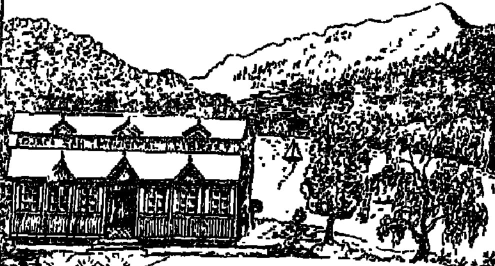

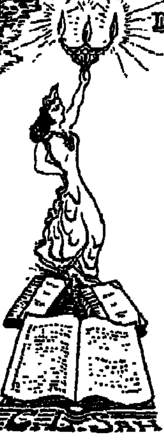
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FRANCIS YEATS-BROWN
1886-1944

by John Evelyn Wrench

TO the world in general, Francis Yeats-Brown is probably best remembered as the author of *Bengal Lancer*, but as a soldier, airman, journalist, author and student of Eastern life and thought, he was a man of wide interests and deep learning, and an original contributor in many fields.

In this study of him by his cousin, Sir Evelyn Wrench, he is seen as a cadet at Sandhurst and then as a young subaltern in India, sensitively aware of the peculiar problems posed by that great country—problems both material and spiritual, to the consideration of which he was still devoting his mind at the end of his life.

After transferring to the Royal Flying Corps in the early years of the First World War, he was captured by the Turks and underwent many privations before finally returning to England in 1918. A further period of service in India, and then he turned to writing and journalism, becoming a regular contributor to the *Spectator* and occasionally to other periodicals on a variety of subjects. He also started writing books, and Sir Evelyn Wrench, with the aid of his letters and notes, gives a fascinating account of the travail which produced *Bengal Lancer*, as well as describing his friendship with Lawrence of Arabia, Henry Williamson and other literary figures of the time.

The international turmoil of the 'thirties led him to turn his mind to the problem of ensuring peace, but when war came, it was to India that he returned to write *Martial India*, an account of the Dominion's contribution to the struggle. Soon after returning to England, he died, in 1944, after a life whose colour and diversity failed to hide from his relatives and friends the fundamental search for reality which underlay all his activities.

FRANCIS YEATS-BROWN

By the same author

UPHILL
STRUGGLE
I LOVED GERMANY
IMMORTAL YEARS

FRANCIS YEATS-BROWN

FRANCIS YEATS-BROWN

1886—1944

JOHN EVELYN WRENCH

"As defined to myself, my plan was to realize personality by living with the man, in as close familiarity as was consistent with the fact of his being dead."

A. T. MAHAN.

LONDON

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TO MY WIFE

Tibi quae, sive lucente benignio sole sive tempestate minante, cum tenerum tum seniorem velut sidera nautas direxisti.

PREFACE

MY ORIGINAL intention was to give a complete list of all those who have helped me in the task of trying to present a faithful picture of my cousin, Francis Yeats-Brown—or Y.B., as he was known to his countless friends. Few men can have had more friends in all walks of life, both East and West.

When I attempted to set down my inadequate thanks to those who have furnished me with data concerning his colourful personality, and with letters, I realised that this course would be unsatisfactory, and would yield nothing but an inexpressive list of names. I have been helped and encouraged in the task of preparing this biography by his widow, his brothers, and many relatives and friends, by fellow officers in the Indian Army, both British and Indian, by prisoners in Turkey during the first world war, by journalists and writers in Great Britain, India, and America, and by the swami of Chidambaram with whom he last explored the world of the spirit.

A few names must, however, be recorded. Above all, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to his widow, who has made my task possible by placing at my disposal a vast mass of material, the accumulations of a lifetime, consisting of Y.B's papers, diaries, newspaper cuttings, manuscripts, and old note-books. To Victor Yeats-Brown, Y.B's chief literary executor, I am much indebted for his unfailing help in supplying facts about the early years, and with him must be included Y.B's eldest brother, Alan.

My warm thanks are also due to A. W. Lawrence, the chief literary executor of T. E. Lawrence, and his colleagues, for permission to use the letters from T.E. in the special chapter on their friendship.

My grateful thanks are also due to all who have supplied me with letters, especially to Rosalind Constable, since Y.B's letters to her throw a flood of light on his mental outlook in the years 1930 to 1936, and to Henry Williamson.

This book is dedicated to my wife, who is also Y.B's cousin. For nearly a year she and I have been occupied in delving into the various egos of Y.B's elusive personality. She took down on her typewriter the original text of this biography, and steadfastly encouraged me when I lost confidence in myself. Without her I could not have completed the task.

E. W.

The Mill House, Marlow, Bucks.

PART I

1886–1918

CHAPTER I

Y.B's FORBEARS

FOR SOME time prior to his death Francis Yeats-Brown had been gathering material for his autobiography. The opening paragraph of his first unpublished chapter is as follows:

"The clip-clop of hooves along the cobbled streets of Genoa is my earliest memory—immense to me, aged four—driven tandem-wise to the crack of a whip and the carter's hyoop-hyoop! Flat against a wall, touching my nurse's hand, I watched them go by with fascinated eyes. My childhood's dreams were of them; and when my godmother, old Miss Leacock, (the famous Stephen's aunt) gave me a whip, my happiness rose to its zenith."

It was suitable that a Bengal Lancer's first memory should be of horses, for they proved with him a life-long passion.

He was descended from good Cumberland yeoman stock through his paternal grandfather. The ancestral home was the farm of Scales Rigg, above Kirkoswald, where his forefathers had lived for many generations, down to his great-grandfather's time. In the family records there is mention of a direct ancestor, William Browne (so spelt), a soldier under Cromwell. Y.B's great-grandfather Timothy Brown, who was born at Scales Rigg in 1751, was largely responsible for raising the family's fortunes. He must have prospered as a farmer, for he sought wider horizons and went to live in London at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There he went into partnership with a certain Thomas Cobb, and the firm of Brown, Cobb & Co., 66, Lombard Street, carried on the business of bankers which was finally dissolved in 1810.

The elder Timothy had a son, also a Timothy, Y.B's grandfather, who established the family's connection with Genoa; he was the only surviving son, for his six elder brothers had all died in infancy of small-pox. In 1812 this Timothy married a Miss Mary Ann Goldsmid, a daughter of Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, and Y.B. was always amused by the banter of his friends who observed that he might very easily have had a Jewish grandmother! As a matter of fact the young wife died at the age of twenty-seven after a married life of only five years, and is buried at Torno on Lake Como.

Eleven years after the death of his first wife, Y.B's grandfather married

Stuarta Erskine, daughter of the second Lord Erskine, at the British Legation, Munich. Diplomacy was not a profitable profession from the financial standpoint, and Lord Erskine was unable to give his daughter any financial help. In point of fact, the dowry took the form of two half-crowns, coins which Victor,[1] Y.B's brother, has still in his possession.

Probably drawn to Italy as he had entertained many Italian liberals in London, Timothy settled in Genoa. The family established their home on the island of Palmyra, in the gulf of Spezzia, in an old house built in 1504. This was the only important residence on the island, as the rest of the population were poor peasants who lived in humble dwellings, and it was here that Y.B's father, Montagu, was born on 2nd August, 1834. The fact that he was christened on an American war vessel then in harbour, emphasises the family's links with America through Stuarta, Y.B's grandmother, whose mother, Frances, was the daughter of General John Cadwalader, an intimate associate of Washington's in the American Revolution.

The young family spent the winter on Palmyra and the summer with their grandfather, Lord Erskine, at his delightful place on one of the Bavarian lakes. Monty had a Bavarian nurse, which accounts for the fact that his first language was not English, nor Italian, as it might well have been, but German—added to which, curiously enough, he was sent at the age of ten to a German school at Brussels, before going to Marlborough. I am purposely emphasising the many links existing in the three generations between members of the Yeats-Brown family and Germany, which may account for Y.B's affection for that country.

His father, a fluent linguist, was perfectly at home in German, Italian and French. Francis spoke the Genoese dialect before he spoke English, and in that he shared one other experience with his parent (they both had Italian wet-nurses). Y.B. had a favourite explanation for his knack of languages. For instance, in *Bengal Lancer* he comments on the fact that he was bi-lingual and adds that "I lisped Genoese before I could speak English, and at one time I thought in German."[2] In Italy half a century ago there were no perambulators in the country districts and as a small infant Y.B. was carried on a cushion resting on his brawny nurse's arm.

The position of H.B.M's Consul in Genoa, before the unification of Italy, was diplomatically a very interesting one. The post was occupied by a Yeats-Brown from 1840, when Timothy, became consul till 1893, when Y.B's father was transferred to Boston after thirty-nine years' service in Genoa. Monty Yeats-Brown worked at the British Consulate at Genoa from 1854, when, a young man of twenty; he was appointed

[1] Lieut.-Colonel Victor Yeats-Brown (late King's Royal Rifles).

[2] His cousin Mrs. Arthur Buckley writes: "as regards your general query as to whether Francis spoke Italian or Genoese,—he must certainly have heard and spoken a *little* Genoese; but, I should imagine, not much, as a nurse would, in politeness, always try to talk Italian to her master and mistress and to her charge."

Vice-Consul two years later, and on his father's death in 1859 stepped into his shoes.

Charles Dickens was a friend of Timothy Yeats-Brown's and one of the earliest memories of Y.B's father and uncle was of hearing the famous writer's rendering of his "Christmas Carol" to a select circle specially invited to meet him. This, by the way, was believed by the family to be the first occasion on which Dickens read his works aloud outside his own house. Y.B's uncle Fred thus describes the scene: "His (Dickens's) table was placed near the door leading from the middle drawing room and on it stood a reading lamp, a glass of water and a bag of raisins—this at his request. The guests sat all round the room, which was lighted by a large Venetian glass chandelier hanging from the ceiling with wax candles." Y.B. relates that his father told him that the novelist was extremely nervous and insisted that no one should sit behind him.

Five years later, when in London, Y.B's grandfather received the following letter from Dickens, amusing enough as showing how even distinguished authors are sometimes stumped by Biblical names.

DEVONSHIRE TERRACE,
Wednesday, 14th August, 1850.

My dear Brown,

Georgina tells me you are going to the opera next Tuesday. Now, (as our servants are out of town and we are in an anti-Malthusian state here) I want you and Mrs. Brown to come and dine with me at the Star and Garter at Richmond, on the following Friday. I will drive you down and we will dine early; so that if we feel disposed for Vauxhall we may go there, very easily afterwards.

Is it a bargain? I name that day because I am not likely to be free before, being now hard at work.

My good friend, Mr. Ellis of the Star and Garter, is used to me and knows how to make us comfortable.

Say yes, and I elevate my pen in the air after the Roman manner and swear by it to call for you next Friday week at 3

With best regards to Mrs. Brown and all the pets (including, when you write, the child with the name which I am not sufficiently Biblical to be able to spell.)[1]

Believe me, very cordially yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

T. Yeats-Brown, Esq.

It was small wonder that Monty Yeats-Brown became so much interested in European problems. Genoa then was a more important centre politically than it is in our time; and in his position as Consul he met all the leading British visitors. From the earliest days he followed with deep interest the political and military events which ended in Garibaldi's triumph. Few men could paint a more vivid picture of nineteenth

[1] Kerenhappuch, Job's third daughter.

century Europe. The great events which shaped the destiny of Europe in the Napoleonic era had occurred but a couple of decades before his birth; and at the Consulate in his early years, there was a messenger known as "Valet", who had actually taken part in Napoleon's campaign to Moscow in 1812.

Monty married in 1875 Agnes, one of the five daughters of Sir Alan Bellingham; they were known as "The Pocket Venuses".[1] Agnes was born at Castle Bellingham, in Co. Louth, the family place, and spent much of her early life at Dunany, a property on the sea coast, belonging to her father, with lovely views of the Mourne Mountains. Y.B's maternal grandfather was a model parent, to whom his family was devoted, but he was a strict disciplinarian and the family lived in state as befitted an Irish landlord a century ago.

Monty Yeats-Brown had a deep affection for Italy and in the few biographical fragments that he left there is this revealing sentence in which he records how he succeeded to his father: "Eventually at his death I was appointed to be H.M. Consul, though only then 23, which is unusually young for such a post as Genoa. However, I must have satisfied the Foreign Office, as before the first year was out they offered to send me as Consul to Manila, a post which, however, I could not accept for family reasons, and which would not have suited me, being so tied to Italy where I was born, and where I should always like to live—and, when the time comes, to die!"

The last ambition was not realised. He left Portofino, his Italian home, in 1917, for the last time and died in February, 1921, at Twyford, near Winchester, where he and his wife are buried. For many years they had kept there an English *pied-à-terre.*

His father in addition to his own sterling patriotism certainly passed on to Y.B. a deep love for Italy, a keen interest in the politics of Europe, and at the same time certain eccentricities, and a stubbornness when thwarted.

Y.B. all his life, was deeply devoted to his father, but in latter years there was a consciousness that his father's reserve had prevented real intimacy.

[1] They were Hester (Lady Butler); Alice (Lady Brooke); Charlotte (Mrs. Wrench); Agnes (Mrs. Yeats-Brown); and Frances (Mrs. R. A. Smythe).

CHAPTER II

BOYHOOD

FRANCIS was born in the Palazzo Grupallo, at Albaro, on the outskirts of Genoa, on 15th August, 1886. From an early age he was usually spoken of as "Stella", an Italian pet name for a child of either sex, equivalent to "my jewel", or "my lamb" in English.

An early picture of Y.B. is provided by Mrs. Arthur Buckley, his first cousin, nine years older, who describes him at the age of three as a rather delicate and ethereal-looking child, with a colouring quite unlike that of his parents. He was a great favourite with his father, and with elderly people. He was always full of fun and inventiveness, and, at the age of four solemnly told his cousin that Miss Leacock, his godmother, would be an "excellent person to marry as she was good at sewing on tapes and buttons".

At the age of five Y.B. invented a story about ghosts and "ghostesses". Mrs. Buckley writes: "There was also in it a flesh and blood young lady, whose hand one of the ghosts asked in marriage, but she refused him because he was 'so very old and ramshackle'. I cannot remember much of the story, but I well remember his using the word 'ramshackle'."

One of the earliest memories set down by Y.B. himself, thus referred to a visit to the circus at Genoa: "I can only have been five at the time (for at six I went to the United States with my family) but I was allowed to sit up for the evening performance. The clowns, the bears, the seals, and even the last act, when the arena was flooded and a naval engagement was fought, did not thrill me as did the snorting, champing, stamping white stallion, arching his neck to a spangled rein and foaming at his bit, upon whose back a ballerina pirouetted."

After his father's long term of office as Consul in Genoa it must have been a great upheaval when he accepted the position of Consul-General in Boston, Mass. Admittedly the fact that the family took with them to America four Italian servants must have mitigated the hardships of embarking on a new life at the age of fifty-nine.

Francis's recollections of Boston were somewhat sketchy; the pictures remaining in his memory were chiefly of a Cat Boat, a camera, a bicycle, a carpenter's shop, and of "reading Black Beauty at my Mother's knee". His first experience of schooling was at a local Kindergarten, which he much enjoyed—unlike the rather sombre memories he retained subsequently of his private and public schools in England.

The family returned to Europe in December, 1895. Francis—now a boy of nine—spent a happy holiday with his uncle and aunt[1] at Ballin Temple, Co. Carlow, and with another uncle and aunt at Lauragh, Portarlington, Queen's County.[2] He describes the visit thus:

"Back in Ireland, at the age of nine, I can still smell a harness-room and a hay loft and still see the fat bay pony on which I first rode. That was a tremendous experience, and the buttons of my gaiters hurt fiendishly. Soon afterwards I caught measles.

"Feverish, I saw a little white monk standing on the rail at the foot of my bed. A little monk about a foot high, who began to speak quite clearly, in a shrill voice, suitable to his size. At first I was terrified, thinking I was going to die, but what he said reassured me. He prophesied that I was going to be a Lancer. That was very odd and unexpected. I suppose I knew what a Lancer was, through having played with soldiers, but I had made no plans for the future. I didn't want to be a soldier. In fact, I never wanted to be a soldier. Yet I saw myself with a sword at my side, and then with a spear in my hand . . . I became delirious, and my thumbs felt enormous.

"It would be easy to suggest that my future lay open to me then in a vision, that I saw myself joining the 17th Cavalry, pig-sticking, playing polo, and so on. Easy and untrue. The word 'lancer' stuck in my mind, but I never expected to go to India, I was never even interested in India till I went there."

He has left but scanty memoirs of his days at Sunnymede, Mr. A. J. de Winton's School at Slough, where he was assisted by Mr. Gervase Alington, a cousin of Y.B's mother.

"At my private school," he writes, "the horror of learning Latin drove horses out of my head. Some complex made 'amo, amas, amat' almost impossible. I started crying directly I saw a Latin grammar, and felt in the depths of my being I was being tortured unjustly and unnecessarily. I was a slow, stupid and yet arrogant child, for I had hardly been a week at school before I wrote my name in large letters of water—jug in hand—across the floor of the gym, and was very properly licked for this premature attempt to gain a public."

Francis was never happy at Harrow. As a small boy he used to avoid some of the fag's duties by telling his seniors horrifying tales of "Jack the Ripper".

"At Harrow it was discovered that I was short-sighted and that I was no good at cricket. Naturally enough I became a person of no account. I was really no good at anything, except at not being found out, and not always at that, for a game-keeper caught me bird's-nesting with a friend and reported us to the school authorities.

[1] Sir Thomas and Lady Butler. [2] Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Smythe.

"How he caught us, and before whom he hauled us, has completely escaped my memory, which is annoying, for I would like to know the circumstances. But the beginnings of our adventure remain vivid: one ecstatic morning at the streak of dawn, my friend Jerry and I climbed out f a window in Druries and spent from 2 a.m. until school time at 7.30, in the freedom of a jungle which seemed limitless to youth. Those woods have now become suburban villas.

"We went out many times and made a largish collection of eggs. These excursions were my only glimpses of happiness at Harrow, brief and blinding glimpses. To say that I hated my school days would be an exaggeration, for I had no standards by which to judge, but I only felt alive when bird's-nesting, or making plans to escape from Druries by night. Eventually, old Howson, our poetical house-master, came to hear of our crimes. He summoned us to his study: we thought he was going to send us to the headmaster to be birched, but he only gave us each a Georgic to copy out.

"Would that Howson had continued at Druries! He woke the love of rythm in me, but did not satisfy me, for he only took my form once a week. I used to hunger to hear him read the cadences of *Paradise Lost*. Unfortunately he fell ill, and I met no other master in whom I felt the slightest interest. The fault was mine—one cannot hope to find teachers that are also poets or jockeys, and those were the only two kinds of people who caught my wayward imagination. I might have been happy if I had been brought up in the neighbourhood of a racing stable, like George Moore, but this was too much to expect of Harrow. However, I won a prize for English essays, I could hardly believe it, but so it was. At the end of my first winter term I walked away from 'Speecher' with a copy of Southey's *Life of Nelson* under my arm, feeling that I had excelled my fellows. Next term I devoted many hours, which I should have given to Euclid, whose propositions seemed to me foolish, or to Latin grammar, which I still detested, to composing a poem in the manner of the Ancient Mariner, in which an acolyte, carrying a heavy cross in procession, was disembowelled by its fall. This interfered with my studies in the Army Class, and my parents, to my amazement and delight, came to the perfectly correct conclusion that I was wasting my time and their money. So they sent me to Germany that I might learn the language there."

During his second term at Harrow my uncle and aunt asked my mother and me to visit Francis in his new surroundings. It was presumably difficult for an Etonian to be enthusiastic about the rival school, this was my account of my first visit to Harrow in 1900, written at the time:[1] "It has a splendid position on a hill. The buildings are nice but new. The boys are very unsmart compared with Eton. We had tea and heard 'bill' being called. Francis is a very nice little boy and I gave him five shillings . . ." In the pages of *Uphill* recording the visit I wrote: "I enjoyed the importance of being a 'grown-up' and giving tips to boys at school. Francis was four years my junior. His father was with us. He heard of

[1] The Author's *Uphill* published by Nicholson & Watson in 1934.

my largesse and said he was sure I had no money to spare—which was true. The next day when my uncle left for Genoa he gave me a tip of a pound, it was a case of virtue rewarded, although slightly *infra dig* to accept tips when just starting business on your own." Francis was a bright little boy with very nice manners. I cannot say truthfully that he made an impression of unhappiness on me, and if he was somewhat subdued I put it down to the inevitable feelings of a boy at the beginning of his second term.

His brother Victor tells me that his journalistic ambitions were already showing themselves; while at Harrow Francis either started an opposition paper to the *Harrovian*, containing too much criticism of the powers that be, or he may have written something in the *Harrovian*; whatever it was his writings gave offence to the authorities, and he was hauled over the coals because of this journalistic endeavour.

It was shortly after leaving Harrow that he first was paid for an article; his brother Alan[1] writes: "From very early days he used to say he wanted to be 'the sub-editor' of a newspaper. I often used to ask him why not the Editor, but never got a satisfactory answer."

His cousin, Mrs. Erskine, the authoress, always believed in his gift as a writer, which was evident from his early youth, together with his persistent desire to devote himself to literature; he was the official story-teller at Sunnymede private school, which is curious because in later days he was never successful at imaginative writing, whereas he could hold his own with anyone in descriptive writing. He consulted his cousin about this first story and she sent it on his behalf to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, and great was the rejoicing when Y.B. received his first cheque.[2]

In one of Y.B's scrapbooks are pencil notes outlining some of the chapters in the autobiography he planned but never undertook. They are tantalising as they suggest so many trails I would fain have followed.

Concerning his childhood before he went to school are these entries:

"Getting things done. Horse. Sailing. Kindergarten. London and Mademoiselle. Having mumps. Frightened of dark. Everyone should make confession. 'People look too good to be true.' "

About his private school he wrote:

"I am Yeats-Brown. The math master. The games master. Fat boy. The duds. In deserted house. Alington (the Assistant Master) discovers us playing. Being licked. A fight. Always hungry. No conception of poor people. Driving to Church in Ireland. I suppose one always lies in auto-

[1] Commander Alan Yeats-Brown, R.N., D.S.O.

[2] The youthful author thus describes in his biographical notes the first acceptance of an article; " 'Love and the Obelisk' was published in the Pall Mall Magazine and I received for my first effort the same as Milton did for Paradise Lost—£10!"

biographies? Misery of small tips. Getting ringworm. Joy of being alone and well fed."

About Harrow he writes:

" 'Horror of being new boy. Fear of getting toast wrong' and 'Carrying heavy baths.' (Presumably from the fag's point of view.) Sleepiness in school. Prayers, 'Be about our bed and our path.' Birds nesting. Cold class rooms."

Y.B's first visit to Germany was a great landmark in his life. He left Harrow at the end of the Easter term, 1903, a timid boy, lacking in self-confidence, and dissatisfied with himself, and sub-consciously feeling that the most had not been made of his talents. Apart from a prize for English literature, he had been successful neither as student nor athlete. The boys thought little of him; he felt thwarted.

His thoughts as to the career he would like to adopt, were no doubt nebulous, but he had definite literary aspirations although he did not know how to turn them into something concrete. His father was unsympathetic; man of the world that he was, he quite naturally frowned on the profession of journalism, which, despite the higher standards of pay, largely introduced as the result of Alfred Harmsworth's recent rise to fame, was not regarded by the upper classes seriously as a career ranking with the Army, Navy, Law or the Church. His father talked to me about Francis when he was at Harrow, and said that he felt sure a life of regular routine and army discipline would be good for his character. In the army he would learn habits of punctuality and method in handling papers and records, often sadly lacking in those endowed with literary or artistic talent.

Yeats-Brown senior felt strongly that a knowledge of German would be a useful asset for a young soldier, for, unlike many Englishmen in the first decade of the present century, thanks to his great knowledge of European conditions and of Germany in particular, he always considered war with Germany inevitable. Nevertheless, he had a profound admiration for Teutonic thoroughness and German methods of education. His father also naturally took pleasure in the thought of sending Y.B. to Germany, a country which had been a second home to him.

The way was made easy for carrying out his plan for Y.B's aunt Ida (his father's sister) had married Franz Weyermann, and one of her daughters, Edith, was married to a German, by name Heydweiller, who lived in a delightful part of the country. Denzerheide, his cousin's home, to which Francis was sent, was situated on the attractive uplands, in the triangle between Ehrenbreitstein looking westwards to the Rhine and southwards to Bad Ems on the river Lahn. From the moment he arrived he found happiness and loving cousins who welcomed him with open

arms and called him "das Onkelchen" (little uncle). It is customary in Germany so to address first cousins once removed.

New horizons opened, life was fuller and more interesting for him than had ever seemed possible. He admired the orderly way of life he found; in 1903 the Germans seemed a carefree people, and even the ordinary folk were provided with comforts and amenities practically unknown in England. The countryside was attractive; there was good music to enjoy while sitting in the open-air restaurants. In his writings there are frequent references to the year he spent in the Rhineland. I can enter into his feelings, for I, too, as a boy of seventeen, spent nine happy months in Germany, also in the Rhineland, on the river Lahn, fifty miles from Denzerheide.

The Heydweiller family consisted of three girls and two boys. The eldest daughter—Y.B's contemporary and special friend—married a German officer, who had been stationed at Ehrenbreitstein, two years later. No doubt the fact that there were two pretty young girls in the Denzerheide family was responsible for frequent communication between "Denzer" and the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein. Mrs. Buckley, when staying with her sister shortly after Y.B's visit, was told that he had been taken over the fortress by German officers, which the Heydweillers took as proof in 1903 of the excellent relations existing between Great Britain and Germany!

Alas, Y.B. never completed his account of his stay in Germany in his autobiographical notes, from which the following is taken:

"Coblenz was a glorious escape, I gave up telling lies and learnt to ride and shoot; also there was a cousin, to whom I gave my 17-year old heart, without ever thinking of declaring my passion. I was immature, and would certainly have been ashamed to confess that I was in love; a girl, I was convinced, could not be as interesting as a gun or a horse. However, my life began at 17. Until then I had hardly thought of myself as a person.

"My father was the best and the most reasonable of men, but he thought that the career of a writer was a foolish one to adopt when the times demanded men to fight for their country. If I hadn't been a fool I could easily have convinced him that I had the makings of an author, (at my private school I used to tell a serial thriller to my dormitory every night, invented as I went along: alas, that this gift has gone) and that it was not necessary to devote my whole life to soldiering; however, I didn't. I was devoted to my father, and my mind was full of confusion.

"In Germany this inner conflict cleared. I began to see that learning was useful, and good fun. The German people and their language charmed me . . .

"Every day now I used to bicycle into Coblenz, for riding lessons in the school near the Uhlan Barracks. The horses there were superb creatures, very different from the hacks to be found at most such places, and the Rittmeister was an artist to whom a trained and balanced thoroughbred was the first work of God. He liked me, and I was a light-weight.

Soon—within a few months—he had taught me how to hold a good horse between my knees, and make him do my will."

Thanks to his cousins, Francis became acquainted with many of the officers of the local garrison, and during the autumn manoeuvres his host kept open house for them:

"Amongst them I met a captain of the Uhlans," he wrote, "who introduced me to that delectable mixture of Rhine wine and wild strawberries called Mai-bowle. With him I talked much of horses, and wine, and war. Those were the days when mounted brigades—even divisions—were manoeuvred in mass, and keen cavalrymen believed that battles would be won by 'cold steel' and 'shock action'. My friend showed me the German lance which was larger and heavier than the British. Machine-guns were still considered 'troublesome and expensive toys'. We both thought war inevitable, since the Germans and English were too big to inhabit the earth together, but it made no difference to our friendship. We thought the war, when it came, would be an affair of a few weeks, or at most of a few months. And there are still lunatics holding the same views. . . . On the evening of the last day of the great manoeuvres, at which the Kaiser had been present, I sat with my Uhlan in a restaurant at a table adjoining that of some dozen resplendent Death's Head Hussars who clinked their coloured glasses to Der Tag."[1]

In the pencilled jottings for his proposed autobiography are these notes concerning his first visit to Germany:

"Ilse. Grammar. Suddenly woke up to learning. Beer, betting, girls. 'The children of the rich suffer more than the children of the poor.' "

[1] *European Jungle*, 112–3.

CHAPTER III

YOUNG LANCER

Y.B. ENTERED Sandhurst in July, 1904, shortly after his German interlude. In his autobiographical notes he remarks:

"Although I never had any serious desire to be a soldier, the prospect of riding led towards a military career and since my father wished that I should join the Indian Army, I stood for the Sandhurst examination, and passed, much to my surprise. It was all very casual on my part, and I don't think anyone ever considered which profession I was best suited for —and partly to my dismay, for by then I had hankerings for literature, the law, and the Church. As regards the Church, however, my desire was not connected with religion. I used to picture myself as a Bishop, with a jewelled hand resting on the edge of a marble pulpit. It is curious, looking back, to remember how utterly unprepared I was for life of any kind. My education had given me no idea at all of reality. I was blankly ignorant of everything but some English poetry and some general history, and this in spite of the fact that I had already travelled in Germany, Italy, France and the United States.

"Curious, I say, what a lost creature I was when I entered Sandhurst. Previously I had been a rather bright little boy, to judge by an early photograph; but during my adolescence something went wrong. It was an inner conflict, I suppose. I really wanted to be a writer.

"At Sandhurst I thought I would be considered a good horseman, but I wasn't. I was good enough, however, to be chosen for a cavalry squadron which went out to Salisbury Plain for a fortnight's manoeuvres. For weeks I had lain awake at night looking forward to this time, and the reality was as good as my expectations, in spite of the troop-horse allotted to me, a heavy, hairy-footed brute who must have had a Clydesdale for his mother. But I had bad luck with my horse; he was terribly heavy in hand, he was also vicious, boning at me with his great hairy feet, while I was hissing professionally at his flanks. One evening I spent a long time reasoning with him. I pulled his ears, fondled his muzzle, breathed warm breath into his nostrils, rubbed the 'chestnuts' on his forelegs, and smeared their scent on his ugly face. Presently I felt that we understood each other better: he whinnied with pleasure at my endearments, but when I turned to go promptly bit me in the back-side.

"In Germany I had ridden chiefly animals with almost academic paces, and in perfect balance. Here I was a trooper, jostled in the ranks, sweating and swearing, my mouth full of dust, but intensely happy. The gilt was off the gingerbread of riding school cavalcades, but there was a better taste in

my mouth, and joy in my soul: some need of my nature was being fulfilled. It was a new sensation to me then, though now I know it is shared by all true cavalrymen. Galloping horses always bring back to me those days of youth, with their splendour and surprise. Though bruised, and with torn hands, I was part of a herd of swift flying creatures: part of something which I felt I had been before. Like the hero of Algernon Blackwood's great novel, *The Centaur*, I felt the speed and strength of the earth coursing through my profoundest being: the glory of the earth when she was young: I was more than human: I was part of creation, revelling in its rush through space.

"Sandhurst means nothing to me now except that fortnight with a coarse-mouthed brute who became so suddenly a mystic steed when companioned by his kind on either flank (I was centre-guide) carrying me to a vision of a time before men were men. Always this delight—this magic—returned when I rode with my troop. An exultation which sounds fantastic in cold print. Today, musing by the fireside, I think what the drivers of tanks must miss! Not air-pilots. A fighter scout gives its driver a marvellous sense of mastery and speed. But a tank . . .

"Although my career at Sandhurst was by no means brilliant—I hated the spit and polish of the guardee sergeant-instructor—the senseless way they taught us the components of the Maxim gun, compelling us to repeat the instructions by rote. I was graded forty places higher in my passing out examination than I had been at my entrance, and was consequently eligible for the Indian Army. Thus I became the 'trusty and well beloved' servant of King Edward VII, and found myself, in my 19th year attached as a Second-Lieutenant to the King's Royal Rifle Corps at Bareilly, India."

Y.B. arrived in Bombay on 1st December, 1905.

He has written but little of his first year at Bareilly, beyond the characteristic admission that, with all possible speed, he negotiated an overdraft and bought two ponies, which he called Punch and Judy. In addition to his ponies his "household" included two bulldogs, made famous in the opening pages of *Bengal Lancer*, Brownstone, bought in Calcutta, the grandson of Rodney Stone, "the most famous bulldog that ever lived"; and his consort Daisy, ordered from the Army and Navy Stores in England.

The writing of a chronological story of Y.B's life is not easy because he rarely added the year to the date line in his correspondence or records. I have found many inaccurate entries in his diaries and papers. As an instance I may cite the first chapter of *Bengal Lancer*, his best-known book, called "New Year's Eve 1905", in which he tells, most delightfully, the story of his journey from Bareilly to Bannu, where he had gone to join the Bengal Lancers—the 17th Cavalry—with which regiment his name will always be identified.[1] Actually this journey took place on New Year's Eve, 1906.

[1] Before me as I write is the official "Record of Officers Services, Indian Army" stating his term with the 2nd King's Royal Rifles to have been from 2nd December, 1905, to 30th December, 1906, and his arrival at Bannu, where the 17th Cavalry was stationed, on 31st December, 1906.

His first year in India passed rapidly, and in September he qualified for his lower standard of Urdu at Ranikhet. The new life was very delightful, and he soon settled down to the duties and privileges of an officer representing the British raj. It was intoxicating to one who had never been well off to find money no longer a problem. The credit of the British Sahib was good and, if he wished to purchase a polo pony, to buy furniture for his tent, champagne, cigars, or other luxuries, he had only to initial a chit. It was exciting to be the lord and master of an establishment of half-a-dozen willing slaves, which included Jagwant, his bearer for fifteen years, a waiter, a washerman, a water carrier, a sweeper, and a couple of grooms to look after his ponies.

However much he enjoyed the life of an officer in the Indian Army, with opportunities for sport, which a man of his means would not have had at home, he was never just a soldier without any thought of the great mysterious world outside the cantonment. If he rejoiced in bearing his share of the white man's burden and upholding the Pax Britannica east of Suez, his active mind was always questioning, enquiring, and noting the environment in which he worked.

How many young men in their twentieth year would have written as he did of life in Bareilly:

"It was a jolly life, yet among these servants and *salaams* I had sometimes a sense of isolation, of being a caged white monkey in a Zoo whose patrons were this incredibly numerous beige race . . . 'cantering across the magical plains that stretched away to the Himalayas, I shivered at the millions and immensities and secrecies of India . . . We English were a caste. White overlords or white monkeys—it was all the same. The Brahmins made a circle within which they cooked their food. So did we. We were a caste: pariahs to them, princes in our own estimation.' "

On railway journeys and in the bazaars of Bareilly city he was appalled by the drab lives of the masses. This India, with its pervasive squalor, was something very different from the exotic accounts of the writers.

"Where were the Rajahs who ruled in splendour and those other Rajahs who drank potions of powdered pearls and woman's milk? Where were the priests and the nautch-girls, and idols whose bellies held rubies as big as pigeons' eggs?"[1]

Instead he was surrounded by poverty such as he had never dreamed of and by mysterious groups of emaciated and under-fed human beings who squatted patiently in every byway, or lay like corpses on the pavement. No writer, with the exception of Kipling, has done more to make the Indian scene live. He had a genius for making subjects usually dull leave

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 8, 9, 10.

a vivid image in the mind. Who but Y.B., when dealing with the population problem, could have written:

"Those doll-like babies with flies round their eyes—nineteen thousand of them were born every day in India. A staggering thought, all this begetting and birth."[1]

The thought of India's teeming millions and the fact that her population increased in every decade nearly as much as the total population of Great Britain always preoccupied him. Even during his last visit, within a year of his death, the steady increase in the population of Asia, accompanied by the decline among the Nordics, worried him.

Few young Englishmen were better qualified to act as interpreter of India to the West because, however British he might be, and he was intensely patriotic, there was always one section of his psychic make-up that was able to look at himself and his fellow-countrymen through Indian eyes—very valuable in a writer.

His arrival at Bannu, on the North-West Frontier, on 31st December, 1906, opens a very definite era in Y.B's life. Lover of Kipling that he was, many of the scenes that he witnessed must have seemed familiar. He loved the Frontier, the wonderful spring mornings, and the added interest as he gradually got to know the Pathans and Punjabi Mussulmans with whom he served, as his ability to speak Urdu and Pushtu increased.

Like many young Englishmen he suffered much from the heat and was soon laid low by a sunstroke in a land where the sun has not the benign character it possesses at home. He likened it to Shiva the Destroyer, and at times, as all who have suffered from ill-health in India are aware, life was a perpetual struggle with prickly heat, with hordes of insects, with choking dust, with attacks of malaria, and the ever-monotonous mockery of the brain-fever bird. He wisely used to take a siesta after lunch to the accompaniment of the flapping punkah, when he used to read or write to friends or even try his hand at writing for the press.

During his second year in India, while at Bannu, he wrote a two-and-a-half column leading article for the Allahabad *Pioneer* of 25th July, 1907, entitled "On Pots and Heads"—his first appearance in a daily paper—the youthful Y.B. had not yet learnt the art of condensation. It was a plea for sportsmanship in games, for playing the game for the sake of playing, not with the sole object of winning, and a general attack on commercialism in sport.

Later in the year under the general heading of "After-Dinner Thoughts" he contributed to the same newspaper three articles entitled "On Gilt", "On Gilded Youths", and "On Hotels"—written in half-bantering mood.

In 1907 he was concerned with the parlous condition of old John Bull

[1] Ibid., 11.

whose rightful business was "ploughing and fighting and ruling the people of his sway". The young journalist took seriously the implications of the white man's burden, and as he reflected on the state of the Empire from afar he was disturbed by the unrest at home and abroad, and by the artificiality of our civilisation. His ire was roused by the gentry of

"The jewelled hand, the large cigar,
The cocktail at the rakish bar,"

who declaimed "on army reform in the best club of either hemisphere". He admitted that the world was going through a stage of transition, and that we were nearing the dawn of a new era.

His early years of soldiering in the 17th Cavalry, with polo, hawking parties and coursing matches always conjured up happy memories for Y.B. in after life. With the passing of years the small irritations and daily frictions were not remembered. The diary he wrote in 1908–9, however, certainly does not give a picture of undiluted enjoyment. To my surprise I find repeated references to discontent with his surroundings after three years soldiering.

He was definitely thinking of getting a transfer to the Political Department of the Government of India. And he was even then longing to throw up soldiering and to embark on a literary career. He writes in March, 1909: "Colonel told me I might go home if I liked. I am now in great doubts as to how order my future career."

He thus describes his arrival at Portofino, his Italian home, on his first leave since joining the Indian Army:

May 8. 1909.

"I looked up at the old Castello: but could see nobody waving (Mother was waving, but I did not see her). Can you imagine my feelings? At that moment I cursed myself—damned myself—for having got into debt. What joy to see Pippo.[1] I told him to pay the cab: dashed down to the village: and saw Father and Mother waiting for me at the gate by the boathouse. I waved my hat and shouted 'Hurrah'. Kissed them both: and then walked up hand and hand with Mother. They both asked me lots of questions: all the time I was longing to say that I stupidly had got into debt in India: I felt I had to get that off my chest before really feeling happy in my mind.

"So at dinner I felt extremely happy and yet deeply uncomfortable: after dinner Mother stopped downstairs to see Angela (the cook), so I told Father straight out. It was a bad moment for me. God knows how bitterly I regretted the necessity of telling him. He had just brought me a cigar to try:—God! I've never had to screw my heart up like that before in my life. Perhaps it is all good for me. I see how much Father loves me: how he really cares for me: I feel an honester man: and I resolve never to get into debt again. I have been really lucky to escape with as

[1] Old family retainer who only died during the second world war.

little inconvenience as I have: but I have seen enough of it to know that extravagant living, (i.e., living beyond one's means) is a great bar to success in life.

"To my surprise, Father showed outwardly no symptoms of annoyance: —he *must* have been angry: however, since then I have explained fully and absolutely candidly all my money affairs: and he is going to settle up the £555 I owe. . . .

June 19, 1909. *Portofino.*

"I have made great friends with E. F. Benson. He is a most remarkable man: living vividly in the present: and talking cleverly. His manners are truly perfect: he has square shoulders and looks boyish. His forehead is magnificent: he is strong and well built. He likes his work, but perhaps he likes the world still better.

"One day walking up to Ruta; I told him (we had talked of many interesting things) of my passion for writing. After eating strawberry tartlets up there and admiring the view: we came down by Santa Margherita: talking hard about writing: and had vermouths at a little *osteria*. . . That was a happy day for me: I started writing furiously the plot of a story which he gave me: and have now finished it (within a week), it is called 'A Disciple of St. George.' He was awfully good: spending about two hours correcting it for me. I am not sure what I feel towards him: fear: awe: love: God knows what.

"He gave me much excellent advice on writing. First to get the story clear in one's head. Then to alter one's style for descriptions, conversations, dreams, etc. To write quickly but correct much and often. To observe carefully: to listen carefully to conversation. *Writing is a trade which must be learnt.*

June 23. 1909. *Portofino.*

"As to my future plans . . . If a good opportunity offers to do journalistic work, I shall certainly take it.

"To my father I owe much, and I should be sorry to do what displeases him, more especially as I am exceedingly alive to the fact that I am having an extremely jolly time in India. Yet I feel that my *raison d'être*: my real and only sphere of usefulness, would be to go in for literature: this I think every day more clearly, will be my ultimate career: and if so, why not now?

After his leave Y.B. returned to India. He was to remain a soldier for many years. Among the letters from officers in the Indian Army who knew him as a young soldier, is one from Sir Alan Hartley, Commander-in-Chief in India in 1941. He writes:

"I am not sure, but I think it was in the late autumn of 1907 that I first met Y.B. Anyway, somewhere about that time he did a riding-class with the 10th Hussars (in those days an officer appointed to Indian Cavalry had to do a riding class with a British Cavalry Regiment).

"We, the old 11th Lancers, (Probyn's Horse), were in Rawalpindi; his regiment, the old 17th Cavalry, was in Bannu.

"I think we both changed stations in the winter of 1909–10; the 11th to Delhi, and the 17th to Bareilly.

"Up till then Y.B. was a pretty frequent visitor in Rawalpindi—it was in any case, a pleasant change from Bannu; also he had a particular Harrow friend in the 11th, St. J. V. Baker, with whom he used to stay.

"My two chief recollections of him at this period are his extremely 'girlish' appearance, and his love for argument.

"I don't know how often he found it necessary to shave; but he looked as if he had not a hair on his face; and, when dressed up for the Fancy Ball, he made an extremely good-looking and attractive girl.

"As for argument, he loved nothing better; and was prepared to sit up all night and argue on any subject under the sun, usually, of course, from the unexpected and unpopular angle. We had four or five subalterns at that time who, too, had wider interests than the polo ground, and were prepared to do ditto; and we found him a very congenial and entertaining companion.

"In those days he did not know very much about the Hindu element in the Indian Army. The old 17th were an entirely Mussulman regiment (half Punjabi Mussulman, half Pathans); and my recollection is that he was glad he had not to deal with Hindus, particularly Sikhs.

"I don't know when he started being interested in Hinduism and Yoga. But to those who knew him in the early days his conversion to Yoga came as no particular surprise.

"He played polo as a matter of course, and was quite a useful and hard-working No. 1 (under the old rules). But I don't think he was particularly keen; and I think pigsticking (which he took up at Bareilly), appealed to him much more, with its opportunities for getting right into the country-side and making contact with the zemindar and ryot, in their own surroundings.

"I should imagine it was at Bareilly that he first got interested in Hinduism.

"He was evidently on very intimate terms with his Indian officers; and, of course, it was with their wonderful aid that he was able to live disguised in Peshawar City, and, I believe, in Afridi country as well."

Another letter comes from Major E. W. Metcalfe:

"We were great friends for over thirty years; and I was very fond of him. He was a very simple and unassuming man all his life, too unassuming, I have often told him. He was very shy and retiring. It was difficult to get him to talk in front of people of subjects on which he was an expert, and on which he knew more than most. He was the least conceited man I've ever met. It was almost impossible to get him to talk about himself.

"Y.B. was a good and keen soldier and a fine Cavalry officer. He really loved soldiering; a fine horseman; played polo for his regiment; handicap five goals; loved pigsticking and rode well after pig. I remember first meeting him some 33 years ago. We were on leave at Naini Tal, playing polo. He was young and gay, and wore his eyeglass with an air. We played in the same team. Y.B. was a dashing, quick polo-player; he rode Arabs mostly, as he was a light-weight.

"Y.B.'s love of animals was very strong. He understood animals as few men do. In India he dealt in Arab ponies mostly as they understood him. In his compound at Bareilly his ponies were often turned out wild, but they came to his call for a carrot or a piece of sugar. He always had his dogs round him and if a man loves dogs and horses as he did, there must be much in his favour.

"We became close friends. After some time, I realised that Y.B. had two sides to his nature. That of a gay cheerful Cavalry subaltern, the other of a serious thinker, and one who had thought a lot about India and its people, to a degree which was usual for the average young Indian Cavalry officer. About this side of his life he was reticent. I have sometimes asked him what he was going to do for his leave, and enquired whether he would come shooting with me, or go to Calcutta or Lahore and play polo, and he would reply that he had made other plans, and leave it at that. Afterwards we would find out that Y.B. had spent his leave either in the fastnesses of the North-West Frontier with some Pathan tribes, living as they do and dressed as they dress, or perhaps, he'd have spent it at Benares (the Sacred City) living as the guest of a Hindu priest. It was all a bit strange to us. Yoga was a special study of his. He practised Yoga, lived with Yogis, and knew more than most Englishmen of its cult.

"I remember a small episode that happened comparatively recently:—I had a house at Epsom. I asked Y.B. for a week-end. We had a number of guests who included H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and H.M. the ex-King of Spain. On arrival Y.B. was terrified and wanted to leave. After a short time his charm and simplicity conquered all our guests. After dinner, talking of Yoga, I persuaded him to show us something of it, and after much persuasion, he did so with great effect and interest to all. (It was amusing to watch him standing on his head, which he did very regularly as he believed it cleared his brain.)

"Y.B. knew India and its people as few Army officers or Indian Civil Servants knew it.

"He was a very loyal friend, and I do not believe he ever lost one."

CHAPTER IV

NORTH-WEST FRONTIER, BENARES AND BAREILLY

NO ONE can understand Y.B's complex nature who has not read *Bengal Lancer*, *Golden Horn*, *Lancer at Large*, and *European Jungle*, with the frequent autobiographical musings scattered throughout their pages. Few writers have ever been franker in their disclosures, and therein doubtless is a partial explanation for the enormous sales of *Bengal Lancer*—nearly one hundred and fifty thousand. He possessed the power of getting outside himself and regarding his various *egos* quite dispassionately, as if he were a psycho-analyst studying a patient. He tells us that while living on the North-West Frontier his life was "as sexless as any monk's", and for one, to whom women meant so much, it was not surprising that, without their presence, he felt only half alive. He wrote:

"I do not know how far discipline of the sex life is a good thing. But I know that a normal sex life is more necessary in a hot than a cold country. The hysteria which seems to hang in the air of India is aggravated by severe continence of any kind; at the end of Ramzan, for instance, my fasting squadron used to become as lively as a basket of rattlesnakes. Many good brains in India have been bound like the feet of a mandarin's wife, so that they can only hobble ever after; and such cramping of the imagination may lose us the Empire."[1]

When he set down these thoughts in his London flat he had to give a few further words of explanation to his reader:

"Many times have I said I would write these things. But now that I have done so in this grey London weather, I cannot believe that I am not exaggerating. I cannot believe that it was too hot to bear a sheet on my skin, that I ingested six glasses of milk and soda for breakfast, had a malaria temperature twice a week for months on end, that my brain grew addled, and my liver enlarged, and my temper liable to rise like the fires of Stromboli. Yet so it was. Men's brains and bodies, like other machines, work differently at different temperatures; and India would be a happier country if we could always remember that, especially in Whitehall."[2]

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 98. [2] Ibid., 98.

It is easy enough for one sitting in a comfortable armchair in the British climate, with its absence of extremes, to criticise the thoughts and actions of those who live in hot countries but only those who have experienced the scorching winds of India that flay the body, the hot stones underfoot that almost sizzle the shoe soles, the blinding light that nearly strikes one down on emerging from the semi-darkness behind the protecting chits, the sweating nights with possibly only an hour or two's troubled rest before dawn, it is only those who have experienced these things who can understand the part that climate may play in men's lives.

Several times in his writings Y.B. refers to the days spent in squadron training as the happiest in his life. Anyhow in retrospect careering over the plains, near Mamroz, alongside the route that the Emperor Alexander had marched on his way to the Indus, held much glamour for him. His mind was stocked with the recollection of long hours in the saddle, far from civilisation, the return to Camp with the glow of healthy tiredness, the watching of the setting sun over the mountains of Afghanistan, and the evening tub in a canvas bath, so important an event in the daily routine of the young British officer. And after sundown the starry firmament, with "the crescent of Islam riding in the sky", and a cold tang in the night air, and the next day early morning tea "tasting of wood smoke". There was much to be said for dwelling under canvas. Looking back on this Frontier life, he would say: "When there are no such camps, and no excuse to hunt and wander, what will this world be like?"

Within twelve months of arriving on the Frontier, he had received promotion; two pips meant extra pay and he was fairly launched on his military career, though I question whether he ever envisaged high military rank. Certainly during his last visit to India, he never talked enviously of those of his generation like Lord Gort and Sir Alan Hartley who had reached the top of the ladder. Rather were his regrets focussed on the knowledge that his country was not making real use of him in the second world war.

Life on the North-West Frontier did not consist only of squadron trainings, and humdrum military routine, with hours of recreation, when games of Rugby football were played with the men, or of tossing the caber, or afternoon polo. Indian languages had to be mastered, and, to acquire the knowledge necessary for passing the higher standard in Pushtu, Y.B. made his way to Peshawar, commanding the Khyber Pass, sometimes called "The City of a Thousand and one Sins"—or in an Afghan legend the "Place where Satan fell" when cast out of heaven. For a time at least the young Bengal Lancer dressed like a Pathan and, escorted by a Pathan friend, lived in Peshawar hot-beds of intrigue and vice. In the gamut of physical experiences in Peshawar, he considered that he was finding himself. He tells us that hitherto his life had been blighted, ever since an emotional crisis at the age of seventeen, possibly the secret love he

nurtured for his young cousin, when in Germany—anyhow, while living in Peshawar, where the west seemed very remote, he was out for experience. Here he met Nautch girls for the first time, whose beauty he had been told made the dog-stars weep: "Their bodies were cypresses, their teeth camomile petals, their eyes falcons of morning, their lips like Solomon's seal."[1] No wonder, if this was the mental picture he took with him on his peregrinations he must have been attuned to exciting adventure.

"My Pathan friend and I were dressed in gold-laced waistcoats and jet black turbans with gold fringes; we wore roses behind our ears; our eyes were painted with collyrium; we carried daggers, and my friend a favourite fighting quail in a small gilt cage . . . We fought quails and played *andhabazi*, the great egg game. It was an amusing world. I learnt to smoke hashish."[2]

It was here that he met Masheen, queen of courtesans, whose fee, he tells us, was a thousand rupees for a single night—though, he adds "not for milk-faced boys". He was engulfed in the world of the senses.

"She had mesmeric arms and wrists. Her whole body, from neck to ankles, was aflash with bracelets and rings, and on her bare stomach one emerald shone. She was leisurely in her movements, a mistress of time as well as her muscles, beginning always with her finger tips to slow cadences, and continuing with hands and arms and shoulders until the wave passed into her flexible body. Then that too seemed to melt entirely into the rhythm of the drums, which had now grown wild and quick."[3]

He watched the spectacle till, as he informs his readers, the: "release and rapture".

"As she danced on and on to the music of her drunken drummers, some rhythm or religion from the night of time sounded on my skin and gathered itself into my pulses. I could feel as well as hear the beating of the drums . . . The smell of crushed geraniums brings back the memory of these Peshawar nights."[4]

But the lusts of the flesh must pall. Even Masheen could only satisfy one side of complex Y.B. The wings of his soul must have flapped restlessly against the gilded bars of his physical cage. He was going through a very dangerous stage of life's highway, when the voice of conscience was still. Small wonder then that his spiritual *ego*, never far distant, clutched at the prospects of attaining peace, preached by Mrs. Besant, whose writings he had been studying.

When cholera broke out at Bannu he was brought face to face with one of the great mysteries of life. If a beneficent God controlled the world why did all this suffering exist, and why were the wicked and

[1] Ibid., 49. [2] Ibid., 49. [3] Ibid., 50. [4] Ibid., 51.

worthless often spared while valuable lives were taken? He attended the funeral of an old missionary lady, whom he greatly venerated, and, in its way, this pathetic little burial service in a remote outpost in Central Asia was an important milestone in his life. He went through all the purgatory of the soul that has lost its way. He read Anatole France and Renan; he was repelled by missionary leaflets. He was attracted by some of the writings of theosophists and began studying the Vedanta. It was Mrs. Besant, who, at this stage of his life, acted as a signpost to him and induced him to explore the Aryan path.

A few days leave at Christmas enabled him to search for a *guru*. But Y.B. was ever unsatisfactory as a spiritual pilgrim. He was not the stuff that saints are made of. He lacked that complete consecration essential to the mystic. He was too many-sided. There was always a part of his being that held back. One of his friends, Sir Paul Dukes, once referred to him as "as a seeker for a *Guru* whom he never found".

To Benares he went, therefore, for spiritual enlightenment which, in part, he received sitting at the feet of Mrs. Besant, but Y.B. never attempts to sail under false colours. In his reminiscences he is disarmingly frank about his shortcomings and he explains why his spiritual adventure largely miscarried. The claims of the flesh were stronger than those of the soul. At the hotel where he was staying there were American tourists "one fair and one dark" he tells us in parenthesis, and their attractions caused him to emerge from "the rarefied spiritual atmosphere of the holy city of the Hindus". The counterclaims "of a curly head and a pair of bow-shaped lips and of a Virginian burr" were not to be resisted; he deliberately turned his back on what to him had seemed a path of enlightenment and even missed the opportunity of being present at so "epochal an event" for the disciples of Mrs. Besant as the descending of the Holy Spirit on Krishnamurti.

While these important happenings were taking place in the entourage of Mrs. Besant the intensely human Y.B. was enjoying grilled chicken and Pol Roger with his American friends. Twenty years later he thus summed up this brief visit to Benares: "I can never forget the debt I owe to Mrs Besant. But the masters, the Great Ones, the Lords of Karma, and so on, were not for me. The fair and dark tourists taught me more of life."[1]

In 1908, at Bannu, he passed his examination for retention in the Indian Army, and early in 1909, before proceeding on his first leave, he passed a twenty-one days course at Roorkee for the care of telephones in the field.

During his first leave he passed an examination in Italian in London, stayed with relations in Ireland and spent some time in London during the season. He was a regular attendant at the Bath Club and enjoyed his bathes there. He was always deeply interested in everything pertaining

[1] Ibid., 69.

to the Press and I arranged for him to meet Lord Northcliffe, for whose journalistic flair he had a great admiration.

On his return to India he said good-bye for a decade to the North-West Frontier and went with his regiment to Bareilly, where pigsticking played a large part in his life. On his last visit to India he still thought longingly of his pigsticking days, and animal lover that he was, he did not try to reconcile the two opposite sides of his nature. His strong sympathy with four-footed creation, and his passionate enjoyment of the pursuit of the pig. There are paradoxes in most of us, and in introspective mood, the young Bengal Lancer would thus explain himself to himself: "Perhaps it is some trace of the savage which still lurks in us, a lust for prey come down from dim and distant times; no one knows, but certain it is that for keen pigstickers it is a sport incomparable. In no other pastime is there the same joy and stir of blood, the same reality of strife and joy of killing. And, as time passes, so the recollections of discomfort fade, leaving only the memory of our runs and spears and gallant horses." He concluded: "What a cruel game it is, yet how glorious—how near to the very heart of things! Full of the lust of slaughter, fulfilled of man's earlier passions, appealing to instincts most instructive, it is still the noblest sport we know, akin to nature, and, like her, merciless, magnificent."[1] Anyhow in cold weather Y.B. always consoled himself with the thought that the chances of escape of the boar were about even.

Early in life he realised that the Indian village is the key to many of India's problems, for, whatever the politicians in Delhi may do, presumably the dwellers in the seven hundred thousand villages will decide the destiny of the sub-Continent. He was at his very best in establishing friendly relations with the peasants. It was curious that he, so often shy in his contacts in the West, always appeared completely at ease in India.

The villages of the Punjab which provide a large number of recruits for the Indian Army, had a special place in his affections, he regarded these men as "the salt of the Indian earth"—in a tight corner he maintained there was no better fighting man than the Punjabi Mussulman. As a young officer on recruiting tours he would make his way along the dusty winding lanes of the hamlet, to the open space, where under a big tree the village elders would assemble. He would be equally at home discussing crops and herds or tales of love and war. In the Muslim village the large open space where the Mosque faces west towards Mecca, is the place of meeting, while in a Hindu community it is under the Banyan tree, where stands the gaily painted temple with bits of bunting flying, and near at hand, as like as not, a strutting peacock.

He was entirely at home with the Pathans to whom he always refers with special affection, though he was under no delusion that he was commanding angels. One of the most dramatic episodes in *Bengal Lancer* is the story of his handling of Naim Shah, who had come armed in the night

[1] Article on "Winter pigsticking in India" in *The Field*, signed "Francis Yeats".

with a dagger to avenge himself for Y.B's recent severity towards him on "recruits parade". His treatment of this Afridi shepherd lad is a remarkable tribute to his handling of men, and turned Naim Shah into a lifelong friend.

Colonel Kenneth Barge, a fellow officer, writes:

"My first acquaintance of Y.B., was on joining the 17th Bengal Lancers at Bannu in 1907. He had come a long journey in a tonga about eighty miles from Kohat. He arrived slightly exhilarated, having been given a bottle of vodka by the British Regiment (K.R.R's.) which saw him off very well!

"Y.B. was different from the rest of the subalterns, but always extremely popular. As you know, he was eccentric, but very early on he did what the average young subaltern did not do, he really got down to studying the Pathans and Afridis.

"At the beginning of his career he chose a very nice young orderly, Naim Shah. He made him more his friend than his servant and he learned a great deal about the whole life of the Pathans from him. On several occasions he went with Naim Shah to stay with him in his village on the frontier.

"Y.B. did not start to write seriously at Bannu, but began in Bareilly where we went in 1909. He wrote a book on India at Bareilly, but it was not accepted; it was a novel about Indian life in general.

"At Bareilly we were in the centre of a good pigsticking country, and he became a very good pigsticker—full of dash.

"Y.B. was always faithful to his old friends and was very loyal to the Regiment. Actually, I started him off with the idea of having a Regimental Magazine, half in English and half in Urdu, and I knew he would be the man to run it. He kept it going for many years—it was a great success and was called 'The Chand Starra', which means 'The Star and Crescent', that being the emblem of the 17th Bengal Lancers, together with the crossed lances."

To Y.B. the daily routine evolved by the Government of India, both in the civilian and military fields, was very irksome. From earliest days he had kicked against the pricks, and resented the endless form-filling in the adjutant's office. Even long before he himself became adjutant he had jibbed at what he considered needless record keeping—not that he was an untidy individual, for both in his private life, and as a daily working journalist in London, he was punctual and methodical, and liked order in his files.

He often hit out at "babus and bureaucrats" with evident enjoyment. Why should the official machine, of which he had had first-hand experience when adjutant at Bareilly, require a spate of documents to keep it alive? Why indeed? Were all these endless "mind-defeating documents" really necessary? He resented being chained to a desk by masses of pale brown paper.

One of the forms that aroused his particular ire lies before me now, and

in fairness to the pundits of Delhi and Simla the information requested seems to be necessary for entry in the file of an officer's career—certainly in writing his life-history it has been very useful on several occasions. Of his time in the adjutant's office he writes:

"Conundrums arrive daily, by dozens, in every civil and military office in India. . . .

"By dinner time, a new flood of paper was ready to engulf me. Accounts. Objection statements. Confidential documents. Secret papers in three envelopes, of which the innermost was sealed. And a pile of petitions which were not trivial because they were human. A syce demanded ten days' holiday in Benares, in order to burn his mother, who had just died there."

Even when writing about dull official routine work Y.B. contrives to add a human touch.

In many ways he regarded the political systems in force in the Indian States as best suited to Indian conditions. Granted, of course, that there was a wise and upright ruler; and such was his fear of the forcing of Western Democracy on the East that I think he would almost sooner have had a bad autocrat ruling his state than "parliamentary bureaucracy". In some of the states he had visited, where the rulers were practical dictators, he admired greatly the right of access of the humblest subject to the Maharajah. To get a direct "yes" or "no" to your petition was a system within the comprehension of the Indian peasant.

In the era immediately before the first world war, his life ran on an even keel in the untroubled backwaters of service in the Indian Army. There were two periods of leave in Europe, in 1909 and 1911, but apart from these all his life between October, 1905, and March, 1914, was spent in India. He passed the normal examinations of his profession; he received a good certificate for all-round efficiency at the Cavalry School at Saugor in 1911; he passed the lower standard in Persian at Bareilly in 1912; later in the same year he passed his musketry and machine gun examination at Pachmarhi.

His leisure was taken up with pigsticking and polo, and, during spells of local leave, he used to go to Naini Tal, where he played polo and won prizes with his bulldogs in the local shows. In 1910 he became a Mason; three years later he was installed as master of the Rohilla Star Lodge, Bareilly, to which a certain number of Indian members also belonged. And all through these years there was more or less the persistent search for spiritual satisfaction, and increasing study of Yoga.

If one had had to foretell Y.B's future in 1914, based on the events of the previous decade, one would have prophesied for him the usual army career, culminating after a dozen years in the command of his regiment, and then retirement probably to the Italy that he loved so deeply—though I don't think I would have attempted such a task, for there was always

too large a measure of the eccentric and unpredictable in his make-up. But he and his generation could not foresee the great world happenings that were in the offing, and that a political volcano was about to erupt which would sweep aside all man-made plans and proposals.

Perhaps this uneventful life of ordinary military routine, of sport, of breeding bulldogs, and breaking-in ponies, of enjoyable leaves in Europe, was a suitable prelude before the curtain went up on the great drama which left so deep an imprint on him. However, when he was setting out for home in the spring of 1914 he little knew that he was to all intents and purposes saying goodbye to himself as a Bengal Lancer of the spacious pre-war days. For, when he had completed his sick leave after the war, he only spent a couple of years on military duty in India.

In an article that appeared in *The Spectator*, and was subsequently reprinted in *Bengal Lancer*, he told the sad story of the "death of the Devil" (his favourite pony), while pigsticking. Y.B. felt the "Devil's" death very keenly, and before setting out on the return journey to the camp, after the chase that had ended so disastrously, he asked that one of the hoofs of his pony might be cut off, and that its body should be burnt and its ashes scattered in the Ganges. This hoof was made into an ink-stand, used by him for the rest of his life. It represented to him something more than the souvenir of a faithful steed; when after the war he sorted his belongings and began using it, it was a message from the world of the carefree soldier. Was it possible that he had once moved in that world? That existence which he termed "the good life".

CHAPTER V

SEARCHING FOR A *GURU*

TO Y.B's venturesome spirit the vague and nebulous boundaries of Eastern thought made a strong appeal. His mind wandered contentedly in regions where time and space are of no account. Each soul must of necessity follow its own guiding star; the paths that lead to the mountain top are many. Yoga,[1] with its tolerant spirit, was in tune with the tolerant in Y.B.

He set forth on the search for a *guru* during his early years as a subaltern and continued the search, on and off more or less, for thirty years.

"Yoga sets up no gods or god," he wrote, "neither does it deny the existence of gods. It is, I repeat, a method of physical and psychic culture. You may be a Christian, a Buddhist, a Moslem, or a Hindu, and yet a student of Yoga. You may also be an atheist. . . .

"It is the servant of religion, not its rival. Landscapes of the Heavenly City are many, painted by mystics in all lands and in all ages."

He further thus defines its purpose:

"It is a system of mental and physical training, concerned with postures, breathings, exercises, meditation, which claims to give you a knowledge of reality."

For many years his Yogic breathings, exercises, and musings, were matters of real importance to Y.B. There was often, as is usually the case, inconsistency between precept and practice. Y.B. sought for a *guru* all his life, sometimes he thought he had found him, sometimes he wondered if he would ever find him. His spiritual *ego* was gravely dissatisfied, he longed to find a teacher who would show him the way. The fact that he remained unsatisfied to the very end may have been due to something lacking in his psychic make-up; he sought to enter the celestial regions by a short-cut, whereas there is no short cut.

[1] It is thus defined in the *Oxford Dictionary*: "A Hindu system of philosophic meditation and ascetism designed to effect the reunion of the devotee's soul with the universal spirit." In Hindu philosophy union with the Supreme Spirit; a system of ascetic practice, abstract meditation and mental occupation, pursued as a method of obtaining this. (Edition 1933.)

The great mystics have possessed integrated personalities; spiritual observances and longings should be expressed in a perfected way of life. Prayer, silence, meditation, fasting, abstinence from carnal lust, all form essential links in the chain. Searchers after God carry out their self-imposed austerities because of the reality of their faith. Faith can move mountains, but there is no compromising with the Divine; most of us fail in our attempts because we are not prepared to endure to the end.

There can be no doubt, I think, that in his early and formative years in India, when he sat at the feet of his first *guru* that Eastern thought came as a real revelation to him. He disliked Christian dogma, the ten commandments were too definite. "Thou shalt not this", "Thou shalt not that", raised up a spirit of opposition in him. The treatment of "brother body" as something vile that had to be repressed repelled him and asceticism made no appeal to him.

Y.B. had great capacities for admiring the beautiful, the human form was to him a god-like thing. The ancient Greeks realised this beauty, their delineation of the body in stone and marble has never been surpassed, and never will be. There was no reticence in their interpretation. When he watched the Christian Sister of Charity, or the Christian monk, enveloped in robes and draperies, he regarded their clothing as symbolical. Their minds too were swathed in swaddling clothes. There was no freedom in the religions of the West.

In the East doctrines were not so cut and dried, they were more tolerant. There was no inane urge to convert the stranger. He disapproved of missionaries. What right had the West to assume that their doctrines would be acceptable in India the home of philosophy and religious thought? The seers of Mother India had been searching for the truth when our ancestors were cave-men. We had certainly much to learn from the East, and Y.B. decided that he would try to familiarise himself with its thought-processes for it was from India that half of humanity had drawn its beliefs.

He was a monist. Brahm, the all-pervading, had many facets to his being. Saint and Sinner were part of the Universal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent spirit. This was a doctrine that greatly attracted him. Shiva, the Destroyer, and Kali, his wife, and all the other deities, were aspects of the One.

In the West there was too definite a dividing line between good and evil. In this new world, which he was now exploring, there were no clear lines of demarcation; evil was relative. Eastern thought venerated the body and the sex instinct as among the highest gifts of the gods. He thought shudderingly of the smug congregations in the churches of his childhood in Ireland and elsewhere; they were living in, to him, a make-believe world.

If Y.B. failed as a spiritual seeker it was because he was not prepared to pay the price. A devoted friend has described him "as possessing the strangest mixture of qualities of any human being that I ever knew".

Intensely alive, intensely human, intensively lovable, he was sometimes a puzzle to others—he was certainly a puzzle to himself. Part of his personality stood shivering on the brink, unwilling or unable, to take the plunge into the waters of supreme self-sacrifice. He was not prepared to sell all that he had to obtain the pearl of great price. He sought to make the best of both worlds. He was prepared to fall on his knees before the ineffable mysteries of Reality, and, while so doing, his soul tasted the ecstasy of encounter with the Divine—the meeting face to face, the one thing that matters. This was the moment in their experience which all the great mystics have described—the axle of the universe to which the leaders of western, as well as eastern thought, direct humanity as the ultimate realisation of the self—the encounter with the Godhead of Moses on Mount Sinai, the supreme moment when the finite joins the Infinite. But souls that would penetrate thus far must not withhold anything.

Before he fell under the spell of Hindu thought it was as if the forces of light and darkness were battling within his body; the contest swayed to and fro. Two *egos* fought on opposite sides, the call of the body marred the mystic in him. Nothing affected him more deeply in India than the veneration given to woman's part in the sacrament of life-begetting. While at the outset he was puzzled by the prominent place sex occupied in Hindu thought, as exemplified by the carvings on stupas and temples, he gradually became reconciled to this new outlook.

On his quest for enlightenment he records the views of the superintendent of the shrine at Puri, with whom he discussed the sculptures at the Black Pagoda at Konarak:

> "You must remember," said the superintendent, "that these sculptures are old. We Hindus need not justify the manners of a franker age. But we *can* justify them, if you like, by comparing the teaching of ancient Konarak with that of modern Vienna. We had a school, as you have a school, that maintains that the roots of psychology lie in sex" . . .
>
> "To know Woman, through the ministering senses and the attendant angels is the greater wisdom. Humanity has been shaped by Her and through Her it must be saved. The *lingam-yoni* is the symbol of the entry of spirit into matter, without which the world could not have been made, and through whose right function it must be sustained. Our human *lingam-yoni* is but a tiny fraction of the cosmic energy . . ."[1]

This doctrine was of absorbing interest to Y.B. It fitted into his conception of the scheme of things. It embraced the two sides of his being. He no longer felt that his two *egos* were battling on opposing sides. The true explanation was, not that good and evil were facing each other in conflict, there was a—to him—greater and better explanation. The aspirations of the soul and the desires of the body were but two aspects of

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 233–4.

the One. All life was one. With complete sincerity he extolled the beauty of the body and the joys of fulfilled desire. He was convinced that he was now in tune with doctrines nearly as old as time itself.

The fundamental appeal, therefore, that Eastern thought made to Y.B. —according to his interpretation of it—was that it transmuted things that were in Europe too often regarded as unclean into a sacred part of the great drama of existence. It is true that the highest form of Yoga demands of its disciple that he should attain to complete control of his lower nature, in order to preserve the creative energy for spiritual purposes. Certainly no higher conception of continence has ever been placed before its disciples than by one form of Yoga. Not only must the straying thought and desire be controlled, but, after a long apprenticeship, the dream. Such doctrines, however, are only for the chosen few.

A student of Hindu religion, who has spent many years in India as a missionary, in reply to my request for his views on Y.B's practice of Yoga, wrote:

"The exercises he suggests are useful bits of auto-suggestion to impress on the man who practises them the truth of the immanence of God. The trouble (as with all Hindu thought) is that the immanent God has no definition or character, and the result may be, and often is, a mere hypnotic state. But I have found them useful."

An event which influenced Y.B's whole life, and was often referred to by him—he shewed me the very spot, where it took place, when we were driving into New Delhi—is told by him in *Bengal Lancer*. As a result of this incident he ultimately came into contact with his first *guru*. The 17th Lancers were moving from Lahore to Delhi.

"While we were entertaining some friends in our mess tent at Delhi, a sacred bull strolled through the camp with such a cocksure air that I was tempted to make a bet that I would ride it. It tossed me tent-high, however; then tripped itself over a rope and fell sprawling, outraged, amazed. This was too much for Brownstone, who had been watching the proceedings from his bath-tub kennel: he squirmed out of his collar and pounced on the throat of his hereditary enemy. How I pulled him off I cannot now remember, but by the time I had succeeded in doing so a considerable crowd had collected, for we were in the very middle of Delhi, opposite the Jumna Masjid mosque.

"Here was an insult to the Hindu religion offered by a brutal soldiery. I had an awkward interview with the Colonel next day, and a pleasanter one with the plaintiff Hindus, for I was so anxious to stand well in their estimation that I would willingly have given them a sacred bull a-piece, instead of the small contribution for the Sick Animals' Dispensary which they demanded by way of compensation; and it was, therefore, in a very favourable atmosphere that I was able to put a question that I had long wanted to ask

" 'A *guru*, Sahib?' answered the Brahmin whom I had addressed, 'you can find one in Benares if you go there.' "[1]

It was several years, however, before Y.B. continued the search for Sivanand Joshi, whose name had been given to him by the Brahmin. In 1912 he applied for temporary leave, and turning his back on his manifold duties as adjutant, set out for Agra, where he was going "to study the Kingly Wisdom and Kingly Mystery of the Unborn, Undying, Unbegun".

Y.B. was remarkable in that he was not only deeply attracted by Hindu thought but also had strong links with the Muslim world. The beauty of the Taj Mahal always held him spellbound, especially when seen in the hours before dawn from across the river Jumna. Here he went through one of his most real spiritual experiences in India:

"No one can describe the contact with Reality which is rapture, yet everyone, I suppose, experiences it at some moment of his life. The most we can do is to put down a few inadequate words that report not the thing itself, but a memory of light, and more light.

"The sense-world slid away, and I sat no longer by the river, but by an ocean of bliss. It was a glimpse, a gathering-up, a heightening of the senses on every plane, not least the physical—an effulgence of eternity. I think that this was a turning point in my life: the sharpest turn.

"Treading on air, in the freshness of that morning, I strolled along up the river, following my feet, and arrived at a rustic funeral. The relations must have been poor, or miserly, for the pyre was of green wood, and smouldered. But death has no terrors for the Monist.[2]

"Only the burners of the dead still lingered by the body. The next-of-kin had already sent the spirit to its home on the wings of the sacred *mantra* —'Go forth and follow the ancient paths our fathers trod.' The flames burned low and like a witch's oils, and the scavengers of the Jumna—its crocodiles and tortoises and pariah-dogs—awaited all that remained from the pyre.

"I walked on, and almost stumbled over a sack-like object huddled at my feet. It was dressed in Yogi's yellow, and was looking at the dark river . . ."[3]

Y.B. sat down beside Sivanand, for he it was, the nephew of the Brahmin, whose help he had invoked in his search for a *guru*. Sivanand had tired "of this world and turned to the greater wisdom":

" . . . he pulled out from under him a part of the deer-skin on which he sat cross-legged, and motioned me to take my place beside him.

"I did so, wondering whether I had at last taken a jump out of my daily life, or whether I would be disappointed again.

" 'I would like to be a Yogi,' I heard myself saying."[4]

[1] Ibid., 55. [2] Ibid., 113. [3] Ibid., 114. [4] Ibid., 115.

From Sivanand he learnt the name of the *guru*, Paramahansa Bhagawan Sri, whom he was to seek out at Benares. Y.B. was told that first the heart must be humbled and the desire of works slain, before the search could begin:

"They" (Sivanand's words) "were slow, dreamy words, spoken not to me, it seemed, but to the Jumna which was carrying down the white flowers and the yellow flowers that are the daily tribute of India to her gods and goddesses.

"Amongst these flowers rose an arm, as if waving a good-bye. It sank under the even waters, without sound or ripple, but the turtles had seen it and were coming from every direction, making tracks like the periscopes of submarines.

"A big white turtle reached the body first, and worried it, and raised its obscene idiot's head with a ribbon of flesh in its mouth, snapping and gobbling. Others arrived. Soon there was a red foaming and scuffling where the body of a girl had been.

"I turned away, but Sivanand did not flinch.

" '*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman*,' he said, '—all this is indeed God.'

"Somewhere in the distance a bugler sounded réveillé. Its notes drifted to me across the flower-strewn water, with its corpses, and turtles, and the reflection of the splendour that Shah Jahan had made for the love of a woman."[1]

On arrival at Benares Y.B. describes the meeting with Hastini, the future wife of Sivanand, at the Scindia Ghat, where the *brahmacharins* (celibate ascetics) "come to find a peace the world cannot give". It was here that he tells us he had the conviction that he had been there before in a previous incarnation:

"At the Scindia Ghat I am myself. Myself in skin and marrow. A sympathy reaches out across I know not what gulf of time and ancestry to unite me to these people. Some are insane, some have diverted their vitality into their burning eyes, so that they live only above the neck and not in thought as I understand it at present, but all have a goal before their eyes which is also my goal. They are fellow-travellers on a difficult journey, some madder than I, some stronger, and all freer, less tied to names and forms.

"In another life I have practised these austerities. I have sat cross-legged, like that *brahmacharin*, with the sun in my half-closed eyes, restraining my breath. I have stood on one leg, like that stork-like youth whose right foot is tucked into his groin. I have balanced on my head, like those two naked Yogis, (as a child I was always looking at the earth inverted). I have been that girl, with caressing eyes. She is myself in another incarnation. Surely she will recognise her poor kinsman? She is sitting cross-legged, in *padmasana*, the ancient lotus-posture, with soles of the feet turned up and placed on the thighs. Buddha sat like that, and many before him."[2]

[1] Ibid., 119 and 120. [2] Ibid., 125-6.

Small wonder that some of Y.B's fellow officers when they heard of these adventures in Benares were startled! To Y.B., attuned to the quest, his presence in these incredible surroundings seemed quite natural. No external event would have surprised him. His patience was duly rewarded when he found the Sri "middle aged, clean shaven, bald, naked save for a loin cloth and the sacred thread of the twice-born" sitting under a large umbrella.

This was the encounter for which Y.B. for six years had been waiting.

"Now it had happened. Time is nothing in India. *Karma* rules all, and the belief in its influence is infectious. I felt neither hurried, nor eager, nor surprised: this talk was planned before my birth: I had chosen the womb that should give me ears to hear it."[1]

Here, at Benares, for a time he listened to his master, describing the rules necessary to obtain internal purity, so that the body, outwardly and inwardly, be clean—this hygienic side of Yoga always attracted him. The interview ended when the *guru* said:

" 'Your feet have been led to the path. You have come here, and you will come again. To me, or to another, if I am dead. For you may not return for a long time.' "

Bhagawan Sri held out his hand.

"I took it and rose, feeling that I might have overstayed my welcome. He held my hand in both his, looking through me, rather than at me.

" 'Books will not show you Yoga,' he said, 'but life. You must live out your time as a soldier. I cannot tell you when you will be ready for the path, but I know that you are not ready now, and that you will have to suffer more. I shall be sitting here under my umbrella for some years still.' "[2]

[1] Ibid., 129. [2] Ibid., 135.

CHAPTER VI

ENCOUNTER WITH EVE

WITH PLANS fixed for his holiday Y.B. wound up his affairs in Bareilly, bade *au revoir* to his colleagues. He patted on the head Brownstone and Daisy, now proud parents of a numerous progeny, little realising that he would never see them again—for neither of them survived the Great War. Then he boarded the familiar Bombay mail train, and was back with his parents at Portofino in May, 1914. There he lazed through weeks of sheer enjoyment in the dear, familiar haunts of his boyhood.

In the little port, just below the Castello, the fisherfolk were witnessing a great event—for there, slowly cutting its way through the azure waters. was the *Hohenzollern*, with its Imperial master on board, entering the Bay, Y.B. dipped the Union Jack, flying from the Castello's flag staff, and watched with satisfaction the salute returned. He writes:

"He (the Kaiser) made a fine imperial figure on his bridge, dressed in all the stars and orders of an admiral, with the sunlight glinting on braid and jewels, and the withered arm well hidden. The fishermen of Portofino and I were much impressed. There was peace over that enchanted land and sea."

All happy times must come to an end, and, if he said goodbye to Portofino with regret, there were the attractions of the London season in full swing to allure him. He threw himself with all the enthusiasm of a soldier on leave into the social whirl. He went to Ascot, to the Eton and Harrow match, to the opera and enjoyed the life of a man about town. In both *Bengal Lancer* and *Golden Horn* he refers briefly to the Centenary Ball at the Albert Hall, to celebrate the hundred years of peace between Britain and America. On that occasion he met "Eve", of whom he writes that she altered his views so profoundly that he "never mentioned the change to anyone".

In *Golden Horn* when describing the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, he writes:

"While these dreadful events in Serajevo were occurring, I must have been breakfasting in Chelsea—the late and famishing morrow of one of the many fierce midnights of an Indian subaltern home on leave."

His contacts with Eve, briefly referred to in his books were to him so important that I give some fragmentary ruminations on the whole subject which I came upon in looking through the notes and memoranda for his proposed autobiography. This account illustrated the aspect of his character which puzzled his friends; instead of frankly admitting that he had succumbed to the urge of the flesh, he sought to convince himself that the experience had been a spiritual gain. I sometimes felt that he interpreted doctrines learnt in the East, in justification for any line of conduct, as the tiger can be referred to in India as one aspect of the Deity, so is the tiger in man accepted as one facet of his personality.

As an introduction to the Eve episode Y.B. wrote:

"Not in self-justification, but as a matter of fact, I must affirm *most positively*, that chastity in men was not approved amongst the people with whom my lot was cast.

"Perhaps male chastity is not really approved by any virile society of any age or clime. There is need for frankness on the subject. Not one of my male friends or acquaintances had led what is called a pure life. Since then I have learned that there are exceptions: a boy can pass through adolescence and early manhood without any stirring of sexual life. Perhaps he may even be the better for such quiescence. I do not know. I doubt whether anyone is yet competent to deal with the subject dispassionately, in the absence of scientific data and in the presence of the hypocrisy with which these matters are still surrounded.

"For the rest, I can only consider my own experience. Sexual psychology is at present chiefly pathological and therefore invalid for normal people. What I would like to know, is what are the sex needs of the average young man and woman, how far temperament, diet, and exercise affect those needs, and whether adolescents could be saved from tawdry experiments by a knowledge of the consummate beauty of a real union. I confess that I have no idea. But when I remember that an eminent clergyman asserted in a talk to the Sandhurst cadets of my time that the sexual act outside marriage brought with it deadly physical as well as moral consequences, the recollection makes me rather angry and sick.

"The whole attitude of my generation towards sex was wrong; it was never sanely discussed. Even now, the reader of my own age will think me idiotic, if not indecent, to have written as I have. My reason is partly because I shall refer again to the effects of continence in captivity, but chiefly because the subject inspires me to a mood of revolt. The young will understand. We have today, perhaps for the first time in history since the commentaries on the Vedas were written, some glimmer of an understanding of how the roots of sex—libido—life force—call it what you will—interpenetrate the Unconscious which is seven-eighths of our makeup: if that be so, we can forget the mumbo-jumbo of the mediaevalists and look on life with clearer eyes than our predecessors.

"But my pen hesitates. I cannot tell the whole truth about myself. No man can do that in one volume. Even Benvenuto Cellini failed, and the subject can be tedious in the hands of a chronicler less capable in every

sense. I choose to write about Eve because she was my first, kindest, simplest guide to a mystery that all men contemplate, though none resolve. In her dark eyes my spirit came to a flaming awareness: on her lips I drank in immortality.

"So I return for a moment to self-confession."

This is Y.B's story of the encounter with Eve:

"Eve lowered her waxed lashes.

"Champagne bubbled in her glass at supper in an hotel; and as we drank each other's health, I thought, how extraordinary it is that a creature so divine should need any earthly sustenance, but she does: she has consumed a large quantity of salmon mayonnaise and is now eating strawberries and cream, and drinking Cointreau . . .

"We danced again.

"Presently we were in Chelsea once more (which was not where she lived). The sun had just risen: it was high water in the Thames: a good sea smell had come up with the tide: the planes and elms lining Battersea reach made an enchanting fretwork against the pink of dawn: a tug chugged up to Albert Bridge, curtseying with its funnels: the coffee stall by the Pier Hotel was deserted: along the Embankment a single flower cart clip-clopped towards Covent Garden: we were the last of Chelsea lovers abroad.

"We leaned over the parapet, watching the water, which was as still and satisfied as our minds: it had done the moon's will.

" 'Have you a shilling, Sir?' asked a sudden stranger.

" 'Go away,' I answered, vexed.

" 'All right . . . I'm sorry . . .'. He seemed hopeless, starving. Relenting perhaps because of Eve, I gave him the only coin I had in my pocket.

"We continued to stare at the quiet Thames. Then I remembered that my florin had been refused by a cabman as being bad.

" 'He'll change it all right,' said Eve. 'Are you coming to bed?' "

" 'It is time to get up,' I said. 'Still . . .'

"We went back to my lodgings . . .

"By the time we reached her flat near Piccadilly it was broad daylight, and we had exchanged no more than a dozen sentences.

"Perhaps the razor edge of appetite had been dulled, for I found myself thinking of the stranger.

"Had he changed the florin, or was his faith in mankind destroyed? Was he asleep or had he found a light of love? Was he drinking coffee, or contemplating suicide?

"I was nearly twenty-eight years old at this time. Something exceptional had happened to me, I thought, little guessing that I was the exception, and that our enjoyment of each other was the norm by any standards but those of an artificial civilisation. We knew it instinctively. Women have never been duped by the taboos they invent: that is why they maintain them.

"My new-found joy was so precious to me that I kept it like a star-

sapphire in the mine of consciousness: it was there, ready to gleam and dazzle the eyes, but I would not bring it into the light of day: I liked to keep it in its native bedrock of the deep subtle, unseen life of the body, which knows so much that the expressed intelligence misses.

"How shall I recapture those half-forgotten days and my story of Eve?

"There is no clear-cut conclusion. We met at dances, but never spent a whole day together until June the 28th, when we went to Brighton.

"She was a slight, lithe, gentle figure to me, with strange, enchanting, sudden ferocities. She was dressed generally in black and white, with roses at her breast to match those in her cheeks, and she carried an ostrich fan—they were fashionable then—carried it sometimes like a dagger. Her lips were incredibly soft. I learnt nothing from her beyond what she had taught me on the first night. Perhaps there was nothing else to know: it is a great deal more than words can express.

"What I was to her I had no idea, for she never told me. Between us there was a complete comprehension on the levels that mattered: other interests did not exist when we were together: we lived frankly for our two selves: we enjoyed each other and despised the barriers that would keep us apart: despised them so completely that neither of us bothered to discuss them.

"During these weeks I grew in grace with God and man: became kinder, happier, healthier, soberer, more punctual, less distracted. My life took on purpose and solidity. I began to learn Arabic, contemplating a career in the Indian Political Service: I even forced myself to study the overdraft displayed in my pass book. I felt sure that I would marry Eve.

"After my very late breakfast on Sunday morning, June the 28th, I drove with Eve to an hotel in Brighton in a car borrowed from her rich uncle: a mysterious uncle whom I never saw.

"The car was long and narrow, low for those days, aluminium bonneted, with a vulpine look, the admiration of all beholders. Good women drivers were still rare: Eve's wash-leather gloves held the wheel in a relaxed and confident way: her eyes sparkled: her teeth flashed: her brilliant complexion glowed against jet hair and a flaming orange tam-o-shanter. When we punctured on the crest of Hindhead it was she, not I, who knew how to work the jack. Near Petersham Hill she tapped her dustcoat pocket and said that she wanted to smoke. Finding her case, I saw that it was packed with tiny cigars.

" 'Light one for me,' she said.

"I did so, and she puffed contentedly. Half a gale blew in our faces, sweeping the black curls across her cheeks. I felt proud, but a little remote: pale beside her vividness.

"That evening, while drinking the hotel's driest sherry, I heard from a chance-met journalist friend of the murder in Serajevo; and cared not a jot. Why should I? . . . the death of a foreign royalty was merely an occasion for a glass of wine . . .

"After this day in the fresh air, I began to suspect that Eve had some deep-seated lethargy in the larynx. She would tell me nothing about herself. Who was the rich uncle who was always giving her presents?

"She slept in a satinwood suite in his flat whenever she was too late to

reach her parents' house in the suburbs; and her late nights had been frequent since we had met: did her people ask no questions? Silence can be restful, but there is a time for everything. That night at Brighton seemed to me to be a time for talking, but Eve thought otherwise, or did not think at all.

"Which was it? I had compared her in my thoughts to the magnificent emancipated heroines of Shaw's plays, but now I was not so sure . . . Had she depths unplumbable, or—or—I hardly liked to suggest it to myself—a vacant mind?

"Imperceptibly, easily, pleasantly, with no scenes or dissensions, we drifted apart. She never reproached me. I know now that I never understood her, and that she gave me much, much more than I deserved.

"Did she tire of me sooner than I of her? I hope so. I was unworthy of her grace, sensibility, cool courage. Such was her cleverness, or my conceit, that the possibility of her being bored only occurs to me now, as I make this retrospect . . . Darling, dumb Eve . . .

"The war came and we lost track of each other."

These subjects are not easy to deal with, there is much in man's physical nature that is best treated with reticence. But Y.B. himself was always deeply interested in his many-sided self. He was ready to dissect it in print, and share his conclusions with his readers.

How is it possible to arrive at a fair and true picture of the enigmatic phases of his eccentric and many-sided personality if we exclude material which helps us to follow his mental and spiritual conflict? To me, it seems better far to give as accurate a picture as I can of the intensely human Y.B., with his frailties and failures to be entered on one side of the ledger, but also with the very many entries on the credit side.

Much of Y.B's service had been spent on the North-West Frontier, far from female society, and he may thereby have become unduly susceptible to the allurements of the opposite sex. He certainly went through some very real experiences with Eve, which left a deep impress on him. In writing this book I have often wished I could question him on some aspects of his life that would help in the task of the delineation of his character. I believe he would have frankly answered any question I put to him.

Some of the doctrines he had imbibed, both in East and West, seemed to condone licence. He mixed lust with love, love for the one and only mate, and lust for the casual acquaintance. Passing physical encounters do not deserve to be sublimated.

CHAPTER VII

THE VOLCANO ERUPTS

DURING his last days in London in the summer of 1914 we see Y.B. in the unexpected rôle of the courtier, making his bow to his Sovereign at a levee in St. James's Palace. The Irish situation looked ominous, orange and green were marshalling their forces. There was no question where the sympathy of the army lay. In the event of Asquith provoking the North, soldier friends at the Curragh would send in their papers, and join in with the Northern "rebels". He writes at the time: "No doubt Carson and F. E. Smith mean business, and some of the Navy will come in on our side. Then there will be the deuce to pay."

During a holiday in Ireland while staying with relations, Y.B. received, like a bolt from the blue, a telegram from the War Office instructing him to be ready to rejoin his regiment in India.[1] A few days later, as the crisis grew, a further telegram arrived, telling him to proceed to a Cavalry depôt near Aldershot. Thither he went, joining the 5th Royal Irish Lancers.

He arrived in France on 15th September, 1914, having crossed the Channel on the *City of Chester*, on which were the London Scottish, whom he regarded as the finest lot of men he had ever seen. He was now a Captain, his expected promotion having been gazetted on 5th August, the day after the outbreak of war. He remained with the 5th Lancers for three months as a troop leader, and saw service at the Aisne, in the first Battle of Ypres and at Festubert with the 9th Hodson's Horse. He was thanked by General Gough through his squadron commander, for a patrol to Warneton while attached to the 5th Royal Irish Lancers.

A letter to his cousin, Miss Vera Bellingham, at whose home he had passed several happy holidays, written from the Front in December, 1914, runs:

"How extraordinary this sedition in Ireland sounds! Is it really very bad? Now would be an excellent time to hang a number of troublesome

[1] On 4th August, 1914, the 17th Lancers were at Allahabad busy buckling on their swords. *The Star and Crescent Magazine* thus refers to the outbreak of war: "As we go to Press the news is to hand that we have declared war on Germany, and that now all the world is at each other's throats. Papers and periodicals now make it a rule to depict war as an awful thing and to pray for its aversion. Let us, however, be honest. This paper is the organ of a corps anxious to dip their sword in the blood of their enemies. To us the news of war is good, not ill."

people in the United Kingdom. I am sure things would go much better with fewer cranks and self-seeking politicians.

"Here we are doing all that is expected of us apparently. The infantry are holding the Germans in trenches not 40 yards apart (where they indulge in throwing beastly little bombs at each other) and we (the cavalry) are in billets behind, waiting to chase the Germans to the Rhine or elsewhere.

"No, thank you very much, I do not want any mufflers or socks, as Mother has sent me all I need and I find that the kind young ladies of the house I live in mend my socks and wash my clothes and generally make me far more comfortable in this sort of way than I have been as a bachelor in India—not that I am not still a bachelor! but that this life in billets amongst such very kind French people is very domestic and comfortable . . . Almost too comfortable in a way. One feels rather a brute sitting in front of a cosy fire with coffee and liqueurs after dinner, when only a few miles away there are poor fellows up to their ankles in slush in the trenches.

"However, no doubt our turn will come, and I shall be awfully glad if I get a German or two myself, in return for all the friends they have killed or wounded.

"In my capacity as interpreter I arrange with the good lady of the house to cook us most recherché dinners. But as you may imagine we all wish we were leading a more active life.

"I am afraid this is a dreadfully stupid letter, but then one leads a dreadfully stupid life, with a minimum of thinking or working, and a maximum of smoking and eating. It is pleasant enough in its way, however, and there are no bills, appointments, or worries of any sort."

The cushioned existence to which he refers did not last long. The next months passed quickly. When you were actually fighting in a battle events were much more blurred than you had imagined. Modern warfare was a mixture of boredom and bewilderment, and it was incredible that you had to read the *Paris Daily Mail*, or later the London papers, to find out what was really happening round you—but it was true. Much of the time was spent in re-organising and re-equipping and there was always waiting and waiting.

"The guns never paused," he writes, "one night, alone in my field, I wept over the world. Heavy black clouds were massing upon the Aisne heights. Over there machine-guns chattered and chattered and chattered like the delirium of a giant hashish smoker. All over Europe women wept, and the harvest lay unreaped. I wanted to scream, and coughed and cried into my handkerchief, much ashamed of myself."[1]

"We rode northwards in great good spirits, for our division was apparently engaged in a flanking movement to take the Germans in the rear. The weather was superb—and French girls were kind" . . .

"They gave us fruit, wine, flowers, everything except cigarettes I'm frightfully hungry in the morning. Today I breakfasted on a stick of

[1] Ibid., 159.

chocolate, a cup of black coffee, a jug of café-au-lait, an apple and a pear, some *pâte de dindon*, a glass of wine, and finally a cup of chocolate, all taken from the saddle."[1]

Familiarity with death on the European battlefield soon came. His regiment had been shelling the Mont des Cats, near Hazebrouck. They were bivouacked in the Trappist Monastery on its summit. He writes:

"Our losses have been two officers and four men, but we had killed the same number of Germans. Our dead were laid out in a row.

"My Bengal Lancer friend was one; he lay there on the dirty straw, grey and limp, with a parson mumbling over him. I stood dazed, for he was a hero, and I could not believe that heroes ended like this.

"During the night, my eyes would not shut, as if to make up for the days that they had been as blind as a puppy's."[2]

Y.B. received one short spell of 108 hours Blighty leave that first autumn. He has left behind him this vivid account of one evening:

"Half-a-dozen of my friends were killed in one week. Next week, in London I found others very much alive.

"Crossing the Channel on a short spell of leave, I had been heartily sick, although the sea was smooth. But physical revulsion was not enough. There was a need for more insanity in homeopathic doses.

"We gave a big party, and stopped thinking or talking about what was happening over there; we were chucked out of the Empire, found ourselves supping with chorus girls in a big hotel—then new. My companion was a Russian dancer, who brought a dachshund that lapped liqueurs from her glass. Incautiously I told her that more than one glass of Cointreau would not be good for her or her dog, for they had both already dined too well. Thereupon she tried to drink the bottle. When I took it from her, she screamed and stabbed my hand with a fork. Then she wanted me to stun her.

"We tried to hide the bottle. She called the waiter and made a scene. What was I to do? Hell knows no furies like an angry ballerina and a drunken dog. I left the table and attempted to escape, asking one of my friends to pay the bill. But she saw me and ran down the long red carpet as straight as a die, followed more unsteadily by the dachshund.

"It was then that I had an inspiration: 'You must dance for us,' I cried —'before you drink!'

"Instantly her expression changed. The artist and Slav in her had been challenged.

"She danced divinely. Tables were cleared. The orchestra played her tunes. She was the success of the evening, forgot alcohol, sent her pet away by a page, coming out meekly and sedately to drink café-au-lait at the Hyde Park stall in the small hours of the morning. She was a devil to cross, but a fascinating devil.

[1] Ibid., 154. [2] Ibid., 154.

"The gates of pearl were forgotten in those hectic one-hundred-and-eight hours leave sandwiched between the long days and nights of northern France."

Back in France from Blighty leave the flesh-pots of London seemed far away; he wrote:

"We attacked a farm south of Messines, then retreated. We dug shallow trenches and left them. We cursed the plum jam. Our feet swelled with the sudden cold. Some of the men could hardly walk, but no one went sick. We became lousy. Lorry-loads and bus-loads of infantry kept streaming into the market square; cannon-fodder we said, and they were. It rained always. No one knew just where the enemy was, nor even, sometimes, which way we faced. Sometimes I was so sleepy that I wished a bullet would let me go on lying down."[1]

Then came a rumour which cheered Y.B. greatly to the effect that an Indian Cavalry Division was sailing for Europe. It seemed inevitable that the Bengal Lancers would soon be on their way. He received orders to report to Marseilles, his spirits soared. He was to take over the advance party of his regiment; the journey south was by way of Paris, where he bought a motor car for the mess, arranged for four interpreters, and engaged a "marvellous chef".

"We would seek death or glory with the best advice, and on full stomachs. Deloused and shining-booted . . . I sauntered down the quays of Marseilles to report myself to the authorities.

"Here the blow fell.

" 'Your regiment? Didn't you know that you had a case of glanders at Bombay?' said a Staff Officer. 'The 17th Cavalry isn't coming. I'm afraid we've nothing for you.'

"I shall pass over the next few weeks quickly—indeed the next few years—for when one is stunned one is not articulate, even in retrospect. And I remained orphaned, lost, rudderless for the remainder of the war, except for a few happy months in Mesopotamia.

"Here I was alone and unwanted on the streets of Marseilles. The four wonderful interpreters would go to other regiments, the car would be resold, the cook waste his rum babas in the wilderness."[2]

Y.B. went through a period of acute depression. Even the mud of Flanders was preferable to the lines of communication. He had always taken an interest in flying, he therefore decided to apply to be trained as a pilot. For the next few months he served as interpreter to Hodson's Horse.

His story continues:

"At last we were to see the Germans. Day broke as we formed single file to enter the communication trench. On and on we trudged, through

[1] Ibid., 157. [2] Ibid., 158.

deep mud, past coils of wire, field kitchens, field hospitals, gnomes with scrawny beards who were Royal Engineers before they took to the trenches . . . We were in the marshes of Festubert, with the Germans eighty yards away . . .[1]

"A noise like a toy dog's bark came from a man of my section. On opening his shirt, only a small hole was discernible. Yet his lungs had been sucked out at the back of his tunic, and he was, of course dead. We carried him back to the latrine trench, which was the only convenient place to put him at the moment, and here my foot sank in a soft place, and levered up a small brown leg, with toes splayed out. The Gurkhas had been there before us."[1]

[1] Ibid., 161.

CHAPTER VIII

Y.B. GOES EAST

IN *GOLDEN HORN* Y.B. tells of the journey in 1915, from the hospital in Wimereux, to the Nursing Home in London, and thence, after a period of leave, to the Red Crescent Hospital in Baghdad as a prisoner of war. Before following him to Mesopotamia we must pause a moment in England to record one of the most vivid psychological experiences of his life. He was staying with his parents in their small house at Twyford, near Winchester. Unlike most of his fellow soldiers to whom England was home, he did not feel part of England in the very warp and woof of his being. His background was unlike that of most young Englishmen.

After the glamorous year in Germany came the twelve months of Sandhurst, again not a treasured memory, apart from the hours spent in the saddle. The nine years of India, with two periods of leave, typified for him new horizons and absorption in the Eastern scene.

In May, 1915, he discovered England for himself. Deep called to deep, and he sensed the appeal of England that is often vouchsafed to the wanderer from afar. Henceforth right through his life he loved England passionately. I use the term "England" in its widest sense, as Y.B., despite his Scottish and Irish blood, used it. I do not think I have ever met anyone who cared for England more. I emphasise this in order that his devotion to his country should be recalled in later years, when he fell under the spell of Fascism and, to a lesser degree, of Nazism. However much he admired the efficiency of the corporate state on the continent of Europe, his love and loyalty to England came first.

In *Bengal Lancer* he records the vision of England that came to him:

"A month or two later I was convalescent, and found myself strolling from Winchester back to my house at Twyford, across the lovely lawns of St. Cross and along the gurgling, glutted Itchen.

"Spring had come at last. Those poor nuns at Messines would be having a hell of a time. We were luckier in England. And I became aware suddenly—as if a star-shell had glittered over my thoughts—of what the War meant to me. It was not a war for civilisation (which had twisted my mind out of shape), but for England.

"My veins were proud that they carried English blood and that they were part of a stream greater than all present lives. I saw the careful

fields, the opal distances, the lovely haze upon this land; its sleek cattle, its sheep thick-nibbling the pastures, its rich content and strength. The physical sources of my being were revealed. I was nearly thirty, and learning to love my country.

"... Unless you have lived abroad you will have missed the comparisons that a returned wanderer may make; as for me, I do not care how many may have expressed the same thoughts better; nor would I exchange the memory of that afternoon for any other in my life.

"It was raining. I looked down the churchyard of Twyford to the river, and across to the fields, and I thought of the energies that had gone into that soil to make it a garden, and of the blood that had been spent to keep it so. I was English, grown like the corn, like the grass, like the yew under which I sat, but not so useful or so ancient as the yew. England came to me like a goddess then, and I have held fast to her ever since, in a world where so much is so very uncertain."[1]

By midsummer, 1915, Y.B. was once again steaming through the familiar Red Sea, with the dim and distant pale mauve mountains of Arabia on the horizon. He was lucky in having as travelling companion delightful and enthusiastic Mark Sykes, who, no doubt, because the gods loved him, died young.

On arrival at Bombay good news awaited Y.B., who had feared that he was merely going to be sent to his regimental depôt at Allahabad. He had been gazetted as an observer in the Royal Flying Corps, and posted to the recently established Mesopotamian Flight. After all the boredom and disappointment of France, he would soon be engaged in an element that made a strong appeal to him. "... happy that I was still to be concerned with the two greatest adventures of mankind: war and flying."[2]

His term of service in Mesopotamia in the British Expeditionary Force was destined to be brief—only 104 days, according to the official records—but certainly into those three months were crowded his happiest days in the war. He reached Basra in July and for three months his fortunes were interwoven with the glorious 6th Division fighting on the Tigris under General Townshend.

Three days after 28th September on which the Battle of Es-sinn was fought, Y.B. wrote to his mother one of the few letters preserved from this period:

October 1st, 1915.

My own Mother,

This must be a short letter as I am really tired after the battle of the last three days.

I can't give you any details about the battle—and anyway details would be boring, but it was the most interesting thing I have ever taken part in: it was *absorbing* in fact: both Fulton and I forgot to eat or rest till it was over. Besides ourselves (Fulton is pilot of the machine I observe

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 163–164. [2] Ibid., 166.

from, and a charming boy) there was only Major Reilly flying in a single-seater scout, so we had practically all the tactical reconnaissance, i.e., seeing what actually was happening during the progress of the battle.

We began the day rather badly by getting up at 3.30 (2 hours before dawn) and setting off independently for our machine, which was about a mile away across desert scrub. Of course we both lost our way and both thought the other was waiting and was an idiot not to start the engine, fire a "Very's light" or somehow indicate the position of the machine... Also, hostile Arabs had been reported prowling about the night before, and as I wandered on, cursing myself for not having taken a compass bearing from the ship, I began to realise that I might easily be caught—an ignominious end for I had nothing to defend myself with: everything having gone overnight to the "bus".

Eventually I saw a figure, very dim in the darkness, creeping stealthily towards me, and for a moment my fears were confirmed, but (as you have guessed) it was Fulton, who had covered me with his revolver, thinking I was an Arab. Well, later on, we came across a party of mechanics who frantically endeavoured to load their rifles (not being soldiers they hardly knew how) and as dawn broke we saw the desert was swarming with people who were creeping about cautiously, mistaking each other for Arabs! Eventually we got under way: you can't imagine how wonderful the battle looked:—the Tigris winding and winding to the north west, and gleaming in the morning sun,—and the flash of guns and burst of shrapnel over the position.

We sailed slowly over the northern section, where we were to make our main attack, made a lot of notes and then came and landed near the General: after getting our report he decided to advance at once, and we returned to Divisional Headquarters. When we returned to the battle, and I borrowed a horse to gallop up and make my report, I found I was passing over ground strewn with dead and wounded. He had advanced to within 2000 yards and anticipated speedy success. Off we went again with this information: when I returned with a message of congratulation the aspect of things had rather altered, for although we had taken the main redoubt, the Punjabi Mahomedan regiments on the right of our position were sullenly retiring, having had enough of fighting against co-religionists, and it looked as if we would have to give up what we had already won.

Everything hinged on whether we could immediately take the trenches on our extreme left: I think it must have been an anxious moment for General Delamain. He ordered us to reconnoitre this flank, and directly we got up it was evident that the assault was then in progress. It was necessary to see exactly what happened, so I wrote to Fulton "Go over them, chance the height" and we sailed over them at a height of 900 feet, whereas, of course, 5000 feet is the correct height. Some bullets cracked round us, but I thought the Turks would be too busy avoiding being bayoneted to fire very carefully at us. We dived and turned about and saw the Oxfords carry the trenches, and I was just going to ask F. to turn back when he pointed to the back of his neck.

I saw a bullet had passed in and out of his shirt collar. I tore this open

and tried to get a first field dressing on the wound, but the wind nearly carried it into the propellor. Eventually I held a bit of cotton and gauze on the place (the bullet had just snicked out a bit of flesh half an inch deep and two inches long) until we landed. I rushed to the General to tell him of our success and when I got back F. *implored* me to tell no one of his wound, in case they should stop him flying! However, this was obviously impossible, and besides, we had bullet holes in other parts of the machine.
It was an interesting and probably never-to-be-repeated experience, having seen a battle from the air and yet so close. The remainder of the day passed off without any special incident, although it was all hugely interesting and resulted in a big victory for us. Next day we followed the flying Turks and dropped bombs on them. Now the pursuit is in progress our machine is having a bit of a rest (the work being done by the fast single-seater scouts) and you may imagine how nice it is to wash and shave and how profoundly thankful I am that old Fulton is all right. Except for feeling a little stiff he is absolutely all right.

The Battle of Es-sinn was a victory but the British Forces were unable to follow up their advantages to the full, for our men were exhausted, and after the Dardanelles debacle the Turkish Commander at Kut was receiving welcome reinforcements from the west. Y.B. had obtained a close-up view of the fighting on the Tigris fifteen miles from Kut, for he had spent a couple of weeks on a British tug on the river. Of the photographic barge he writes: "For a fortnight I am flying, sketching, photographing, developing, printing and pasting the result together into a pretty composite map—busier with responsible work than I have ever been in my thirty years of life."[1]

"After an hour's flying," he writes of the battle, "we circle back and land by Delamain at the Tigris. It is now a little after five o'clock, and he has won another battle. He saw the Turkish reserves in time, turned on them like a tiger and drove them back. But the men are too exhausted to pursue, having only just strength enough to drag themselves to the river and drink and be sick and drink again.
"Our own and the enemy wounded are being evacuated in barges. They are mad with wounds and thirst: the few doctors are almost helpless: it is a really frightful scene: poor devils creep to the dressing stations on their hands and knees, over decks slippery with blood and diarrhoea . . .
"For seventeen hours Jumbo" (his nineteen year old pilot, Fulton) "and I have been at full stretch, and for ten of them Jumbo has been in pain. Into them have gone anxiety, hope, fear, horror, and joy, pressed down and brimming over. He and I and Reilly say little over our tinned mutton and coffee; and my eyes begin to close before the food is finished."[2]

For his part in the Mesopotamian campaign Y.B. was mentioned in Sir John Nixon's despatch of 1st January, 1916, but it must have been some months before he received this gratifying information in his prison camp.

[1] Ibid., 172. [2] Ibid., 183–4.

Another six weeks as a soldier fighting the Turks lay ahead of Y.B., they were weeks of regular routine, spent between the desert and the dark room, where he developed his aerial photographs. Despite the Dardanelles setback there was optimism in the British Force, and the capture of Baghdad was confidently expected in the near future. He was now flying with an Australian pilot, T. W. White.[1]

The two young officers turned in betimes on 12th November as they had to make an early start. Y.B. regarded the future with confidence, for, after the capture of Baghdad, he intended to become a fully qualified pilot, having been promised a transfer to Cranwell, the Air Training School, as soon as he could be spared. Of this fateful date in his life he writes in *Golden Horn*:

"There was need for some spectacular success in Mesopotamia to offset the check at Gallipoli: Townshend was the man to restore our waning prestige. When, therefore, I rose from my bunk in a river barge an hour before dawn on November the 13th, and swallowed a raw egg in Worcester sauce before setting out on an attempt to cut the Turkish telegraph lines, west and north of Baghdad, I felt that I was in the stream of great events.

"That was my last meal as a free man for two and a half years.

"Unconscious of my impending fate, a glow of satisfaction pervaded me. I had baked for several weeks in the T.20, a red-hot little Tigris tug, and was sick of her smell, her food, her convivial skipper . . .

"The night sky looked good: it was clear, cool, and strewn with the ineffable stars that turn men's souls to God in the desert. I thanked Him for my luck: that He should trouble about my affairs when there was so much else to claim His attention, did not strike me at all extraordinary; nor does it now: Life has thought for even the meanest of her creatures."[2]

The adventure which ended so disastrously for the two young officers was thus described in the *London Gazette* of 3rd June, 1919, when they each received the D.F.C.:[3]

"The mission was not only to cut the Turkish telegraph west of Bahgdad but also north of that city, an enterprise which entailed two landings on unknown and hostile ground, which also exceeded the petrol capacity, etc. of the machine, entailing carriage of extra load.

"As both Capt. T. W. White and Capt. Yeats-Brown must have been well aware that the attempt to carry out the orders given them would in all probability end in their death or capture, I would submit that the way in which they volunteered and attempted to carry out their desperate task exhibited intrepidity and devotion to duty of the highest order."

[1] Wing-Commander, formerly Lieut.-Colonel T. W. White, D.F.C., Minister of Trade and Customs, 1933 to 1938. Served in the first Australian Unit Overseas, was twice mentioned in despatches and received the D.F.C. for his part in the campaign.

[2] *Golden Horn*, 108–9.

[3] Extract from a letter from Major General G. V. Kemball: Major General Commanding 5th Division Mesopotamia. To General Sir John Eccles Nixon, K.C.B., late Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "D2".

CHAPTER IX

CAUGHT BY THE TURKS

THERE is a full account in *Golden Horn* of Y.B's last flight as a free man, which ended in the capture of himself and his pilot, on 13th November, 1915.

"Desperate the hazard was, as Townshend knew very well, and as the men of Kut were soon to learn. But Townshend was not his own master. He had advised his superiors against the advance to Baghdad, and he had been over-ruled. So, amongst other and more important enterprises, he risked a valuable pilot, an elderly aeroplane, and the present writer on a venture whose success must always have been doubtful.

"Off we went, just as the sun rose in an amethystine mist across the Tigris.

"We flew past the winter capital of Parthian Kings . . . until we reached the date-gardens where Scheherazade had entertained Haroun-al-Raschid; then we swung west, and I perceived that the desert, instead of being empty, as I had hoped, was swarming with horsemen and camels . . . I tried to find a place that was free of them and yet near the telegraph line, and I thought that I had succeeded when I told the pilot to land near the site of Nimrod's tomb.

"Click! I heard a slight cracking noise as we stopped on the smooth, hard-baked surface, but I was busy at the moment with wire-cutters and explosives, and I did not know that that sound meant the breaking-up of my career as an airman.

"When I looked up, I saw that we had run into a telegraph post, and had splintered a wing. The pilot cursed the rear wind which had caused the machine to escape his control on landing; and I cursed the pilot, but silently, for this was no time for indulging in futile recriminations . . . the only thing that remained was to destroy the telegraph line and take our chance with the Arabs . . .

"Lighting a match, I touched it to the split end of the fuse, heard it sizzle, retreated to a safe distance. Looking round, I saw that horsemen were galloping towards us from the four quarters of the desert. They would be too late. I felt happier in my mind now that I had at least done something . . .[1]

"I was surrounded.

"A grey-headed Turkish gendarme spurred his frightened horse up to me and held out his right hand. I grasped it in surprise and relief; and was

[1] *Golden Horn*, 100–111.

still more amazed when I found that the grip he gave me was an ancient and honourable one, proving that even here in the desert men are brothers.

"I climbed off my perch and put myself under his protection, thinking of a night in India when I had become Master of my Lodge . . ."[1]

Before the two captives reached the police post they went through some horrible experiences:

"That was a sickening moment, for I thought that I was to be forced to witness something worse than disembowelment, and then suffer the same fate myself: my skin sweated cold; I hope that I shall never be so extremely frightened again.

"The pilot was pinioned: Arabs tore at his few clothes: knives gleamed.

"But he was not to be gelt, or even killed: they merely wanted his flying-coat and did not know how to pull it off without destroying it."[2]

Arrived at the police post, he writes:

"Considering things calmly, we knew that we were lucky. Except for some cuts and bruises, and a bump the size of an apple on the pilot's head we were safe and sound. We had cut one telegraph line. Baghdad would be taken soon. In a fortnight we would be flying again, and what a funny story we would have to tell on our return!

Experiences which must have haunted the two young officers in their dreams for many months, lay ahead. Baghdad was in holiday mood. As with the Romans of old the populace was to be treated to a grand spectacle. The British captured airmen were taken to the Governor; this was an omen of British defeat.

"Elderly merchants wagged their white beards and cursed us as we passed: young men threw mud: women pulled back their veils in scorn, and putting out their tongues, cried 'La la la', in a curious note of derision; boys brandished knives: babies shook their little fists. The hood of our carriage was torn off: we were both spat upon: a man with a cudgel aimed a blow at the pilot which narrowly missed him: another with a dagger was dragged away to prevent him stabbing us—I can still see his snarling face and hashish-haunted eyes. Our escort could hardly force a way through the narrow streets: we sat trying to look dignified, which was difficult because of the spitting."[3]

In *Bengal Lancer* he condenses the whole story of his capture and sufferings, the horrors and boredom of prison life into twenty-five pages. Those who are unable to obtain *Caught by the Turks* must satisfy themselves with the dramatic account given in *Golden Horn*, written in 1932, two years

[1] Ibid., 113. [2] Ibid. 115. [3] Ibid., 118–9.

after the appearance of *Bengal Lancer*, which is based on his earlier work, but largely re-written and revised. Here the story of those three years' imprisonment that left their deadly imprint on all Y.B's subsequent life, can be studied; the telling of the dramatic and pathetic story of the captivity and two escapes takes 163 pages.

The prisoners went through grim moments when they heard of British reverses. Their Turkish captors, firmly believing in German invincibility, boasted that the British Empire was losing the war. After the defeats both in Gallipoli and on thebanks of the Tigris, the British Forces in Mesopotamia would soon be pushed into the Persian Gulf. To the British officer accustomed to getting his news from British sources, it must have been difficult suddenly to be confronted with enemy propaganda, and this alone!

Unpleasant news travels fast, and the pashas and propagandists on the banks of the Bosphorus, in willing subservience to their German masters, made the most of the chain of reverses and set-backs of the Allies. In the Middle East British prestige had been great since the Crimean War, and the spacious days of Queen Victoria's reign. However, two decades earlier the Emperor William the Second—the *Reise Kaiser*—had been travelling to good effect from the Bosphorus to the Holy City of Jerusalem. Wherever he went he flattered the Turks; smooth-tongued German diplomats and trade emissaries followed hot-foot on their Emperor's heels. At the end of the century I came across them from Batum to the Balkans, and from Lake Scutari in Albania to Afionkarahissar. The German Baghdad railway running from Haidar Pasha, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, through the heart of Anatolia, towards the Persian Gulf, served as a permanent advertisement for German engineering and business efficiency.

The *Wilhelmstrasse* had been carefully nursing the young Turks. The *Drang nach Osten* was a popular slogan in Germany at the beginning of the century, and, inspired by their imperial master, the Germans were looking for *Lebensraum* in the vast and undeveloped territories that spread on beyond Baghdad to the waters of the Persian Gulf.

At first the Turks were somewhat sceptical as to the ability of the Germans to carry out their promises, but seeing was believing. Who would have dared to hope that the British lion would be obliged to creep away stealthily by night, and to abandon the territory won so dearly after two costly expeditions on the shores of the Dardanelles? And now there were the reverses of Mesopotamia and the strings of British prisoners as ocular demonstration of the Turkish victories in the far south-east.

The Turks were in optimistic mood. In their talks with their captives they rubbed in their confident and jubilant beliefs. The British saw with their own eyes fellow-countrymen, captured both on the western and eastern confines of the huge Ottoman Empire, on their way to prison camps. Stories circulated of the unbelievable horrors of forced marches

from the wind-swept uplands of Kurdistan across the sun-scorched deserts of Mesopotamia.

In *Bengal Lancer* he evidently did not intend to dig deep into the painful memories of his captivity and write again of his prison experiences; those two and a half years were to remain for the most part a closed book; its pages would only be turned over with great reluctance. He writes:

"The truth about the next twenty-four months it would not be in my power to write, even if I wished to do so. And I do not wish. Prisoners see war without its glamour. The courage and comradeship of battle is far from them. They meet cruel men, and their own fibre coarsens. A chronicle of these wasted and miserable hours, of dirt and drunkenness, of savagery and stupidity, would not only be dull, but remote from my subject . . .

"To write more would be useless, to write less would be to forget that out of fourteen thousand prisoners of war in Turkey only some three thousand returned to England."[1]

As a matter of fact, in 1932, Y.B. changed his mind and wrote about his captivity in *Golden Horn.* Illness is not usually a very arresting subject in biographies, but the account he gives of his physical and mental sensations during the chain of days when his poor battered body was fighting disease, and he was too weak to care whether he lived or died, could hardly be more vivid. This illness was one of the landmarks of his captivity.

In a state of great lassitude, Y.B., on his recovery, made the journey to Afionkarahissar. I suppose very few of his readers have been to Afionkarahissar unless they have had the misfortune to have been prisoners in war in the hands of the Turks, for there is nothing to take them there. I went there in 1899, as my father wished to visit Sultan Abdul Hamid's famous stud farm, where he bred Arab horses in Anatolia. I remember but little of the small Turkish town, except of the picturesque ruined fort looking down upon it, and of the sight of a Turk dragging a frightened fat-tailed sheep across the footpath in front of us, and, at our feet, slitting its throat from which the blood gushed into the gutter. In the East domestic scenes of this kind are enacted in public, and, not as in the "civilised" west behind walls, so that our sensibility may be spared unpleasant spectacles!

"I remember little of the journey," writes Y.B., "thither (Afionkarahissar). When vitality goes, memory follows it. I was worn out, more dead than alive. Vaguely I recollect a crowded train, a stage by carriages, carrying my quilt—which seemed to weigh a ton—up a mountain path, and fainting on the way, a dead Indian whom we thought the guards had killed, and a doctor whom we questioned as to whether lice would give

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 191.

us typhus: he had opened the collar of his tunic and said, 'Don't worry: I'm swarming with them myself and I haven't got it yet.' At Bozanti I implored the Turks to leave me and let me die. I lay on some sacks in the railway station, a bundle of skin and bone that might not have been human at all. Porters threw more sacks on the pile and I was soon almost covered. I lay still: as my bodily weakness increased, so did my mind range out beyond normal consciousness, deep into myself and wide into the world. I thrilled to this strange strength, which seemed to mount to the throne of Time, surveying life from a great height. I saw then something that happened some three months later at this station."[1]

In the chapter "The Long Descent of Wasted Days" in *Bengal Lancer*, Y.B. describes the life of the prisoner:

"Spring came, and the days succeeded each other in a pageant in which we had no part, cooped up as we were. I know now why drunkards drink, and how caged canaries feel, and all about bugs. Lice we are all familiar with, who served in the War. Fleas are lively little beasts. Scorpions, hornets, wasps, mosquitoes, leeches have none of them the Satanic quality of bugs.

"One squashes a bug and there is a smear of blood—one's own blood. One lights a candle, and there, scuttling under the pillow, are five or six more of the flat fiends. Having killed every living thing in sight, one lies back, hoping to sleep. But they smell horribly when dead, and keep alive the memory of their itching at neck and wrist. Presently out of the corner of one's eyes one sees monsters darting about avidly, magnified and distorted by proximity. There is no end to them. You kill them on the bed, and they jump on you from the walls. You slaughter them by fives and tens, but still they come from crannies where they have lain for months—years maybe—waiting for the scent of live bodies. They batten on the young: of two victims they will chose the healthiest. They not only suck your blood, but sap your faith in God.

"Under these circumstances I took to Yoga."[2]

After the first great war many escape stories were published. In the next few years probably even a greater number will appear recording deeds of endurance, heroism, ingenuity, a measure of luck, a helping hand at critical moments, accounts of plans frustrated, and of final success or failure. I question whether there will emerge a more original method of escape than that devised by Y.B. Once his plan of action had been decided it required the minimum of preparation, there was no necessity for secret tunnelling in the bowels of the earth, no surreptitious selection of equipment. Success depended on establishing good relations with those in key positions. From the earliest days in Afionkarahissar, Y.B., according to one of his associates in captivity, "preferred his own company in a marked degree, and left no stone unturned until he acquired a snug-

[1] *Golden Horn*, 152. [2] *Bengal Lancer*, 193–4.

gery of his own, cut off from the rest of us; this he finally obtained at the end of a corridor. It gave him an opportunity for private talks with his gaolers".

"I determined," Y.B. wrote, "to reach Constantinople by foul means if I could not get there by fair."[1] Military prisoners requiring special medical treatment were usually sent to the capital, where escape would be an easy affair compared with the attempt to elude the guards at the prison camp in the heart of Anatolia. He continues:

"First we must reach Constantinople. The capital became in our minds a stepping-stone to freedom: we shammed sick: we tried to bribe a Greek doctor: we even inflicted wounds on various parts of our bodies. Robin[2] had a bad ear, and I had displaced a bone in my nose by boxing, but it was not until I took to smoking opium with the Cypriote interpreter attached to the Turkish Commandant's office that my departure became possible. I will not say that I bribed him, but his intimacy helped me to bribe others."[3]

"My friends thought I was going to the dogs; some avoided me, others looked away. I let it be known that I could not sleep at night, that I considered escape to be impossible, that I expected the war to last another two years, and that I intended to dream my days away. No one argued with me: we tried to mind our own business at Afion."[4]

In order to obtain a permit Y.B. had to consort with depraved types of human beings; there was the French officer who instructed him in the distillation of poppy juice: he demurred at first but "soon changed his mind, for every addict must have his neophyte".[5] Then there was the Samian youth described in *Bengal Lancer* as a Cypriote, who had been educated at Robert College on the Bosphorus, and was a clerk on the staff of the local Commandant. Half a dozen pages in *Golden Horn* are devoted by Y.B. to the description of the curious surroundings in which his opium adventures involved him. The Samian, who boasted of smoking seventy pills of opium a day, was an adept in preparing the drug; under his expert touch a black drop changed to a glowing bubble of crimson.

A two-day railway journey brought Y.B., with a medical certificate in his pocket, to Haidar Pasha, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. The surgeon before whom he appeared did not consider a deflected septum sufficient reason for his occupying valuable space in the hospital. Confronted with the probability of being returned ignominiously to Afion-karahissar, Y.B. acted quickly.

"There was only one way out: it came to me as an inspiration. I asked to see the chief doctor, and told him a long story. He listened to it politely and said that he quite understood my position: I did not want to become

[1] *Golden Horn*, 174. [2] Sir Robert J. Paul, Bart. [3] *Bengal Lancer*, 198.
[4] *Golden Horn*, 174. [5] *Golden Horn*, 174.

a Muhammedan immediately, but while I was considering my conversion he was ready to perform the necessary physical initiation. Indeed, he had recently invented a new and practically painless method of carrying it out, and would like to demonstrate it to some visiting professors . . .[1]

"Six students and two elderly men—the visiting professors, no doubt—watched the proceedings, which were brief. I had time to observe that they were all in white coats, that the room gleamed with steel, nickel, enamel, that the surgeon's back radiated confidence (he was washing his hands).

"I lay on a metal couch, bare to the waist, thinking how absurd it was that I should be lying there, waiting to be circumcised.

"A screen was put before my eyes, which I removed.

" 'Let him look if he likes,' said the surgeon, advancing towards me with a hypodermic syringe. I did not feel the injection at all, not even the prick of the needle.

"He addressed the spectators in Turkish, making sweeping motions with his lancet. Presently he leaned over me, facing the way I was looking. His strong arm pressed against my thigh and belly; I craned my neck to see what he was doing: he told me to lie still.

"I tried to feel *something*, but there was nothing to feel. Nothing except the weight of a number of forceps.

"The operation was over.

"By a mere act of faith I could now become a Muhammedan, and although I had not the least wish to do so, I did desire to escape. Desires are often reached by winding paths."[2]

They are indeed.

His last days in hospital were vivid with anticipation. He was transferred to the Armenian Patriarchate of St. Psamattia, a suburb of Constantinople on the other side of the Bosphorus. It was from here that he made his first escape with his friend, Robin.

"We were the proudest and happiest men in the world on that July night of Ramadan. The slothful years had vanished as we drew a breath. We lit cigarettes. We strolled away pretending we were Germans . . .[3]

"I cannot convey the thrill of that escape, for it will seem, as indeed it was, a fairly tame affair. Hundreds of prisoners have crept through the barbed wire of German camps, eluded bloodhounds, travelling long distances in disguise. But to me my first escape was from more than the Turks: I have freed myself also from an 'inferiority complex'."[4]

Sir Robert Paul writes:

Ballyglen,
Waterford.
July 16. 1945.

"As you can imagine, having been through so many funny experiences with him, I had an enormous admiration for his courage and determination, but he was as obstinate as he could be, and once he got into

[1] Ibid., 191. [2] Ibid, 192–3. [3] *Bengal Lancer*, 203. [4] Ibid., 204.

his head that his method was the best, nothing would alter it, although he would always listen to my views and discuss things thoroughly before making up his mind.

He was full of theories most of which proved to be right. One was 'Sentries never look upwards', therefore to escape from a building it must always be 'out and upwards,' even though it was just over a sentry's head, rather than 'out and down' no matter how far the sentry was. He always believed everything was possible if you went about it the right way.

Another of his characteristics was he never had any bitterness if I decided to go my own way. And he would help me with my plan and be just as much interested about its success as he would be about his own plan."

How sum up dispassionately the permanent effect that captivity had on the mind and soul of Y.B.? Mr. Ward Price, who first met him during those dramatic days after the armistice with Turkey, was struck by his light-heartedness. Other friends who knew him intimately, thought that his experiences had seared his soul, and left a lasting impress on his body. One close friend, with whom I discussed his death, said he was convinced that his whole physical system never recovered from those two and a half years.

Shortly before leaving the army he appeared before a medical board at Lucknow in January, 1922. He wrote the following description of his physical condition:

"When captured by Arabs, November 13th, 1915, near Baghdad, both my pilot and I were roughly handled. I received a blow from an axe, near the spine, which left me in a dazed condition for several days. I have never been the same since. The slightest sun or glare affects me, and I do not sleep well in India."

He added that he worried over trifles. The board, after considering his case wrote:

"No organic lesion is detected after a careful examination. He is probably suffering from the after-effects, on his general nervous system, of a lengthy imprisonment in Turkey."

Talks with him in the immediate post-war era left the abiding impression of how deeply he had felt the horrors of his prison life. Not only because of the bodily suffering, but because of the strange places where the mind had roamed. Times when complete despair had seized the unfortunate captives and when they had given up any thought of ever seeing their country again. Times when in the disturbed and overstrained mind there seemed no dividing line between right and wrong. What did anything matter? Certainly there was a period when the prisoners

thought the war would drag on endlessly and they looked forward with apparent certitude to the horrors of violent death at the hands of the Turks before peace came.

Human liberty was something sacred to him and he henceforth always took a personal interest in the lot of prisoners. Y.B. held capital punishment as much less terrible than incarceration for life, and above all solitary confinement, of which he had had first-hand experience. His sympathy went out, not only to caged human beings, but to all living creatures kept in captivity. In subsequent years he often raised his voice to protest against the exhibition of wild animals for profit, and even the fate of the animal in a zoo aroused his deep pity.

The reader must be referred to the pages of *Golden Horn* for the details of those weeks in hiding in the home of Thémistoclé the Greek waiter and his family in Istanbul, as also for the account of meetings with Miss Eveline Whitaker,[1] to whom he always referred with deep respect as "this good angel to prisoners of war for her work for England was equal to that of Edith Cavell". There can be studied all the stages in the plotting and planning of his two escapes and of the disguises, provided by Miss Whitaker, which he adopted, as Mademoiselle Josephine, the German governess, and later as a Hungarian mechanic; of the second and final escape from the Turkish Ministry of War in the middle of September.

At long last, on 13th November, 1918, just three years after his capture in Irak, the ships of the Royal Navy cast anchor off the Golden Horn. A few weeks service at the British G.H.Q. followed, and then goodbye to Turkey and all that.

[1] Now Lady Paul, daughter of Count Gorkiewiez of Warsaw and adopted daughter of Mr. Edgar Whitaker of Constantinople.

PART II

1919–1939

CHAPTER X

AFTERMATH OF WAR

IT WAS as well perhaps that Y.B. had a few weeks in Constantinople before undertaking regular work at the Headquarters of the British Military Command. During that interlude he gradually adjusted himself to freedom and normality.

On the day he arrived back in London—11th December, 1918—he telephoned to me and the following morning he came to breakfast at my flat in Victoria Street. Externally, to me he appeared much the same as on the eve of the war, and looked but slightly older. My diary contains the somewhat inadequate comment: "I thought him looking very well and not nearly as starved as I had expected." It was only later, during his year and a half's sick leave, that I sometimes wondered whether his time in prison had not left a permanent stamp on him.

Of his first Christmas at home he writes:

"I lay in bed in a house in the Cotswolds on the first Christmas Eve of peace, watching shadows from the fire passing over my brass hot-water jug. Outside, the waits were singing.

"A few months ago, I was shivering on a couple of planks in a cellar littered with tomato skins and crusts of bread, with sleek rats and mangy men for my companions.

"One of the prisoners had been shackled to the wall by chains riveted to his wrists and ankles.

" 'One gets used to anything in time,' he had told me, 'except the bastinado. I have been here two years, accused of spying (they will never know the truth) and I am getting weak. But God is great. Unless they beat me again, I shall live for my vengeance.' "

"They did beat him, however, and I saw it, when transferred to solitary confinement in an upper cell, whose window looked out on the place of punishment.

"His ankles were strapped together to a pole, and the pole was raised on the shoulders of two men, so that he hung head downwards. A jailer hit the soles of his feet with a stick as thick as my wrist. He fainted, but the beating continued, for the sentence was fifty strokes. Had he survived, he would probably never have stood upright again, for the bones of his feet must have been crushed to pulp. They untied him and laid him flat on his back, and offered him water, but he made no sign, for he had died—of shock, I suppose, like my thoroughbred, The Devil.

"There was one spy the less in Turkey.

"How impossible that seemed to me now! Yet there were probably men still chained somewhere in that dungeon, and others being bastinadoed. I would search for no bugs to-night, and rise for no roll-call to-morrow. I had seen enough for a lifetime of wrath and bitterness and vermin. My pillow smelt of lavender."[1]

During the first weeks Y.B. was enraptured by the mere fact of liberty, and did not indulge in as much introspection as was his wont. There were all the old associations to be taken up and life with his parents. They had left their home at Portofino in 1917 for the last time. When they met after three and a half years' absence, Y.B. received a great shock, for his father's mind was failing.

Although externally he looked more or less the same, he was rapidly failing. If there was a sense of frustration during the next few years, it was probably due in some degree to watching at close quarters this disintegration of his father's mind. To his ingrained dread of old age, it added a sense of horror.

In the immediate post-war era in London, Y.B. was undoubtedly toying with the idea of fresh worlds to conquer, for he was dissatisfied with the headway he had made thus far. He plunged into the writing of his first book, *Caught by the Turks*, and this task for a time absorbed him. But after its appearance and the indifference of the public—he suffered from bouts of depression.

While actually writing his reminiscences he led for the first time the life of an author able to devote all his energies to the task in hand. Apart from the joy of writing, of finding the melodious and well-turned phrase, so important to him, and in spite of the moments of complete despair which succeeded periods of elation, he felt at home in his workroom, with his reference books around him and his piles of papers and notes. He was systematic in his methods, and wrote every word in his own hand in notebooks that were much corrected. If dissatisfied with a passage, he would re-write and alter it until but little of the original remained. He had several literary friends whom he used to consult, and chief among them was E. F. Benson.

When the book appeared and the public showed little interest, the fleeting hope of literary success vanished, and there followed long weeks, still on sick leave, of introspection and futile longings for the might-have-been. One of the few moments of gratification came when he received the proof of Owen Wister's preface to the American edition of *Caught by the Turks*.

Life held no absorbing interest at the moment, and when he compared his war achievements with those of some of his contemporaries, though

[1] *Golden Horn*, 252–253.

his lack of military success was not his fault, he must have felt depressed. Just at a time when a happy home life, and the joys of Portofino, would have been a godsend his parents were tied to England.

Military life in India seemed remote and there was no overwhelming urge to make him look forward to the resumption of his career as a soldier. More people than Y.B. were going through a wave of depression, doubtless due in part, to the inevitable reaction after a world war, when both individual and national life had to be readjusted.

There were, of course, moments, after five years' absence, when he longed to be back with his regiment; but it would not be easy to take up the reins again, especially as much of the confidence of youth had gone. He had seen too much of the seamy side of life ever to be the care-free young Bengal Lancer of pre-war days again. Besides, economy was in the air; there was talk of retrenchment in the Indian Army military establishment, and of reduction in the number of units, perhaps his own 17th Cavalry among them. The prospect of retirement, probably as a Lieut.-Colonel, to Cheltenham or Torquay, if he could not afford Portofino, was not very alluring, and golf, which provides relaxation for so many returned wanderers, never appealed much to him.

One of the few articles that he wrote in 1920, but which as far as I am aware, never saw the light of day, was called *Cabs and Cats*, and reflects his state of disillusionment with life in London. He writes:

"This morning, in the half-light that precedes the dawn, I left a dance and searched vainly for a taxi-cab to take me home. No moving thing was visible, save cats, until at last in Oxford Street, I came across a four-wheeler behind an aged, aged horse. Both driver and the driven seemed to have stepped out of another epoch—from the night of time. I entered, and as we clip-clopped along through a wilderness of sleeping houses, I reflected that this archaic thing, soon to grow as obsolete as an ox-cart or a Sedan chair, would probably be in the British Museum instead of on the streets, before the span of my life was done."

He concludes:

"As I turned down Queen Street, it seemed to me that the cats had some secret of their own. They were cheerfully unconcerned with the affairs of men. Whatsoever happens to the world, the business of the cats will go on just the same: a life above our life, lived in dawn-light on the house tops between Mayfair and the moon. Lambent-eyed and feral, they will have no truck with large white creatures who lie abed, chastely, conjugally, adulterously, or in any other fashion. Whatever the position of mankind, Persian pussies and their basement brethren will continue to prowl on their private errands, and wrangle, and swear, and woo, and squawk, and griff each other's faces, and remind us that in the tides of existence, we are not the only pebbles on the beach."

Y.B. has left comparatively little material about the next few years. The later phases of his life are dealt with in copious memoranda in his handwriting, reporters' note-books full of jottings, newspaper cuttings, and, after he had joined *The Spectator*, in 1926, in the articles and book reviews which he wrote. He himself was baffled by this absence of material about that phase of his life, as he tells us:

"An album of Indian photographs is on my table as I begin this book in my Gower Street flat. I have unearthed it from the rubbish of years—three boxfuls of old letters, pig's tushes, war pictures, articles I have written for various papers—strange jumble my life has been of soldiering and scribbling—in order to recall the months in 1920 which will serve as a background for my argument.

"It's a pity I can't cast my book in another form. With the material I have for stories, I ought to be a novelist. I have the words, and the ideas, but not the link between them. Something in me has died. At my first school, I used to tell the boys in my dormitory serial thrillers, lasting a week or more: now my imagination fails. I have become serious, self-engrossed, decidedly stupider than I was thirty-five years ago, and can't point a moral and adorn a tale exactly suited to my purpose: I must describe scenes and thoughts without the help of the lost faculty of fancy . . ."[1]

On 28th July, 1920, Y.B. was back with his regiment at Rawalpindi, and a few days later he found himself, now a Major, on the arid uplands of the North-West Frontier, commanding his squadron. They were at war again for three months, fighting in the Black Mountains and engaged in settling Hazara disturbances, under Brigadier-General Ridgeway. For his part in this campaign he was mentioned in an official despatch in the following terms:

"I take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation (which has been communicated to the Division) of the excellent work of the squadron under Major Yeats-Brown while at Mansehra. The behaviour of the squadron has had a valuable political effect."

Y.B. describes very graphically in *Dogs of War* this "frontier show" at the head of a squadron of a hundred young yeomen "in aid of civil power", or as he puts it "to help the police in a situation which had more or less passed out of their control". His task was to show the flag and seek to restore order in a large district where the sole forces of the Government consisted of twenty police, commanded by John Coatman, a level-headed and popular officer, already recognised as the right man for handling difficult situations.

A Holy War had been proclaimed and thousands of fanatical tribesmen from across the border had responded to the call of fighting the infidel.

[1] *European Jungle*, 77–78.

If the situation further deteriorated the diminutive police force and Y.B's squadron would be faced by twenty thousand bandits and a sullen peasantry armed with sticks and staves.

Coatman, with two of his police, and an escort of six Gurkhas, awaited the psychological moment on the outskirts of the town. Led by the young Englishman the small detachment of soldiers and two police ran to the ring-leader's house two hundred yards away. Climbing over a low wall, they surprised Izak, cooking his mid-day meal of mutton and rice.

"Coatman showed him his revolver and told him he was under arrest. Too surprised to object, Izak allowed himself to be bundled over the wall into the clutches of the waiting Gurkhas.

"Already, although not more than three minutes had gone by since Coatman's men had started, Mansehra was swarming with angry and excited people. The police were nine men against twenty thousand. Putting his revolver into the small of the Maulvi's back, Coatman said: 'Tell them you're a dead man if they attempt a rescue.'

"Izak knew that Coatman uttered no idle threat. Weapons gleamed from every window. In an agony of fear he cried to his people to hold their fire . . .[1]

"In a minute—sixty seconds that none of the party will ever forget—they reached the waiting lorry. Into it Izak was bundled. Gurkhas and police sprang on to the dashboards on either side. Coatman jumped in beside the driver, telling him to step on the accelerator.

"Half an hour later, Izak was under lock and key in Abbottabad."[2]

The story of this particular little expedition is like a hundred others to be found in the records of British arms on the North-West Frontier. From our standpoint, however, it is of especial interest, because it was here that Y.B. first met John Coatman, whose remarkable handling of an incipient rebellion he regarded as one of the bravest acts he had ever witnessed. To him Coatman stood as a symbol of the lonely British official, unknown, unsung, but doing his duty whatever the risk, and treating it all as part of the day's work.

The episode which left such a deep impress on Y.B., as an example of the right use of force and firmness at the right moment can be studied in *Dogs of War*. I have received the following letter from Professor Coatman himself describing Y.B's part in the Mansehra campaign:

"To my great regret I have no letters of his, and my most vivid recollections in connection with him are of our association in the operations on the Hazara Border in 1920, about which he wrote in 'Dogs of War'. That was the first time I met him, and immediately I was tremendously impressed by his personality. All along the British side of the Border there, and up in the Konsh and Bhogarmang Valleys our tribes were in a state of semi-rebellion—indeed, in some cases, active rebellion. But

[1] *Dogs of War*, 50. [2] Ibid., 51.

Francis got on terms with them in the most extraordinary way. For example, in one place where we had had quite a lot of trouble, and where the people were in a distinctly unpleasant frame of mind, Francis organised a most amazingly successful tent-pegging exhibition, in which his own men of the 17th Cavalry and the villagers took part.

"These men were all Mohammedans, but he was just the same with the Hindus. The frightened, unhappy Hindu shopkeepers who, of course, were terrified about their prospects in the Mohammedan uprising, seemed to draw confidence from him, and they saw that he was interested in them and in what they thought and did. With his own men his relations were perfect. There was real affection for him, and on the marches up the Valleys to the distant Chattar Plain, on which I accompanied him, I had plenty of opportunities of observing how close this relationship was. He seized the essentials of a situation immediately, and to him even the worst blackguard was a human being with human attributes. I never once heard him address an angry or discourteous remark to anybody."

The three months' campaigning on the Frontier were at an end, and Y.B. was back at Lucknow for his last eighteen months of soldiering. Certainly whatever effects his imprisonment had left on him, when he rejoined his regiment, his character had unmistakably developed through suffering. I have talked to several of his brother officers, and their wives, who saw much of him at Lucknow, and they used almost identical words in describing him. The memories he left were of his "friendliness, kindness, courtesy and humour".

Y.B. took a great interest in the animal creation, and it was always a joy to hear him talking about his personal experiences of his four-footed friends. He taught me more about camels than I had ever known before. Among his cuttings there is a delightful article from his pen, entitled "My friend the Camel, a Rhapsody and a Lament".[1] He had been familiar with the camel from his earliest days on the North-West Frontier, when it played an important part in military transport. I wish he had given us a book about the animals of India. Of the camel he wrote:

"It is a complete fallacy that the last straw will break his back. He is too intelligent to allow himself to be overloaded, and will refuse to rise until an unreasonable burden is lightened. Nor will he do his best if asked to work for overlong hours. He likes to get up early—generally long before dawn—and march during the cool of the night, stopping at about eight or nine o'clock for his extraordinary breakfast of camel-thorn, a plant resembling a well-stuffed pincushion . . .

"Long before man appeared on earth the camel was hob-nobbing with the dinosaurs. His present master is a newcomer, and one can sometimes see this idea reflected in his supercilious bearing. When riding him, if he considers you are not behaving properly, he will twist round and look you in the face, as beast to man. Yet for all his pride he is easy enough to manage when well-treated . . .

[1] *Book Society's Annual*, Christmas, 1936.

"Once a year, in the autumn, *sarwans* (camel-men) consider that their charges need the entrails of an antelope as a tonic. Now the camel is a clean feeder. A few pounds of grain, some thorns, and a bucket of chopped straw is his normal diet. Nevertheless, once a year a black buck is slain, and its liver and lights are crammed down his throat. I have often asked why this insult is offered to a respectable and apparently healthy vegetarian, but have never yet received a satisfactory answer. It was just *dastur*."

" 'The Unt (camel) must have his medicine at the turn of the year,' say the *sarwans*. Why he must have it, when he so obviously hates it, is one of the mysteries of this inscrutable land.

"Sometimes I have thought that the shape of the camel is one of the Creator's least successful efforts . . .

"I was given an Untni (she-camel) once, when I was adjutant of the old 17th Cavalry. She had grown too old for regimental work, so I begged for her life, and promised to keep her until she died. She seemed to know that I had saved her from the humane killer, and did her best to prove that she was not superannuated. During the week-ends she used to carry me to pig-sticking camps . . .

"The night before our departure she became strangely excited, she seemed to know quite well that she was to take me on a journey. Camels are stately creatures, not given to demonstrative affection. But that night the Untni wanted to talk. She grunted as she muzzled my pocket for sugar. Our eyes met. I can swear that she tried to tell me something, but I did not catch its drift.

"All was bustle in my compound next morning, but she lay stretched out, completely relaxed. I cracked my whip. She did not stir. Then I knew at once that she had died. Last night's molasses lay in her feed-box, untouched.

"She was a kind, gentle creature, this Untni, and I am glad that our paths crossed, for her race has a bad reputation with mankind. (Yet the Prophet Mohamed was devoted to his white she-camel, who was his companion on all his campaigns, and bore him during the crucial days of the flight to Medina, from which Islam computes its calendar.)

" 'My lord the elephant,' always exercised a strange fascination on Y.B.; one of the things that he most enjoyed during his farewell visit to India, when he was describing the Indian Army on the Burma Front for his last book, 'Martial India', was his visit to an elephant camp. He wrote about elephants and their habits on several occasions.

"A good Mahout talks continuously to his elephant. When I was new to India I thought that this understanding between beast and man was exaggerated, as are so many stories of the East. But it is true that most mahouts consider their charges are practically human, and share their thoughts and hopes and worldly possessions with them. For instance, the keeper of Lakshman Piari, an elephant I used when pigsticking, would always share any tip I gave him with her, sending her down into the bazaar with a few annas in her trunk to do her shopping for herself. (Once he even shared a bottle of whisky with her: she groaned a good deal, but it may have been because she had a wound in her throat.)

"On these shopping excursions Lakshman Piari knew quite well that the coins would make her welcome at the grocer's, and that the grocer had what she wanted: dropping the money in front of her crossed feet, she would help herself to a tray full of toffee and several bundles of sugar-cane."[1]

During his last two years in the army Y.B. played much polo, and he preserved with pride the programmes of the chief events in which the 17th Cavalry's team, of which he was a member, gained glory. In February, 1921, it won the Inter-regimental and Indian Cavalry Tournament. It was a suitable ending for the career of the polo-playing Y.B.

When he gave up soldiering there was no clear-cut line between his life as a soldier and a civilian. There was the four-month interlude as liaison officer with Lowell Thomas between soldiering and the final eighteen months furlough. His subconscious self had no doubt long been determined, even if he was unaware of the fact, to quit the army and try his hand at literature. He decided to send in his papers when he read in the Press that the Government proposed to abolish twenty *sillidar* regiments, of which the Bengal Lancers was one. This meant amalgamation with another regiment, and the old 17th Cavalry would be no more.

On his return from campaigning against the Mahsuds in Waziristan, where he had been with his regiment which had been fighting and "toiling through treacherous passes to make the world safe for democracy, while the Mahsuds praised Allah for our madness"[2]—as Y.B. described the campaign—fate took a part in deciding his destiny. He must tell the story in his own words:

" . . . I would 'send in my papers' as soon as possible.

"As if to confirm my decision, I met with a polo accident on my return from Waziristan.

"It happened at Lucknow during a practice game . . . I was on the line of the ball. An opponent in front of me hesitated while trying to hit a back-hander . . . My impression, as we collapsed together, was that I was being squeezed by some resistless power onto his pony's brown quarters.

"We sank down, and as I looked through the limbs of our entangled animals . . . the world seemed standing still . . .

"I was now being pressed down into the earth . . . my waler stood on me. One of his hoofs was on the back of my neck, and the other on my right forearm . . .

"Which bone of me would he break?

"Tim slipped backwards and forwards. With my brain I knew that my spine might crack . . . Then every incident of my life connected with riding—from a frosty day in Ireland, when my legs first gripped a horse to this uncomfortable conclusion—passed before me slowly. It was neat and logical. It was *Karma*. Had I concussion of the brain?

[1] *Daily Mail*, December, 1937. [2] *Bengal Lancer*, 218.

"No, for I was walking towards the refreshment table, arm in arm with two friends.

"My arm was broken above the wrist.

" 'My head's all right,' I said, 'or isn't it?'

" 'Yes, of course, but you can't go on playing.'

" 'Who said I could?'

" 'You did.'

" 'How long ago was that?'

"I could not remember how I had disentangled myself just a few minutes before. All the way to hospital I worried my friends for details of those mislaid seconds of my life, but I have never been able to trace them."[1]

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 218, 219, 220.

CHAPTER XI

PASTURES NEW

WHEN LOWELL THOMAS, the American lecturer and historian of the Palestine campaign, contemplated going to India to obtain special photographs and local colour for his new "travelogue", *Through Romantic India*, he discussed his plans with me. I told him that Y.B. would make an ideal guide for the Indian scene, he should try to obtain the loan of his services from the Government of India.

"While I lay in hospital," writes Y.B., "considering where I should go first when I left the service, a telegram came for me from the Army Department of the Government of India, suggesting that I should accompany an American author and his photographer, on a tour through the country.

"I accepted this offer immediately, for I could imagine no more delightful prospect. I tore up my resignation, sold my ponies, bought a typewriter, and as soon as my wrist was well enough I took the train to Delhi and began four crowded months of travel."[1]

Y.B. was only acquainted with the north of India. The chance of extending his knowledge now presented itself, and from March, 1922, to the end of July he travelled around India in the dual capacity of guide and student.

He had long desired to see South India with its teeming millions, inhabited by people with strange languages and customs, a complete contrast from the arid North-West Frontier, and above all so important from the standpoint of the student of Yoga and Hinduism. In Lowell Thomas he had a delightful companion, with an active brain and American "pep", determined to see as much of India—or the Indias—as was humanly possible in four months. Lowell Thomas, a successful author and journalist, was also an innovator, something that always appealed to Y.B. He had evolved a new technique on a scale never before attempted. The "travelogue" as presented by Lowell Thomas was something unknown in Great Britain until the American took London by storm when he filled Covent Garden Opera House and even the Albert Hall when presenting *With Lawrence in Arabia.*

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 221.

Another great bond between Y.B. and Lowell Thomas was that they were both adventurers, both thrilled to the unexpected; they were ready to go anywhere, to face hardships to achieve their purpose. While Lowell Thomas had not suffered the tortures of Turkish prison life, he had been the only American journalist on the campaign with Lawrence, and he readily roughed it when the occasion demanded: he had had a varied career, had punched cows in the west, had been a night-cook and a law-student—like many young Americans he had turned his hand to most things. He probably had more to say in introducing T. E. Lawrence to the British public than anyone, and over a million people saw his first "travelogue". Another link between Y.B. and the American was their regard and admiration for Lawrence; Thomas knew him intimately, and stimulated yet further Y.B's interest in that picturesque personality—which was not fully satisfied till he met him, when on *The Spectator* staff some years later.

These four months travelling in India, from Cape Comorin to the Khyber, apart from the opportunities they afforded Y.B. of adding to his already considerable store of knowledge about the sub-continent, affected him in several ways. They stimulated in him the desire to do at some future time for India, by the written word, what Lowell Thomas was about to do from the lecture platform, and hence were perhaps indirectly responsible for *Bengal Lancer*. His association with Lowell Thomas strengthened his determination to leave the Indian Army and seek pastures new, and stimulated in him the desire to re-visit America, where he had spent three formative years, from the age of six to nine; this desire was shortly to be given concrete form.

Before the travellers started on their journey they spent some time in Delhi, where they provided themselves with letters of introduction. From Hindu Rao's house on the Ridge of Old Delhi, with its memories of the Mutiny they could meditate on India's past, visit the remains of the six Delhis of bygone ages and watch the beginnings of the new imperial city. They made contacts with the official world, and generally obtained background for the undertaking.

"It was a marvellous trip from my point of view," wrote Y.B., "and I think from his, although the large sum of money (was it a quarter of a million dollars?) which he spent in making *Through Romantic India* did not yield him an adequate return. The day of the illustrated lecture was almost over."[1]

The task of acting as interpreter and liaison officer to Lowell Thomas and his party was one after Y.B's heart; he had to help the Americans to meet the right people and take the right pictures from the Government of India's standpoint, but, characteristically he adds, "He (Lowell Thomas) generally went where he wanted, and saw whom he pleased."

[1] *New York Times*, Magazine Section, 23rd February, 1936.

Lowell Thomas was a past-master at taking mental snapshots, and with Y.B's help contrived to visit every tourist centre of importance and meet many political leaders and public men. They interviewed agitators and saints, saw the Juggernaut car at Puri, the miraculous hand of St. Francis of Xavier at Goa (in Portuguese India), "were blessed by the three-breasted goddess at Madura, and drank tea with Afridi free-booters at Kui"; visited world figures such as Rabindranath Tagore, "the Dante of India" and Jagadis Bose, the scientist; they went to the shrines of Hindu culture at Benares and Allahabad, the sacred junction of Ganges and Jumna; they traced the storied history of the Moghuls in Delhi and Agra, and visited Mutiny shrines with sacred memories for the British, such as Cawnpore, "where two hundred women and children were killed by butchers from the bazaar as no one else would consent to do the deed"; and Lucknow "where the British flag, alone of all the Union Jacks in all the world, flies by night as well as by day, in memory of that time when 1,200 men kept it flying for five long months in face of a hundred thousand rebels". And in their endeavour to understand Hindu thought they talked with cultured Brahmins educated at Oxford, speaking faultless English, and versed in Sanskrit, and at the opposite pole they watched naked ascetics (Bhairagis) "adorned with nothing but necklaces of jasmine". Even Lowell Thomas, experienced lecturer and interpreter of the passing scene, must have had difficulty in presenting to his public in tabloid form the essence of Hinduism, with its "two million and two gods"—"an encyclopaedia of religion, and not a religion".

I have received the following letter from Lowell Thomas in response to my request for recollections of Y.B.:

August 22nd 1945. Rockefeller Center, New York.

Yes, I first met Y.B. through you. And then, in India I was entirely responsible for his leaving the Indian Army. That is, I asked Lord Reading and Lord Rawlinson to arrange for me to have him as a companion and adviser on a long journey around India. We covered far more of Hindustan during the months we were together than Y.B. had seen in his eighteen years out there. And we had so much fun on this jaunt that he said to me one day: "Where have I been all my life? And why didn't I know about all this, and that things of this sort could be done?"

Whereupon he told me that he never had been cut out for a military career in the first place, that his eldest brother had, according to English tradition been given the opportunity to go into the Navy. And that he as the younger son was simply shunted off to Sandhurst. But he went on to say that he really should have devoted his life to letters, prose and poetry. And he told me that I, out of a blue sky, through our association during our wanderings up and down and back and forth across India had shown him how this could be done.

Later, I gave him a job doing some speaking, talking with a Mt. Everest film, rights to which I had obtained for Canada. That was his first taste of the platform, for although he stood on one foot, stammered

and died a thousand deaths, he liked it, and in the years immediately following he did a good deal more of it.

Because of my enticing him away from the Bengal Lancers, taking him from Lucknow, where his outfit was stationed when I arrived in India, and as a result of what happened to him from then on, we got a superb book, "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer".

When it became popular, I urged him to come to America and while he was here I helped him make his connection with Hollywood, and also helped him to arrange a lecture tour of this country, telling the story of his experiences in the Indian Army and in Turkish prisons.

He often stayed with us here at our farm, brought his first wife to visit us, and got a tremendous kick out of riding a rather wild horse that I had gotten from the West, a turbulent animal named Montana.

We kept our intimate friendship throughout most of the years, although we saw him far too seldom. From about 1934 on when I did see him I was startled and alarmed to notice that he seemed to be shrivelling steadily, getting more and more stooped, and showing the passing of the years more than he should have shown them.

The state of his health during the final twelve years of his life reflected the long years he had spent in India and some of the things he had done out there. And then too, his experiences in Turkish prisons may have been even more to blame than India.

When we were travelling together, at times he would get petulant and crotchety, and he carried the most tremendous number of bottles containing every sort of medicine. He used to apologize and say that the climate and too many *chota-pegs*, had made him liverish. Well, he was forever in search of health, some way of regaining his lost vigor, so that he could go back to polo and pigsticking. And that was one of the reasons why he became interested in Yoga, and he sort of went off on a tangent in that direction in the final chapters of "Bengal Lancer". I can vouch for this because I was with him at the time he gathered most of that material, and his slant on it was the slant of a man who was ill, and who was groping in every direction for something that might pull him out of it.

At the conclusion of the tour Lowell Thomas carried out his long-cherished wish to visit Afghanistan. After months of waiting the permission finally came, but Y.B. was not included, for at that time Amir Amanullah was still suspicious of the British, and an Indian Cavalry officer was *persona non grata* in his turbulent realm. So, regretfully, Y.B. took leave of his friend "Tommy" and wished him godspeed.

Lowell Thomas pays a generous tribute to Y.B. in *India, the land of the Black Pagoda*,[1] which is also dedicated to him. He says:

"I, metaphorically speaking, sat at the feet of a Guru, a Yogi. Incongruous as it may seem, my Guru was neither Hindu, Mussulman, nor Buddhist monk. He was not even an Oriental, at any rate not by place of birth or ancestry. He was an Englishman and a professional soldier.

[1] Published by Messrs. Hutchinson in 1931.

" 'Y.B.' was the nickname by which he was known throughout the Indian Army. And most of his fellow officers thought him a bit mad. Y.B. would take off his uniform, don the picturesque costume of an Afridi, and wander about like a modern Haroun al Rashid. Then, too, he seemed to be genuinely fond of the Oriental peoples around him and seemed to understand them.

"Although his charm and drollery are not to be resisted, he is indeed one of the most eccentric fellows alive. And it is his very eccentricity that has resulted in his knowing India as few others do. This is amply demonstrated by a book of his recently published under the title of 'The Lives of a Bengal Lancer'. It is perhaps the most extraordinary book ever written about India by a westerner.

"Any insight that I may have into the ways and ideas of the mysterious land of India I owe to that sapient, whimsical guru, 'Y.B.'. I found him equally at home along the Coromandel Coast, near the Equator, in the mountains of Waziristan and in the holy cities of the Gangetic Plain. He had delved into the lives of the people and into the hidden knowledge and discipline of Yoga. He was the only western Yogi I have ever known.

"For months we travelled together, and as scenes of fantasy and mystery unfolded before us he expounded the wise, enlightening and witty ideas of a British Yogi. So whatever of truth and wisdom you find in these pages should be credited to Y.B., the Bengal Lancer who became a Yogi."

The moment when Y.B. was to give up soldiering in India occurred on the conclusion of his tour with Lowell Thomas. Back in Lucknow in the summer of 1922 he felt in a strange world, for his Bengal Lancers were no more, they had now amalgamated with another regiment: the days of soldiering for him in India were indeed over.

"There came a night in Lucknow when I threw off my mess-dress, medals, Wellington boots, and all my gear as a soldier, as if I could then and there forget these toys and start afresh with new ones . . . Every fibre in me was in revolt against my ghost-like existence as an officer of vanished Bengal Lancers."[1]

On the morrow of his stepping out of the old life he made for the hills, as others before him:

"It was 'cow dust hour'; ox-carts creaked slowly to a mud-walled village. Blue buffaloes browsed along in front of a naked pot-bellied baby: black buck bounded high, as if to see the train better: a procession of peasants trailed out towards a shrine: a peacock preened himself by a bamboo covert: men and beasts were gentle and well content. An infinite serenity lay under all that sky.

"And as background to this pervasive peace, stood the Himalayas, white and holy, their summits reaching into an afterglow of crimson.

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 255.

Would it be my work, I wondered, to tell the West a little of what may be discovered there . . . The task was broad and big as these plains I travelled, and my equipment scanty. Would anyone listen to the stammering of a soldier?"[1]

Having heard that his *guru*, Bhagawan Sri, was preparing for his annual pilgrimage to Amarnath, Y.B. hoped to find him at Naini Tal. It was nine years since their last meeting. Stupendous events had taken place in the world meanwhile.

He hired a car and drove up to Naini Tal and had hardly begun enquiring for his *guru* in the rambling outskirts of the bazaar below the lake when he saw "his tall loose-limbed, saffron-robed figure at a sweetmeat stall. He was buying parched barley for his bitch who sat up and begged for it". She was an old dog now. Y.B. took up the threads of friendship with ease, and felt at home with his *guru*, whom he greeted, clasping his hand, with the words:

"I have been longing for this moment. You seem younger, Guruji, than when I saw you nine years ago.

" 'Age is nothing, Sahib. I am happy, too. We have been expecting you for some time.' "

Y.B. was soon in the presence of his friends, Sivanand and Hastini, now happily married, and *chelas* of the *guru*. For even in Yogic circles love stories have sometimes happy endings. With Hastini Y.B. embarked on a discussion concerning the internal cleanliness of the body, an aspect of Yogic teaching which he sought to follow faithfully for the rest of his days. He subsequently studied the methods of nature cure, both in America and in Great Britain, and evolved a system of his own, a combination of Yoga and nature cure. Whatever the ailment from which he suffered it usually vanished after the commonsense practice of a couple of days starvation and orange juice. There are frequent references in his writings to colonic irrigation[2] dating from the distant past, when the Yogis used, with the aid of muscular control, the purifying waters of the Ganges, as they still do to-day, for cleansing their internal organs.

In all Yogic writings there are references to Kundalini, the life-force within, thus described by Hastini whose personality affected him deeply, in her talk with Y.B.

"She drew her arm through mine, and we returned to the hut. The glow of her warmed me through and through.

[1] Ibid., 256.

[2] In *Lancer at Large*, 134–5, Y.B. sums up his views in the following words: "To me the physical basis of mysticism is of great importance. In the West it is considered almost blasphemous to suggest that the body can have a part to play in man's approach to the Temple of the Divine . . . Why this neglect of Hatha Yoga in both East and West? An active soul needs an active mind and active bowels: the three are linked." Hatha Yoga is the mystic path of physical exercise that he followed.

"A curious comprehension seemed to link us, but whatever this understanding was, she was its mistress as she was its begetter: she could make me burn or freeze, but I did not feel that I had any effect on her.

"She began to speak of that serpent-lore of the Tantriks which is at once so mystical and so material that it baffles the Western mind.

" 'The goddess' (Kundalini) she said, 'is more subtle than the fibre of the lotus, and lies asleep at the base of the spine, curled three-and-a-half times round Herself, closing with her body the door of Brahman. Sometimes She awakes of Her own volition, which you call falling in love. Falling in love! Yes, like slipping on a mango skin. The right way to arouse Her is through breathing. Then you do not fall, but rise into love. Then She uncoils Herself, and raises Her Head, and enters the royal road of the spine, piercing the mystic centres, until she reaches the brain. These things are not to be understood in a day.'

"Hastini held me as if I had been entranced. I could not take my eyes from hers: they were my gates of pearl.

"One can, if one will, describe what happens when four hands meet. One can, if one will, describe the sudden understanding between a man and woman, the conflagrant moment when two Selves come into the sunlight of unity, knowing each other. But there are moments stranger still, which no tongue can tell, or pen write, when nothing happens on the physical plane, unless the eyes between themselves spin some etheric web in which something dances, like the sex-chromosomes in the womb. It is not in the body alone that a child is born. Every woman carries within her another seed: she is the begetter of more than bodies. That which was born between Hastini and me that night still lives, and can therefore reproduce its kind, but what and where it is I cannot say."[1]

There were no formal leave-takings and farewells when Y.B. ceased to be a soldier, for, after recovering from his polo accident he had plunged straight into the tour with Lowell Thomas, and, after his brief visit to his *guru* at Naini Tal he sailed across the Pacific to Canada. He was then granted furlough for two years, and did not finally retire from the Army till the summer of 1924. During his months of sight-seeing and recording impressions, he had little time for vain regrets about the past, or for worrying about the future. It was an easy exit from the old life.

He took leave of Mother India, as her servant, on Sunday morning, 6th August, 1922, when he sailed down the Hooghly from Calcutta. He had never voyaged homewards via the Far East before. He had always embarked at Bombay, as do most British officials and soldiers, anxious to get home as quickly as possible.

I had never before understood why Y.B. decided to go to Canada at the expiration of his military duties; in looking through his papers I think I have found the reason. While recovering from his polo accident, and before starting out on the tour round India, a letter from Canada had reached him, the only letter which he kept in his letter album dealing

[1] *Bengal Lancer*, 270, 271.

with his Canadian experiences. On reading it one can appreciate what its receipt must have meant to him. It was from Professor W. T. Allison, of the Department of English in the University of Manitoba. Its arrival must be regarded as one of the landmarks in his life.

The Professor, who had just been reading *Caught by the Turks*, wrote:

"I read your volume with the keenest interest and was so impressed by it that I decided to tell this part of the world how good it is.

"What puzzles me is where in the world you managed to pick up such an excellent style as a writer? Surely you must have done some literary work before going to India. I really think you should go on producing books. You ought to be a great success as a story-writer, seeing that you have such a good sense of humour, acute observation, skill in character portrayal, and adroit management of dialogue. Why not imitate Kipling by capitalising your intimate knowledge of Indian native and military life?

"If you are ever back this way, as I hope you will be, I am going to insist on your appearance before our Authors' Association."

Young authors, with only one book to their credit, the copies of which have, for the most part, remained on the bookseller's shelves, do not often receive letters like this: it must have been balm to Y.B's wounded pride. Despite the failure of *Caught by the Turks*, he knew that he had literary talent: here was a professor of English, who not only talked enthusiastically about his powers but went so far as to mention Kipling. With great discernment Professor Allison stressed those special qualities in Y.B's writing which subsequently became recognised. This letter must have reinforced his longings to emulate the author of *Kim*, and, always a great admirer of Kipling, he now studied the master's style even more carefully.

The creative fires within must have burned low at times during the three or four years of frustration. Providence had no doubt a purpose in turning Y.B. during the immediate years ahead into a rolling stone—but he belied the proverb, for he did gather moss. In those years before he had found his feet he gained priceless experience. He saw life from many angles.—He, who had led the sheltered existence of a young Englishman, educated at a good public school, followed by a year of travel and study on the Continent, at the age of nineteen had become an officer, had never faced the rough and tumble of life, apart from his years of captivity—and that was a chapter of existence that stood alone—it was not part of ordinary life.

In Canada and the United States he saw the melting-pot from the inside. When in the Army his future was assured, the State took good care of its employees—he had willing slaves, polo ponies, good food, ample leisure and long holidays. There was always the comfortable assurance that, whatever happened, if he stuck to his job, there would be

an adequate pension. During these years as a wanderer, he lost no opportunity of polishing his style, and, above all, learned to bide his time. This factor must have been of inestimable value to him when ill fortune dogged his steps.

On the journey to Canada he changed steamers at Rangoon, Singapore, and finally at Hongkong. He crossed the Pacific in the *Empress of Australia*, and arrived at Vancouver in early September, 1922. Towards the end of the year he contributed four articles to the *Montreal Star*, called "Eastward-bound to Canada—a Traveller's Venture, by Major Francis Yeats-Brown". These articles contained but little of the sparkle to which we became accustomed in his mature writings.

"On the journey," he wrote, "you will probably see more colour and contrast, and get in touch with more people and problems of to-day than on an equal number of miles anywhere else on earth . . . You will see something of Burma, the F.M.S., Hongkong, Canton, Shanghai, the Inland Sea of Japan;—you will see sunrise on Fujiyama, have tea with a geisha, catch a salmon in British Columbia, shoot a big-horn in the Rockies . . ."

"Rangoon is a sight for sore eyes, grown weary with the arid plains of India, and the appearance of the inhabitants cannot fail to impress the traveller. Everyone is happy. Everyone is smoking and laughing. Many Burmese, even children, I was told, have lately taken to a far more terrible habit than cigarettes, namely, sniffing cocaine, (as if Paradise were not already at their elbow, without adventitious aid), but presumably the drug has not yet had time to sap their constitution or impair their vivacity, for a jollier lot of people I never saw."

The following comment on Penang is more in the true Y.B. style:

"You mustn't miss Penang. Really it is a little Eden. Yet there is one snake in the grass—the presence of a very vicious smell which sometimes assails you when you least expect it. At the Post Office, for instance, the *Cabu* handed me as change three ten-cent notes which smelt like young skunks eating a Stilton. I handed them faintly to the rickshaw man, and soon felt better."

Y.B. had gone to Canada to investigate the possibilities of large-scale migration on the part of his brother officers in the Indian Army who would shortly be retrenched owing to the wave of post-war economy. This purpose he carried out and contributed a series of articles to the Indian Press.

He did not subsequently write much about the New World in his books. Presumably he felt he had little to add to what had been said by others with greater knowledge. Western civilisation, with its mechanical devices and contraptions for making life easy, appealed to one side of his nature, but I think the call of the East was always there at his heart.

Among his earliest impressions of North America recorded by him on arriving at Vancouver are the following:

"The country looks hungry for men. The next thing you notice is the briskness and the complexions of what people there are. The children looked healthy and happy: if they were live stock you would describe them as prime, and ready for the Smithfield Show. An ogre would choose a Canadian child before any other on earth.

"The next thing you notice are all the labour-saving devices, mail-chutes, elevators, etc. In London, when the British matron desires to ascend a floor or two of her hotel, she is lifted there gradually by a ceremonious affair that creeps up and down a rope as quickly as cold molasses. Not so on the American Continent. The British matron (I watched one with much amusement), at the Vancouver Hotel is elevated to ecstatic altitudes before she has time to gasp, and her descent is like Satan's from his first home. To a poor Anglo-Indian[1] like myself, it was jolly to stand by the elevator doors, each with a clock above them to indicate their progress and two buttons marked 'Up' and 'Down'. We are not used to things like that in slow old India. I rang both buttons; elevators flicked up and down with startling suddenness. At last one stopped; door clanged; people shot out. I encaged myself and was ejected next instant on the roof garden instead of the luncheon room where I had meant to go."

Alas, the diary that Y.B. kept in Canada appears to have been destroyed, and I have only been able to find a few typed extracts from his reflections written at the time. Under the heading of "Mountain Moods", describing the effect of Canadian water and woods and hills on a traveller from the East, he wrote at Lake Louise, that haunt of beauty, on 17th September, 1922:

"Coming straight from the torrid zone, this is a new and wonderful world . . . Round me, as if in solicitude for my special welfare, there is silence of the eternal hills, healing of the heavenly air. Of all the contrasts of the journey this is the pleasantest. From Lucknow to Lake Louise, from the monsoon to the mountains, from the Stewpan of the Indian plains to the snows of the Rockies, all in one short month . . .

"September 18th. I went into the forest this morning, off the beaten paths: I wanted to get away from civilisation, and *close to Canada.* I pushed on, into the thickest tangle I could find, ankle-deep in rotting tree trunks, alone in just such a forest as the pioneers must have often met during the making of Canada—forest such as pioneers still meet . . . Round me was death, sorrow, the defeat of trees by ivy and by age. Then I looked up, and saw the green of young larches, where they had turned their leaves to the sun, against a background of mountains and ineffable blue.

[1] The term Anglo-Indian in those days was used to express British officials living in India. To-day this term is reserved for those of mixed parentage who were formerly called Eurasians.

"On my way back I saw a marmot, and some duck floating down the Bow River. Neither bird nor beast took any notice, for they knew they had as much right as I to this preserve where St. Francis might have walked with brother wolf and his sisters the swallows . . .

"Blue sky, still lake in which the marvellous crimson of the maple was mirrored, keen air that wets the senses, twilight, silence, the evening star."

Before returning to England Y.B. spent three months in Canada, after his preliminary stay at Lake Louise and Banff, in the Rockies, he travelled the four thousand miles to Nova Scotia. Then a few weeks later he returned to the Pacific coast and ended up by crossing the continent a third time. I think he was searching for some opening for himself. He was probably hoping that an opportunity would present itself whereby he could emulate his friend "Tommy" (Lowell Thomas), and write books and lecture.

He made contact with the Canadian Pacific Railway authorities, and with their backing delivered lectures in various centres on the attractions of Canada for the Indian officer about to retire. He also contributed some articles to the Press in India. On his return to Great Britain he delivered a travel talk entitled "Canada, the Land of Youth", in such places as Grimsby, Keighley and Buxton in the north and at Bath, Swindon, Salisbury, Torquay and Weymouth in the south. But lecturing never came easy to him.

Y.B. had felt lonely during his Canadian wanderings, despite his sight-seeing; there were many long hours of meditating on the past and on the uncertain future.

CHAPTER XII

LIFE'S ROUGH AND TUMBLE

AFTER staying in the hotels in some of the smaller provincial centres, while lecturing in England on behalf of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Y.B. more than ever rejoiced in returning to London, to his friends and to the Bath Club. Stumping round the country, haranguing audiences of varying sizes, was all very well, but one needed to be thick-skinned, and there were moments when he must have wished himself back in his soldiering days.

Canada was certainly a land of promise and offered great opportunities to settlers of the right kind, especially to young men and women not afraid of work. He was doing his best to describe the advantages offered by the great Dominion, and as far as the Press cuttings show, he succeeded, but where was all this leading to? This was not what he had left the Indian Army for.

At the end of March, 1923, he was still lecturing—a month later he was married. This is the record of a sad episode in Y.B's life, which caused him and his wife much unhappiness, and their friends real concern.

My elder sister and her husband[1] had sold their Irish home after the war and with their family had come to live in London. They had taken 20, Roland Gardens and thither Y.B. went to meet his young cousins. There were five of them, all under thirty, four girls and one son, for the eldest son had been killed in the last weeks of the first Great War. Y.B., the wanderer, received a typically Irish welcome. He was made to feel at home; they were all deeply interested to meet the author of *Caught by the Turks*, of whose experiences they had also heard from his mother, who used to circulate news of her son in a family letter that went the rounds. Y.B., then aged thirty-seven, responded to the geniality and warm-heartedness of his Irish relations. One side of him had always enjoyed family life. He was tired of being a wanderer. His mind probably went back twenty years when, as "*das Onkelchen*" he had been made to feel so at home at Denzerheide in Germany when staying with his cousin and her children. Only on the former occasion he had never declared his romantic affection for his first love, the eldest daughter.

History was, in one respect, repeating itself. The eldest daughter, Olga Lavinia, and he became great friends. She had a very sincere nature and

[1] The late Thomas S. Porter of Clogher Park, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

with her things went deep. She had been very much attached to her old home in Ireland and leaving Clogher had been a bitter experience. With Y.B's arrival wider horizons revealed themselves. She enjoyed meeting him and he was touched by her sympathy and understanding. Two mortals, dissatisfied with their lot, were placed by destiny in close proximity, and before many days had passed, became engaged. For her, this was no engagement entered upon lightly, it was a case of lasting love.

In the family circle those who knew both parties shook their heads. When the man of the world, or rather the man of many worlds, meets the woman from a quiet home and they decide to marry in a hurry, the venture may occasionally be successful, but not often. What a gamut of experiences the Recording Angel would have to enter against Y.B's name. Where could the woman be found who could make a success of married life with him—where indeed? Deep devotion on one side was not enough.

Matrimony is a dangerous thing to prophesy about. There is always the chance that the unexpected may happen; we have all known of unlikely unions proving successful. When wedding bells are ringing is not the time for gloomy prognostications. Those of us who went to St. Peter's Cranley Gardens, on 30th April—that date having been chosen so as not to risk the dangers of a May wedding—to witness the marriage of Francis Charles Claypon Yeats-Brown with Olga Lavinia Porter tried to forget their forebodings, and prayed for the success of the union.

There was only one place in the world for a honeymoon from Y.B's standpoint, and that was Portofino. Thither went the couple, accompanied by our loving good wishes for their happiness, but also with an occasional anxious thought.

Before many months had passed disturbing rumours reached the family circle that all was not well, but this was no time for interference with the newly-weds; they would have to work out their problems for themselves. They did the best thing in the circumstances, they went away, putting the Atlantic between them and their relations and the familiar scene.

For a few weeks in the autumn of 1923 Y.B. worked in the Foreign Sub-Editor's room at Printing House Square; but a career on *The Times* was not for him. He felt too circumscribed and he did little more than begin to learn the elements of news work.

North America called to Y.B. There he hoped to find fame and fortune. He was much attracted by Canada—although I question whether he would ever have been content to settle there. More likely in his case the magnet of American journalism would have attracted him to New York, with the object of becoming a successful author. His wife worked hard and became a proficient typist; around me lie articles of Y.B's Canadian experiences typed by her.

Married life did not turn out as Y.B. had expected. He was disarmingly frank in admitting that a large share of the blame for its failure must lie

at his door. Coming down to breakfast, confronted by the daily worries, was not as glamorous an experience as he had imagined. In moments of depression he felt that he had failed in all his undertakings, and now his marriage was a failure too. There was only one thing to do from his standpoint, to throw himself into his work. But the goddess who presides over the world of literary endeavour is a fickle deity. When success is yearned for, it is often conspicuous by its absence, and when dazzling attainment comes to an author overnight, he may have some other absorbing personal preoccupation which poisons the moment of triumph—such at least happened to Y.B.

In the next two and a half years he tried his hand at many things: as a lecturer, in New York as publisher of a weekly news-letter, called *Far Horizons*, as a free-lance journalist, as the manager of Point Judith Polo Club, Narragansett Pier, R.I., and for two seasons as the polo correspondent of *The Times* and the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Perhaps to regain poise, he studied Yoga at the Yoga centre at Nyack, New York State.

He went through the bitter experience of being apparently a complete failure. His attempts to emulate Lowell Thomas made no headway. In an article written a dozen years afterwards, he said:

> "I had bought the right of another illustrated picture, 'Climbing Mount Everest' and had been trying to show it in Canadian cinemas in competition with such attractions as 'The Thief of Baghdad' and 'Flaming Youth'. Tibetan devil dancers, poor climbers plodding up a snowy slope —they could not rival the glamour of a Fairbanks or a Colleen Moore! I was broke."[1]

During these years in America, as will have been observed, one of Y.B's ventures was concerned with sport, and the other with writing, two elements with which he was equally at home, and which held for him the best chances of success. In the limited field as a reporter of polo he wrote excellent commentaries. But polo is a rich man's pastime and only on some special occasion, as for instance in an international contest between Great Britain and the United States, does it arouse widespread interest. For a few weeks in the autumn of 1924 he was kept busy reporting the overwhelming superiority of the American team of players. Polo tournaments do not last long, however. If he had been an expert on football or golf or racing, he might have made a good living as a chronicler of sporting events, but polo offered no such opportunity.

In the *New York Herald-Tribune* he was apparently allowed greater scope for his descriptive powers than in the columns of *The Times*, and his vivid accounts grip even the non-polo player, as the following excerpts will show:

> "I may say at once that seeing horses in their stables, wearing their business suits, so to speak, chewing hay and swatting flies, is not the best

[1] *New York Herald-Tribune Magazine*, 23rd February, 1936.

way to judge them. On the other hand, when saddled and gaited for the game it is difficult if not impossible, amid grooms, stick-holders, camera-men, women asking if that is the sort of mallet the Prince of Wales plays with and which is Milburn, to get a good idea of their several and particular capacities.

"Let us first kill a popular delusion, doubtless fostered by Kipling's great story, 'The Maltese Cat'. The Maltese Cat scored a goal by kicking the ball with her forelegs, as far as I can remember, in the closing period of a polo game in the days when Kipling was a reporter on *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore. Now, that incident was possible, though not probable . . . The truth is, ponies don't care a hang for polo, except for the fun of galloping.

"On Long Island now, resides the polo pony aristocracy of the world. The ends of the equine earth are met here. Whether horses talk to each other I do not know. It is by no means impossible that they have some means of communication. If they have, then they must swap many picturesque stories of sport in distant places . . .

"It is a gift of nature to glory in physical prowess, whatever it may be, and these ponies, the fastest and cleverest of their kind, will surely exult when, like the charger of Job, they smell the battle afar off, 'the thunder of the captains and the shouting'."[1]

On the literary side Y.B. indulgedina perfectly justifiable gamble. He decided to conduct a "Far Horizons Service", from a little office at the corner of Forty-Second Street and Broadway, New York. This service attempted to give the subscriber intimate and human accounts of events overseas. He wanted to be a purveyor and interpreter of European news to the American public, avid for inside comment and information on current events. There would be the following services:

(1) Weekly comment on European cities at a dollar a month.
(2) Weekly survey of European news at five dollars a month.
(3) Weekly comment and survey together, twenty-nine dollars for five months.

The bulletin was to be called "My Weekly Letter from Y.B.". And Y.B., would-be news purveyor and commentator, prepared excellent advertising matter informing the American public of the advantages to be obtained by becoming subscribers.

He slaved at his venture, but the American public was on the whole apathetic, although in one exciting week he received a thousand dollars in subscriptions. Several factors told against him. He was unknown. He was pitting his scanty knowledge of Europe against a legion of expert American journalists and students of European affairs. Twenty years ago he knew but little of political conditions on the European continent: it was not till 1927 onwards that he became familiar with the European scene. Above all he underestimated the amazing efficiency of the

[1] *New York Herald-Tribune*, 3rd September, 1924.

American newsgathering organisations. As an expert on India or Italy, and as part of an established American concern, he might have made a place for himself.

New York is very stimulating, but very expensive for a married couple. Y.B's limited supply of dollars soon vanished. His vision now scanned far horizons in reality. He decided he would go west. When you are broke literary ambitions must go by the board. His wife stayed with friends while Y.B. decided to try his hand working as a labourer, harvesting in the wheat fields of Western Canada.

It was a courageous decision. He was indeed on the rocks, but he would go and do a man's job out west and learn for himself how it feels to earn your living by the sweat of your brow. Y.B. did not know that he had reached the nadir of his fortunes, nor could he foresee the effect his pluck would have—in a quite unexpected direction.

At the end of August, 1925, a typical Canadian "harvester train" pulled out of Montreal station with a human cargo of five hundred souls. The party consisted of French-Canadians, Americans, Poles, Italians, and representatives of other nations: there was only one Englishman aboard—Y.B. The Canadian harvesting season lasts from mid-August till early October, and during that period an army of 50,000 men wend their way to the prairie provinces. It was a great ordeal to plunge from an office desk in Broadway, with no previous experience of harvesting, into a Manitoban wheatfield. This is the story of Y.B's brief career as a harvester:[1]

"What is it like to work a steady fifteen hours with one's hands? Sitting in a New York office, I wondered. And needing some fresh air, and liking the idea of being paid to take it, I determined to find out.

"It was to learn about harvesting from the inside, not as a writer, but as worker, that I was travelling West with as merry a lot of lads as ever set out to seek money and adventure. Some of us were a trifle too merry, indeed, on the first night, but a tall Mounted policeman, resplendent in his red coat and broad-brimmed hat, clanked through the cars occasionally to see that decorum was kept.

"Rates of pay on the harvest field range from fifteen to twenty-five shillings a day, in addition to fair accommodation and good meals . . .

"And what of the work itself? Is it as severe as it is said to be? Having done it, with the bruised hands that now tap the typewriter, I can speak from experience!

"After two days in the train, we disembarked at Winnipeg, carrying our blankets and 'grips' to sheds where the Governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta had established temporary employment offices. Clerks had lists of the localities needing labour and we gave our name to the Province in which we wished employment . . .

"I chose the Province of Manitoba as the field for my endeavour, as

[1] Y.B. submitted articles on his experiences in Western Canada to the *Daily Mail*, *The Spectator*, *Country Life* and *Overseas*, from which the following extracts are taken.

it was the closest and my time is limited. That same afternoon, somewhat stiff and very unshorn, I was on my way to Dunfrost, a hamlet south of Winnipeg. With me was an English friend whom I had chanced to meet in Winnipeg, and it would be well for the intending immigrant to remember that a stranger in a strange land feels lost indeed; with a companion, on the contrary, the small inconveniences of travel become a joke.

"We were met by the farmer who hired us and taken out to his farm in a Ford car. My first job was to feed the pigs, which requires no skill at all. Could I milk a cow? I could not. Hitch up a team? Well, I thought so. Ever spike-pitched? I didn't even know what it meant and had to admit that my education had been much neglected. If only I had had even a week's experience I am confident I could have passed as a veteran farm-hand. As it was, I was labelled 'green'. But my friend was even greener, his only interest in horses having been derived from the sporting columns of a London daily.

"After a hearty breakfast of eggs and bacon, we started our first day's work at six, piling wheat sheaves into small towers, known as 'stooking'. At first it seemed easy but after an hour my back began to ache . . . After stooking for a long time, as it seemed to me, I looked at my watch, hoping it was near lunch time. But it was eight o'clock—the hour when, in New York, which I had lately left, I should have been indulging in a shower bath and orange juice . . . After two hours my hands were cut with thorns and hard straw. After three hours I longed to lie down among the sheaves and give up. By noon when we stopped for dinner I thought that I was too exhausted to eat, until I set my teeth into the inevitable eggs and bacon, followed by fruit tart and coffee. At half past twelve we were at it again and continued steadily until darkness fell at half-past seven.

"The binder rambled along, scything down the tall wheat, tying it in sheaves and disgorging them in groups. Followed the 'stooker' who now writes this. He took a sheaf under each arm, carried them to other sheaves and laid them upright by sixes—little towers of the staff of life. Sometimes a seventh sheaf, called the cap-sheath, is added over all, as the mackintosh in case of rain, but this was pastoral refinement that did not appear to be part of my duties. Here then, is the whole operation of stooking—simple enough in theory and practice—but very strenuous when performed hour after livelong hour.

"Always the binder continues its march, like the chariot of Boadicea scything a lane through the Roman ranks, and always the stooker must follow. To unbend himself from the ape-like progression of his sheaf-gathering is considered amateurish; the good stooker continues from dawn to dark with his body bent towards Mother Earth. Meanwhile the sun burns down on the just and the unjust . . .

"In the afternoon we spike-pitched . . . We gather the sheaves on a pitch-fork and pile them into the open cart. Then we drive to the separator, a monster run by a Fordson tractor, that divides the wheat from the chaff. Into the moving maw of this machine, like the stairway of the Piccadilly tube, we feed our sheaves. That is spike-pitching.

"Unloading a cart takes about half an hour, during which the spike-

pitcher will swing his sheaves as regularly and mechanically as the throbbing engine below him. At first it seems like some graceful gesture of a physical culture course—but as the minutes pass and the insatiable separator continues to demand nourishment, a panic seizes the novice and he grows clammy with fear, stumbling and prodding his toes in his effort to see that the supply does not fail. At last, however, the cart is empty, save for a bed of swarming crickets, who sing on, heedless of the fate they have so narrowly escaped.

"By eight o'clock that night when the field was half empty and the horizon a great glory of red, I was ready to fall from exhaustion and did in fact stumble into the moving stairway of the separator as I plied my pitchfork blindly.

"At last we adjourned, lit pipes, and drove slowly back to Stygian stables, where we watered, unharnessed, and fed our horses. Eggs and bacon, fruit tart and coffee, as before, revived me a little, but I lay down in my boots too tired to think or sleep. Yet I slept, towards morning, and arose, unwashed as well as unshaven, to resume the same work in the same field.

"Why had I left my room overlooking Broadway? I asked myself.

"Why, oh why, I repeated, when I rose at dawn again on the next day, with an ache all over, had I engaged in this soul-deadening toil? But after the noon-time dinner, came a dramatic change. Stiffness vanished, a joy in this long, slow work took its place. The air of the thousand-mile-wide prairies was beginning to do its work. By the third day, I wanted to go right on for months, drawing my pay and eating my grub and caring a fig for no-one, a thoroughly contented animal.

"And so it will be with any man who cares to try this recipe of the Canadian harvest as a cure for overmuch sitting still.

"It is a privilege to live on a prairie farm, even for a few weeks. It is good fun to gather with one's own hands the staff of life that will go out to feed half the world. It is an education, also, to do this work, a schooling in certain vivid aspects of the world which only sun and wind and sweat, not midnight oil, can give."

I have always thought those weeks on the wide and open prairies did something for Y.B's soul. He was face to face with elemental things. Once he survived the aches and stiffness of the first days, his body attained a rhythm and he rejoiced in complete physical well-being. He was just a hard-working farm labourer, who toiled, ate, and slept. There was no time for reflecting on the marriage tangle into which he had drifted. Paradoxically it was restful to have nothing to do but work, fighting against time till the harvest was garnered.

He never forgot the lessons of the harvester working to the utmost of his capacity at stooking and spike-pitching. There is something healing about nature to those receptive to her messages, conveyed in varying forms, by the sea, the mountains, the heart of the forest, or the field of swaying wheat.

CHAPTER XIII

JOURNALIST AT LAST

IN THE autumn of 1925 Y.B. returned from the Manitoban wheat-fields to New York. He sent me an article recounting his experiences as an harvester called "A Green Hand's Experience in the Canadian West".[1]

That article played a very vital part in his career, for it was responsible for the invitation to him to join the staff of *The Spectator*. The grit displayed during his harvesting experiences had greatly impressed me. No description of farming had made such an appeal to me since I had read Tolstoy's account of his working in the fields alongside his peasants on his Russian estate.

I knew Y.B. had been going through hard times and I welcomed the chance of giving him a helping hand, but my offer was not merely an act of friendship. I believed he had literary talent—how much I did not know—and I was prepared to give him a fair trial. I had joined *The Spectator's* staff as Managing Director in 1922 at St. Loe Strachey's suggestion. On 1st January, 1925, he also appointed me Editor-in-Chief giving me a year's option on the paper. By Easter I decided to exercise my option, so that just before Y.B. set out for the Canadian West, the transaction was completed and I had also become Governing-Director of the Company.

The paper needed new blood. I therefore sent Y.B. the cable enquiring whether he would care to join our staff. If he could make the Canadian prairies live I was convinced he could treat other subjects equally vividly. There would be plenty of material for his pen and he could write "middles" as we termed them, and do book reviewing. I knew of his literary aspirations, but at that time he had not written much: I had read *Caught by the Turks*, and he had occasionally written articles for me.[2] But in offering Y.B. an editorial post I was taking a leap in the dark. I knew that his views and my own were often at variance. There was always the unpredictable and eccentric side to his character to be taken into account. My father, who was also a shareholder, expressed a fear that I might regret my decision.

I never had any intention of entrusting him with the political side of

[1] *Spectator*, 17th October, 1925.

[2] In *Overseas*, the magazine of the Over-Seas League, and in *The Landmark*, the journal of the English-Speaking Union.

the paper, as I did not consider his judgment reliable. That side of *The Spectator* was in the safe hands of J. B. Atkins, who had been on the paper for many years; when St. Loe Strachey was suffering from ill-health during the first Great War, Atkins had practically borne the whole burden of producing the paper, and *The Spectator* owed much to his sound judgment and selflessness. He was "one of the great anonymities of Fleet Street" and upheld the best traditions of British journalism.

Within a few days of the despatch of my cable I received Y.B's joyful acceptance of the offer. When I saw him again on his return I felt his North American experiences had been a useful antidote to his somewhat exotic outlook and his acquaintance with the North American scene was an added link between us.

Y.B. joined the staff on 1st January, 1926, at an auspicious moment. After three years of hard work the paper was emerging from the lean post-war period and its future was now assured, its circulation was on the up-grade and its advertising revenue was expanding rapidly. Strachey's public spirit, his enthusiasm for great causes and readiness to accept ideas, were an inspiration to all who came into contact with him. The torch he had handed to us we were determined to carry worthily.

The staff was like a happy family. Y.B. soon made himself at home at 13, York Street, Covent Garden, whither the paper had moved from Wellington Street. On Tuesday mornings the members of the staff assembled to discuss the next issue, and at the end of the week, after the publication of the paper, the members of both the editorial and the business side, foregathered for "the post-mortem", as we termed it, where were analysed sins of commission and omission. At these informal gatherings, where there was complete freedom of speech, sparks used to fly, for the political views of the staff varied. Y.B. was a great believer in the corporate state, and Bolshevism was anathema to him, while some of the staff held opposite opinions. His views on health and some of his fads aroused suspicion among his colleagues. The cross-currents and discussions were stimulating, nevertheless, and I can see Y.B., engrossed in argument, sitting on the table, in the Buddha Lotus position, the office file copies of *The Times* pushed aside, advancing some startling theory to the consternation of the upholders of the *status quo*.

Y.B. remained on the staff[1] till 31st March, 1931. Certainly from the literary standpoint they were the most fruitful years of his life, for apart from his contributions to *The Spectator*, much of his time in 1929 was devoted to writing and re-writing *Bengal Lancer*. I gave him special leave in the autumn of 1929 so that he could go to Italy and, away from

[1] Among Y.B's colleagues on *The Spectator*, in the early days, were J. B. Atkins, in charge of politics, both home and foreign, Wilbraham Cooper, an old friend of Strachey's and nurtured in *The Spectator* tradition, E. G. Hawke, Alan Porter, Celia Simpson (now Mrs. John Strachey), Hamish MacLaren, and myself. On the business side were E. D. W. Chaplin, who had joined *The Spectator* with me in 1922, becoming Managing Director in 1927, and H. S. Janes, the Advertising Director.

the claims of a journalist's life in London, concentrate solely on his book.

Installed as a working journalist in York Street the pent-up longing since childhood to become a sub-editor was at last realised. The metamorphosis of the soldier into the scribbler was now complete. His output was enormous. Almost immediately I realised that he was a writer endowed with remarkable descriptive powers. It was unthinkable that he should do anything but write. On various occasions he said that he only felt really happy when with pencil in hand he was expressing himself on paper, and this was undoubtedly so. I never changed my early views as to the position he should occupy on *The Spectator*. Literary editor—yes; assistant editor—yes; but the political judgment essential in a good editor was lacking. His presence on the paper however was very stimulating.

He worked with enthusiastic concentration. No one on the staff was more punctual or methodical; for the most part he kept a firm hold on the eccentric side to his character. His temper was usually equable, or, if he was out of sorts, he took the matter seriously in hand. If the vexation or irritation was of a temporary nature he would on occasions, in his office, place himself in the *sirshapadmasana*, or head-lotus position (stand on his head). If the malaise responsible for his depression seemed deep-seated, he would either undertake a "two days starve" at his flat, as a means of clearing mind and body; or, when really unwell, go to Champneys, near Tring, and under the expert guidance of Mr. Stanley Lief, undertake a two or three weeks fast.

A year after returning to England he established himself in a pleasant little flat at 1, Robert Street, Adelphi, where he possibly derived inspiration from the thought that one of his neighbours was Mr. Bernard Shaw, and another Sir James Barrie. It was a peaceful and unconventional background suited to Y.B. with its dolls' furniture, pale yellow walls and orange velvet-like curtains.

He had impressed his personality on his habitation: he had a low armchair, about a foot from the ground, with a low table to match, notebooks, scribbling blocks and works of reference accessible, on well stocked shelves, with his favourite books for his growing library. As literary editor, which he soon became, he had many opportunities for assembling a useful collection of reading matter on his special subjects.

He was a painstaking writer and, if dissatisfied, would tear up his first attempt and practically rewrite the article from start to finish. With the patience of the sculptor who chisels and re-chisels till satisfied, Y.B. would go on remodelling till the phrase or paragraph passed even his exacting standards. The right word, proper sequence, alliteration, meant much to him, and he delighted in vivid contrast. He often chose the unusual word, if it conveyed his meaning; he took great pains with the headings of his articles, seeking to combine the dramatic and the unexpected.

Among his papers I find a typewritten statement of his output on *The*

Spectator, during those five years. It is an impressive record. Usually the paper contained one signed or unsigned middle article, and one full-length review over the familiar initials Y.B. The high water mark was reached in 1928; in the next two years there was a slight decline in his writings for *The Spectator* as the preparation of *Bengal Lancer* absorbed his surplus energies. After 1931, when he retired from our staff to devote himself to the writing of books, he continued to act as a special correspondent for *The Spectator*, or wrote articles, when called upon to do so. He occasionally interviewed a celebrity or investigated social problems such as the slums, unemployment conditions in South Wales, the open-air school, new inventions, methods of Nature cure, or the latest developments in aviation. Indeed, when searching for a writer to describe the unusual we inevitably turned to Y.B. But he had definite views of his own, and if the subject was one that did not appeal to him, it was waste of time to entrust him with the job.

If Y.B. did not become a working journalist till his fortieth year, he certainly made up for lost time. As a result of those months of steady application on *The Spectator* he obtained a wide and growing public, and what was more, made for himself a reputation in Fleet Street amongst the critics, which was to be very useful when he wrote *Bengal Lancer*. Among the articles he contributed to the paper in the first months were "A visit to an Efficiency Exhibition", "On Admiring America", and "A Wreath of Jasmine", describing a lecture by Sir Jagadis Bose before the Royal Society of Medicine. His first article with a typical Y.B. heading—"A Buddhist in Bayswater"—described a lecture by the Anagarika Dharmapala, whom he had listened to only a month previously in New York. He always welcomed any and every opportunity of keeping in touch with Eastern thought, but he was also ready to write on matters connected with the United States. His article "On Admiring America" was reprinted in Canada and the United States with appreciatory comments on the part he was playing as interpreter of North America to Europe. The article started off with a personal note:

"I have no particular cause to love America. When I first set up for myself in business, in a little office at the corner of Forty-second Street and Broadway, they parted me from a good many dollars. True, I made as much as £200 in one week, but I lost that and more the next. My final cash balance was a debit one, but experience was a countervailing asset. I kiss the rod of my reverses, for I learned thereby to understand a little of American methods and ideals."

The weekly appearance in print of the initials Y.B., and the congratulations received from friends on his work, gradually gave him the self-confidence he really needed. Others now recognised, what he had known all along, that he was a born writer. The purposes of Providence in his case were slow in revealing themselves. Of interest is a short letter that

appeared over the *nom de plume* of "Bengal Lancer" in the correspondence columns of *The Spectator* in April, 1926—one of the first occasions on which he used this designation for himself.

This newborn confidence in his destiny as a writer was of great importance to him, and inspired in him the desire to record the story of his life. The writer, who was gaining a place for himself in weekly journalism, would surely have prospects of success not vouchsafed to the young and unknown soldier ten years earlier. He was confident that he had plenty of material for a biography, and if he but bided his time the opportunity would come. In the meantime, work on the paper was full of interest. In his first year he interviewed Mussolini. In a letter to my mother I thus refer to the event: "An enormous signed photograph about three foot long arrived for Francis this morning at *The Spectator* office from Mussolini, who seems to have been pleased with the interview." Within a year of his joining the staff he was prosperous enough to purchase a baby Austin—it was rather a shattering experience to be driven through London traffic by him, especially when he was immersed in the ventilation of his views on some abstruse subject!

His investigations into the perplexing problem of the slums deeply stirred him. In India he had seen dire poverty and degraded and starved human beings, but never anything more heart-breaking than the blind alleys and backwaters of industrial Britain. In the murk and gloom of our northern climate there were no rays of sunshine to penetrate into the recesses of the miserable hovels and human rookeries. How was it possible that Great Britain—truly great as he knew her to be—while creating a free Commonwealth around the Seven Seas, and taming continents, had permitted the growth of this cancer of misery in her midst? It was completely baffling. His visits to Continental Europe proved that slums were not a necessary concomitant of industrial civilisation. That knowledge prepared him mentally for the impact which the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler made on his mind in the decade to come.

After Y.B's travels in northern Europe in 1927, he began to take a more personal interest in the changing European scene. Many of the chief problems engaging the attention of chancelleries and statesmen became realities to him, such as the Danzig Corridor, the rectification of the German-Polish frontier, and Soviet Russia's relations with Poland and the Baltic republics.

The Spectator had warmly espoused the cause of the League of Nations, and Y.B., although an admirer of the corporate state, as demonstrated by Fascist Italy, then warmly supported the League idea. An important shareholder of *The Spectator*, my old friend Alexander Smith Cochran, of New York, deplored the fact that the public took but little interest in the League's debates, partly owing, no doubt, to the somewhat stereotyped presentation of the Geneva scene. To the man in the street, absorbed in the atmosphere of the "parish pump", the messages of correspondents at

the headquarters of the League, largely dealt with unfamiliar topics. Such terms as mandates, minorities, sanctions, Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, and all the rest of the Geneva jargon, meant but little to him. We, therefore, decided to send Y.B. to Geneva to record the League's progress more arrestingly. Thither he went at the end of 1927, and in due course contributed articles on the League, its organisation, Sir Eric Drummond, the Greek refugees, the League's health services, and other subjects.

After the rise of Nazism he regarded much of the League's work with suspicion, but there is no doubt that in 1927 he was much impressed by its activities. This, for instance, is the vein of his first article written at Geneva:

"Perhaps the most dramatic moment of the recent Disarmament Conference was when M. Paul Boncour, the first orator in Europe, sprang to his feet to plead security for France. It focused in my mind for ever the appearance of the famous Hall of Glass during a debate . . .

" 'Je vous supplie' the speaker is saying, 'Messieurs les representantes de l'Union des Republiques Sovietiques Socialistes' (with what grace the tangled title comes from his eloquent lips, clenched hands before him, eyes echoing his words!)'—je vous supplie!' He is asking Messieurs Litvinoff and Lunacharsky not to hurry the date of the next Disarmament Conference. The two Soviet tsars sit side by side. They listen in some surprise, and obviously not unmoved by this appeal.

"Does the thought flash through their minds, as it does through mine . . . that discussion is almost always better than destruction? How many of us in the Hall of Glass—some twenty dozen rather specially trusted people in various walks of life—really believe in the League? The answer is, almost all. The few who do not are 'cranks'. Five years ago it was just the contrary. But public opinion has veered vertiginously, and politicians and the Press have adapted themselves accordingly. Those who do not see which way the wind is blowing will not long survive.

"It is a remarkable scene, this Parliament of Man, often described before, but always worth doing again, for the public memory is short. Imagine then, a large conservatory, or a small town hall . . .

"The legislators sit round a horse-shoe table, liberally provided with decanters of water and glasses, occupying about a third of the end of the hall nearest Lake Leman. Behind this table, against the plush curtains, sit the chief officers of the Secretariat—Sir Eric Drummond, M. Dufour Feronce (his chief lieutenant), and the other Under-Secretaries, notable among them being the huge bulk of the Japanese, M. Sugimura, who is Director of the Political Section. Sir Eric Drummond, the Secretary-General, and past-master in the art of persuading committees to stick to the point, sits next the President. Inside the horse-shoe are the shorthand writers, translators and interpreters . . .

"How soon, with all this meeting and mingling, will war between members of the League become intolerable and unthinkable? Statesmen come and go. Even journalists disappear, no one quite knows where.

But the League goes on. If it were to perish in another world-war, another new League would arise on this very spot from the ashes of destruction. Every sensible man and woman on earth knows that modern war is too horrible, too ruinous to continue: it will end simply because the common sense of mankind declares that this thing shall not be.

"Is there not something novel enough to give us pause in this apparent platitude? The miracle of peace may be wrought by the lordship of a united will . . . Sane people cannot meet four times a year in Geneva and then go away to make preparations for blowing each other to bits.

"What actual decisions will be taken in the Hall of Glass I do not know, nor does anyone else. But that they will lead to peace I am certain. The words that have echoed between its windows have been heard before on earth, but never has the spirit that informed them been so universally acknowledged by mankind.

"To organise and express this new will of the world the Secretariat of the League exists."

It is curious that one who wrote about the League of Nations with such utter confidence in 1927 could, seven years later, have written *Dogs of War*, and attacked those who were working for international co-operation. On the occasion of this first visit to Geneva he wrote as follows to his mother:

Hotel Richmond. Geneva. 5. Dec. 1927

I am writing after the first meeting of the Council of the League; it is really very interesting seeing Briand, Stresemann, and Austen Chamberlain, cheek-by-jowl, so to speak. They only met for an hour this morning, and have adjourned till 10.30 tomorrow, when I suppose the big Polish-Lithuanian question will be discussed.

So far my chief adventure has been a meeting with M. Lunacharsky, the Russian Minister for Education. He is a really nice man, kindly and cultivated. I hope Evelyn will publish it in next week's *Spectator*.

The proceedings of the Council are more informal than I expected. Every speech is translated into either French or English: the interpreters are quite wonderful, taking down a few notes during a speech of even half-an-hour and then getting up and making it again in the other language without pause or hesitation. During the translation, however, no one seems to attend much, and the journalists often chatter among themselves.

Austen Chamberlain looks very stiff and glassy-eyed. Briand is far the most remarkable and has really fine eyes; he looks a great man. Stresemann is very pink and white and brisk—a successful grocer, one might imagine.

The great excitement, as you will have heard before you get this, is that Chamberlain (in the Hotel next door to this) is to see Litvinoff at 2.30. What the results of the interview will be I have no idea, but anything which makes for peace between us is to the good, I suppose.

Another letter is still more vivid:

Dec. 11
1927

I hope you are getting more sun than we are. I haven't seen it once since arrival, and I write this in my room at mid-day with electric light! But despite the continual fog, I am enjoying myself enormously. Evelyn wrote he did not want an interview on the Polish-Lithuanian question, so I have talked to no more 'great men', but last night at about 10 o'clock came the news that the settlement had been reached, and we all gathered in the Hall of Glass.

I got in early in a good place, where Briand, Chamberlain, Stresemann, Pilsudski and Valdemares all had to walk past me, and after the short scene of reconciliation was over I stood just by Valdemares and heard what each Foreign Secretary said to him. Chamberlain came first. He said: 'C'est tout arrangé, n'est ce pas? Tout fini! Tout bien réglé!' and waved his hand and patted him on the shoulder. Stresemann just shook hands and bowed and smiled. Briand either 'Vous avez fait une bonne traité', or 'Vous avez été bien traité'—I couldn't make out which.

Pilsudski deliberately got into the line of people walking past Valdemares, but as far as I could make out did *not* shake hands as they say in the papers. Certainly there was no cordial conversation between the two. As far as I could see, he ducked his head, grunted, and passed on. Valdemares looks like an overgrown schoolboy. Pilsudski, with great eyebrows and moustache, and no back to his head, a thorough wild man. Undoubtedly no love is lost between them, but the League has scored a great triumph by averting what would inevitably have been war except for its intervention.

In subsequent articles he wrote of earlier triumphs of the League, such as the prevention of the war between Greece and Bulgaria in October, 1925, when the actual telegram announcing the League's decision only reached the battle line an hour and a half before the fight was about to begin. An article referring to the reconciliation of Poland and Lithuania concluded with these words: "Conciliation and commonsense: these are the springs of the League on which the car of peace draws—slowly perhaps—to its beautiful destiny."

Prophecies are always dangerous; in the second half of the "twenties" confidence as to the unlikelihood of war was prevalent and Y.B. succumbed to it. He wrote:[1]

"We need but to know the facts to understand the futility of any future hostilities between the industrial nations of Europe. War has already become impossible between the Great Powers. Thanks to modern research and inventions we could today annihilate each other so quickly and securely with fire, pestilence and poison that even the most bellicose of old-fashioned citizens would say to the war-lords 'This thing shall not be.'

[1] Review of Lord Thompson's "Air Facts and Problems", *Spectator*, 23rd April, 1927.

"The engines, weapons and chemicals of this century's contriving have rendered 'civilised' war impossible in my belief, provided we do not lay ourselves open to attack by weakness in the air."

After the appearance of *Bengal Lancer* it was inevitable that life on *The Spectator* should seem dull in comparison with the exciting times he was experiencing as a successful author. Ninety-nine Gower Street was an anti-climax after the creative moments at Vallombrosa. There is this admission in his notes:

"I was always aching to get back to my own work, and to write about other peoples' books bored me so much that I used to take my review copies into St. James's Park or Kensington Gardens, or sometimes Battersea, where I had a friend in a peacock, and read the books."

I have only kept two or three letters from Y.B. during his years on *The Spectator*; one of them was written a few months before he left the staff, and after the appearance of *Bengal Lancer*. For a short while I toyed with the idea of making him assistant editor, to be generally in charge of the paper and its make-up, apart from the selection of the weekly notes and the two political leading articles. Y.B. wrote:

"Thinking over what you said, I want to say clearly and promptly that I should not entrust the *Spectator* to me if I were you, and that I do not expect you to do so.

"In spite of this, I do believe that I know what the *Spectator* readers think and want, having been an eager *Spectator*-reader myself for longer than most journalists. This is not conceit; it is merely that my mind really does work with theirs. I should very rarely want to discuss what *Spectator* readers would think about anything, for I believe I *know*, from 20 years experience.

"However, I don't expect you to believe that, and if you were to offer me the editorship now I should be so surprised that I should fast for a day or two, and take time to decide in my own mind what your reasons were in offering me the post, (not my own hopes, which I have thought over for a longish time), and whether I could meet your wishes.

"You are half Socialist. I am only one-tenth Socialist (only just enough to get a move on our self-complacent middle-class) and the rest of me believes in land-tenure, family life, a State religion, etc. To me the land is holy. I have never owned a foot of it, or anything I could call a home, but I believe in these things, and hate the subvertors of their sanctity.

"You have done so much for me that I could never repay you. I have always been happy working for you.

"Anyway, that will be over by the end of the year. There are lots of men, Mr. Law[1] for instance, who can write more polished political

[1] Mr. Richard Law, who wrote one or two articles for us and whom I had mentioned as the type of man we needed.

articles and other men again who have better brains than I. If you get one I like I will work with him with enthusiasm, but do not try a conjuring trick, with yourself juggling three or four balls; that will wear you out...."

Working for five years in close proximity with Y.B. gave me many opportunities of appreciating his worth as a friend. He was possessed of an unusual power of understanding sympathy which showed itself at various times when I was passing through dark moments. His intuition was such, that although I never discussed my private affairs with him, he sensed just what I was going through. There was no friend to whom I would sooner go for sympathy in moments of anguish. I never returned empty-handed.

In 1927 when he and I arrived back in England after our trip in Northern Europe I was greeted with the news that my wife[1] would have to undergo a very serious operation. She was far from strong. Her family record was bad, there was the haunting fear that her constitution would not stand the strain. Y.B. was devoted to her; she was his first cousin, too, and he had a deep admiration for her wise judgment. Many times he had gone to her to "unbare his soul" when enmeshed in the problems of human relationship.

As the day of her operation approached in May, 1928, he surrounded me with sympathy. In our business talks at the office there was always the background of the knowledge that he realised the terror gnawing at my heart. On the morning of the operation—it lasted two endless hours—he breakfasted with me at my bachelor's flat, and waited till the telephone from the nursing home rang with the news that she was back in her own room, although she did not emerge from the anæsthetic for many hours. When setbacks occurred in the long months of convalescence he entered into my despair—for two years she was tied to a bath-chair. If I lost interest in my work he understood.

This was no ephemeral sympathy. I suppose all of us are capable of giving sympathy in a crisis or when our pity is deeply stirred by the unexpected—with Y.B. this capacity of entering into the sorrows of others had an enduring quality.

Sixteen years after the event just referred to, when staying with us in India, during what was to be the last year of his life, he again helped me in a way I shall never forget. For two years my wife had suffered grievously from asthma, owing to the climate; the attacks came on night after night, and were accompanied by choking fits and heart attacks—most terrifying to watch. At one or two in the morning I had to try and summon a doctor. Y.B. insisted that I should call on him at any time of the day or night; he meant it—and I did. He would move unobtrusively in and out of our hotel suite at any hour of the morning. Dread of the future

[1] We were not married then; many years were still to lapse before I obtained my heart's desire.

often assailed me as I waited for the calming effect of the injection . . . his mere presence was a comfort.

I have written about intimate and sacred things. I have turned back pages of the story of my life, which usually I prefer not to consider. They still have the power of making the heart stand still with terror. I have done so because I know no other way of paying my tribute to Y.B's qualities as a true and unfailing friend.

CHAPTER XIV

AMONG THE NORDICS

WHEN Y.B. had been eighteen months on *The Spectator*, and had made a success of his job, I suggested taking him for a month's tour round the Baltic. After an absence of fifteen years, I had long wanted to revisit Northern Europe, and to study afresh the everlasting problem of Teuton and Slav relations. I told him of my plans and he showed so much interest in the proposal that I suggested he should come with me as my guest. I thought the experience would be useful to him, for he then knew very little of European politics. The tour would provide material for articles, and with introductions to the Chancelleries of a dozen nations, Y.B. would get a real insight into the European scene, which would be invaluable to him in his work.

We left London on 16th July, 1927. The most interesting experience of the tour, our visit to Berlin, was Y.B's introduction to Northern Europe, and his first visit to Germany since the world war. Those were the days when the Wilhelmstrasse was cultivating friendship with British journalists. Although we arrived on a Sunday afternoon, we found a warm letter of welcome at the Adlon Hotel, written in his own hand, by the head of the Press Department of the Foreign Office.

Our itinerary was most carefully planned, an A.D.C. was attached to us, and we saw whatever we wanted. To Y.B., who had never studied German political and industrial methods, the tour was a revelation. He was greatly impressed by the thoroughness of the Government's methods of tackling the problem of national physical well-being. It was not only Y.B. who was interested in doing his "daily dozen". The whole German nation seemed to have gone sport-mad. Physical fitness and physical culture were the order of the day. The Government realised the nation's need, and was concentrating its energies on helping youth to achieve new levels of fitness by means of open-air life, of sun-bathing, of planned sport, and of a carefully thought-out education.

Earlier in the year Y.B. had been writing articles on the slum problem. In arresting fashion he had outlined the magnitude of the task of slum clearance in Great Britain. In London he had written separate articles on the slums of Westminster, Chelsea and Fulham. His mind was, therefore, primed with statistics and furnished with first-hand knowledge. The entire absence of slums in Northern Europe made a deep impression on

him. On one hot afternoon in Berlin we searched for a slum area—but in vain.

The dominant impact made on Y.B. was of the national enthusiasm for fresh air; this was an enthusiasm that he shared to the full. Never before had he seen so many hatless men in a large city. Bare heads and shirts open at the neck, were symbols of the mass enthusiasm for physical fitness. Could this be the same nation that he remembered twenty-five years before? From the standpoint of the passing visitor the Germans now looked the healthiest nation in Europe.

To find out how the metamorphosis had been achieved we directed our steps the morning after our arrival to the Stadium, the headquarters of the great athletic organisation (Reichsausschuss Für Leibesübungen) with its affiliated membership of seven millions of men and women, and its central training institution for athletic and gymnastic instructors. There was a four years course for three hundred teachers of both sexes, and they were destined to act as the nucleus which would in due course, turn Germany into a nation of athletes.

In an article called "German Paths to Health and Beauty"[1] Y.B. describes this aspect of national life which appealed to him so strongly. In those days he confidently believed that this enthusiasm for sport would "deflect the energies of their youth from militarism to athletics":—

"By every means in their power the Germans are seeking to become the healthiest nation in the world.

" . . . Of the success of this 'Sport Kultur' there can be no question. 'Back to Nature' enthusiasts throng the forests, and on every bookstall are displayed popular magazines, devoted to beauty, boxing and nakedness. The latter cult has a club of its own in Berlin, with many thousands of members, (The Reichsverband für Freikörperkultur) . . .

" . . . Everyone is interested in the sports movement, and the 'Weekend Bewegung'. What a nation it is for organisation! Rumour has it that the municipal authorities of Berlin wrote to the L.C.C., asking information as to how the Saturday-to-Monday excursions in England were managed, under the impression that no such exodus as that to Brighton or Blackpool could possibly happen without official supervision.

"A railway station is probably the best place in which to view a 'cross-section' of the inhabitants of the country. Rich and poor meet here; you may observe their complexions, temper, destination, the luggage they carry, clothes they wear, papers they read. In all these details, Germany has changed. No longer do the napes of middle-aged men fold over their collars; and fat old women are as rare as officers in uniform. Open necks, bare heads, tanned faces, are favoured by the boys and girls of the new Germany. The 'Backfisch' of my schooldays has vanished. The bubikopfed (shingled) damsel has taken her place.

"Whenever sports are held at the big new Stadium at Berlin, crowds flock thither. It is a gigantic place with every sort of apparatus and con-

[1] *Spectator*, 29th October, 1927.

trivance to further the progress of the brown, bull-necked young athletes of both sexes who train there . . .

"One machine that I experimented with was designed to test my nervous reflex by recording the number of dots that I could make in a given square in a given time. Another instrument consisted of a rubber disc which I had to tap as quickly as possible for half a minute—the result being recorded by an instrument like a recording barograph, with a moving needle scribbling its inexorable run. The wave line which I made revealed the gloomy secrets of my Ego, and I felt thoroughly ashamed of it. Humiliating also was a test executed before a moving drum, which flashed relentless lights at me so quickly that the brain jibbed and sent idiotic messages to my hand. The truth is that my eyes were roving about the room.

"I have written enough to show that the Germans, with their Government behind them, seek their new Kultur with the seriousness and the self-sacrifice that they did the old. And it is all to the good that this thoroughness is being devoted to health and happiness, rather than to war games and the billeting of Uhlans. Something useful should come of it."

We were wined and dined by the authorities. At a sumptuous lunch at the Kaiserhof we met many departmental heads and members of the Reichstag. Our hosts appeared very anxious for friendship, and a leading diplomat said: "We want an *entente* with England, but if we are rebuffed we may have to turn to Russia."

We were taken in a six-seated Junker plane for a flight over Berlin. My diary noted:

"We really went up a thousand feet but only seemed to skim over the housetops. I never saw anything like the tidiness and greenness of Berlin from the air. All the houses looked the same height, and wonderful rehousing settlements encircled by green spaces are in progress. From the air Berlin looks like one of those toy towns we played with as children."

We hurried from an appointment with the Traffic and Transport Ministry to a large lunch at the Aero-Club, where Y.B. found the company very congenial. He rejoiced in the great enthusiasm displayed for commercial aviation: he only hoped that the British Empire would not be too far out-distanced. One very strenuous day ended with a tea at the Wilhelmstrasse, where leading diplomats and Foreign Office officials, discussed Germany's post-war grievances, while we were regaled with strawberries, cakes, and a liqueur, a mixture of cherry brandy and *Kirschenwasser* served in long tapering glasses, no doubt an efficacious method of engendering enthusiasm in the visitor. In such an environment high policy seemed quite entertaining, and diplomatic studies no longer dry as dust.

How great was the impression that German industrial methods made on Y.B. is evident from his article entitled "Electropolis".[1]

"The Berlin Electric Light Company is the most exciting thing I have ever seen, as thrilling as a murder, as beautiful as a glimpse of fairyland. It is, indeed, both murder and mystery. It is the dramatic curtain of the first act of the industrial revolution. We all know the beginning of the drama, the high hopes, disillusionment, mob-scenes, intrigues, counter-plots. Now comes the promise of release from the toil. What is to follow no one can foretell, but as I viewed these engines that provide light and power for two million people with practically no human labour, the fingers of destiny seemed to twitch aside a veil, revealing *Siva* dancing on the body of his spouse, mind triumphing over matter.

"These foreshadowings of the conquest of sweat and misery by gods of steel have long existed in print and in the minds of idealists. Now they have begun to take shape and being.

"Men speak casually of developing two hundred thousand horse-power nowadays. Yet such an assemblage of living beasts has never been under the control of man, unless it was Genghiz Khan."

After the visit to the Berlin Electricity Works, a wonderful example of efficient municipal enterprise, and in view of the fact that gas, tramways, and buses, and underground, were all publicly owned, we thought it incumbent on us to see some privately-owned industrial plants. So we went to the great Siemens Electrical Works, employing fifty thousand hands. Y.B. was never happier than when exploring some new world. He possessed great reserves of wonder, on which he was always able to draw. The fantastic dream of an H. G. Wells, or of a Jules Verne, come true, enthralled his alert mind. He, who rejoiced in discussing abstract and metaphysical topics by the banks of the Ganges or in the shadow of the Himalayas, was equally at home in the Berlin of 1927, talking electricity with Herr Karl von Siemens. He caught a fleeting glimpse of the future world order.

In Siemens Town, notebook in hand, he was busy making memoranda concerning an industrial Utopia, the like of which he had never seen. Past smiling gardens and along tree-lined streets we were escorted from factory to factory. In one building some of the plant for the River Shannon's electrical undertaking in Ireland had been made—Y.B's pencil was busy. We lunched in a workers' restaurant under trees, where for the equivalent of one shilling and twopence we obtained a daintily served meal of three courses, washed down by a sevenpenny glass of white wine.

He had, of course, visited large industrial concerns in the United States, but nowhere had he seen such a happy combination of efficient management and ideal surroundings for a great industrial undertaking in a large city.

[1] *Spectator*, 22nd October, 1927.

Just when the reader might weary of a description of electrical works and industrial efficiency Y.B. comes to the rescue. Often during the crowded days of sight-seeing, entailing much study of statistics and handbooks, he would discover some human subject for portrayal by his pen.[1] His ability to become enthralled by the wayside scene was a marked characteristic, it was probably nature's remedy for journalistic brain-fag.

" . . . the best and most useful purpose to which dogs are put in Germany is that of leading blind men. Through crowds, in traffic, in the press of Unter den Linden or Friedrichstrasse, one may see these faithful servants leading their sightless masters. At the approach of danger—in crossing a street, for instance—they lie down and the blind man stands still, knowing he is in peril. Whenever you see a man leading an unmuzzled dog, you know that it has been supplied to him by the Society which trains the animals for this purpose, and that he is a blinded veteran.

"I watched one of these dogs, a cross-bred collie, taking her master down the Wilhemstrasse. *A kind of leather hoop was fastened over her back*, which the blind man held. She steered him very neatly past pedestrians and he walked along with absolute confidence. Evidently the collie was fully aware of her responsibilities, for when they came to a street-crossing, she looked anxiously to her left at the oncoming traffic, and did not start to cross until a hurrying taxi had passed.

"As she was an official dog in the exercise of her duty, her muzzle was off, hanging by her collar. They progressed at a smart pace until they reached the Wilhelmsplatz, where she sat down and waited, while a passer-by was consulted as to the whereabouts of the Underground. Even then, she kept a watchful eye on her master, and I am pretty certain she understood what was being said, for when the passer-by pointed with his umbrella, her gaze turned to the large 'U' with which the Underground stations are marked in Berlin. Now the entrance to the Wilhelmsplatz Underground lies among patches of grass and flower-beds in the square. Directly her master took up her leather hoop and began to walk in that direction, she took charge. He wanted to go one way, but she saw a directer route on the other side of a flower-bed, and took him that way without a moment's hesitation. Perhaps they had often travelled by that Underground before. Even so, it was a remarkable exhibition of intelligence.

"When they reached the bottom of the steps the collie wagged her white tail and put up an obedient snout to receive her muzzle. Her task was done. Her reward, a pat. In the Underground she could no longer be a guide, and must conform to muzzling regulations like a good citizen."

I have purposely dealt with our stay in Berlin at some length because thereafter Y.B. became even more deeply interested in Germany and always hoped that there would be some way out of the Anglo-German clash although he feared it was inevitable. From Berlin we went to Denmark,

[1] "Dachshunds and Butterflies", *The Spectator*, 5th November, 1927.

Scandinavia, and Finland, visiting Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania on our return journey by way of Poland. We imbibed much information concerning the progressive countries of northern Europe. We returned with lasting memories of Danish co-operative organisations and farming methods. In Norway Y.B's viking blood[1] was deeply stirred at Oslo by the sight of the Viking ship, preserved in the clay soil for a thousand years—it was a welcome change looking back into the past.

No matter where we were, he reserved half an hour in the mornings for Yoga and breathing exercises; even on days when we made early starts by train, steamer, or plane, nothing was permitted to interfere with this routine. I used to watch him, either sitting in the lotus position in our compartment, if we had it to ourselves, or standing in the corridor, breathing rhythmically; or, with a far-off expression, holding his breath, somewhat to the surprise of the passing officials. His exercises certainly helped him to attain poise and detachment.

[1] A Bellingham ancestor came over with William the Conqueror.

CHAPTER XV

THE WRITING OF *BENGAL LANCER*

THE WRITING of *Bengal Lancer* was the greatest event in Y.B's life; it turned the aspiring journalist with literary ambitions, into one of the best known authors of the day. He who in his writings was always searching for the dramatic and vivid contrast, provided both drama and contrast in his own life. In 1929 he started to collect material for his autobiography. The following intensely vivid pages record in his own words the story of the writing of *Bengal Lancer*. It has never been published:

"I began to write the story of my life in April 1929, and dictated it all to a yawning young stenographer with a blonde Eton crop: a discouraging and distractingly pretty girl, who kept glancing at her wrist-watch and misspelt all the Indian names. I babbled on and on, like Tennyson's brook at Somersby, from ten to two, and from four to six, sometimes gravelled for ideas, and sometimes talking gibberish (according to the typescript) but determined to keep at it, whatever the result, just as I had thirty years ago, when I told yarns to the dormitory at my private school.

"The words had to come quickly, partly because I wanted to get away to Florence, where a dear friend awaited me, but chiefly because my mind was in a fever that nothing but self-expression could assuage.

"Within six weeks the book was finished. It consisted of four hundred pages of typescript, bound with green ribbon tied in feminine bows. Its Blimpish title was 'Nineteen Years in India'. I took a first-class sleeper on the *train-de-luxe* to Florence, which I could ill afford, and therefore greatly enjoyed. After a suitable dinner, with an Imperial pint of champagne, and a *fine champagne* to follow, I settled down with cigar and pencil, to taste the fruits of my labour. I knew well enough that some sentences would need smartening, and that there would be some cutting to do, but I was unprepared for the mawkish mess I found.

"It was all wrong, hopelessly wrong. It began with an incident on the troopship taking me to India, when one of my friends swallowed twelve dozen oysters while the clock struck twelve, for a bet, a dozen tinned oysters in a glass for each strike of the clock, and was sick afterwards; and so on, flaccidly, fatuously, ineptly recording every phase of my commonplace existence. There was not a glimmer of inspiration, not a thought that did not make me squirm with disgust at the way I had expressed it.

"My work reminded me of a poor British soldier whom I had seen

standing as a defaulter before the Colonel of the 60th Rifles in Bareilly. The first entry on the man's long 'Crime Sheet', related to some neglect of his quarters on shipboard, and was entered as 'Having an untidy birth'!—That was true also of my mental child.

"There and then I unbound the ribbons, and began to cut the wretched thing to pieces. The first thing I did was to alter 'Nineteen Years in India' to *Bengal Lancer*. My journalistic training stood me in good stead. Making a book demands craftsmanship as well as art: part of the job is a trade, which must be learned like any other. One must know how to cut and compress here, and expand there. Always in my writing I have skipped some links in a chain of thought: they have to be replaced in order to make my meaning clear. On the other hand I labour and belabour points of little interest: it is a truism that what one omits is just as important as what one writes: to read with enjoyment one must be thinking for oneself, not just following the author's argument. The successful writer is an electro-magnet, setting up an induced current in the reader's mind. This is why there are definite limits to revision. Too much of it destroys the electrical potential, but if there is too little, no current passes.

"A curious thing about my writing—and other authors have told me that the same thing happens to them—is that my most effective work is done quickly, from some part of the brain not used for everyday affairs. One can call it inspiration without being the least conceited about it—and without explaining anything. It is as if another hand held the pen. Words written laboriously often seem still-born. The others are alive, minted in the unconscious. They seem to be catalysts and to have the quality of making sentences coalesce into an idea, or into a picture. But the censor must remain active in the background, watching over this viable stuff, to see that it does its work, and doesn't degenerate into nonsense. My first draft was full of nonsense.

"I began to re-write *Bengal Lancer* in the stimulating air of Florence, and in June of that year (1929) I went up to Vallombrosa (where Milton and Galileo had been before me) and lived there alone with my work and a couple of pointers belonging to the manager of the hotel. It was an enchanted time. I began work at seven, over coffee and rolls, sitting in the sunlight of the veranda, and never so much as glanced at a newspaper, until I sipped my vermouth twelve hours later.

"In the afternoon I used to walk up with the dogs to Monte Sechietta, where an old monk had built a hermitage five hundred years ago. Sometimes also I used to walk up there by moonlight at two o'clock in the morning (it was an hour's climb) and see the dawn lighten the twin peaks of La Verna. There have been so many happy times in my life that I hesitate to say that this was the happiest, but it was certainly the most productive. I thought of nobody but myself, but the body was not important: I slept and ate little, and gave no thought to anything but to the mounting pile of pencilled sheets which were evolving from the typescript of the stenographer . . .

"The nights were exciting. The 'real' world completely vanished. I was pig-sticking again, or meeting Sivànand by the Jumna, or flying in

Mesopotamia. When I lay down to sleep I was still in India, or in Turkey. Sometimes there were mornings of delight and sometimes days of despair when I re-read what I had written. Nothing comes through the gates of birth alive without pain and pleasure, and the agonies and exultations of motherhood were mine during those weeks at Vallombrosa.

"They came to an end abruptly because I had no more money, and was compelled to return to England to earn my living by articles and reviews. This kind of writing now gave me a pain in the neck. Literally. I was always aching to get back to *Bengal Lancer*: everything else bored me, and to write about things that bore me tenses my muscles so that my head creaks when I turn it. One must live, but I strongly advise any budding author to avoid reviewing—not other kinds of journalism, which are all good practice for the masterpiece everyone hopes to write one day —if he can do any other work. And if he can't, he has no business to be a critic.

"Summer and early autumn passed rather unhappily, for London is a distracting city for a writer. By the time I was back at my little table in Robert Street, with pipe alight, some 'virtue' had gone from me. I could no longer possess my soul. My mind kept wandering back to engagements I had made, and friends I had seen, or ought to have seen. I began to doubt what I had written. Was it worth-while? Platitudes, fallacies, non-sequiturs loomed up alarmingly. Sentences lost their sparkle. I was reading so much that I could not bear the sight of my own stuff, and the thought of the number of clever people in the world gave me a slight but permanent feeling of mental indigestion.

"On the afternoon of October 19th, my revisions were complete—parts of the book had been re-written ten times—and I drove down to Champneys to begin a short fasting cure.

"My own progress towards health occurred during ten days fast that eliminated the malaria and poisons in my blood from Turkish days, which had dogged my footsteps for more than ten years . . . After a week's fast I felt so well that instead of a morning bath I rolled in the hoar frost on the lawn of the sun-bathing enclosure. On the ninth day I walked seven miles; on the tenth I was given a milk diet, because I could not afford the time for a full treatment.

"After a week of orange-juice I looked at my opening chapter, and saw it was what I had wanted it to be. The creator looking at his small world saw that it was good. There are few pleasures to compare with reading one's own sentences when they are running smoothly, and few miseries comparable to their contemplation when the stream is muddy.

"I sent *Bengal Lancer* to my agent with high expectations, but heard nothing for several months. Then I learned that the first firm of publishers to whom it was submitted had returned it promptly, and that the second also refused it, saying that the incidents were vivid enough, but that the public could not be expected to be interested in Indian philosophy.

"Surprised and somewhat disheartened, I went to Engelberg to ski with a large party of friends, and heard there that my dear friend, E. F. Benson, had strongly recommended the book to a new and enterprising publisher. I awaited his verdict confidently, and once again my hopes

were dashed. This publisher told me that he personally had enjoyed reading it immensely (when he said that, I knew there was bad news to come) but that his partners thought the book contained far too much about Yoga and too little about the life of Englishmen in India. Could I write a chapter about Simla society? Something perhaps in the manner of 'Plain Tales from the Hills'?"

We must now break off Y.B's narrative, in order to realise the despair that overwhelmed him. I was on the continent of Europe in connection with international work and my wife writing to me from London on 11th April, 1930, sent me the following account of a dinner with Y.B.:

"Francis called punctually at 7.30 in his very nicest mood. Quo Vadis is in Greek Street. We had a very real talk all through dinner. Francis plunged in straight away; he has had a great blow, as his book has been refused again by the publisher Benson advised him to send it to; and he minded dreadfully at first, he told me, but has pulled himself round. They all seem to think there is too much Yoga in it, and he is cutting it down further.

"He has quite come to the conclusion that writing a book is not his strong point, as he does not seem to have the gift of hanging it all together, and he said he did not rely on his judgment, so he has been reconsidering his whole future and wondering what he is to do.

"Three courses he put before me:

(1) That he should join a printing-press in the country which he knows of, and for a year go right through the whole process of printing, which he thinks would be of value to him afterwards, and he would rather like to work with his hands.
(2) That he should work in connection with the Northcliffe provincial papers; he thinks there is an opening for him there of which he could avail himself.
(3) That he should write a book on the lines of 'Mother India' about England.

"Of the three, the last was the one that seemed to me had real possibilities in it, and we discussed it all thoroughly. What I advised was that he should write this book in the form of a series of articles which could perhaps first be published in the *Spectator*; any that were not suitable he could hold back and make use of for the book. His idea would be to do the thing quite thoroughly, to go himself and live in the slums he was describing, etc., and not to describe slums only, but every sort and kind of interesting problem in England, Scotland and Ireland at the same time. It seemed to me that a series of articles of this kind might be just what you were wanting to put fresh interest into the *Spectator*, especially as Francis is so very good at this kind of thing, and I can imagine the articles making very good weekly posters.

"Anyhow, there are possibilities and he seemed cheered discussing it all."

The value of this letter is that it shows Y.B's complete sense of frustration. He felt himself a failure as an author but still clung to the hope of writing a series of articles that might ultimately appear in book form. He refused the third publisher's suggestion to write about Simla society, and on the advice of his agent, sent the typescript of *Bengal Lancer* to Mr. Victor Gollancz. This was April, 1930, just a year since he had begun the book.

We can now return to Y.B's narrative:

"On May the 27th I heard that it had been accepted, not only by Gollancz, but by the Book Society, who would publish it in July. Hotfoot I went to Henrietta Street. How many authors, I wonder, have returned from the Gollancz office with wild elation in their hearts? A good many, I am sure. All Mr. Gollancz's authors are geniuses and their books masterpieces; his enthusiasm was infectious (at least they were then, before he had become more Marxian than Moscow), and inspiring.

Bengal Lancer, he said, bless him, was not only a great work of art: it had also the makings of a big commercial success, but with regard to sales everything depended on his being able to publish it by July the 11th, before people began to leave London. Was I prepared to correct proofs over Whitsuntide?

"Was I? I was prepared to jump over the moon!

"There were still corrections to be made, and there was a postscript to be added about Lazarus, which I had not dared to show anyone except Victor Gollancz, who at once agreed to its inclusion. On May 29th, I sat up all night, revising the typescript from beginning to end. (A new typescript, needless to say, done by a good lady who lives in the city, and who has a marvellous facility for reading my interlineations and 'bubbles' of added matter.)

"Dawn came at a quarter to four, over the dome of St. Paul's. I smoked a cigarette on my roof, watching a glory spreading over the Thames. Then went back to my table until the charwoman brought coffee. What a happy night! I find this work of polishing a delightful job, no more strenuous than a crossword puzzle, and infinitely more amusing.

"London lay sleeping, and beyond it the cities of the English-speaking world, into whose shops my book would soon be going. Colonels would read it in Ealing, sub-debs in rocking chairs in the Middle West, *babus* under electric fans . . .

"Fifteen thousand people would buy this book from the Book Society, and how many more from Gollancz? Ten thousand? Twenty? I saw a great host of people, in my mind's eye, waiting to be instructed or entertained, while I sat, with pencil poised, able to do what I pleased.

"But not entirely what I pleased. By now the book itself had acquired a personality of its own. I could not play fast and loose with it. Several pages had to be re-written, not to please the public, or myself, but some other entity, real enough to me at the moment, although shadowy now, a sort of ghost raised by my revision, which became clearer and clearer as the night wore on.

"Never again has this ghost come to me so vividly, although come it

does. I wonder if it is an Angel? A guardian angel, versed in suggestive values, who helps to make the meaning clear? I wish I knew, but I have never been conscious of this presence except when sitting up all night at work, and that has happened but rarely. One must be in the right mood.

"Off went the typescript to Henrietta Street, and I to Plymouth, where I was to meet T. E. Lawrence.

"*Bengal Lancer* was published on July 11th, 1930, the first day of the Eton-Harrow match. That morning there was a short notice of it in the *Times*—short and rather chilly to my anxious eyes.

"I spent the two days at Lords wondering what all those sleek, secure, well-nourished people—some of them my friends, whom I met under the clock, or hailed in passing, thinking of the havoc wrought by time—would make of my adventures with the philosophers of India. Never did I dream how well-known the title would become, if not the book!

"On Sunday morning, across the top of two columns of a Sunday newspaper, I found that Jack Squire had lauded *Bengal Lancer* to the skies. Jack 'leans over backwards' as the saying is: he is so careful not to praise a friend's work unduly that I knew then that success was in sight.

"Success is sweet, and good for an average man, such as I, who have had many reverses in life, and been at my wits' end for money.

"Letters began to arrive from strangers at the rate of ten and then twenty a day. One day I received forty, mostly from persons unknown. Those from friends warmed my heart, and some of the others from sick and lonely people, were also very touching. But inevitably there were requests for advice, autographs, cash, and so on. There was only one angry correspondent, a missionary in Burma who considered that I had misinterpreted the Fourth Gospel. That nobody objected to my style I thought flattering at the time. I now know that it was because I had said nothing of any importance.

"One of the letters from a stranger began: 'My breasts are still firm, although I have passed my thirtieth year, and I have full soft lips. Have you seen me in your dreams, as I have seen you?' I had not. Another girl wrote me that she had been reading the book in her bath, and when she came to the sentence 'As the compass-needle points to the north, so the unconscious mind directs our destinies', she knew that she had to make my acquaintance. So I sent her a postcard, suggesting that we should meet in Kensington Gardens, by the statue of Physical Energy. She arrived punctually, accompanied by a Pekinese and a child on a fairy cycle, and proved to be a governess: a clever and charming young lady who has since been happily married.

"The London season was over, but I lunched and dined out every day, and received many invitations to the country. However, I soon left for Holland, to see a friend who was studying the cult of Rudolph Steiner by the shores of the Zuyder Zee. I was at Harderwijk when a cable arrived from the United States to say that the Viking Press and the Book Society of America, both wanted to publish *Bengal Lancer*, and soon after another cable from Hollywood to say that the Paramount Film Corporation wanted to buy a three months' option on the film rights.

"More good news came on the heels of these trans-Atlantic tidings.

Sales were booming in England. The Committee of the James Tait Black Memorial awarded me the prize for the best biography of the year. An American magazine offered me a dollar a word for an article on Yoga.

"That was a quickly earned £200!

"And finally Paramount bought the film rights for what seemed to me a fabulous sum!

"The cup of my contentment should have been pressed down and brimming over, but the fact remains that when I returned to London I was not happy.

"Happiness comes easily to me, through conversation, horses, the sea, sunlight, reading, writing, meditation, mountains, watching dawns and sunsets, eating, drinking and flying; and thank God, I have had my fill of these good things. Often, lying in bed, and thinking of all that is to happen next day—and how certain it is that the sun will rise, and how probable that I shall enjoy a delicious breakfast—I feel I am the luckiest man alive. Yes, even in the winter of 1939, when we are at war, I am happy, for I see ahead 'the time that shall surely be, when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea'. But in the autumn of 1930, the morrow was generally laden with anxieties. True, I expected to read some agreeable letters, and even to find some cheques and charming reviews. But I was beginning to wonder how to invest my money! I saw a slump in the offing. Calvados cocktails, dinners, dances, receptions, are all very well for a time, but they soon pall, and during that autumn they left me with a nasty taste in my mouth. Below the surface of a glittering life ran an undercurrent of cynicism and futility.

"Here I must be frank, and drag a heartache out of my memories. The real reason why I was adrift and rudderless was that I was in love (not for the first or last time in my life; indeed my heart had been broken shortly before, in my baby Austin when a girl said: 'You are intolerable: drive me to the nearest station: I never want to see you again;' (but more flat-footedly than ever before or since) and that my love was unrequited. I need not describe her marvellous voice, her beautiful fair hair, and how even her writing on a letter, or the scent of her dropped handkerchief that made me giddy with delight. It is an old story. There were seven virgins I might have embraced, but it was this intractable eighth who obsessed me with passionate longing and lured me to hopeless adventures such as following her to New York, or sitting up with her all night in Cannes, eating lobsters and hoping to wear down her resistance.

"I never wore down her resistance, and 'lured' is probably the wrong word to describe her attractive power. I lured myself. She behaved beautifully, always, and the more she told me that I was wasting my time, the more obstinately I disbelieved her. I was the usual fool. Love should be a light to them that sit in darkness, but I made of it a stumbling-block. To all knights errant I would say (and of course they will not listen) that if their lady frowns on them they must never sit at her feet and ask her why. Let them go away quickly. It is not true that any man can win any woman, provided he is patient. Women can be won by stratagems, but never by argument.

"How I argued! What long letters I wrote! At twenty my conduct

would have been forgivable, but at forty-four it was simply absurd. At the time, and for years afterwards whenever my philosophy deserted me, which was often, I felt that life would be impossible without her, and that I could never love again. But life is never impossible, and I have loved again.

"Sometimes, however, still I feel that something was wasted when our minds and bodies did not meet. I used to think that somewhere in outer space a soul was yearning to be born. That the child invisible of my fancy watched us, wondering, for a year or two, and then turned away to find other bodies to make its flesh and blood. A less foolish father, and a more highly-sexed mother. Our paths diverged, and we shall go our ways apart through centuries.

"She was always kind, as I have said . . . It is an uncomfortable thought that she may have merely pitied me; but anyway, God bless her, and give her all the joy for which she is so richly endowed!

"Yoga ought to have helped me to be less unreasonable. Perhaps it did. If one really believes, as I did, and do, that 'all that exists is one', it should be impossible to become stunned with desire. Individuals are facets of the All-in-all. They are oneself. One possesses them already. This sounds fanciful to the superficial enquirer, but it is a really practical idea, which will calm the mind, especially the love-sick mind, and lift it to higher levels of awareness. Certainly I did not keep the heights, but I had had glimpses of the peaks of monism, and it was perhaps for this reason—although again it may have been due simply to her courtesy—that the lady of my heart never yawned in my company. We quarrelled rarely, and laughed a great deal. She had a gift of happiness, although I was terribly unhappy about her, and for a time broken in health and spirits.

"It would be wrong to pretend, however, that this hopeless quest—here touched on lightly, for it is a sorry business to dissect the corpse of Cupid—entirely blighted my life. Slices of fun were sandwiched between hours of egotistic gloom. It was amusing to find myself for a season a 'distinguished author', and even an authority on Indian affairs.

"Learned societies asked me to lecture. Commissions for articles were almost as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa, and editors who used to suggest that I should see them in their office now asked me to lunch at the Savoy Grill, or came to my flat for a cocktail. Women's clubs wanted to know my views on bombing on the North-West Frontier. (It is curious to reflect that the technique which we evolved of the merciful use of air-power against the Arabs and Pathans, by threats which forced them to evacuate their homes, is being adopted on a large scale by our enemies in the present war.) I met a number of clever and successful people.

"Mr. Bernard Shaw was the most eminent. At large parties I had often heard him descant in his familiar platform style, but when Mrs. Hardy asked me to meet him, and Mrs. Shaw and Sir James Barrie, I hoped for a private feast of reason. Alas, Mr. Shaw gagged like a comedian. A grand comedian. He made a scene live for us in which he had been interviewed by a news-reel company, interrupting his meal by acting the respective parts of Shaw and camera man. It was magnificent, but not conversation. We were spell-bound, and more or less speechless. Unfor-

tunately I never met Sir James Barrie again. I think he remembered that I was the neighbour who had danced on his roof.

"The only question I asked Mr. Shaw was whether he was ever nervous when speaking in public. 'Yes,' he replied, with a gleam in his small bright eyes, he had recently been almost overcome when giving an address of welcome to Doctor Einstein, at a dinner of the Royal Society; but when the spot-light was turned on him and he remembered how beautiful his white beard must look when thus illuminated, all was well.

"The kindness of G.B.S. to journalists is well known in Fleet Street, and I believe his private charity is lavish. Contrary to the general belief, he is humble about his writings (at least T.E. told me so) and on the only occasion when he wrote for the *Spectator* (while I was its literary editor), he accompanied his review of 'Revolt in the Desert' by a note to say he was sorry to be so out of practice at that kind of work. As a dramatist, several of his plays will live as long as our language, notably 'St. Joan', and as a writer his prefaces will long be studied as models of vigorous prose. But as a man I do not regret not knowing him better any more than I regret not having met Milton, or Wordsworth, or Tennyson, or Keats.

"Shakespeare would be another pair of shoes, or Byron, Shelley, Browning, any of the Brontës, or Oscar Wilde. Surely anyone who has ever tried to write would give all he possesses to spend a day with Shakespeare. As to Wilde, my friends who knew him—the late Reggie Turner, and E. F. Benson, for instance—say that he was the best talker that they ever met. Max Beerbohm is probably the last of the Victorian wits, and in his style there are no successors.

"To hear 'Max' at his best"—

The above line, as far as I have been able to ascertain, is the last of his proposed autobiography. Presumably he was going to have written several paragraphs about Max Beerbohm, they would certainly have been entertaining, and perhaps Y.B. with his gift for capturing the elusive could have portrayed the inimitable and elusive "Max" at his best. I wish he had done so.

CHAPTER XVI

SUCCESS

FOR SOME time Y.B. had been anxious to marry again,[1] not only was he much attracted by the young woman whose hand he now sought; but in her he would have found a mind capable of entering into his wide interests. He was also longing to have a home and children of his own. In a fragment in his handwriting one of the greatest imagined joys in life is defined as "feeding one's children oneself". His bachelor life had begun to pall. In his diary—curiously enough on his birthday, 15th August, 1930, a month after the publication of *Bengal Lancer*—there is this entry: "The crash came—spent my birthday miserably at Boulogne."

It has been a somewhat bewildering experience rummaging among Y.B's "pencillings by the way" which refer to the months after the publication of *Bengal Lancer*. It was as if he had been living in some dimension where time and place were of no account. In his note-books, fragments and memoranda for his autobiography, he jumps from the years of childhood to the second world war, and then jumps back again.

In referring to these years he describes himself as "something of a lion"—certainly not an over-statement. The knowledge that Hollywood was interested in his work was a great stimulus, and when the cable with the joyful news came that his book was to be filmed there was a long period of pleasurable anticipation of the *première* in London of "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer".

During the next few years he met many literary celebrities. On a sheet of foolscap, in his handwriting, are listed some of the constellations in this dazzling firmament. Engagements noted in his diary include tea with Tagore: an O.U.D.S. dinner: a visit to Masefield with Max Beerbohm: talks with John Buchan, Father Martindale, Somerset Maugham, and so on. The post usually contained some attractive offer. He was in demand as a broadcaster. Reading his fan mail certainly gave him pleasure. He would not have been human if he had not been touched by the sentiments expressed by some of his admirers. Success was undoubtedly pleasant, even if it entailed going to boring cocktail parties and being lionised by certain well-known hostesses always on the look-out for a lion.

Bengal Lancer brought him in touch with many Indian friends and he

[1] His first marriage was dissolved by decree absolute on 6th December, 1928.

met some of the delegates attending the Round Table conferences. Few things gave him greater pleasure than the appreciation of his work by Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote that he had sat up all night reading his book. Y.B. had visited the poet eight years before at Santiniketan, and sat with him again five years later, in the poet's old age, "not talking much, but deriving something precious from his proximity, as a disciple does from a master, in civilisations wiser than ours".

Tagore wrote an article on *Bengal Lancer* for *The Spectator* in which, *inter alia*, he said:

"I have just finished reading almost at one sitting 'The Lives of a Bengal Lancer', and feel that it is one of the most remarkable books in modern literature. We are too familiar with the writings dealing with secret knots and distortions in sex psychology, jarring notes of nerves gone out of tune, futile struggles of human will against inheritance or inherent self-antagonism. But I have known no other instance of a genuine psychological record of any intimate touch of a western mind with the mind of the east, a record of reactions much more deeply fundamental and interesting in its subtleties than the pathological convulsions of passions and prejudices."

Of his meeting with Krishnamurti, Y.B. writes:

"If fate had brought me into closer contact with Indians at this time perhaps I should not have lost so much of my peace and poise. Yet fate did lead me to Lady Emily Lutyens' house, where I met Krishnamurti, whom I had first met as a handsome boy with magnetic eyes, worshipped by Mrs. Besant and her theosophists. After Mrs. Besant's death he refused any longer to be considered as a Messiah. By his action he cut himself off from friends, money, power, and the adulation of his disciples, whatever that was worth. It was just the thing that a Messiah might have done. He is absolutely honest and sincere, a high type of Hindu, preaching what is really the philosophy of the Vedanta to a world that wants some easier and more comfortable doctrine."

At the time of Mahatma Gandhi's visit to London to participate in the Round Table discussions, I introduced Y.B. to him. These comments on his meeting with the Mahatma in Whitechapel have never been published:

"*Notes on Mr. Gandhi and the Indian Problem.* I went to see Mr. Gandhi on Tuesday morning, November 10th, at 5.30 a.m. My taxi lost its way, and I was nearly late for the appointment. As we drove up, I saw a little shrouded form in sandals, paddling away from Kingsley Hall, followed by a dozen women, like Krishna with his milkmaids.

"I jumped out of the cab and approached the group, who arranged themselves in a semi-circle round the Mahatma. Gandhi did not catch my name, but shook hands and smiled a little wrinkled smile. Then he

said: 'Are you the writer of *Bengal Lancer*? Ah, I heard that you have been wanting to see me ever since I came. It is cruel to bring you here at such an early hour, but I am so busy—'

"I answered that I enjoyed walking in the dawn, and made a mental note of the fact that his secretary must have flattered his vanity by representing me as one who had for a long time supplicated for an interview; as a matter of fact, I had asked E.W. to give me an introduction, but had not moved heaven or earth about it, nor taken any steps before last week.

"We set out at a brisk pace. Gandhi barely looked where he was going. His feet, bare except for the thonged sandals, splashed through the puddles of Whitechapel. Occasionally Mira Bai would say 'turn right', or 'turn left', and at six o'clock she directed us to retrace our steps.

" 'Yes, my friends are all surprised that I haven't caught cold,' he said, 'but I keep entirely fit. I never go to bed before midnight, and am always up at four thirty, when I pray. Then I drink hot water, with a little honey and lemon. At 5.30 I walk for one hour with my friends, as you see. Afterwards I bathe and breakfast, and am ready for my day's work at eight. My meals consist of milk and fruit, with a salad in the evening.'

"Certainly Gandhi is a good example of the energy—physical and mental—which is possible on a vegetarian diet and limited hours of sleep. (Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Besant are also vegetarians and it is noteworthy that none of the trio can be described as a normal individual, though all three are brilliant.)

"I naturally asked Gandhi the latest news of the Indian situation. He answered that he had 'not much hope', but that he had suggested a compromise on the Communal question to the Prime Minister.

" 'Apart from the technicalities of the moment,' I said, 'do you believe that India and England are destined to go forward together, or do you think they will part company?'

" 'That depends on England,' he said; and just as I expected, he proceeded to manoeuvre me into a dialectical position in which the British Government appeared responsible for the breakdown of the Hindu-Moslem negotiations. I forget his exact words. He mentioned his imprisonment, and although he did not say that he expected the Government to enforce Hindu political supremacy with British bayonets, that was what he meant. He put it with subtlety, but with wasted subtlety, for after all, he knew that I had lived twenty years in India.

"What is the good of bluff, when inevitably, one day, the cards must go down on the table? It would seem reasonable to suppose that the subtlety of the Hindu mind would have discerned long ago that complete independence means complete dependence on the martial races of India, and that those races would therefore inevitably govern the country.

"I hinted this to Gandhi. Somewhat to my surprise, he did not scoff at the idea, but agreed that it was quite a possibility. 'You British had your racial quarrels on the Scottish border and in Ireland before you settled down,' he said.

" 'Surely the circumstances are different in India,' I replied. 'You know, Mr. Gandhi, I have served as an officer in the Indian Army with

both Hindus and Moslems, and I know how easily quarrels arise between the two peoples.'

" 'We may have internal wars,' he admitted, 'but we shall no longer be enslaved.'

"That was true. Mr. Gandhi and the people he represents would not be enslaved; they would be exterminated. I felt it would be crude to say this, yet I could not leave the subject without an effort to clarify it. I asked if I might put some further questions on the Army, or whether he was sick of the subject, and especially at that hour of the morning.

" 'Of course I am not sick of it,' he said, 'ask what you like.'

" 'Do you expect the Indian Army to be loyal to the elected Ministers of the Indian people?'

" 'Certainly I do,' he replied, 'the Indian Army is composed of mercenaries' (why they should be called mercenaries I had no opportunities to enquire) 'who would serve us as they do you. As to the 40,000 British soldiers, if Great Britain is serious in her expressed desire to help us over the transitional period, then they also will stay.'

" 'I'm sure I hope so,' I answered, 'but many of your countrymen, Mr. Gandhi, are not trained to bear arms. People who cannot bear arms have perished in the past. Do you think the world has progressed beyond that point, and that soul-force will be enough in the future to maintain a State against internal and external aggression?

" 'Certainly I do,' he said again.

"Words failed me. Where would Mr. Gandhi be against Pathan and Sikh and Gurkha and Rajput? What was the soul-force of his, harnessed to the material political dogma of democracy? And why did he want our parliamentary system, instead of the village *panchayets* indigenous to India? The latter question found expression.

" 'I know—the *panchayets* appeal to your Conservatives,' he said, '—but your people should listen to the elected representatives of India—that is, to me—rather than to Indians that have been handpicked and nominated by the Viceroy. I represent the peasants of India, who are 95% of the population.'

" 'Do you claim to represent *all* the peasants?' I said, aghast at his temerity.

" 'Yes, certainly! And my proof of that is the trouble I shall make if the wishes of Congress are not met!'

"Again words failed me. There was a blank wall between us. How could he claim to represent the Moslem peasants of the Punjab, who will certainly never be ruled by Hindus? How could he blink the plain fact that only force—whether Indian or British—can hold India together? After all, I said to myself (feeling a little irritated) Gandhi must be an impostor. He must know that he could not govern India without an army, even for a week.

"He was speaking of idealism now, and love. He told me of his relations with his wife. As long as he loved her as a husband, he said, their relations had been estranged. He had been too possessive, too absorbed in her. But when they saw less of each other, when he gave her not individual but universal cosmic love, enveloping her in the ocean of beauty that bathes all creation, then they became friends again.

" 'Is not that too difficult a counsel for human beings?' I asked, 'what would happen to family life, and how would children be born, if each man didn't desire to possess the woman of his choice?'

"Mr. Gandhi chuckled. 'It is not my business to say how children would be born. I should trust to God. When we have found a higher way to love, the Creator will take care of His world in another way.'

"I felt he meant that. Mr. Gandhi is sincere. He takes what he thinks is the higher way and damns the consequences. Facts have no value to him. Let the country be invaded. Let India sink into chaos. Let wives be sad. The squalid details of day-to-day life are not his affair.

"Mira Bai told us to turn. We walked back now in a steadily increasing rain-storm. Water glistened on Mr. Gandhi's grey head.

"How many shrouded figures like this I had seen in my life, walking out slowly into their fields as dawn broke over the plains! Humble, patient, peasants they had been; but here was one who was neither humble nor patient. Yet like them, he had the Hindu mind, but raised to the *n*th degree—a marvellously flexible and quick, discerning, witty instrument for philosophic enquiry, but with no grip on objective facts, indeed, denying their existence. Mr. Gandhi could hardly have succeeded in any Western profession but that of lawyer or politician.

"I was not disappointed. I was stimulated by his charm, impressed by his ready wit; and I felt that even if he did not represent as much of India as he said, yet he was the most representative Indian I had ever met.

" 'Come again,' he said as I left. 'Now that you have found your way here you must consider yourself one of the family.'

"I don't feel that I am that. I am a thousand miles away from his attitude towards daily life, and I am not anxious to come any nearer, for to my mind, it is a false and fantastic attitude. When dealing with abstractions of space and time, or the movement of the soul towards ecstasy, there are men in India who would teach the West great truths. I have sat, and would like again to sit at the feet of such men. But when it comes to planning for the future of millions of people with divers languages and religions, I tremble to think of the hash the Congress Party will make of the affairs of India if they obtain a large measure of political control."

Y.B's first-hand knowledge of the slums, and of life in the mining villages of South Wales, with their catastrophic unemployment figures, left him dissatisfied with existing methods of approach. The Parliamentary machine under Mr. Baldwin, and even under Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, did not seem capable of mending matters. Just back from witnessing Signor Mussolini pulling down derelict areas in Rome, draining the Pontine marshes, and establishing new and healthy colonies in the Campagna, he undoubtedly compared the achievements in Italy with the half-hearted methods at home.

In his proposals he, no doubt, ignored the difficulties in the path of the reformer in a democracy. It is probably true that the British nation becomes thoroughly aroused, only in moments of supreme crisis. Be that

as it may, he put forward suggestions in his articles which required imaginative statesmanship and it was just this quality which was lacking. He suggested the mobilisation of a million unemployed in a vast workers' army to build houses, construct urgently needed highroads, cut canals, recondition slum-land, create playing-fields, and undertake vast projects of re-afforestation. Simultaneously he felt the crying need for State-aided migration on a large scale. He had seen the empty prairies of Western Canada and knew the need for workers: what he under-estimated was the disinclination of British agricultural workers and farmers to emigrate in the "thirties".

Of the scourge of unemployment he wrote:

"I want something done now, for I have been unemployed myself and know the bitterness of waiting, the hopeless interviews, the slow rot that eats out the hearts of good men . . .

"Above all material reasons for making a militia of the unemployed there is a spiritual one. A volume might be written about the psychology of enforced idleness. I know, for circumstances made me study it for a couple of years. Nothing fails like failure. Put Napoleon in a slum and he would make himself Mayor of the Borough, no doubt; but keep him in a slum for five years and he would be either dead or destitute. We cannot fold our hands and say that unemployment will right itself when trade revives. Trade cannot revive, as I believe, while the idleness now in England prevails and spreads.

"We have been losing trade, and shall lose more as we allow our own flesh and blood to waste because we have not the vision to use it. Here we have a million hearts, a million brains. If we believe, as I do, that they belong to the best human stock on earth, what a crime we are committing against England and the world, in not using those incalculable energies!"

While Y.B. was on *The Spectator* staff he watched our fruitless efforts to stir up public opinion. He began to think that the whole system of government needed overhauling, this was just the state of mind that would be responsive to new concepts of political organisation. He was strongly prejudiced against Bolshevism, but nevertheless, ever since he visited the Baltic countries, he wished to see the Russian experiment for himself.

Undoubtedly Europe was in a state of flux and now that Great Britain had gone off the gold standard nothing was sacrosanct. His personal sense of frustration was very real; had he been happily married, I question whether he would have plunged himself so enthusiastically into the difficult task of enlightening his fellow countrymen concerning the corporate state. The new Europe already in being, in Italy and elsewhere, now became his chief preoccupation, and even his interest in Eastern thought and Yoga were of secondary importance.

He was living in Rye and thought seriously of buying a house there.

On several occasions he went on house-hunting expeditions. Like Shelley, he was prone to express his intention of settling down for the rest of his life in the place he happened to be in at the moment—but unlike Shelley, there was one spot on earth, Portofino, to which his allegiance never changed.

Golden Horn was finished in March, 1932, and published during the summer. While it did not achieve the phenomenal success of *Bengal Lancer*, over thirty thousand copies were sold; there must be many well-known authors who envy such figures. It was chosen as "the book of the month" by the Book Society, and it was published in the United States, with *Bloody Years*[1] as title.

The following letter was written by him after a talk when I suggested he should continue on the staff of *The Spectator*:

Farthing Wood, Rye, Sussex.
26th June 1932.

I have been thinking a great deal about the *Spectator*, too, and will write to you about that fully soon.[2] I recognise what a great opportunity it is for me in many ways, and also how delightful it would be; but on the other hand I hear India calling, and feel the need of expressing myself in books, and ask myself whether it is wise to tie myself up to the routine of an office when I feel I have something to give to the world which is purely personal. I know I shall reach a conclusion soon now, so will write again. It was lovely staying with you, and being in the atmosphere of your house, which is calm and peaceful and so unlike much of our distracted, disturbed modern life. If there were more people like you in the world what a happy place it would be! Ever so many thanks, Evelyn, and *au revoir* soon. Francis.

Among the letters written at this period are the following to Mr. Charles Morgan:

Champneys, Tring, Herts.
Dear Charles, 10th February, 1932.

Thanks awfully, I'd ordered *The Fountain* from the booksellers. That copy shall go to some fortunate friend.

I'll write again as soon as I've read it: from the first two pages I know it'll be entrancing; you take *hold* with a firm, cool, strong hand.

Stuck in my book, I thought fasting might brighten the old brain: it has: I'm five lbs. lighter and 10 years younger. Today I begin to feed and work again: oh, the joy of changing lettuces into ideas, however raw . . .

Yours,
Y.B.

[1] The Viking Press.
[2] I had suggested his acting as a special correspondent and going to Russia and elsewhere on our behalf, as well as working part-time in the office when in England.

Old Hope Anchor, Rye.
1st June, 1932.

Dear Charles,

. . . I find *The Fountain* very satisfying and consoling: it is the work of one who over and above the joy in his craft (and exquisite that is) has lived and suffered *greatly*. The book is big all through, and I thank you for it, as thousands of others must have done, or wished to do. Soon you must give up casting your pearls before the daily papers and live in the country. No one has done anything on the scale of *The Fountain* since Hardy, and H. was damnably pessimistic: you are as honest, as apt, as wise, but know more of the world. Much, much more: I always thought there was truth in Chesterton's "village atheist bemoaning the village idiot".

Yours,
Y.B.

The finding of one's other half in this large and alarming world occurs but rarely, and when it does it is God's greatest gift to man or woman. Would Y.B. and the woman with whom he was in love have been able to attain such bliss? Were they the destined halves of the perfect whole? Who can answer that question? Y.B. went on hoping. He pursued the lady of his heart across the continents, he kept returning to the attack, but all to no avail. The vision, of what might have been, dominated him for several years and certainly affected his work.

Many things in his life can only be understood when we bear in mind the background of this deep devotion. On one occasion I saw the happy and carefree Y.B.—if a lover is ever carefree—in the surroundings of Portofino, his old home. Surely this was the ideal setting for the unfolding of the story with a happy ending. I have a very vivid memory of that summer spent in the mediæval castello, with its enclosed garden within the battlements, the azure sky, the sparkling sea, and coming upon the two of them talking earnestly on some rocky look-out at sunset hour. To Y.B. Portofino would have been a dream home with the woman he loved by his side. Here at last he, the wandering minstrel, would settle down, not merely to an "Enchanted April" but to an existence of enchantment.

His love was not dependent upon the magic environment of Italy, however; amid London's wintry gloom the fire of his devotion burned just as brightly. Surely if he were but persistent enough, he must ultimately overcome reluctance? He would persuade her that their destinies were linked.

Looking back on these years in 1939 he wrote that this unsuccessful love affair had been the cause of the misdirection of his life at this period.

The following letters to Rosalind Constable give a vivid picture of Y.B. during the latter part of 1930 and 1931:

August 3. 1930. Camp de Stakenberg
Elspeet
Holland.

I'm sitting in a neat little room in the incredibly neat village of Harderwyek on the Zuyder Zee. They have trained their lime trees to grow so as to shade their roads nicely: the roads are built out of small bricks: women in white caps and sabots sweep them: the barges look like private yachts: the infantry barracks, with its lawns and gleaming windows looks like a country house: everyone is extremely well-nourished and comfortable: even the cows wear small overcoats when in a delicate state of health.

. . . The people have such solid (tho' possibly circumscribed) happiness that they don't even have a cinema. And there is only one pub: (I'm in it or rather over it) where the good burghers take their schnapps and play billiards. As you may gather, I like Holland: its beer: the bloom on the cheeks of its girls: its matrons' caps: the large slow pipes of the men.

Ypres was sad and beautiful. The Menin Gate dominates it, as it should, with its fine lion looking out—for ever, I hope—towards Germany. It is splendid to hear the last post sounded here at 9 o'clock: it is a bigger and more glorious thing than the flag over the Lucknow Residency, when, after all, we could do nothing but stand our ground. At Ypres and at Zeebrugge (which I hope to see on my way back) Englishmen did something quite unsurpassed . . .

And here we are, leading the Higher Life amidst 900 Huns. There are only 50 English and about the same number of Dutch. Last night a Dutchman made an opening speech of 1 hour in German; then repeated it in English and Dutch: 2 hours in all. This morning we listened to another German who spoke without pause or hesitation for 1 and three quarter hours: tomorrow there will be English translations.

I suppose we're rather like the Early Christians minus persecutions: we have our love feasts (highly respectable, though) and our Pauline Elders. We think noble thoughts and do them all day long, or most of it; but when my spirit begins to waver I lie on some delicious heather, and go to sleep. Personally, I don't believe in anthroposophy, or in listening to sermons:

"From mystical Germans
Who preach from 10 till 4":

in fact I don't believe in mass religion much. Gurus don't trouble with crowds. Yet it is stimulating to be among the waves of all this Nordic emotion, and I ought to be singing glees with my brother and sister campers at this moment instead of writing about them superciliously . . .

August 8. 1930. Ibid.

This is a strange world of Anthroposophists. What orgies of talk we indulge in!

We do some physical exercises at 8.30 a.m. (all very mystical symbolical: raising hands to Heaven and bringing down the higher forces to earth: no mention of the benefit to the bowels of such bending)—or a few of us do—for I notice the chief adepts and higher initiates are consuming sausages

and coffee at that hour; and at 9.30 we have a 1-1/2 hour sermon, such as Cromwell's Ironsides listened to, no doubt. At 11 (after one Camel smoked in the canteen, the only place where the filthy habit is allowed) I go to a study group conducted by a charming English boy—a young Science master. He is taking us through a course of Steiner's lectures, which seem to me to be Vedanta-and-water.

At 12.30 I attend Dr. Vreede's lecture: she is a well-known Dutch astronomess. At the end of each sentence she makes a noise which is a cross between a sniffle and squeak: most giggle-making.

But we must see the god and goddess in each physical sheath, I know (and have lately been taught ad nauseum) . . . Anyway it will all be over the day after tomorrow; when I go in search of more Pieter Breughels in Amsterdam and the Hague; also of the sun, if he be visible anywhere in Europe. And in the afternoon of the 19th I cross to England.

Last night there was a band on the market square of Harderwijk. The fishermen all came in their sabots and costumes; and the girls in their white caps and black flounced dresses; the children in sabots and black stockings are so many Mickey Mice. A marvellously handsome people, and I'm lucky to see this unsophisticated town, off the tourist track . . .

18th. September 1930.

. . . I can't come to Paris alas: not yet. I might manage the following week if that wasn't too late, for I've just heard that the American Book of the Month Club have taken *Bengal Lancer* for November. That means 80,000 copies cold. Isn't it *fun*?

Assuredly there must be some celebration of such an auspicious event, and I'll try and make it in Paris if you are still going to be there.

On the sand at Camber, near Rye,
at 10.30 a.m. October 19. 1930

My dear,

You will probably realize I'm rash, when we know each other better, but really and truly I believe that I've found a book that will work a magic in you and make you a new woman—or rather release the real and royal self that your friends can see beneath illusions and self-depreciations and tortured moods.

It is Bertrand Russell's new book *The Conquest of Happiness* and I'll send it to you, if not tonight tomorrow, (for I must review it). It says all I believe, but *brilliantly*, regarding mental states. He is not afraid of platitude, and he is not afraid of contradicting himself. Really this is a book in a million, and it's lovely to think that it should have been published just now, when there is a friend in such need of it.

It does not deal with soul or body. They are both as subtle as the mind, or subtler, less amenable to conquest through books, but within the limits he sets himself he has done what no analyst or philosopher has yet succeeded in doing. You shall see for yourself.

I couldn't bear any more of London and have come down here by myself. Rye stands behind me, its towers and spires like the bulwarks of a

new Jerusalem against a pale autumn sky; and before me, across a strip of wet shining sand, the opalescent Channel. I'm on a big sand dune, and these lines (I don't know where from) run in my head:

> "Firm is the man, and set beyond the cast
> Of fortune's game and the inevitable hour,
> Whose falcon soul sits fast . . ."

You know, I'm really not sorry you are unhappy, provided you put up a good fight. To write well I rather think you must be unhappy sometime: it actually gives a depth to be won in no other way. Most artists have not been unhappy enough.

Now the sea is like mercury, with the sun on it and the air so delicious I must undress and let my skin rejoice. I wish you were here

Later. But it was damned cold . . . Met Sheila Kaye-Smith on my way back, and got out of going to lunch which she asked me to do, and have arranged to go to tea with E.F.B. Tomorrow I may look up the Girls[1] at sherry-hour. It is bliss to be alone: it's the only chance one gets of liking oneself a little, and knowing that poor little fluttering thing that Hadrian only addressed when dying . . .

Saturday. October or November 1930.
1 Robert Street.

. . . Masefield has just written "Though I have not the honour of knowing you, perhaps you will let me write to tell you how very greatly I have enjoyed your book. It has been a great delight to me; please, therefore, let me send you these lines of thanks. If you ever come to Oxford, will you not come to see me? With my thanks, yours sincerely, John Masefield." Isn't that sweet? He is my favourite poet, too. Of course I'll go to see him; and Dick Sheppard too has written from hospital to say he wants to see me. Those sort of people are real fun. As to the others, the constipated dowagers and cancerous Colonels, who cares? For five years I've been struggling in London, chiefly alone, and sometimes very lonely. Numbers of people cut me altogether after my divorce. Now these same people write asking me to their dreary dinners, and like a fool I've gone—or rather like a snob, for I am middle-class enough to be that. But in my heart I despise them, and I know you do too . . .

December 1930. Ibid.

. . . an exquisite dinner alone with Mrs. Belloc Lowndes. She's a marvellous woman. Gets her butter from Cornwall, mutton from Wales, chicken from somewhere else. She'd heard I was in love, wanted to know who with. I rode her off easily: she told me all sorts of queer and exciting things. Just back from America. My book sold 3,500 copies the first week in spite of the slump. Says I mustn't stick to *Spectator*, and mustn't write about Constantinople, but give the public what it wants—more Yoga. I think she's wrong. But her dinner was excellent and I like her mind and admire her complexion . . .

[1] Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge.

Circa December 1930. Ibid.

I'll have to tell you about Masefield, and de la Mare, and Raphael Sabatini and E.M. Forster when you get back; also of an extremely funny night with Oxford undergraduates. One thing I did notice about the above successful writers; they were all physically strong men. E. M. Forster the weakest, and the worst seller, Sabatini the strongest. Health isn't everything, but if you don't want to blush unseen, darling, you must be very fit in the writing game. This is a profound truth that journalists generally don't know. You can see dozens of them ruining themselves at the Savage Club daily. Whereas a man like Galsworthy, with a little real talent, is a great success because he plays golf and limits his cocktails. Even Max is an ascetic as regards food.

Just a little fanning will light your spark, and make it such a candle that I'm determined you shall learn about diet and enemas and exercise. Like Naaman you hesitate to believe that such simple things as water and work should make you mistress of your mind. But so it is. Your *je m'en fichisme* is mine. It doesn't matter what we do, except in so far as it pleases or hurts oneself and others. . . . Once you have a feeling—realisation of monism (not a mere intellectual conception) however, and do truly believe that you and the universe are parts of the same whole; then Jeans' ideas of running down are of little importance. Certainly we can do little on earth. We are little. Yet we can ask with Masefield:

> "Is all this lust
> Some chymic means by warring stars contriven
> To bring the violets out of Cæsar's dust?"

It may be. Love means something. It is the best meaning we have. Good enough to go on with . . .

Jan. 8 1931. Ibid.

I suppose I was in a thoroughly bad mood a few minutes ago when I began to look for pencil and paper with which to write to you. But now I have turned on my electric fire to reinforce my coal one, mixed myself a hot whisky and lemon, lit a cigarette, sat down in my armchair with stockinged feet on my new French rug . . . It is 10.30 p.m., cold and foggy outside, quiet and warm in here.

Yesterday a nice boy in the Flying Corps gave me a grand lunch—oysters, pheasant, etc. I think I had a bad oyster, but am so pure inside that all that happened was that I awoke with a very odd feeling at 4 a.m.

Tonight I am tired, soul and body. And perhaps, instead of the oyster, it was Mrs. Adams-Beck who troubled my dreams. She died the day before yesterday, you know, near Kyoto, where she was studying Zon Buddhism. She and I were strangely linked, tho' she was quite old . . .

Looking at the photographs I have just had taken by Yevonde (in order to give one to Michael Joseph, my agent) I see what a twisted soul I am. My face is full of duplicity and cruelty. I am hardly ever myself and hardly ever happy . . .

Jan. 18. 1931. 1 Robert Street.

If you've been working at all at this book[1] I daresay you are as confused or more so than I—who have been over the ground, and lived part of its history. But it will all clear up. At present I am still in the wood, but I am sending you the first rough draft of Chaps 1 and 2, and suggestions for the remaining chapters.

Probably there will be 12 chapters instead of 10; and the Epilogue will be a compressed epic—the wonderful story of the birth of New Turkey. In Halide Edib Hanoum's books I have found some marvellous materials about Mustafa Kemal, with his delicate effeminate hands and tigerish eyes. But I can't expand the book without unbalancing it. My book must be chiefly of the escapes and intrigues in Constantinople: the rest (what I hope you'll help me to work up) is only background for that. But it is in the artful arrangement of such detail that its success will lie. I want you to see Constantinople (if I can find a map I'll send one) as the Enchantress,—cruel, cynical, infinitely seductive, merciless, heaped with Time and Fate, regardless of the puppets who walk her streets.

Enver, Taalat and Jemal must stand out vividly: three glorious rogues who seized an Empire from paralytic doped old men, with the help of unscrupulous Jews, but themselves animated by that most dangerous of idealisms (because so potent) love of country. (They were all poor bourgeois. The class from which all leaders spring, even as you and I!) ... They waded through blood to power. They killed more men and lost more territory and made more history (think of what the Dardanelles, the Armenian massacres, the loss of Palestine have meant to the world) than any other triumvirate, and when things went wrong they all escaped. Enver was murdered in Bokhara, by Bolsheviks, and his wife's letters were found in his breast pocket. Taalat was murdered in Berlin. Jemal in Tiflis. That will come in the Epilogue. But they must be vivid in the second chapter; and we must find out much more about them than I know ...

9th February 1931. The Spectator
99 Gower Street.

I must tell you about Cocteau. I was simply enchanted with the book,[2] and will give it to you back on Friday. Much of his writing is symptomatic of the perversions of a civilisation so exhausted that it cannot get a thrill out of anything natural; at the same time he is a real thinker, and there is lots in it that I would like to talk to you about if there was only time. One thing is sure, every thrill he gets out of opium can also be got out of breathing. Obviously he has never known perfect health and mistakes it for rude vitality instead of the infinitely subtle thing it really is ...

8th June 1931. 30 Watchbell Street,
Rye.

... Paul Dukes is here: he has eaten nothing for ten days, and lost 15 lbs. in weight. He tells me he is doing it to make his hair *grow*, but he generally has an undisclosed reason for his actions. He and I ate an orange for

[1] *Golden Horn.* [2] *Opium.*

dinner, and I am going to have nothing more until *Wednesday*. A short fast like that gives one a wonderful sense of clearness, and is a rest to the poor old stomach . . . The fat cook has given notice, in disgust at my refusing dinner I suppose and announcing that I was to eat nothing till Wednesday. Oh, I forgot to tell you I've bought an *Epstein*. You'll see it at the Redfern Galleries: the top left of the "Shadrech, Meshach and Abednego" group.

CHAPTER XVII

Y.B. AND T. E. LAWRENCE

AT MY suggestion Y.B. invited T. E. Lawrence to write for *The Spectator*. The correspondence which ensued resulted in a friendship when Aircraftsman "Shaw" returned to England.

In April, 1926, Y.B. wrote:

Dear Colonel Lawrence,

I hope you will not think it a presumption on my part to enquire whether you would review anonymously or otherwise, just as you like, some books on the Near East for *The Spectator*.

Their names are:—

"Bedouin Justice"	A Kennett.
"Sahara"	Buchanan.
"Mysteries of the Libyan Desert"	W. J. Harding King.
"Nature at the Desert's Edge"	R. W. G. Hingston.
"Syria"	Stein.
"Rambles in North Africa"	A. Wilson.

Of course I would prefer to have the reviews signed.

Mr. Evelyn Wrench suggested my writing to you, and I should be glad to hear from you as soon as possible, if you can do these books, as otherwise I will have to send them out to someone else.

In a month's time the following typical letter was received in reply:

26th May, 1926.

Dear Sir,

Your letter went to All Souls', which I visited for the first time in four years last Sunday! So your wish for a swift answer was not perfectly fulfilled. Yet, please remember that you might have waited from 1922!

I have not written anything since I enlisted, and I hope most sincerely that I won't, so long as I remain in the R.A.F. Writing always came to me strangely and with difficulty, and the result satisfied me as little as it did other people. In barracks it would be quite impossible. Indeed, it's very seldom I can bring myself to answer a letter.

Yours sincerely,
T. E. Shaw.

Nothing came of this first attempt to induce Lawrence to contribute to the columns of *The Spectator*, so early in 1927 I wrote to him inviting him to write for us on his special subjects. To this he replied as follows:

Karachi. 5th May, 1927.

Dear Wrench,

Your letter arrived duly; and has been thought over; but I can't imagine what sort of reception you'd give to the only sort of stuff I'd consider writing. I'll never again use the name Lawrence: nor allow anything I write to be connected in any way with the reputation I made as Lawrence. Nor will I ever write upon the Middle East, or upon any political subject. Nor upon Archaeology.

If you want poems reviewed, anonymously, or literature, (biography, criticism, novels of the 20th century sort of Forster's, Joyce's, D. H. Lawrence's, etc.,) at an interval of three months from the fountain-head; —but of course you don't . . .

Probably you didn't think at the time that I was five thousand miles off, and had finished with my Arabian incarnation.

Best of luck to the *Spectator* in your hands,

Yours ever,
T. E. Shaw.

P.S. "If, despite time and space, you still feel charitable; why, I'll be delighted! I'm not ambitious, financially (my pay and sole resource is the R.A.F. 22/- a week), and not proud, critically; for I've never imagined that my writing was any good. So I'll do the very smallest stuff, gladly."

My reply was as follows:

24th May, 1927.
The Spectator.

My dear Shaw,

Many thanks for yours of the 4th May, which I was delighted to get, as I was so very glad to establish contact once more.

Indeed, I quite appreciate your situation, and I shall certainly never again refer to Lawrence, or ask you to write on any of the subjects you do not want to.

The Assistant Editor is going to send you from time to time some books such as you indicate that you would be ready to review, anonymously. We shall have to choose only those that will not be affected by the time involved in sending to India. I do not know whether it would be possible for you to think out some anonymous name over which your articles will always appear. It might be rather amusing creating a fresh personality.

I had breakfast this morning with Ivy Lee,[1] who had just been in Moscow, and is very much upset about the trend British policy seems to be taking. He sends many greetings to you and I showed him your letter, which happened to be in my pocket.

Thanks so much for your good wishes for the *Spectator*. I am having quite an exciting time, so do not forget if you ever want to air any points of view anonymously, to let me hear from you.

[1] I had introduced Lawrence to two of my American friends, Frank Doubleday, subsequently his publisher, and Ivy Lee, the "moulder of public opinion".

The correspondence which ensued between Y.B. and Aircraftman "Shaw", then serving at Karachi, shows that he spent much time in reading the books sent. Drigh Road Camp is some miles outside Karachi, desertlike and dusty, as I know from experience, and good reading matter must have been very welcome. The reviews duly appeared in *The Spectator* over the initials "C.D". The general public never had any idea that T. E. Shaw was one of our regular reviewers. T.E. started the ball rolling in this letter. Few of Y.B's letters have been preserved, but there was a frequent interchange of communications between York Street and Karachi, of which the following have been left:

Drigh Road, Karachi,
India.
23rd June, 1927.

Dear Yeats-Brown,

(Is that right? Your signature and mine are much on a low level).

Did I say I'd review for you, or *try* to review? I'm not a writer by instinct, you know, and things come to me slowly with immense difficulty: and the quality of the things doesn't impress me, any more than the way I put them.

However, I'm going to have another try. My last two employers cast me away very firmly, after a trial. I'm expecting you to do the same.

The books you mention in your letter of June 1st have not turned up. Book-post is quick; parcel post twice as long. Anyway, India is far off, so you must choose me subjects which, like Stilton, are the better for a little keeping.

D. H. Lawrence I'll be delighted to have a try at. I've read all his stuff since the White Peacock.

Hakluyt is only a name to me. So on that you'll get the reflection of a fresh mind: if it does reflect anything.

The Koran is barred. Nothing Arabian or related. Besides, it's a proper mess of a book. A mixture of Bradshaw and major prophet and police news.

Balzac, perhaps. I like him, like Shakespeare, at times.

Guedalla I had the misfortune to meet at Oxford.

Disraeli's novels: no I think not. I got through two of them. It was nearly as sad stuff as Chesterton's.

I'll do you the best I can: and will trust in you to turn it down at once if it doesn't reach *Spectator* level. Wrench suggests a pseudonym. Colindale was the last Tube Station I entered. How's that? Split in halves? There's an American novelist called Dale Collins: but I can't think of anyone called Colin Dale.

Karachi.
8.7.27.

Dear Y.B.,

There, I've got down to initials, in which I feel more comfortable: because I don't know if you are man or woman. One never does these days—or any day really. Birth is such a toss-up. Till the child actually

gets into the daylight it doesn't know its sex: and (except at tennis) there doesn't seem, later, much distinction in their performance.

This preliminary paragraph conveys the personal note. So your secretary (bound to be female, this one, at least) will lay this note before yourself. As I'm to write under a pseudonym I'd better be told how to address my contribution. The fewer people aware of C.D. in your team the better. For if talk began about that person I should cut his throat.

'If talk began.' I'm being more optimistic than I believe: but before starting a journey one should look where the road might eventually lead. I enclose you a note on D.H.L. . . . I read the three D.H.L's on Thursday, and have written this today. Too quickly, no doubt, but I did not want to keep you longer without a sample, besides I've been reading him since before the war, so that my mind was made up before this week.

As for the note, of course it's no good. By nature I wasn't meant to write. The job comes very hard to me. I can't do it without trying my best: and if I've ever in my past written decently it was under the dire command of some mastering need to put on paper a case, or a relation; or an explanation, of something I cared about. I don't see that happening with literature and so I don't expect you to like what I write.

I've signed it C.D. because it's the first, if you do print it, after all. I'd suggest the first five or six things worth signing be restrained to their initials. If the miracle continues after that (surely either your forbearance or my endeavour will break down) we might climb so far as Colin D., keeping the full truth about the D till it was certain that the fellow could write and had a character. In my heart of hearts I know he hasn't. People have been led away by his retinue of extraneous accidents.

Commend me to Wrench—Thank him for all your books. I'll try now to say something about Hakluyt, and Gerhardi, and some one new to me of the batch in hand.

T.E.S.

Special apologies for the scruffy manuscript: but I have no typewriter.

Karachi 14.7.27.

Here's another poor scribble. It wouldn't work out as a review. Perhaps it was a little hard to tackle the poor worm just after D. H. Lawrence.

I'm labouring at Hakluyt, but do not know if anything will come of it. In fact things do not seem to be going right. If the next effort isn't better than this we'll have to pack it up. No need to look for excuses. I'm quite aware (always have been) that I can't write: and my judgements haven't got that philosophic basis of belief in something incredible which enables such as Middleton Murry to go on writing when they've nothing in God's earth to write about.

Beg Wrench to believe the astonishing truth that I can't do better than this. It just shows what a starveling anatomy there was, under the Arab robes of my apotheosis. He'd better not send me any more books. I don't feel that you get an adequate return.

In 1930 I'll call and apologize for myself.

T.E.S.

Karachi 18.8.27.

Dear Y.B.,

You are a man: Celia Simpson[1] wrote and told me so. Well . . .

Hakluyt goes on. It is hard work. Old H. had not the judgement of a white ant, or the keen vision of a dormouse. The times gave him the best material in the world, and he made an awful mess of it. However the later stuff not even his editing could spoil. The recenter volumes are V.G.

Don't burst yourself trying to find books for me to review. I write such miserable stuff that it isn't worth printing, to my mind. You'll have seen two or three samples by now: and I hope you won't hesitate to say what you think of it. Popular opinion has absurdly overestimated the literary merit of my Arabian book.

Even your "Celia Simpson" was taken in by it so much as to cut out a sentence in which I contrasted the permanent greatness and copiousness of D.H.L. with the vogue of T.E.L. and the would-be smartness of C.E.L., two other published people of the same name! Neither of us is fit to black D.H.L's boots.

Your imagination of me wandering about Karachi is at fault. I have not yet been outside the gates of the camp. So I have met no Indians and am not likely to. They do not venture inside, into airmanland.

T.E.S.

Karachi.
6.9.27.

Dear Y.B.,

Your sex declared itself thrice:—

(1) By a review in the Spectator in which you uttered some truths about war books in general: and an amazing over-estimate of "Revolt in the D." in particular.

(2) By your going on a journey across Europe with Wrench: who is as safe and sure as the Landseer lions in Trafalgar Square.

(3) By a letter from your replacing angel in Essex Street. But she called you "Major": that chrysalis state between the Captain and the Colonel. I should prevent this.

It is a pity our positions are so far apart. In England I could have been some slight use, occasionally, to you. You have missed (spectatorally) good chances of better reviews in Harold Nicolson's "Some People", and Darrell Figgis "Irish War". You should read "Children of Earth," the Achill Island novel of Figgis O'Flaherty is a tallow dip compared with this. Figgis was a very great man.

Also by being in England I'd have missed the last task you've sent me: that of trying to sum up H. G. Wells as an artist: for his short stories are works of art: but 1200 pages of them! It is difficult to see all that quickly. Also I am still labouring through the slough of Hakluyt. When I have finished Hakluyt and Penzer's rather fatuous "Ocean of Story," and Wells, then I'm really finished: for I take it you'll have agreed to send me no more. The reading of that attempt to interest your readers in D. H. Lawrence was worse, as a show-up of my dumbness as critic, even than

[1] Now Mrs. John Strachey, then Assistant Literary Editor of *The Spectator*.

anticipation expected. I'm sorry. It shows that one doesn't write good reviews merely by being interested in books. E. M. Forster has taken the last shine out of my hopes as a judge, by producing that splendidly far-seeing little set of lectures on the Novel. Have you read them? Are they out? I've studied them again and again, lately, without exhausting their value.

By the way your departure seems to have left the financial department in a muddle. They have sent me £4.4.0 for the Lawrence article. In my previous reviewing attempts I've generally been left with the book as my reward. Sometimes they have paid as highly as a guinea a thousand. But four guineas is fantastic. Will you chasten them gently? The finance of the *Spectator* is not my province; but it can't be a gold-mine, after that fashion. The paper must have been in low water before Wrench went to its help: and if he pulls it round he will be doing very virtuously and well. But he can't pull it round by over-paying book-reviewers (and anonymous book-reviewers, too!) What few shekels he can spare must go to popularity-chasing.

A sick paper is a very troublesome baby. My sympathies.

Yours ever,
T. E. Shaw.

The Spectator,
22nd September, 1927.

Dear Shaw,

I am sending you by book post half a dozen Everyman books and half a dozen Travellers' Library, also two more of the Hakluyt volumes and two volumes of Montaigne.

My suggestion is that you should not do any more about Hakluyt and that of the others you should make a rigorous selection. Slaughter innocents unlikely to grow into stout reviews, and confine yourself to one or two books. By the way, you always have Wells's short stories. I am awfully keen on Wells and enthusiastically agree with what you say about his care in writing and sweet, stark simplicity. There are passages in Wells equal to the best in the "Revolt in the Desert", and that is the standard of modern descriptive English.

Yours sincerely,
Francis Yeats-Brown.

13.10.27.

Dear Y.B.,

I can't help thinking that the reason why so many reviews slip off the surface of one's mind into darkness is because the reviewers haven't read their books right through. The compliment of reading as carefully as the writer wrote is the least one should pay for the privilege of writing about him.

I did a review of Hakluyt II III IV and have gladly torn it up at your suggestion. It was only a guide-book to tit-bits, which were not yet very numerous. His best stuff all comes near the end, apparently. "Selections from H" might be made a good book. My best discovery

was a letter, which said "My last I sent you from Aleppo, by the purser of the Tiger." It was like finding a human footprint in the desert. W.S. had passed.

The Wells short stories I read, a few at a time. Clearly it does not matter to *The Spectator* when I review that. It will not have a "season", but will sell for years, and you'll be able to stick it in—if I find anything worth reading to say about H. G. Wells the artist—any time.

The Landor is a colossal gift. I will do my very best over that. I like theold man. What a whale of an edition.

I'm sorry about the Forster. I wired you yesterday that I gave him up. It is a wonderful little study. I read it about six times, and made a sheaf of notes: and wrote them out. No good. Did it again. Again no good. My third try was a bit more of a thing, and yet not good enough for *The Spectator.* You'll have to do it yourself. I like your writing. Mrs. or Miss Taylor failed over *Gallion's Reach,* which I've only glanced at. However only one review in ten comes off. E. M. Forster was asked to review Revolt in the Desert, that thing I wrote. He replied that dog didn't eat dog: which is a high compliment. I'll probably send him my cancelled review, to show him that dog does eat dog. . . but doesn't like it to be published.

You should have torn up my Guedalla review. It was punk. Oh dear, I wish writing wasn't such hard work.

T.E.S.

The R.A.F. work engrosses most of me, now. Trooping season, October. I will be at ease next month, again, I hope.

The Spectator.
2nd November, 1927.

Dear Shaw,

You are figuring a good deal in the press just now, what with MacMunn's ridiculous article and the new book about you by Graves.

All we are sending you is Rabelais and the new book of essays by Aldous Huxley. We would like Huxley as soon as convenient, the others at your leisure. I would like to do the Wells well, so do write your heart out about it.

I think you ought to edit a selection from Hakluyt. This is the age of selections and quite rightly. I could improve Thackeray enormously by editing him, especially "Vanity Fair."

As to Forster, Benson tore him to bits. I am sorry we disagree about him. His suggestions on writing seem to me sterile.

The Guedalla review was simply splendid.

Old Sarolea wants to become our weekly Gosse. I would much rather you were.

Two years later Lawrence was in London and went to tea with Y.B. The following appreciation, headed "Lawrence, as I knew him", appeared in *The Spectator* a fortnight after T.E's death:

"So much has been written, and some of it so well, by the people who knew Lawrence long and intimately, that I only add my memories to

those already published because they are directly concerned with *The Spectator*.

"In 1927, when I was Assistant Editor of this journal, I wrote to Colonel Lawrence to ask him to become a contributor. To my surprise and delight I received an answer, signed T.E.S. to say that he had read my article on Dirt Track Racing (anything to do with engines interested him to his dying day) and would be ready to review books occasionally, provided his identity was not disclosed. Thereafter, in England and India, I kept him supplied with the latest Wells, Bennett, Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, whatever I thought would interest him. His criticisms were extraordinarily acute, and aroused great interest. Every contribution was accompanied by a note of apology for his style, or a protest that he was being overpaid.

"After my first meeting (he arrived unexpectedly from India and took tea at my flat in Adelphi House Terrace) I wrote an article, which I still have in proof, accompanied by his comments and the following notes:

" 'Dear Shaw, Here's the article. If you don't give me your private consent to publish it, it will be scrapped, to my sorrow.—Y.B. 27.2.29.

" '28.2.29. Dear Y.B., I do not think it's as good as dirt tracks: and I hope you will agree to hold it up. People won't care, perhaps, after the General Election. After all, I am *vieux jeu*. Sorry to appear to spoil your output: but my need is greater than yours—as the soldier did not say to Sir P. Sidney.—T.E.S.'

"Here, in part, is what I wrote," continued Y.B.:

"It has been my fortune as a journalist to meet heroes and statesmen, and even a saint, but never a man with such a blend of qualities as that contained within the small figure in R.A.F. blue. His shyness, of course, is the first thing one notices about Aircraftman Shaw. The next is an almost inhuman reserve. He gives you the impression that he might vanish like the Cheshire Cat, leaving nothing but his lips curved in a riddling smile.

" 'T. E. Shaw sat on the edge of my sofa, put his cap on the floor, brushed back his fine fair hair. At first sight he seems not a day over 25, but when you look close, the devil and angel of the Augustus John pictures are visible, and an agony in the eyes.

" 'It is no pose on his part when he says that he has done with the East, and is glad of it. He is not Eastern at all, either in appearance or in mental texture, but Western steel. He might do greater things in England, if the need arose, than he ever did in Arabia. (In the proof Lawrence wrote "Perhaps", and put a question mark before this sentence.)

" 'My first thought was to urge him to write more for *The Spectator*, for there need be no secret now in the fact that he did in the past contribute some brilliant anonymous reviews to these columns. (Lawrence deleted the adjective.)

" 'I can't write,' he said, twisting his hands together nervously. 'I tore up the last three or four things I did for you. You shouldn't have taken and paid for what I sent. However, your cheques have bought me a civilian suit of clothes.'

" 'I suppose you were quite poor,' I said. 'Yet you know quite well that you could make £20,000 tomorrow if you wanted.'

" 'I draw four bob a day: two whole pennies for every hour I live, even when I'm asleep: that's enough for me.'

" 'But why do you spend your time in cleaning boots and polishing tables, when you are a master of English prose?'

" 'I prefer polishing tables to pushing a pen,' he answered. (Oddly, Lawrence altered this simple sentence, which I feel sure he used, to 'I'd rather work with my hands than with my wits.' To me, this seems a revealing correction: there was an occasional streak of conventionality, even of triteness in his style—never, as far as I know in his talk—as if some psychological knot in his inside occasionally prevented the utterance of his sword-bright, flashing mind.) 'As to writing,' he continued, 'I tell you definitely that I can't. Wells said that *The Seven Pillars* was a human document, but had no pretensions to be a work of art. That's true.' (Lawrence's marginal comment is: 'Yet it did try, poor thing, to be art.')

" 'But Wells is an admirer of yours,' I said, and added: 'You are wasting your time and talents.'

" Was this an impertinence towards the man who had conducted the Arab campaign, set two Kings on their thrones, and written a masterpiece? Shaw answered that he is no longer interested in politics or in literature, and that his work on the larger stage of the world is done. 'Lawrence is no longer living, but Shaw is quite happy.'

"The remainder of the article was concerned with the rumours that Shaw had worked for the Secret Service while in India. A spate of nonsense has been written about his mysterious life, both in this country and abroad. Before and during the war he was, of course, employed on secret missions. He casually mentioned to me once that he served as A.D.C. to Enver Pasha, in 1912, I think. In 1916 he was one of three officers engaged on a strange—and unsuccessful—negotiation with the Turkish Commander in Iraq. But after he had enlisted in the Air Force he devoted himself entirely to 'the greatest adventure that awaits mankind,' the collective and continued conquest of the air.

"He hated lionizing, and silly publicity; but being human, he was interested in portraits, even photographs of himself; and he valued the literary opinion not only of his close friends, but of acquaintances such as myself. In 1930 he gave me *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* to read, and the manuscript of his unpublished work, *The Mint*.

"Both books contain passages as well-balanced, tense, virile, evocative as any in the English language—that September night of horror and triumph when he allowed the 'grand rebellious Baba', his racing camel, to extend her stride so that he entered Deraa quite alone—the final scenes at the conquest of Damascus—the last chapters of *The Mint*, where he races an aeroplane on his great motor bicycle—but neither book is of good craftsmanship throughout: in spite of the care he gave to his writing there are flaws of private mystification, jarring sentences, complications, obscurities, a straining for effect. They are the products of a fine brain

under tremendous nervous tension, strained and half-starved as his body was then. They will live, because they are symbolical of the grandeur and misery of his time and because through them and in them shines the greatness of the man.

"Although I was never intimate with 'T.E.', I saw enough of his kindness, humour, sensitiveness, to understand what a wonderful friend he could be. Once I spent a long day on Dartmoor with him, while he read the proofs of *Bengal Lancer*. He took immense pains to help me: his advice was wise, far-seeing, and, now that I come to think of it, prophetic. Afterwards we drove about in my baby Austin, discussing everything under the sun.

"I have never been with a more delightful companion, nor with a talker whose mind showed so many bright facets. A year later I spent a glorious day with him on his speed boat at Southampton.

"Once we met at his cottage, and several times in London.

"To me these hours remain magnetic with his presence, but I felt intuitively that I wearied him. He remained kind, remote, elusive.

"He has left us an example of selflessness which will be long remembered; and some magnificent prose. He was a creature set apart for unusual tasks, with terrific, indeed terrible energies pent in his small body. They flared up at a great moment. Now the fires are extinguished, but they will light up a long future in England's history."

Broadcasting from New York in 1932 over the W.E.A.F. network, Y.B. again refers to the unpublished article "Tea with Lawrence", which never appeared in *The Spectator*; this is what he says:

"He (T. E. Lawrence) is one of the few people in the world to whom, money, power, comfort, success, mean nothing. Nobody knows his real thoughts. Certainly I do not. There is something very secret about him. Even Bernard Shaw, who is one of his best friends, feels this.

"I wrote the interview of my first meeting with Private Shaw, and sent it to him in galley proof. He sent it back with a good many corrections, and the following remark at the foot of it: 'This is poor stuff compared to your speedway[1] effort. If you publish it you will get me into serious trouble.'

"What did he mean me to do? Why did he correct it, if he didn't mean me to use it? The only explanation I can suggest is that I was a struggling journalist, and that T. E. Lawrence,—I mean T. E. Shaw—knew it would be a scoop for me if I published it. He was testing me, and I need hardly say that I did not use it."

Y.B. continued:

"Since then I have seen a good deal of Shaw, off and on, but he is just as queer and elusive as he said my book was (he was referring to *Bengal Lancer*) perhaps that is why I like him so much."

[1] Referring to an article in *The Spectator* by Y.B. on Dirt-Track Riding.

Y.B. ended his broadcast in the following manner:

"One day he will retire to live in a tiny two-roomed cottage in Dorsetshire. It was there I saw him last, about two months ago. I had driven over with Mrs. Thomas Hardy, the wife of the great author. It was just a chance that we would find him, but there he was at the door, with his motor cycle, and a big flat parcel on the back of it.

" 'That is a portrait by Augustus John,' he said, pointing to the parcel.

"Now Augustus John charges at least ten thousand dollars to his usual sitters, but he does Private Shaw for nothing whenever he can get hold of him.

"Shaw undid the parcel, and showed me the picture. It was a striking piece of work. One side of the face was the Lawrence I knew, the man who doesn't smoke or drink, who has no vice but speeding on a motor bike, the scholar and poet who would not hurt a fly. The other side of the face is that of a man who created an army out of a pack of nondescript Arabs, the hard man who required no sleep, who was wounded seventeen times, who wrecked fifty trains, who fought a hundred bloody and victorious battles, governed a city, crowned a king, and wrote a masterpiece about it all.

"Both Lawrences are in the same small body, which I think contains the strangest personality in modern times."

The following letter was written by Y.B. to "T.E. Shaw" after he ceased contributing to *The Spectator*:

Flat B,
1, Robert St.,
Adelphi, W.C.2.
18 July, 1930.

Dear Shaw,

This is only an interim report on the *Seven Pillars*, which is my nightly solace, savoured slowly, luxuriously, while London sleeps. There is something fitting in my lazy comfort: a soft bed, silence, cushions, pipe, glass of water, full belly and head full of stupid nothings; and on the page before me the stark, the savage story you have written. The contrast amuses me. I seem to sum up in myself all the little fusses and hopes of the average man, and you the powers above the world. But in some way I am in touch: I have just enough of your strange spirit to understand, even sometimes to guess at things before I read them.

For instance, when I began Canto LXXX, "properly to round off this spying" I knew you were in danger. Perhaps someone had told me, and I had forgotten, or a reference in *The Mint* may have connected with what I was reading. Anyway, I grew really horrified. I had to get up and walk about. Although it is a week since I read that terrible chapter, with all that suppression at the end, the "carrying-on", the continued spying, the riding and marching, I have not yet got over it. I don't mean this as a compliment to your writing. One doesn't think about writing.

One thinks of revenge: a revenge which you are too concerned with to

execute. You have been the murdered man. I feel you need an avenger still. But you will think all this nonsense, and in a way it is. I am making notes of things to ask you or to say to you as I go along. In ten days I shall have finished, and will write to you again, but send this merely to let you know that I am reading and thinking!

You have quite unsettled me, damn you! Or bless you? today is my ex-wife's birthday, and I spend the day with her walking: then I go on to my Mother for Saturday and Sunday. At the end of the month I go to Holland for a fortnight and before then will post back the *Seven Pillars* Don't answer this unless you want it sent to an address other than yours.

Yours,

Y.B.

104a, Gower Street,
W.C.1.
December 18th, 1933.

Dear Shaw,

This is just a line needing no reply (not that I should expect one even if it needed it!) to say I hope we shall meet in 1934. It is long since I have seen you, and I would like to discuss politics and life.

If ever you pass this way, my flat is over the Women's Total Abstinence Union, and nearly opposite *The Spectator* offices. You merely press the bell marked 104a (otherwise you arouse the temperance reformers) and walk in.

Shaw's new play has some marvellous speeches in it: wonderful—how young he is, how alive to world thought.

Well, here is to your health and happiness in 1934, from your sad but constant admirer,

F. Yeats-Brown.

104a, Gower Street,
W.C.1.
7th February, 1934.

Dear Shaw,

I am writing a book in refutation of Beverley Nichols and Norman Angell's pacifist theories, to be called "Dogs of War." Peter Davies is publishing it, quite soon.

There is to be a chapter on air power, and modern developments, in which I want your help. It is ridiculous to spend £117,000,000 per annum on defence weapons about as useful as the broadsword and busby, when we might have a really powerful modern force.

Could I see you sometime about this; and would you, if in London sometime, discuss the philosophic aspect of the subject with Bernard Shaw? —allowing me to report your conversation? A talk between the public and private Shaws would of course make the book: it would also probably clear up the confusion which exists in most people's minds between peace and pacifism.

If you would tell me (a) whether you are likely to be in London (b) whether I could come down to see you.

I would make my plans accordingly, and approach G.B.S. Peter Davies endorses my bold suggestion.

Yours sincerely,
F. Yeats-Brown.[1]

The following account of Y.B's visit to Aircraftsman Shaw at Plymouth is included in the material for the chapter in his autobiography dealing with Lawrence. He had just passed the proofs of *Bengal Lancer* and returned them to the publisher:

"I stayed at Yelverton, on the edge of Dartmoor, and used to drive in to Cattewater every day, where T.E. was stationed with his flight.

"On my first visit to Cattewater he was nowhere to be found. I enquired for him from his comrades, who said that he might be at the quay-side. When I discovered him at last, he was walking up from the sea, carrying a dynamo in his hands. He wore a mackintosh over his wet and naked body. His hair was glistening with water, and there was a light of fury in his eyes. I hardly recognised him, never before having seen him angry.

"His small figure had assumed an air of majesty, and his scowl was terrible. It was really frightening, as if somewhere about him a devil lurked. And that is the truth. There *was* a devil somewhere in T.E. I was rooted to the spot, wondering what I had done wrong.

"As soon as he saw me, his expression cleared. He explained that the engine of his launch had been giving trouble, and that he had had to mend it in the water. He was full of apologies for having kept me waiting.

" 'Come with me while I dress,' he said. 'I have leave till nine o'clock tonight, but I can't take you out in the launch. The damned thing won't be ready for days.'

"Above his cot books were piled high. Some of these I had sent him from *The Spectator*, but there were also many first editions from his friends. One was from G.B.S., inscribed 'To Private Shaw from Public Shaw.' He was happy in his surroundings, and the men adored him for himself, not for his fame. He had given them a gramophone, and being something of an electrician he had juggled with the wiring so as to provide the hut with an electric heater. Sometimes he used to tell his companions (there were seventeen of them) stories.

" 'I don't get much time for reading,' he told me. 'Réveillé is at seven, and I am in the office till dinner time. Then I'm in charge of the launch. At night I work on the Odyssey in the office, where it's quiet. I get to bed at about three or four in the morning. Sometimes I do a little reading then.'

" 'Not much time for sleep?'

" 'I don't need sleep', he answered, winding his putties.

"That morning we walked and talked on the moor. We lunched at an hotel where T.E. insisted on eating a plate of roast beef. He loathed it, I believe, but it was put before him and he wanted (I think) to teach me a lesson not to be fussy over food.

[1] As far as I know nothing came of this proposal. E. W.

"When I talked about diet, he changed the subject quickly, for anything to do with the body bored him profoundly. The pity of it! If he had cared for his body, even a little, he might still be with us.

"True, his death was an accident, a splendid sacrifice of himself to save a careless boy. But during the last years of his life it seems to me that his remote little Clouds Hill cottage, with his big Brough motor cycle as his only physical distraction, was bound to lead to disaster sooner or later. He did not look after himself properly. He rarely ate a regular meal. And of course there was no real reason, except an undue sensitiveness, why he should not have played a great part in the world. Perhaps he was about to begin, when death overtook him. We shall never know for certain. But I remember clearly an occasion during this visit when he admitted to me that he had mismanaged his life ever since the Arabian campaign.

"I had bought an evening paper with news of the exploits of Miss Amy Johnson. 'I wonder whether she will make as big a failure of her career as I have of mine?' he said. My answer was that he had fame, health, and happiness in the work he had deliberately chosen.

" 'No, I have made a mess of things,' he insisted.

" 'Not that it matters. I'll crack up soon, I expect.'

" 'Nobody looks less like it!'

" 'I'm healthy,' he admitted, 'and feel as strong as a horse, but people who have had my fevers and wounds are liable to crack up all of a sudden.'

"Those were his exact words. Naturally I remembered them when he met with his fatal accident. My friend Mrs. Thomas Hardy visited him in his cottage, a few days before he was killed. She found him nervous, almost irritable, she told me, which was amazing in him who had such calm and courtesy. He was looking ill (also rare with T.E.), and he complained that he could not sleep. A tit came tapping at the window. It startled him, which again was unusual. And of course Mrs. Hardy knew the country saying, that a bird at the window means death. I don't think T.E. expected to die as he did, but he may have had some premonition that his days were numbered.

" 'You have chosen to be an aircraftman,' I said to him one day, 'when you might have had two thousand a year as curator of the Museum of Archaeology in Baghdad.'

" 'Who told you that?' he asked.

" 'Jafar Pasha. And there are lots of other things you could do. Useful and interesting jobs, in which you could use your great talents.'

" 'What sort of things? I can't do anything connected with the Arabs or Arabia. That phase of my life is over.'

" 'Very well. But I'm sure *The Spectator* would be overjoyed to keep you for life'.

" 'For advertising purposes,' he answered, chuckling.

" 'No, we would employ you because you are a great critic, and because you are a master of language.'

" 'It is no good, Y.B.! I tried to sell my stuff to editors anonymously and they have refused it.'

" 'That's ridiculous. You know what a mark your contributions to *The Spectator* have made, even though they have been anonymous, and how thrilled we've been.'

"T.E. shook his head, he did not like my saying his views were ridiculous.

"On the Saturday before Whitsunday, 1930, the proofs of *Bengal Lancer* arrived. Next day we spent again upon the moor. T.E. lay on his stomach, reading with lightning speed. I went for a walk, returned, asked him how he was getting on. He made no comment except that he would soon be finished. I sat beside him, feeling anxious, while he flicked the pages so quickly that I could not believe that he was absorbing their contents.

"Within the two hours, however, he read the book from beginning to end. He raised his head and grinned. 'I shall read this again,' he said, 'It's good stuff. A best seller, I think, though rather elusive in parts. You can't spell Scheherazade, and you have misquoted the Koran.'

" 'Any other mistakes?'

" 'One or two. You can't improve the sporting stuff, but your grammar is sometimes shaky. I've made a few notes.'

"To my amazement, he had corrected the book with the care of a proof-reader.

" 'To thank you for all this trouble is a waste of words,' I said. 'But tell me, why did you say you would read it again? You don't seem to have missed a word.'

" 'When I like a book I always read it twice,' he replied. 'You'll succeed even better in America than in England. They'll lap up that Yogi stuff. Now let's go and look at the view.'

"On the moor we met a man out walking with a monkey. I spoke of the cruelty of keeping exotic pets, and the misery endured by performing animals. T.E. was not interested. He had no small talk, and no fads or fancies. But when the conversation turned to politics, he was witty, incisive, amusing. And he did not speak in a monologue. He had a wonderful gift for putting his hearer at ease. We talked of Palestine, the League of Nations, Socialism, God. Palestine would belong to the Arabs, not to the Jews, he said, for the Jews would be in a permanent minority. The League was moribund, like International Socialism. But Socialism itself was protean, and indestructible. About God he said something clever, connected with monism and the desert. I mentioned the Upanishads in this connection, but he changed the subject, for he had a definite dislike of the Aryan sages. Yet everything he touched with his mind seemed to shine. Everything, though I am incapable of conveying this gift upon paper. There was a clarity, a buoyancy, and a vigour about him that made one feel as if one were having a swim in the fresh clear sea and a sunbath. Indeed his was a radiant personality."

CHAPTER XVIII

PORTOFINO

PORTOFINO was probably the place that Y.B. loved best. One of the earliest memories of him there comes from his cousin, the daughter of his uncle, Fred Brown, who describes him as a "gaily laughing, lovable boy, with a passion for bathing—a wonderful diver—he would dive down and hold on to a rock below and grin up at us through the translucent water for so many minutes that he alarmed his young cousin thoroughly".

Portofino is a little promontory on the Riviera di Levante. The train is left at Santa Margherita, seventeen miles south of Genoa, and thence hugging the very edge of the Mediterranean the road leads to the little fishing town of Portofino, three miles distant, nestling round a tiny turquoise-blue harbour, where the sun seems always to shine. The Castello was bought in the 'sixties for a song by Y.B's father, who had a sure eye for the beautiful, and rejoiced in owning the promontory with its fifteenth-century castle and garden enclosed by the walls of the battlements. The Castello was originally a Moorish fort, built by raiders from North Africa as a base for their attacks upon the Italian Littoral.

The Moors certainly had an eye for a site. The Castle, perched amid its olives and umbrella pines, commands the mainland for miles, while towards the south one gets beautiful views of the Italian coast beyond the deep waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea. At the neck of the isthmus, just below the Castello, connecting the little promontory with the mainland, is the Church of San Georgio,[1] dominating the town. It was here that Y.B's mother—despite her strict upbringing in the Protestant Church of Ireland—used to attend Mass: it was the only place of worship within reach.

Portofino is the idyll of a dream: small wonder that the Yeats-Brown family passionately loved it; Francis went there whenever circumstances and finances permitted, and it would have been kind of fate to have let him end his days there. Only those who have watched him in his care-free vein at Portofino can realise what the place meant to him; he could not remember life without it. As a schoolboy he longed for the summer holidays there. After his father's death, he took every opportunity of going there to keep in touch with the Castello's staff. In the two decades

[1] A recent visitor informed me that the church was destroyed during the war by aerial bombing.

between the World Wars it was often let, but even then he made excuses for visiting the little town, and would stay in the Albergo Nationale on the quay.

On one occasion, during his mother's lifetime, Y.B., my wife and I took Portofino for six weeks for our summer holidays. We used to watch with amusement Francis, in shorts, stripped to the waist, gesticulating affectionately with Pippo, the gardener, who had come to the Castello when but five years old, and must then have been nearly eighty. When members of the family were at Portofino during Emil Ludwig's tenancy, Pippo, described by Victor Yeats-Brown as a "great (though at times unshaven) gentleman", entertained his wife and mother-in-law *en grand seigneur* at the gardener's cottage, offering them cakes and wine. During the occupancy of strangers Pippo did not like the idea of members of the family going away without being welcomed by the oldest retainer.

In the *dolce far niente* life at Portofino the days flew by almost unawares. An early bathe from the rocks in the grounds, giving on to the deep waters of the tiny harbour, where large ships could anchor, was followed by breakfast in a favourite corner of the battlement garden, whence one looked over the olive trees to the sea far below. Breakfast was a long-drawn-out function when plans for the day were leisurely discussed. Y.B's housekeeping was somewhat sketchy, for as the result of long experience, the establishment practically ran itself, and the dietary of the guests was safe in Angela's hands.

In the mornings there would probably be a walk to the little *plage* of Paraggi, with its bathing huts and coloured umbrellas, and tanned humanity sunbathing: and before returning there would be a glass of Marsala. The climb to the Castello was always a strenuous undertaking, but it whetted the appetite. On passing through the wrought-iron gates, one entered a white marble hall, delightfully cool on the hottest summer day. This led to the dining-room, and the bathers did full justice to the fare. The first course was usually a *pasta—ravioli* or *spaghetti*—garnished with amusement whenever the host initiated newcomers into the correct way of twisting *spaghetti* round the fork. There would be plenty of fresh vegetables and, in the early autumn, great dishes of golden grapes and deep purple figs. It was indeed easy to practise nature-cure here. After lunch the whole assembly usually had a *siesta*, Y.B. spending an hour or two in sun-bathing on the balcony encircling the round tower. There he could tan his skin and grill his body to his heart's content, though how he could stand the sun's rays reflected off the glistening white walls, that turned the balcony into a veritable oven, was always a mystery.

In the afternoon there would be more bathing, excursions by speed boat, or perhaps, when in venturesome mood, a picnic would be arranged, involving endless climbing up cobbled mule paths, in order to visit some local shrine perched far aloft. Or there would be walks through groves of chestnuts and olives, past terraced farms, splashed with star-like pink

dianthus, to some favourite outlook point. At dinner, with a general sense of well-being, there would be lively conversation; for Y.B. dearly loved discussing the causes nearest his heart. He was a good-tempered opponent with whom to cross swords, although at times, when the discussion turned to favourite themes like the superiority of the corporate state over Anglo-Saxon democracy, or the futility of international organisation to keep world peace, the atmosphere was apt to grow somewhat heated. But he was always prepared to listen and did not try to beat down his opponents' strictures with a barrage of words.

Many of his friends looked forward to spending a few days at Portofino on their way to Rome or the south and they would always be certain of a hearty welcome. His visitors, included Max Beerbohm, Charles Morgan, and his wife, Ward Price, Harold Goad and others. The letters of his friends speak of the happy memory of those days.

Before the first World War a warm friendship existed between his parents and their nearest neighbour, Lady Carnarvon, whose villa, "Altachiara", was across the little promontory at the other side of the village —as well as with Mervyn and Aubrey Herbert. The Empress Frederick, when Crown Princess, came with the Crown Prince to stay at Lord Carnarvon's house a few years before the Emperor's tragic end. During her widowhood the ex-Empress returned to Portofino at the end of the century when her son had embarked upon the headstrong career which was to end in his downfall; she always remained a warm friend of the Yeats-Brown family.

His old friend Ward Price writes:

"In Y.B. the characteristics of soldier and philosopher were combined. The compound is not unusual, but in his case they were so distinct as to give him a kind of dual personality. It was difficult for one who knew him only as a writer, student and mystic, to realise that this modest, self-effacing man of letters had in his earlier days been a bold steeplechase rider, polo-player and pig-sticker.

"I first met him in Constantinople in 1918, immediately after the Turks had signed their Armistice. He had made his venturesome escape from the military prison in the Seraskierat, the story of which is told so vividly in *Golden Horn*. We travelled back to England together by way of Italy. He was gayer and more high-spirited than I ever knew him since to be. This may have been only a natural reaction from his grim experiences as a prisoner of war in Turkey, but when I came into contact with him again, after he had spent a further term of service in India, I was conscious of an underlying strain of melancholy in him, which I had not perceived before. It was not a subjective quality so much as a kind of *Weltschmerz*, due perhaps to intuitive perception by his undoubtedly psychic temperament of the evils that were so soon to come upon the world.

"My happiest recollection of Y.B. is a week that I spent as his guest at the 'Castello', that mediaeval fortress converted into a romantic villa which stands upon the top of the promontory of Portofino . . . His father used to cruise up and down the coast in a small sailing boat, and made up his mind that he would like to possess the Castello. The promontory on which it stood was Government property, and he approached the appropriate Ministry in Rome with an offer to buy it. The officials were puzzled by his desire to possess a forbidding unfertile mass of rock, with a ruined fort on the top of it. Attributing this, no doubt, to the well-known eccentricity of the British race, they fixed a modest price of a thousand lira, then the equivalent of £40, for the Castello and the steep headland on which it stands.

"Mr. Yeats-Brown set himself to convert the ancient stronghold into the delightful residence it has now become.[1] Paths had to be cut up the rocky sides of the cape—everything still has to be carried up by hand. The walls of the fort were found to be 14 ft. thick, and in opening them up for the purpose of making windows and entrances, the skeleton of a woman was discovered inside the masonry, with a rusty dagger driven through its ribs."

"Almost cut off from the outside world, yet surrounded by natural beauty and simple comforts, I think Y.B. was probably happier at the Castello than anywhere else, and he often promised his friends a good time there when the war in Italy was over."

Charles Morgan, a writer for whose work he had a profound admiration, sends the following history of his friendship with Y.B.:

"I met him first, casually, at some party or other, now forgotten. Then, in the year in which England came off gold (wasn't it 1931?) my wife and I went for a holiday to Portofino, staying in the hotel opposite the Castello, without knowing that Francis was there. We met him by chance and when most of his guests (I think you were among them) returned to London, he asked us to move into the Castello for the rest of his stay. As we were both great swimmers the delight of it was that we could bathe from the grounds in the sun at any time of the day, following the sun round the peninsula.

"In the evenings we had great discussions of literature and politics, full of plans for the future, which were made easier because, in many respects, Francis and myself saw eye to eye.

"The characteristic incident which I remember was this. One morning we and he and Thomas Bazley were having breakfast in the sun in a corner of the terrace overlooking the sea, when he said he was about to begin a fast of two days. I said:—'If you are going to fast, we had better do so as well.' He assured us that it was not necessary, but we decided

[1] Among other things Y.B's father introduced modern sanitation into the Castello and built a bathroom, which contained a rather alarming bath that roared like a lion, if mishandled. Taking a bath was always more or less an adventure. The steam, with the intensity of Vesuvius, would envelop the bather unless he was careful. In extreme cases he would have to summon Teresa or another of the domestics to deal with the monster, who was speedily brought to heel.

that we would. I then added that if we were going to fast for two days, it would also do us good to have two days of silence. With this he eagerly agreed. Then, like a fool, over-estimating my own austerities, I suggested that if we were to be silent and fast, we ought also to knock off smoking. To this also he agreed, and I don't think that it was a great denial to him, but it proved to be the worst of my trials. I remember that during that forty-eight hours of asceticism we would sit on the terrace reading books, and that the servants and dogs judged from our silence that we had all gone mad. Periodically, a message would be brought out to Francis by the servants, and instead of answering them by word of mouth, he would solemnly and conscientiously write his reply. The real agony came when we went down to swim, because if there is one moment on earth when one wants a cigarette it is when one comes out of the water. However, we kept strictly to our three rules throughout the forty-eight hours, and all was well!"

From Portofino Y.B. wrote to Rosalind Constable:

18th October 1931.

It is 5.45 a.m. The sea laps below my window, two fishermen are talking, the Angelus is ringing on the other side of the house. Framed by my window (for I've moved to the room E. W. had, and moved the bed so that by sitting up in it, I can see the dawn) is a patch of dark fir with its outlines fretted against the opalescent sea, then the sea, strewn with lighted fishing boats, Chiavari still sparkling, the dark, low mountains with an amethyst flush above them . . .

Today we go to Montallegro, and have tea with the Beerbohms. Tomorrow is our last day.

I am always thinking how much better it would be if you were here; how little people mean to me unless I can see them through someone else's eyes—and that someone, you. I don't see why this isn't quite natural. For myself, I have reached an age when I no longer care for people as people. I want to be the power behind the throne so to speak, to enjoy radiance and happiness by the reflected light of another personality. All the loveliest things in life are *mirrored*: trees or clouds or moonlight on water, or music heard across it, or the sun, not yet risen, sending its foreglow to the sky above Chiavari . . .

The following letters were written in England to Rosalind Constable before his trip to the Soviet Union:

25th April 1932. Woodcote Grove, Epsom.

I'm back in my quiet flat after a hectic week end. I thought I'd get some work done, but only managed a little on Sunday morning. Fruity[1] took me to the races on Saturday; . . . Then, to my alarm, they began to talk about when "David" would arrive. Sure enough he came at about 9.15 having flown from Stratford, and we sat down to dinner after 3 or 4 cocktails. I sat next to the P. of W. and found him quite charming: really

[1] Major E. W. Metcalfe.

the kind of man you and I like. We sat up till 2 a.m. doing thought reading, punching a ball, riding fairy bicycles round the drawing room. I enjoyed myself greatly, and Fruity has marvellous brandy and excellent cigars.

I stayed in bed till lunch on Sunday: the others played golf. In the evening Lady Cunard came and has promised to take me to see George Moore. I couldn't stand that whoopee life for long. On Sunday the Prince of Wales recited Shakespeare, a La Fontaine fable, a Spanish poem, and a German one, to show Lady Cunard he wasn't a low brow, he said. Then I did my usual Yoga tricks, and he told me he stands on his head every morning . . .

28th April 1932. 57 Glebe Place.

. . . I met Lord Beaverbrook last night at Quaglino's. He said Winston Churchill sent him *Bengal Lancer* when he was ill, and that W.C. had written that it was the best book on India; and that he, Beaverbrook, thought it was the best book he had ever read!!! This was after cocktails, vodka and lots of champagne. . . . I enjoyed myself at Quaglino's; and if you had seen me you wouldn't have thought me world-weary . . .

May 1, 1932. West Green House,
Hartley Wintney, Hants.

I am writing this in a lovely old Queen Anne room, with powder closet next door (and my own bathroom) after breakfast in bed. This is what I call luxury—being left alone to do what I like. The house was built for a bastard of George I—Colonel Hawley—a member of the Hell Fire Club, whose motto is over the door: FAIS CE QUE VOUDRAS.

He buried his dog "Monkey" in the garden, with a rhymed epitaph in English which I'll copy. There's a "Monkey" still in the house, and a parrot called "Cuckoo" and a Jay and an exotic S. American bird. The Duchess is one of those really serene people whom nothing can disturb. She has a deaf and dumb man to lunch and dinner every day: it is curious to see her talking to him, he leaning forward and lip-reading, making a moaning noise when he understands.

We talked of Melba, whom both the Duchess and Yvonne adored. (They can never forgive Beverley Nichols for his book. I made them laugh by describing Castlerosse playing golf.) At dinner we drank sherry from the Wellington estates in Spain, a marvellous wine.

After lunch the Duchess, who is very infirm, went ratting in her electric chair (isn't this gloriously English!) and Yvonne and I drove out in her car to Bramshill—which she said was the most beautiful house in England. I daresay it is, but there is no such thing as the *most* beautiful house: for me the most beautiful house will probably be the one I eventually choose to live in. At least I hope so. We have no right to possessions we do not love passionately, especially the possession of land.

I could love this house with its old brick walled gardens, velvety lawns, pools in which the branches of trees look like the stripes on a live tiger, hosts of daffodils. But I'd make a tennis lawn or two, and revive the

bowling alley. If one had a place, one would be tempted to do anything for money with which to keep it up—there's a plot for a novel in that.

Lamb, the Duchess's coachman, has been with her for forty years. He hates motors and absolutely refuses to have anything to do with one: indeed he will not get out of the way of one if he meets it on the road. The D. told me that he was a stable boy in Buckingham Palace and that he has described to her Queen Victoria's coachman, who was so fat he had to be hoisted on to the box by a pulley. Owing to the difficulty of getting him off again, he had to be fed on the box if he was wanted after dinner.

Next day. Old Colonel Hawley, who built this house ended his will as follows: "The priest will want his fee: pay the puppy. Pay the carpenter for the carcass-box."

Drove over to Bramshill with Yvonne.... We were shown over the house, which is like all the old English great houses, terribly depressing. Even Levens Hall, my mother's ancestral home, I wouldn't take as a gift, except to sell or let.

Letter from Y.B. to Mrs. Charles Morgan:

104a Gower Street
23rd May, 1932.

Dear Hilda,

... I hear Rosalind is on her way back from Hollywood. I can't help feeling excited. But I think when I see her again I'll be able to reach a conclusion, one way or the other. Meanwhile hope flowers like the apple trees did before the frost....

CHAPTER XIX

U.S.S.R. AND U.S.A.

A PARTY of twelve British journalists, among them Kingsley Martin, David Low, Hamilton Fyfe and Y.B., left London on 28th July, 1932, in the Soviet steam *Rykov*, and started upon their Russian adventure at Leningrad, which led to a hectic and exhausting month in the Soviet Union. From Leningrad they went to Moscow, to Nijni-Novgorod, by Volga steamer to Stalingrad, and thence by way of Rostov to the great works of Dniepropetrovsk. I wrote to several of Y.B's fellow-travellers asking if they had any special recollections of him during the tour; I have received the following:

Mr. Kingsley Martin writes:

"Yes, Yeats-Brown was a member of the journalistic party that went to Russia in 1932. David Low and I were also on it, and we recorded our experience in a book which you might care to look at called 'Low's Russian Sketchbook,' published at Christmas 1932.

"Yeats-Brown and I were not, of course, in general agreement about things, though on excellent personal terms. There are two occasions of which I have the most vivid memory of him. The first was on the boat down the Volga, when in the blazing sunshine (it was a very hot year) he sat on the deck in a Yoga position, wearing nothing but the briefest pair of shorts, looking incredibly like Gandhi. Like Gandhi he was brown, thin and small, and at his exercise he seemed a kind of reincarnation of the Mahatma.

"The second incident was at the Bolshevo 'prison', which, as you probably know, is or was a camp run by those who had been convicted of more than one criminal offence. It was an astonishing place, built by the inmates and entirely organised by them. It was easily possible, I believe, for them to escape if they wished, but they did not. I remember most being asked to send musical instruments for their band. Yeats-Brown, who did not like many things in the U.S.S.R., was full of admiration for this very successful experiment in reclaiming prisoners, and he wrote about it afterwards, extolling this example of Christianity in practice in the Soviet Union. I well remember his enthusiasm, and being pleased that his mind was open to the more conspicuously happy side of the Soviet regime. It was not a happy year in the U.S.S.R., and our interpretations very much depended on whether we thought that things would become more prosperous, as in fact they have, or whether we assumed that the Soviet type of organisation was certain to fail. Here I

think I was right and some of my colleagues were wrong, but I should like to put on record my appreciation of Yeats-Brown as an observer, particularly at the Bolshevo camp. There is a description of this in 'Low's Russian Sketch Book.' "

Mr. David Low writes:

"So far my memory is not very obliging about Yeats-Brown in Russia. My habit of wiping my mind clean of detail after having done a job seems to have been particularly effective in this case. All I can be sure of is that he was uniformly sceptical and reserved in expressing his opinions: always sartorially the neatest one of our party—even when we were meandering through the Ukraine, when the rest of us were getting nondescript in attire, and even a little Russianised (I wore a Russian blouse), Y.B. persisted in looking like an Englishman visiting Bournemouth."

Obviously a month's visit to Russia does not enable the visitor to sum up so gigantic a political adventure as the first fifteen years of the Soviet experiment. Y.B. certainly went to the U.S.S.R. prejudiced against Communism, and at the back of his mind—although probably it was almost sub-conscious—there was the inclination to compare what he saw with the Fascist achievements in Italy during the previous decade.

Naturally every visitor to Soviet Russia is influenced by home environment and his political outlook. It is difficult to preserve complete detachment in modern Russia, as I know from personal experience. As a youth, I had been in Tsarist Russia three times at the turn of the century. In 1939, just before the outbreak of the war, after an absence of thirty-two years, I returned with my wife. I went there with high hopes and as a friendly critic. There were obviously things to admire, such as the Welfare Work for women and children, Moscow's Amusement Park, the re-housing experiments, the Underground Railway, and above all the intelligence of the young Communists with their eager thirst for knowledge. But the all-pervading impression was of drabness; life was very grim and we hardly saw a smiling face in the streets of the capital. Where I had expected to find freedom, I found—as a result of the recent purges—the universal fear of being seen talking to a foreigner. There was a rigorous censorship, and the Russian people, being completely isolated, depended for their news of the outside world on the Government Press and radio.

If the country had been largely run in the interests of high military and civil officials and land-owners in 1898, 1899 and 1905, as it undoubtedly was, in 1939 we found another aristocracy in power, the aristocracy of the Soviet officials, the G.P.U. and the skilled workers: they were "the privileged classes". The passing of forty years had merely substituted one aristocracy for another. There was no real freedom. We compared notes with British and American friends long acquainted with the country and found that we were in substantial agreement.

I readily admit that those of us who have tried to evaluate the Russian experiment on the eve of war, must have overlooked something. We never expected Soviet Russia's amazing resistance to the Nazis. I certainly thought that the Russian peasant would fight, as he had fought in 1812 against Napoleon, if the sacred soil of his country was invaded; but like many others, I never expected that Marshal Stalin would be able to mobilize the forces of the U.S.S.R. in so miraculous a fashion. My object in referring to my personal experience is that it makes me realise how difficult it was for a visitor to be completely fair and not to allow himself to be influenced by the amount of human suffering, or by the memory of the ruthless extermination of opponents.

Those who desire to study Y.B's views on his Russian visit and on his outlook on Bolshevism, should turn to *European Jungle*, as well as to his articles in *The Spectator* and elsewhere. The letters to his mother, to Rosalind Constable and to me, written either during his tour or immediately after his return, help us to appreciate his final summing-up. It will be seen that he regarded the visit as "the most interesting trip I have ever done", and that he was much impressed by the spirit of hope among Russia's younger generation, though, owing to the prevailing famine conditions, he certainly took an unduly pessimistic view of the country's immediate future.

Here are a few of his letters at the time of the "trip":

Nijni-Novgorod. August 12, 1932

My Own Mother,

Moscow is marvellous. But the prices are appalling—sixpence each for tomatoes, 2/6 for a glass of milk, and 5/- for a bottle of mineral water.

In spite of this I think the Soviet Republic will weather its difficulties and be able to give the people enough food this winter. What we are seeing is awfully interesting and I can hardly begin to tell you about it.

In Leningrad we went to Peterhof and saw the Tsar's apartment exactly as he left it when he was taken off to exile and death. The books he was reading apparently—at any rate on his shelves—included two of E. F. Benson's and one of Mrs. Belloc Lowndes's. We have been extremely hard-worked and rather uncomfortable.

On the Volga. 16 August.

Just a line to let you know that I am alive and kicking: but it is frightfully hot here, and we have seen nothing since leaving Nijni-Novgorod.

Tomorrow night we get to Stalingrad, where we see the tractor plants, and then to Rostov, where the gigantic collective farms are . . . We have no letters or news of the outside world; there is a rumour that Hitler is Chancellor of Germany, but it seems impossible to verify.

. . . This trip has been a disappointment as a whole.

It is disagreeable writing nothing but criticism. I have come to the conclusion that everything in Russia is bluff. They are producing very little from their mines and factories. The food situation is getting worse and worse. All that is left is hope. This the people have in superabundant

measure; and it is something, of course. But when they discover that the Five Year Plan has failed they may lose hope. What will happen then no one knows.

Moscow. August 24th.

I am leaving tomorrow at dawn to fly to Berlin; and shall stay there as long as necessary to do the article which Evelyn wants.

My days here have been as strenuous as any I have ever spent, and my impressions are very varied. The whole of the trip south of Moscow was acutely uncomfortable—not "roughing it" in the sense of camping, but long waiting owing to lack of organisation. The Russian people are very charming and very patient . . .

. . . They showed me *The Times*, *Spectator* and *Observer*[1] at our Embassy, which are all very cheering. I like the *Observer* particularly, for the reviewer saw that I had tried to make a real though small contribution to history. What a book could be written about the Russian Revolution!

Moscow. August 24th.

Dear Evelyn,

It is pleasant that the second book has gone well. I feel more confident about embarking upon another.

This trip has been an amazing experience. I cannot begin to tell you about my impressions; except that the Russian people are the most charming and the most patient I have ever met.

Yesterday I lunched with Mr. and Mrs. Sokolnikoff, and tonight I dine at our Embassy. At dawn tomorrow, I fly to Berlin, thence to Munich, depending upon circumstances, as you may imagine.

. . . There is a great shortage of all commodities of all kinds, and Russia is admittedly going to face a difficult winter, but there is great hope and enthusiasm among her people. Mr. Sokolnikoff[2] asked to be remembered to you; I found him and his wife charming: so simple and kindly.

I do thank you for having made this experience possible.

from

Francis.

After leaving Russia he wrote to me:

I cannot begin to tell you about Russia. It was the most interesting trip I have ever done, but it was also the most strenuous. Famine conditions are prevalent everywhere except Moscow and Leningrad, and as far as we could see, the Five Year Plan has failed.

The building programmes have been completed, but the production is nothing like what was anticipated. As to farming, they simply are not doing any work on the collective farms. We saw some very terrible sights of hunger and squalor. The only good thing is the air of hope amongst the young, but the young are now beginning to lose their hope.

[1] This refers to the reviews of *Golden Horn*.

[2] Subsequently sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

As to the much vaunted welfare-work—care of children—mothers' clinics, etc.,—they must be eyewash. I will go into it in my articles, but I am afraid the Soviet Government won't like them. Berlin was in a strange mood. Hitler was in Berlin, but it was impossible to get near him. There was great luxury in the West End, and hunger and hatred in the North. Mrs. Fylemann was *most* kind and helpful; and took me all over one district where there were many unemployed.

Frau von Huhn insisted on my going to a "highbrow" tea-party, where I learned that the Germans of the higher *bourgeoisie* are as blind as a similar class in our own country to the new world on their doorsteps. There must come great changes in Europe, but I still hope they will not be Socialistic ones. But rather than have no change, I would accept Communism. It is better to be without bread than to be without hope.

I am here for a week, writing my articles and visiting poor Pelham Cochrane. I wonder if you are in Brittany. I am longing to see you again. I hope I will do so before I go to U.S.A. at the end of the month. *Golden Horn* seems to be doing well, as it is not as happy a book as *Bengal Lancer*. Anyway, I am glad it is finished and published and done with.

As from Bath Club, September 11th.

" . . . It was lovely seeing you and Hylda on Saturday, and I only wish time had been longer. There was so much I wanted to say! I hope that I didn't seem as if I had hated the Russian trip. *Far from it!* although arduous and in some ways disappointing, it was an experience I would not have missed, and I am very grateful to you for having given me the opportunity to go. It has given all my mental faculties a good stirring up."

The following extracts have been taken from the articles[1] describing his visit to Russia:

First Impressions of Leningrad. "There are no shops. There are no advertisements. There are no beggars. About half the tram-drivers are women. Children, playing half-naked in the streets, look plump and healthy. Their elders look brisk and bright, but a little shabby. The 'Hotel d'Europe', to which we are driven in large Lincoln cars, looks shabby too These are my first impressions.

"I was wrong about the shops, though. There are a few, and they have long queues standing outside them. The interpreter says that they are Co-operative stores. After breakfast on the charming roof-garden of the 'Europe' we are driven to the People's Park of Rest and Culture. We pass a poor funeral on the way. Yes, there are classes still, in Russia. The rich have been liquidated, but not the poor. This is a 'white' funeral; that is, a funeral according to Christian rites. Two skinny ponies are drawing a white hearse, and behind it follows an old man, cap in hand, and two crying women. (These are the first old people I have seen, by the way.) When a Bolshevik is buried he goes to the cemetery covered by a red pall, and there is no ceremony except perhaps a speech. Jews

[1] In *The Spectator*, "Russia as I saw it", 1st, 8th, 15th, 29th October, 18th, 24th November

have 'black' funerals. There is no religious persecution, says the interpreter.

"Well, here is a church: let us go inside. No, not that one, it is to be converted into offices. We do pass an active church, however, and stop our procession of cars. Some beggars, the first I have seen, ask alms of the faithful. Within, three priests are conducting the service. A hundred people are present this Sunday morning—devout, clean, apparently unpersecuted. Christ, crowned with thorns, looks down on the congregation from a fresco on the south wall. The singing is beautiful. A policeman, wearing his hat, looks at me in surprise as I cross myself, but makes no comment."

A Worker's Flat. "Being led round like a drove of tourists is getting on my nerves. I don't want to be shown and told so much: I want to ask and be answered more. On the way back I stop the car at a large new block of flats. 'Let us see how the workers are living,' I suggest.

"Two interpreters go to ask permission for our visit: they are away some twenty minutes, but return at last and lead us to the home of an electrical engineer on the third floor. He is a clean-shaven, erect little man, living with his wife, child and niece in a sitting-room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom . . .

"Is our friend in his flat better or worse off than his opposite number in England? The Russian has communal wireless, central heating, and electric light included in his rent, but he is living on a diet which would cause an immediate mutiny in any English prison.

"I ask to see the bathroom. There is no bath in it. He moved in in September, 1931, (almost a year ago), but the plumbing is not yet in working order. His wife has lipstick and eau-de-cologne on her dressing-table. She is at work in a factory, earning 125 roubles a month, and can afford scent at 5 roubles a flask, and lipstick (issued in three grades, for non-proletarians, workers, and responsible workers) of the best quality at 3 roubles—10s. to 7/6d. by our standard of comparison. This is a well-to-do family. The three adults earn between them 450 roubles a month; the child is educated free, and they have no anxieties as to the future, theoretically. Practically, however, the majority of our unemployed have more material comforts than these 'prosperous' Russian workers, and have more done for them by the State."

The Last of the Romanoffs. "After luncheon (one of our party orders a bottle of beer and finds that the price is five roubles—17s. 6d. at the exchange we have had to pay) we have an opportunity to compare Lenin's bedroom with that of the last Czar, for we drive out to the great white chateau where the Romanoffs lived, now called Detskoye Selo—The Children's Village. In the Czar's library I find Mr. E. F. Benson's ARUNDEL and THE OAKLEYITES, Mr. H. G. Wells' ANN VERONICA, Mr. Bernard Shaw's CASHEL BYRON'S PROFESSION, FOUR PLEASANT PLAYS, and MAN AND SUPERMAN, and Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes' GOOD OLD ANNE, all in the Tauchnitz edition. In the billiard room maps of the various fronts are laid out, just as Nicholas Romanoff left them. The Czarevitch's toy motor-car is parked in the big drawing-room. In the bedroom are a host of photographs and religious emblems.

"I ask the interpreter whether the Government ordered the execution of all the Romanoffs, or whether it was a mistake that the children were killed?

" 'The Government ordered it,' the interpreter answers, 'to save them from being captured by White Guards. You will note the number of ikons and other evidences of superstition, and the bad *bourgeois* taste of the furniture in these rooms. The Romanoffs were out of touch with the spirit of the age.'

"That may be, but I remember the true story of Ekaterinburg."

On the Volga. "Full moon on the Volga. Its track leads down the glassy river to Samara, the outpost of sixteenth-century Muscovy which is to become a grain centre and an oil depot under the Five Year Plan. We are in the heart of New Russia, and have already passed Kazan, the wonderful old capital of the Tartars, and Ulyanovsk, the birthplace of Lenin, without being given an opportunity to visit them. Is this due to bad organisation, or from fear that we shall see how hungry the people are? . . .

"Today is my birthday, and I must make a preliminary personal confession, for this country is so big and baffling that no one should attempt to write about it without explaining his way of approach. If you are a young Socialist, you will look on modern Russia with a certain bias: if, on the other hand, you are a middle-aged Christian Conservative Englishman who knows only six words of the Russian language, you will regard the Soviet experiment in quite another fashion. All that an observer such as I can fairly report of Soviet Russia is what happens to himself, his own impressions, and conversations. I daresay that this ship, the 'Martina', and the 'Rykov' on which I sailed from London to Leningrad, are fairly representative of the Russian world: ships are revealing and expressive creatures . . .

"Here on the 'Martina' the engines seem to be more or less efficient, but we are already a day late. The Responsible Worker in charge of the bathroom water supply rarely remembers to turn it on. The decks are never scrubbed; indeed, it would be impossible to do so owing to the number of passengers living and sleeping on every foot of open space as well as in the dining saloon, kitchen, passages. Brasswork is unpolished; hawsers are not flaked down; litter is lying everywhere. I wash in a cracked basin from a leaky tap. Perhaps I am lucky to be able to do so at all, for generally speaking, water doesn't run from Russian taps when one wants it. As to the sanitary arrangements, they reek to heaven. The Soviet Government has liquidated many things, but not its lavatories.

"Of course, this is a minor criticism. I would not mention the details of my personal comfort if they were not symptomatic of much else. But they are symptomatic. Can a man operate an automatic punch drill, or help to build up a great industrial nation, when he cannot remember to pull a plug? It is at least open to doubt."

The Proletariat. "I wish that a British worker could stand with me on this deck tonight as the ship berths at Samara pier. At the quayside, the proletariat crouches amidst its enormous bundles of personal property. It is like an animal, a powerful, patient animal that knows how to wait.

Every day it is told by loud-speakers, wall newspapers, Young Communists, Red Guards, that it is the ruler of the country. The *bourgeoisie* is dead! Long live the Responsible Workers! Now see the Responsible Workers putting out a gang-way. A struggle begins for first place on board. The proletariat must have its tickets, else it is pushed aside as ruthlessly as in less paradisal lands. It fights its way forward, carrying feather beds, sacks of melons, baskets, boxes, babies on its strong back. On the lower deck it is packed and pressed down like the black caviare of Astrakhan. We, together with the most responsible of the Responsible Workers—foremen, engineers, technicians, all the aristocrats of Communism—look down on the Toiling Masses from the first class. There are six classes—two first, two seconds, a third and a fourth.

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! Is it for this that a million Russians have suffered 'the supreme measure of social defence'—shooting?"

The Russian Woman. "Amidst the pomp and platitude of the Materialist Dialectic, one note is always discernible, the aim of Socialism (as Marx-Lenin understood it) is to make a New Man. Obviously this creature needs a partner, and, as I have already noticed, she is to be seen here and there in Leningrad. Male-wristed, short-haired, stocky, unfeminine girls are also visible in Moscow, Nijni-Novgorod, Stalingrad, Rostov (in all industrial centres, no doubt), and if Communism were to continue indefinitely they might eventually form a sex apart, such as already exists in certain communities of insects.

"But I am sure that this will not happen. The girls of New Russia seem to me to hold the threads of destiny in their hands more firmly than the boys. They have equal opportunities with men, and a better inherent capacity for routine work. The future of the country is theirs. The memory of our interpreters comes to my mind: agreeable, capable, well-dressed ladies whom I found to be better educated and quicker in the uptake than the men. I remember also a girl in a black overall, operating a bolt-making machine; and another, a very pretty, delicate creature, wearing a white spotted scarf over her hair, in charge of an expensive multiple automatic bolt-making lathe (her wages were only 100 roubles a month), and yet another whose fingers wielded a micrometer gauge with cheerful carelessness. I am not so foolish as to imagine that I have understood Russia after a month's visit, but if my impressions have any value at all, they have been drawn not from statistics but from subtler means of approach.

"There was a young judge, for instance, whom I saw in Nijni-Novgorod. Her Court consisted of two foolish-looking assessors and a flaxen-haired secretary. Tattered linoleum lay on the floor; the windows were grimed with the dust of years; everything was ramshackle except that square-jawed, gimlet-eyed girl in authority. I imagine that she was a just judge, for the accused, (a *moujik* charged with speculation) stated his case fully in spite of attempted interruptions on the part of the police, and she went to much trouble to put him at his ease. I have been told by those who ought to know that Soviet justice is a farce: that may be, but no one could have failed to be impressed by the way that this young woman managed the proceedings . . .

"Another type was Maroussia, a fresh-faced, wide-lipped peasant of eighteen who was learning to be a pilot on a Volga steamer. Her grey eyes lit up continually with laughter at the jokes of the old skipper. She was at the wheel by day and night. She carried herself well, in spite of her short stature, and she was happy in a solid, placid sort of way. I believe that there are thousands of girls like Maroussia amongst the Soviet Republics. They are standing on their own feet and sleeping in their own beds. If they want children, they can have them without any formalities except those which nature dictates; and if they do not want them there are the birth-control bureaux and abortion clinics. The latter performed 80,000 operations last year in Moscow alone . . .

"But I will not end with a sneer. The Soviet Government not only means well but has done its best by women and children. Girls in Russia have more physical freedom and more industrial opportunity than any mass of women has ever enjoyed before. But—mass of women! There is something incongruous in the phrase. Women are never a mass. I do not believe that the Communist girl of today has any permanent intention of becoming a cog in a machine. Just now it is the fashion to be a worker, as with us during the War, and for the same reasons of national necessity, but when the crisis is past, (as it must, by the change or collapse of present methods), the women of Russia will desire more leisure, more romance, prettier clothes, and the atmosphere of a family life which can only be based on capitalism. Meanwhile, they are financially independent and morally emancipated. That is the proudest achievement of the Bolsheviks. It may also be their undoing."

A Wonderful Experiment. "At Bolshevo, near Moscow, there is a Labour Colony devoted to the reform of young criminals. Like our Borstal, it is a "road to life" on which there is all kinds of traffic; and it is the best (and least advertised) of the institutions which I saw in the U.S.S.R. during my month's visit. The Bolsheviks adopt a humane and scientific attitude towards crime, as long as it is not crime against the State.

"Dissent from the orthodox faith of Communism is visited with penalties as severe as any with which the Spanish Inquisition punished heresy, but other transgressors are kindly treated. For instance, the maximum penalty for murder is ten years' penal servitude. Thieving is regarded as a peccadillo for psychological treatment, and so also are vagrancy, drug-taking and chronic drunkenness. All the two thousand inmates of the colony are being treated for one or other of these social shortcomings: ninety per cent. of them had been classed as "hopeless incorrigibles" and all had committed at least four crimes. No one who is not a rogue and a recidivist is admitted to Bolshevo. Yet in time—short or long according to temperament—he or she is nearly always transformed into a self-respecting citizen. The principles of cure are (a) freedom, (b) labour, (c) self-entertainment and self-education.

"The freedom of the inmates is relative, of course, but very real compared with that of any other prison outside the U.S.S.R. They elect their own managers. They make their own rules, for they know their failings better than anyone else. They have established a dry regime, 'just as they have in America' our guide said. ('Not *just* as they have in

America?' asked a cynic.) They work hard but voluntarily. They arrange their own hours of labour and recreation: and give themselves weekly and yearly holidays. Punishments do not exist, except social censure leading finally to expulsion by the vote of the inmates. (When expelled they have to return to prison to serve out their sentence.) At the end of last year two hundred and fifty of them who had served their time were given permission to leave; two hundred and forty-nine of them elected to remain. The cynic might say that it was a commentary on conditions outside, but I believe these volunteers stayed behind in order to help their fellows in an atmosphere in which they felt at home. One day the world may see many such colonies of such maladjusted people.

" 'Do you ever pray?' I asked a young thief who was now an expert maker of tennis racquets.

"He shuddered at the thought.

"There was no visible sign of religion at Bolshevo, yet I felt that here most plainly was the presence of Christ. The Bolsheviks dread Him 'whose service is perfect freedom,' and Who said 'Verily I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven,' but His spirit prevails. After this visit I was inclined to be more sympathetic to everything I saw in Russia. I thought even if Marxian-Socialism is unworkable, the Bolsheviks have tackled a big problem in a big way. They are bridging centuries of sloth by years of stress; they are bringing to Russia a material prosperity impossible under the bureaucracy of Tsardom. Let us praise great men, even if we disagree with their methods; a regenerated Russia, however bloodily achieved, will be an important factor in world prosperity."

The Russian Armies. "I can say little about the Russian Armies from personal contact with them, but a visit to the Museum of the War Institute at Moscow, and an interview with General Mutnik there convinced me that whatever else was neglected in the U.S.S.R. it was not defence."

Summing up. "Iron discipline. Strong leadership. 'Monolithic unity of the party based on the most stringent and relentless eradication of all *petit-bourgeois* tendencies! (Kaganovich). 'The important thing is that the shell of family seclusion has been broken through.' (Sibiriak). 'Class war'. 'Anti-god'. 'Tearing out the roots of capitalism.' 'Success of the five year plan.' The visitor to Russia soon wearies of these phrases. Now, I believe the Russian people are growing tired of them, too, and are beginning to feel that they are but so many formulae for the coercion of the Toiling Masses.

"Lenin's tomb, great in planning, but poor in detail, seemed to me an epitome of my Russian impressions.

"From the Red Square, especially at night, when the mausoleum of the greatest materialist of modern times stands foursquare, gleaming, monolithic against the Kremlin walls, and high and far above it the Red Flag flutters flood-lighted, one gains an impression of strength and unity of purpose. But inside, the lighting effects are those of a cabaret, and the mummy that meets the visitor at the end of his pilgrimage, with small waxy folded hands, and the flag of the Paris Commune at its feet, seems something of an anti-climax.

"On the occasion of my visit I was surprised to see that the comrade in front of me kept on his cap. A policeman spoke to him roughly, telling him to take it off. The comrade obeyed but winked at me.

"Lenin was a great figure, though an evil force in the world. He shook the earth more profoundly than Tamerlane or Ghengiz Khan, and founded his power on a terror hitherto unparalleled, but he was good and kind in private life. Now his yellow face, with its magnificent moulded forehead, thin red beard, sardonic smile, and wart by the right eye, is a peepshow for the people he loved."

On his return from Moscow Y.B. spent a week in Berlin, he wrote:

"A philosophy is being built up round National Socialism which will not be shaken by the sneers of intellectuals: to me, spending an hour at the Nazi Headquarters in Hedemannstrasse, not interviewing officials, but loitering about, watching the buyers in the bookshop, officials passing in and out, the children in the streets saluting their heroes, it seemed obvious that here was a movement based on something more than 'promising everybody everything.' It is a movement in tune with the popular will. To shut one's eyes to the threat of war it involves is very foolish. Germany intends to have Danzig and the Corridor: I have no brief for her. I deplore the fact that several million Germans would shed their blood for this cause, but since it is a fact, and since the Poles certainly cannot be talked out of their territory, how will the matter be settled except by arms? I believe there must be a war in Europe: the best we can hope for is that it will soon be over, and that it will not spread.

"The German people have been living on the brink of ruin for the last fifteen years. Hitler promises them a way out: eventually they will go his way rather than towards communism, provided he adopts a more moderate policy towards the Jews, to whom the country owes much prosperity."

Letters to Rosalind Constable written by Y.B. from Russia:

July 29 1932. The Bath Club.

I've just been over the ship—the Rykov—and find I've got a cabin to myself. David Low is coming, and Hamilton Fyfe, and the Foreign Editor of the News Chronicle, Smith, a pleasant old man of 60. They gave us excellent vodka and caviare for tea: I expect I'll be pretty teetotal on the trip, however . . . I may write from the ship, but after that will send only p.c's until I get to Berlin, for the Ogpu hold up all letters to read them . . .

August 2 1932. Kiel

So far our engines have broken down 4 times. This ship is the dirtiest I've ever sailed on: the crew sit in "Lenin Corner" (their quarters aft, where a bust of Lenin, draped in red bunting glowers down on them like an African god) making diagrams of the part that the good ship Rykov is playing in the Five Year Plan. But they never dream of scrubbing the decks, or scouring out the rubbish which chokes the scuppers.

David Low spends his time sketching Bolsheviks. I haven't talked to him much, as he likes to be alone. I sit with Smith, and Hamilton Fyfe. I'm enjoying the trip, in spite of a fat German journalist who shares my cabin, snores, sprawls, eructates, etc. He is a Socialist, of course, like everyone else on this ship who isn't a Bolshevik, except myself. Or are there many dark horses? I thought I sensed one or two, even in the holy of holies—Lenin Corner.

I don't believe I'll be able to write to you while in Russia, except p.c's. This should reach you long before you reach Antibes. Be careful, won't you? Remember the French are often foolhardy drivers; and that there are boozy bozos on the Riviera who will imperil your young life. I shall think of you often, and wish you were safely among the brigands I shall be visiting . . .

August 12 1932. Nijni-Novgorod

It's a hot night here, and we've been over the biggest plant in the world—to make Ford cars for Russia—and then dined to the strains of an ecstatic band, playing Carmen and the inevitable Boating Song.

I can't begin to tell you about it all. Moscow is *marvellous*: the lobby of the New Moscow Hotel, which is opposite the Kremlin on the other side of the river, is like a Bloomsbury cocktail party, tho' everyone is sober. Alcohol is an appalling price—in fact everything. Apples 2/- each. Tomatoes 6d. Eggs 9d. I ordered two bottles of mineral water and they cost 17/6! So far I have only tasted vodka and Caucasian wines at the various parties to which we have been bidden. There I've eaten beluga, tons of caviare, strange soups and fishes and sweets, and drunk an enchanting pink vodka, etc. Have met Radek and Meyerhold among the Russians; also Sokolnikoff (the Ambassador in London) and Maurice Hindus, whom I like. Louis Golding and Mrs. G. D. H. Cole were there (in Moscow) and I lunched at the Embassy one day, where they showed me Harold Nicolson's slashing attack on *Golden Horn*, and Max's charming article. Nicolson's will do the book good: it is refreshing to be attacked: I really like it.

Today you will have been doing your second day's driving and sleeping somewhere near Orleans perhaps? Tomorrow when we are on our Volga boat you will be in Provence? My geography is weak, and my head like a Russian cauliflower.

Oh, I've fallen rather in love with a woman with an artificial leg . . .

And tonight I've been walking along the promenade over the great river (not the Volga but an affluent) which Nijni Novgorod commands. About a million people seemed to be out—as a matter of fact there are half a million here—enjoying the summer evening just like people anywhere else. In fact, in outer essentials there is little difference between capitalist countries and this. The Responsible Workers and Directors drive in cars, dine at the expensive restaurants, have pretty girls in their company. The other Workers clock in, earn money by piece work, stand in queues for their rations . . . I wonder if this letter will pass the Censor?

One thing does impress me, and that is the atmosphere of hope and enthusiasm. It is like being at a great play—a ballet perhaps—with everybody acting their part to perfection, and enjoying it. And after all, the world's a stage . . .

This place was famous all over the world as a meeting of East and West, for its spring fur market, to which half the Jews of Europe used to come. There were great parties in this hotel: the Hittite faces are still there, but the girls from Omsk and Paris, Tiflis and Archangel are gone: there are only brown-breasted working comrades, in short hair and singlets.

I'm enjoying it all hugely, but I'm too tired to write. I'll do that tomorrow on the Volga. I wish I had a glass of beer, Rosalind! Instead I'll drink your health in a glass of boiled water . . .

August 16. 1932. On the Volga.

This is the bloodiest trip I've ever done: no beer: no ice: filthy food: ghastly stinks: the Toiling Masses sprawling all over the deck. I'm glad you didn't come.

We have seen nothing since leaving Nijni-Novgorod. Tomorrow night we get into Stalingrad and inspect a tractor plant. Then we go on to Rostov, which appeals to me as it used to be a Cossack city. From there five of us go back to Moscow. I spend a night there and then fly to Berlin. I think Berlin may be amusing, but I wish you were to be there.

I suppose you are at Antibes now. Write and tell me what you are doing and thinking about. It's too hot to do or think anything here. We have had no news for a week. There's a rumour that Hitler is Chancellor. I don't suppose I'll see him. After Berlin I may go to Switzerland for 10 days, and then back to England: probably I shall sail for America at the end of Septr.

Did I tell you about the Kremlin and Lenin's tomb. The latter is *most* impressive. We went to an Anti-God museum and were lectured by a Professor of Atheism, and to an abortion clinic. Must stop now as we are reaching Saratov: all these towns smell of wet rabbits.

August 22. Moscow.

Yes, there *is* a gulf between this world and the strangely stifled bourgeois existence we lead in England: it is clever of you to have guessed it. I wish now, after all, that you had come. There is a marvellous stimulus about the atmosphere here, where humanity is young, struggling, virile. Things are not going well. There is hunger and appalling filth and misery in the country districts, but there is hope. Hope is a great thing in this world of illusions (and I don't mean this cynically!) The Volga trip was practically wasted. We were meant to see only a little, and by bad luck we saw practically nothing. However, these twenty days have been an unforgettable experience.

Y.B. liked change and contrast, he certainly got them in 1932. He had no sooner written the articles about his Russian trip than he undertook an American lecture tour—the only one he ever attempted, if we exclude his showing of the Mount Everest film several years earlier. He sailed from

Southampton on the *Olympic* on 28th September and he arrived in New York in very different circumstances from his previous visit; he was now a well-known author with an American reputation, and a recognised authority on India. His visit synchronised with the appearance of *Bloody Years*.[1] If he ever had time during his short visit to remember his work as manager of the polo club in Rhode Island eight years before, he must indeed have felt that fate was now making up to him for the ill-success of the past.

He started off to make his bow to the American public with high hopes. All had been arranged for the lecture tour which was to begin at Salt Lake City on 17th October, thence he would gradually make his way eastwards. In a letter to his mother just before starting he wrote: "I shall have a week in New York. It is a good idea, I think, beginning in the West and working East, for I shall have time to learn what the audience wants, etc., before speaking in any of the big centres." His enterprising publishers, the Viking Press, announced that he would be lecturing throughout the country immediately after the publication of *Bloody Years*, and stated that local residents would be informed "as to his itinerary and given definite lecture tie-ups within a short while".

Alas, the best-laid schemes often miscarry. Y.B. was not suited for the lecture platform. In the autumn of 1932 he was not in the mood to undertake anything so strenuous and all-pervading as a speaking tour in the United States; to make a success of such an undertaking required enthusiasm for the subject and complete self-assurance.

His record as a writer should have banished the inferiority complex from which he had suffered. It was a curious experience in the midst of so much success to be confronted with utter failure. On his return he described to me his sensations on the nightmare occasion when, before a large western audience, he realised his lecture was "a complete flop". He, the artist in words, who could make the printed page live, was unable to grip a restive audience showing signs of boredom. What was he to do in front of that sea of white faces staring at him?

Suddenly he felt panic-stricken, his mind would not function, all the carefully prepared phrases vanished. To bring matters to an end as quickly as possible was the only thing to do. In consultation with his agents it was wisely decided to cut his losses. Many people in his position would have persevered and wrested success from failure, but he was too conscious of his shortcomings as a speaker. The return journey, alone, across the continent by train—he had flown on the outward journey—must have been grim. Within a month of sailing from Southampton he was back again in England and, in a letter written while staying with Mrs. Hardy[2] at Max Gate, Dorchester, to his friend, Mrs. Allhusen, dated 11th November, he remarks: "I have been to America, and ill, and depressed, but am now quite recovered and am enjoying myself here greatly."

[1] The title under which *Golden Horn* was published by the Viking Press, New York.
[2] Widow of Thomas Hardy.

CHAPTER XX

FRUSTRATED Y.B.

THE CORPORATE State had long appealed to Y.B. Every time he went to Italy he returned with increased admiration for Mussolini and his achievements—in terms of brick and mortar they were very impressive. He had always disliked Socialism and had been suspicious of Parliamentary democracy. Undoubtedly his years in India, a country where personal rule has been practised since the birth of time, had profoundly affected his outlook.

His absorption in Yoga decreased from 1930 onwards—apart from a temporary recrudescence of interest in this subject when he was in India in 1936. He undoubtedly transferred his allegiance from explorations in the field of Eastern thought to the ponderables of the Western political scene. Europe and its ailments now became his chief preoccupation. He often acted by intuition, perhaps it was his intuition that focussed his attention on the west. Certainly his instinct was right and, unlike so many of the political prophets, he realised that a supreme moment in Europe's destiny was at hand. For the last fifteen years of his life this was his dominating interest. He read and travelled widely, he became more and more opposed to communism. Writing for the sake of writing no longer sufficed him.

His passionate interest in the political scene in Europe somewhat interfered with the author in him. In *Dogs of War* and in *European Jungle* and in many articles, he was crusading for a cause. Henceforth his job in life was to enlighten his fellow countrymen as to the advantages of the new order in Europe.

The festivities and rejoicings in Italy during the *Anno Santo*, dominated his consciousness. He had long wanted to study the triumph of the Corporate State more thoroughly and had been anxious to get up-to-date material for his articles. He admired the way in which Fascism was eliminating the distinction between the Right and Left. He thought that its methods provided the only satisfactory way of ending the breach between exploiters and exploited. In the beginning of April, 1933, having thrown off his post-influenza depression, he set out for Italy. The Fascist Exhibition in Rome stirred him deeply—as it did many others in a different way. I returned from the Exhibition very much as I had from a talk with Mussolini, gravely disturbed. A great elemental force, solely

concentrated on the advancement of Italy would sweep aside everything that stood in its way. Fascism was so busy planning its future that it had neither the time nor the inclination to consider the claims of other nations. How on such lines could a peaceful world order be established?

Certainly in Rome that year, despite the anxiety of financial experts concerning the stability of the regime there was an atmosphere of elation that was catching; this buyoancy in Rome reminded me of Western America in the first decade of the century. Building was booming, expansion was in the air, big plans for the future were being undertaken. From the Capo del Governo himself I learnt of the Administration's determination to double the population of the Eternal City in the next twenty years.

Y.B. returned from Italy more than ever convinced that this new political order contained vital lessons for Great Britain, then in the slough of despond, and apparently incapable of dealing with the problems of unemployment and slums. His notes contain pages of statistics, statements, and slogans, supplied to him in Rome. But it was by no means only from Fascists that he learned of the regime's successes. He discussed the Duce's slum clearance and rehabilitation of the Campagna with the British Ambassador, Sir Ronald Graham, and with Sir William McClure,[1] the Embassy's Press Attaché. "For twenty centuries the swamps of the Campagna defied the efforts of Popes and Emperors to win them back to agriculture. Mussolini has succeeded, and it is, perhaps, his greatest victory that where there was the croaking of bull-frogs there is now the laughter of children."[2]

He paid several visits to the Fascist Exhibition and received ocular demonstration of the New Italy which he had watched on each successive visit, ever more firmly establishing itself. In some ways, the mere fact that in the years after the first Great War the United States administration had drastically curtailed alien immigration by the Quota Law had been a good thing. Italian workers who had largely helped to build American highways and sky-scrapers, had been obliged to stay at home, and were now busy fashioning the new Italy. The way in which the story of the Fascist achievement was presented was impressive; it enthralled Y.B. The enthusiasm that could be evoked in his being by modern industry and invention, as for instance by the Municipal Electricity Works in Berlin, or by Henry Ford's showmanship, was fired. But this was no surface enthusiasm. The appeal made to him by the Fascist Exhibition stirred his deepest emotions—his love for Italy and his personal pride were involved, for he was part of Italy. He had been much disturbed by the wave of Communism in the immediate post-war years.

The shadow of Marxism had vanished as truly as the malarial miasma over the new Fascist colonies in the Campagna. He was convinced that Mussolini and his followers had found a better way. In the years ahead

[1] Died in 1929.

[2] Y.B. in *The Observer*, 8th May, 1938.

Eternal Rome would witness even greater triumphs. It was not only that trains were more punctual, but new cities were arising and slums disappearing "according to plan".

The pivot of the Exhibition was the Sacrario, with its pedestal of blood-red, its darkened room, the dim music wafted seemingly from far-off regions, the blue metallic cross, the four words "*Per la Patria Immortale*". Every page of Y.B's jottings of this time in Rome bear convincingly the extent of the impact made on him by this visit.

"It is a remarkable exhibition, leading by stages to an unexpected and memorable culmination. You enter between the glances of lean lithe stern sentries—the pick of the Fascist militia I should say—and are confronted with this Fascist oath. Then from one room to another you pass, tracing the history of Italy from the days of the Intervention to the March on Rome. You will see horror and violence here: the cold-blooded killing of the one-legged Fascist, Giordini, in Bologna, of the boy Berta, whose fingers were chopped off by the 'bestia ritornate' (Communists) as he clung to the side of the bridge over the Arno . . . But it is the Sacrario, the Hall of the Martyrs, which no visitor will ever forget. I think it is a room that only New Italy could have conceived, in its combination of strength and simplicity, with a particular note that no Nordic race would have conceived. You enter it with a mind full of the terror and tragedy of the formative years of Fascism: you are in the semi-dark and see a colossal cube in the centre of the room, leading the eye upwards to a metallic cross . . . Round the walls the word 'Presente' is written, and you remember that that was the answer of the *arditi* in memory of their fallen. You think at first there is silence in this darkened room, but as you walk round it, (and here is the touch that no Nordic race would have added), faint and far away comes the lilt of *Giovanezza*: it is played on a muted gramophone and comes to you as the very voice of all these young men who gave their lives for the cause. Ever after, when you hear *Giovanezza*, as you will throughout the length and breadth of Italy, you will remember the Sacrario."

On the way back from his stay Y.B. stopped on the Riviera where he met the lady of his dreams. A couple of years of waiting had not affected his devotion; nor had it changed her determination not to embark on the hazardous venture of matrimony with Y.B. In the midst of his fragmentary notes on Fascism, is the following brief entry:

"July 10. 10 p.m. Grand Hotel (but not so grand) Troyes.

"How delicious to dream about Tibet—it is so far away.

"Yesterday at 2.30 p.m. I said goodbye to R. Since then I have come 490 miles, and seen (unseeingly) the greater part of France."

That is all there is about his love affair; he then gives some statistics about his mileage and petrol consumption. The next paragraph contains a list, in French, of the vegetation near St. Raphael.

The following page describes an encounter with a light of love on the Thames Embankment a week later. Chance adventures were not for him nowadays. He evidently gave the poor woman some money.

"18th July. Embankment. Girl with lovely gold hair, bent over bench. Flowers and vanity bag beside her. Three ships with masts in river. Chelsea Power Station. Reflections on river. Policeman. Spooning couples. Look round. Touch her hand. Horny. Sit next to her. Wake her.

" 'It is awful to be whacked, isn't it? I walk all night, and only stop when I am ready to fall. Last night I hardly got a wink of sleep.'

"Model. Slept on doorstep. Unless something gets better, there'll be a revolt by Christmas. Working classes aren't grateful. Nordic.

" 'God bless you for being so kind to me'."

On the next page are random notes about the Agricultural Marketing Bill 1933, and then a page with a medley of entries, very tantalising.

"July 21. Russian Ballet 'de Monte Carlo.'

"Flexible conductor. Low collar. Fat man in front. Heat. Queers. Woman with rough hair and dinner jacket. Petroushka. Black gloves. Boots. Brandy. Seeing double. Jeux d'Enfants.

"Negro melody on gramophone. Man and woman.

"July 22. 'I am awfully fond of riding.' Paddington telephone.

" 'You take it all too seriously. Of course women guess the thoughts of men'."

"24th July. Article on War and Peace in *Daily Telegraph*. I wanted to call it 'Can we leash the Dogs of War?'

"25th July. Reply by Desmond MacCarthy. Replied by express letter.

"Malvern. Abbey Hotel."

That page seems to me typical of Y.B's life at that moment, he was like a rudderless ship; he was drifting with the current. He was gravely dissatisfied with both his personal life and the nation's life. He wanted to help Great Britain out of the morass of muddles into which—in his view—she had fallen, because of the ineptitude of her rulers; quite apart from the nation's discarding of the gold standard. But what could he do? If only his pen could be used in the service of his country. Why was there such blindness in England where the blind were leading the blind? Why could not his countrymen look southwards, beyond the Alps, to the land of his birth, which was showing the world how to reach fresh levels of progress and prosperity?

Then the miracle happened: he was offered the editorship of *Everyman*: here at last was the opportunity he had been longing for. Editing a paper would be more exciting than laboriously gathering material for a book. He would have a weekly pulpit for ventilating his views: this must surely be the goal towards which his Kismet had been leading ever since he

left the army. He took his responsibilities very seriously. Many pages of his much corrected and rough manuscript lie before me; they were to serve as material for his editorial notes.

"August. The Editor to *Everyman*.

"This ship must set sail without any fuss. We are bound to have a stormy passage during the next six months. The crew is necessarily untrained, for the things we want to do have not yet been attempted in England. There is no use, therefore, dwelling on the ultimate plans and purposes of *Everyman* . . .

"Instead of charting our course, therefore, I will by the reader's permission take him into my confidence. For twenty years I have wanted to edit a newspaper. I have got my heart's desire—or one of them at least—but (as so often happens) not at all in the way I expected. At a distance it looked a simple job . . . Had I let the chance slip I should have ever afterwards felt that my days were incomplete . . .

"In recent years after writing my two books and with the help of God and Mr. Gollancz, I have made enough money (not much, but enough with my pension) to keep me in decent comfort for the rest of my life. But decent comfort has no attractions for me: I know her smug face too well. Even if I were twenty years younger I couldn't enjoy the Riviera life for more than a month at a time. I might be happy in the New Forest with a couple of ponies . . . Well, I hope to have the ponies when *Everyman* succeeds.

"During the last twelve months I reached the end of my intellectual tether. I took a busman's holiday in Russia, and felt most unhappy about the state of that country. Then I went for a lecture tour in the United States, which made me unhappier still. Afterwards I began another book about escapes, which developed into a large volume of other people's adventures . . . Then I thought of plots for novels and plays. Ah, those brilliant first chapters! Lying on the beach at Rimini only two months ago, I was nearly sick with shame at what I had written; I began to face certain facts about myself, which are of no importance except to myself. I am neither novelist nor playwright, alas, but I am never happy unless I am expressing myself in words. Obviously I can't go on writing about myself; not, at any rate, until I have had some more adventures. So when, three weeks ago, the telephone rang and I was asked to edit *Everyman*, my decision was never in doubt.

"Of course I pretended to give the matter my consideration. But I remembered that the first Lord Shaughnessy once told a friend of mine that in big business there was no time for thinking: right decisions, he is alleged to have said, are a matter of instinct. So I have found in my small affairs. The cerebration is all right for crossword puzzles, but it doesn't solve the problems of life. Not mine anyway. For that I turned to something inside me which is more useful than my brain.

"That something (which isn't always right, by any means, but which I am always inclined to trust against reason), tells me that I can edit a newspaper in a new way, and that it will capture the imagination of the public. In six months I shall know whether I have been mistaken, or

whether this belief of mine—a belief that has been shaping itself for more than twenty years, in ways that were often unseen by me at the time—has been a compass needle of my career, directing thought and action . . . So I have jumped at this perfect, pontifical opportunity for elf-expression. As Mr. Bernard Shaw makes the Admirable Bashville say:

> "In this star-crost world
> Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good
> In what we can, and not in what we would."

"I have suggested above that my first consideration has been my own pleasure in self-expression; but when I consider this further I begin to doubt it. Motives are always mixed. There are energies and capacities in one unused and which I shall enjoy using, but I know that I shall not be able to employ them at all, directly, for private gratification. Nothing is so sterile as solitary success. Unless one has been a poor man who has made money suddenly, one does not realise this in one's life. To buy what one wants, to go where one likes, seems to promise happiness when one is young and callow. But the truth (as many wiser than I have said), is that happiness must be shared. And in the present state of England, with our unemployment, our slums, our vacillating, formula-finding leaders, we can none of us be happy. I want to alter the present state of England.

"How this is to be done, I can't say, for I don't know. After a visit to Russia, I saw that Communism was a failure in that country, and nothing in the dreary materialistic creed of Marxism leads me to suppose that it would succeed elsewhere. Fascism, on the contrary, seems to me a good system.

"The editorship of *Everyman* was suggested to me on August 3, but it was only on August 21 that I had a secretary, a desk and an office. We have started in a horrible hurry. Most new papers—and *Everyman* is going to be so changed that it will be practically new—start with a flourish, subside into platitudinous obscurity, growing weaker every week. We shall get better and better, every day in every way . . .

"If you don't want to know what is happening in Europe, then—God help you—this paper is not for you . . .

"We believe in a revision of our constitution on the line sof the Corporate State. Italian Fascism would not work in England but we must be governed by a small group of men, or one man with dictatorial power for a period of years. All that a modern electorate can do—and does in fact do—is to vote for the broad lines of policy. Our Parliamentary system is out of date. It neither guards our liberties nor protects our purse. It gets nothing done. We must have the same sort of dictatorship that exists in a business: no managing-director could sit up half the night, as our Ministers do, arguing with an Opposition, and do work with a clear head in the morning. Let us replace our dictators at reasonable intervals if they fail to show results. But let us give them a chance to make good: they have none in the eighteenth-century atmosphere of Parliament . . . England will save herself by believing in herself, and by so doing she will help to save the world."

The youthful Francis was right when he told his brother, Alan, that he wanted to be a *sub-editor*; he should never have aspired to the editorial chair. Y.B. never possessed the sane judgment required of an editor. There was always the eccentric and unbalanced ego hovering in the background.

The weeks on *Everyman* in retrospect are tragic. Y.B. was in a state of elation, he conjured castles in the air, he saw himself thundering through the pages of *Everyman* in the crusade which was to create a new and better Britain. He gathered a small band of workers round him, consisting of some trained journalists, but others with but little knowledge of journalism. The great moment had come when the country would surely hearken to his words; never was an editor more ready to consult his colleagues. Even the weekly posters were discussed with all the staff. The experienced journalists shook their heads, they speedily realised that their advice would be left unheeded.

Y.B. made fervent speeches to his staff about his plans. He was inclined to suspect the expert; I think he must have recalled some words of Northcliffe to me which I had once repeated to him. At an early stage in his career Northcliffe had penetrated into an editorial sanctum in Fleet Street only to find the journalist of whom he had previously stood in awe of but very common fibre. In creating his vast organisation Northcliffe had often ignored the expert and put intelligent young men with but little previous experience into jobs which usually required long training. But Northcliffe had a wonderful flair for selecting the right man for the job, which, alas, Y.B. did not possess, though on one occasion it looked as if the practice of ignoring the expert might work. Y.B. appointed a racing correspondent who had never seen a race, and who incidentally tipped three winners in the first issues.

With the help of members of the staff it is possible to piece together more or less the jigsaw of those seven hectic weeks during Y.B's editorship of *Everyman*. The entire staff was called to decide upon the actual captions under the illustrations; on one occasion a portrait of Shakespeare was to be inserted in a dramatic criticism of one of his plays. A facetious member of the staff suggested as caption "The man who wrote Bacon", to which came the editorial reply "That is too highbrow".

The nervous tension and strain soon became too much for many of the staff; first an editorial adviser withdrew, shortly after the assistant editor, and a week later the literary editor. In October, 1933, I was in Italy when reports reached me that Y.B., to the surprise of the Directors of *Everyman* was openly advocating in his columns the cause of Fascism. Those who had taken shares[1] in the paper never had the slightest intention of supporting the Fascist cause; there was only one possible solution of the *impasse*, and in a few weeks Y.B. resigned.[2] I deeply regretted the turn of events; having a platform for airing his views had meant much to Y.B.,

[1] I was chairman of the Board but resigned when I heard what was happening.
[2] 10th November, 1933.

his hopes had been high; failure had come so quick, it was not even as if he had had a run for his money. He had only edited seven issues of the paper (from 29th September to 10th November, 1933). The fiasco might have been avoided, I believe, had someone whose views he respected been at hand to exercise a restraining influence, though it would not have been an easy task to prevent him from proclaiming to the world the faith that was in him. He was so sincerely convinced that he had discovered the panacea for our ills. Within a year of his unsuccessful lecture tour in America came this failure of *Everyman*, leaving him again with a sense of frustration. He was evidently in for a run of bad luck. He took farewell of his readers in these words:

"Although I am a Christian (after my own fashion, which is not quite that of any church), I used to lean much on the guru, of whom I have told in another book.

"While he was alive, I felt the radiations of his personality across the years and seas; and when he died, nearly two years ago, there was a gap in my heart and mind. Things began to go wrong. My last book (*Dogs of War*) brought me more kicks than ha'pence. I muddled my opportunities, mis-directed my energies, wasted my time. I began to lose joy in living. My life was in a mess. England seemed to me to be in a similar plight; indeed, every country in Europe. (And it is: they are!)"[1]

On the top of the *Everyman* fiasco came *Dogs of War*. Mr. Gollancz very naturally had not been prepared to publish a book at such variance with his own outlook. *Dogs of War* only sold five thousand copies, and was not regarded as a serious contribution to literature by the reviewers. For a while it appeared almost as if his career as an author had come to an end. The sales of his three books had been 150,000, 30,000 and 5,000—what would be the fate of the next one? It seemed scarcely possible that the hand which had written *Bengal Lancer* could have been responsible for *Dogs of War*. It was Y.B's attempt to reply to Beverley Nichols's *Cry Havoc*. In the opening chapter he describes how, while going off under an anæsthetic at his dentist's, he dreamt of Beverley Nichols with whom he was trying to keep pace; they were discussing *Cry Havoc*, and he was breathlessly protesting against some of the author's conclusions. Who but Y.B. would have sought literary inspiration in the dentist's chair?

Y.B. believed in war as a necessary instrument of policy; Beverley Nichols held contrary views. The twelfth chapter of *Cry Havoc* is devoted to the debate which he arranged between the Quaker Mr. Robert O. Mennell, and Y.B. It opens with a description of the background for the discussion:

"The scene is Yeats-Brown's little house in Knightsbridge, a pleasant yellow room, with early hyacinths pushing their determined spears of

[1] *Lancer at Large*, 19.

perfume into the over-heated air. Yeats-Brown's face is not nearly so swollen as I feared.[1] But I am gratified to see it is slightly swollen, as I was afraid he might have been merely excusing himself from dinner, because he did not want to drink wine with Mennell—or, even worse, because he mistrusted my book.

"We sit by the fire, and almost instantly the two men engage with each other like well-trained wrestlers. I sit slightly in the background taking notes in a shorthand which is of my own invention."[2]

We need not detain the reader with an account of the debate between the convinced pacifist and the equally convinced believer in war. A summary of Y.B's general views appeared in an article called "Why I believe in War",[3] from which the following is taken:

"My title makes me shudder (I would have preferred 'Is Peace Possible?") for I am well enough acquainted with my subject to view it with awe and aversion. I do not want war in my time, or at any time, but I do not see how it can be abolished from human society unless human nature is altered; and, unlike the pacifists, I see no sense in wishing or expecting to alter human nature . . .

"Until 1928 or 1929 I was an enthusiastic advocate for the League of Nations. I worked for a month at Geneva, learning the methods of the new international order. I wrote articles in this journal to show that the hope of the world lay in conciliation and compromise; I still think so, as regards the immediate future: I do not recant anything I wrote as far as practical politics are concerned. But I am more doubtful, indeed sceptical, about any ultimate ideal of perpetual peace.

"The post-war enthusiasm for the League of Nations was largely a reaction to danger and discomfort. In England we did not, do not, shall never want war, for we have all the territory we require, and only by peace can we regain even a part of our former prosperity. But what of Germany today, with her eyes on the Danzig Corridor? What of Hungary with her territorial claims against Rumania? What of the ambitions of the Japanese in Manchuria? In a world of latent conflicts, mounting armaments, and broken treaties, who can deny that force seems the most probable solution of present difficulties? . . .

"Supposing the League of Nations had existed in the eighteenth century, doubtless Chief Yellow Bear or some other eloquent Redskin would have argued the case for the Indians at Geneva. And if justice had been done, the white man would not have been allowed to expand as he did: instead of the skyline of New York there would now be only a few wigwams on Manhattan. Would this have been for the good of the world? It is at least open to doubt.

"Admittedly war is cruel, and to be avoided by all possible means. But sometimes war cannot be avoided. Christ left us the exemplar of our conduct: He used force against the money changers, but He would not

[1] Y.B. had been suffering from toothache.

[2] *Cry Havoc*, Beverley Nichols, 1933.

[3] *The Spectator*, 30th December, 1932.

resort to force to save Himself. We should not go wrong if we followed that high teaching.

"To fight is not the most terrible thing that can happen to a man or a nation. We are imbued with the determination to maintain certain principles even if they cause our physical death, by God, not by the Devil. Patriotism is a very real thing, and an ideal higher than is commonly supposed: the reformer who sneers at flags and uniforms, like Mr. Wells, does not do credit either to his historical judgment or to his knowledge of the modern world. The flower of patriotism has been watered by the blood of heroic men and women, whereas the weedy hothouse plant of Geneva has been nourished chiefly on talk and self-interest. For the desire of nationhood is the germ of life itself. Perfect and perpetual peace seems to me to lead to stagnation, sterility and psychic suicide."

Certainly the history of the decade since *Dogs of War* was written confirms Y.B's view that mankind had not progressed beyond resort to war, and his conviction that force would remain, anyhow for his lifetime, all powerful, has been fully justified by subsequent events.

In response to a request for any recollections of Y.B., Mr. Beverley Nichols writes:

"It is very sad, but several letters of Y.B's were destroyed, with all my other possessions, in the Blitz. My first real contact with him was when I was writing *Cry Havoc.* It might pay you to refer to the chapter giving the long dialogue on peace and war which I 'staged' between him and Robert Mennell. It is a very clear exposition of his views, and he was very meticulous in correcting it. After the success of *Cry Havoc*—as I expect you knew—he came out with a counterblast entitled *Dogs of War*. And after the obvious failure of disarmament, I, in turn, changed my views and dedicated my book *News of England* to him. I think these three books form an interesting comment on the early and middle 'thirties.

"What can I say about our other contacts? Writing at random—and therefore probably more accurately than if I were painting a self-conscious portrait—I would say that he never struck me as a happy man; there was always an undercurrent of melancholy, a sort of *malaise*. Once, after dinner at my club, we walked for nearly two hours up and down the Thames Embankment . . . and over and over again he mourned the passing of youth. 'I think old age is obscene', he said to me several times. 'There is something that makes me shudder at the thought of my hair turning grey, and my muscles going soft and my eyes growing dim.' And again: 'I hope to God I pass on before I become too revolting.' He also quoted to me a story which Wilde quotes in *Dorian Gray*, about the man who, as he grew old, had a horror of mirrors and all polished surfaces.

"This may be a new side-light on Y.B., who was socially charming, sunny, and elegant, but it was certainly an essential one and I think it accounts for his rigid control of his body, his dietary experiments, etc.

Maybe he felt he could relax more with myself than with some... Whatever the reason, he *did* relax, and always his theme was the same. As soon as he came into a room he always went to the mirror, and said something like:—'I am evidently not one of those whom the gods love.' And he was the first to quote to me Saki's delicious epigram: 'To have reached thirty is to have failed in life'."

Mr. Nichols' letter deals with an unfamiliar side of Y.B. There is no doubt that he became increasingly sensitive to the passing of years. During his last visit to India on several occasions he referred to his grey hair, and half jokingly suggested that, in Muslim fashion, he would have it died henna-red. I think his abhorrence of old age, in part at least, was due to the memory of his father's last years.

He devoted much time to the study of Fascist institutions, and especially to their adaptation to British conditions. For a time he was an admirer of Sir Oswald Mosley and asked my wife and me to go with him to the large meeting organised by the British supporters of Fascism at Olympia, in June, 1934. Although the meeting was well organised I disliked the theatricality of it all. I could not envisage anyone as devoid of humour as Mosley becoming a great national leader, able though he was. I think Y.B. shared this point of view. I had never taken Y.B's Fascist leanings too seriously, though I had often heard him express startling opinions. Our visit to Olympia stands out because I realised then how deep was his conviction that Great Britain's only hope was to discard her Parliamentary institutions and adopt some form of government similar to that existing in Italy.

Young and hefty Blackshirts thronged every part of Olympia; their duty was to keep order, but in the excitement of the moment some of them threw restraint to the winds. If a harmless member of the audience sought to ask Mosley a question of which they disapproved they set upon him and knocked him on the head. The unconscious victim was then carried out and dumped in the corridor—a disgusting exhibition of force. I had been present at scenes like this at Berlin's Kurfürstendamm, but I never expected to see the like in London.

During the evening the atmosphere became increasingly tense, and I was glad when the proceedings were over. I found it more than ever difficult to understand his attitude; Totalitarianism, whether of Rome or of Moscow, was equally distasteful to me.

During the next few years Y.B. addressed various gatherings on the working of the Corporate State; he spoke at Magdalen College, Oxford, as also in the Jewish Liberal Synagogue in London, and debated with Mr. Harold Laski before the Women's League of Service, but he wisely kept aloof from Mosley's activities. The beginning of the Spanish Civil War, and the ominous rumblings of the European volcano, more and more deflected his attention from Great Britain to the European continent. He

acted as a special correspondent for *The Observer* in Spain, Central Europe and in the Balkans.

There were occasional outward happenings that gave him pleasure, such as the *première* of his film "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer" at the Carlton in February, 1935. He invited a party of friends to join him and then typically forgot to book the seats and at the last moment the dinner had to be cancelled by telephone.

The following letters to Rosalind Constable were written in 1933:

8th Jan. 1933. Old Hope Anchor, Rye.

I wish you were down here, looking over the wet misty marshes. It is all very quiet, and strangely attractive.

I went to Church, to hear the Vicar's beautiful voice, but a stupid missionary preached. We sang one of my favourite hymns:

Hail to the Lord's Anointed
Great David's greater son . . .

It is the Epiphany, you know, and it occurred to me that what was wise about the Wise Men, was that they recognised Christ in such unexpected circumstances. That is what we are failing to do continually today. Christ was at the Chelsea Arts Ball, and I was wise enough to see him several times . . .

7 April Hotel Metropole.
Monte Carlo.

We arrived here last night from Avignon, after stopping at Antibes on the way for a vermouth and cassis at the Eden Roc. I couldn't see the raft to which you used to swim; I suppose it isn't out yet. The Cap looks to me much superior to anywhere else on the French Riviera . . .

Monte Carlo has a decided atmosphere. Incidentally, the mixed scent of orange blossom and pine is very good when not mixed with too much exhaust gas . . .

The big baccarat table was interesting to watch. The Banker is a Greek, with some affliction of the spine, so that he can only move his eyes, not his head, making him look like a movie crook. He may be that: I shouldn't wonder if he wasn't really the employee of a syndicate, and that the story of his having lost 2,000,000 francs of his own money since Christmas isn't all baloney. The New Sporting Club has only been open since Christmas. All the "best people" go there now instead of to the Casino. The King of Sweden was there, playing roulette for small sums. Gambling in francs seems more exciting than in pounds. One sees people putting on a louis, and forgets that it is only 4/-. The King of Sweden was gambling in louis. He wore a bracelet on each wrist, and 4 rings on his fingers.

We looked into the new nightclub last night—five negroes in the band—in the Sporting Club. The whole thing done very lavishly. Footmen in knee breeches everywhere, and prices in proportion. They hope by these

means to put Monte Carlo on the map again. I wonder. The diners here, and the gamblers also, all look to me very Victorian. The new age will take its pleasures differently.

April 10 1933. c/o The British Institute
Firenze.

I don't think I wrote since Avignon . . . We arrived in Monte Carlo on the night of the 6th. There is no doubt that Monte Carlo is well arranged for the sort of amusements it provides. In the evening we went to the Sporting Club, and I won three louis, having forced myself to bet. I'm not a gambler: I hate losing, and get no particular kick out of winning small sums. So I stopped, and went into the Casino, where the "hoi polloi" play. Such a sight! If I had a child I should take him or her into the Casino to see what gamblers looked like. But of course they don't allow children into the Casino. I stayed there about an hour and made some notes, but didn't play.

Next morning we started at 10 and reached Genoa at 5. No trouble at the Customs. We saw W Guerra! chalked up everywhere, and thought Italy was just ready to go to war, but Guerra turned out to be the name of a professional bicyclist. Not unfunny. One could do an article on that.

11 April. Pension Villa Bencista
Fiesole.

This is a glorious morning, and as usual I wish you were here to look at the view of Florence at my feet, shrouded in light mist, as if the city exhaled some smoky breath. Here the sun is shining, and I've been sitting naked in it for an hour, which addles the brain, but I think benefits the body.

On Good Friday John and Goad and I went to Grassina, a suburb of Florence, to see what is rather grandiloquently called the Pageant of the Dead Redeemer in Cook's office, where they sell bus tickets to it. It is an old pageant, this Gesu Morto. We found a crowd above the village waiting patiently in the cool dark, for rain was threatening. Suddenly searchlights were turned on to the hill above us, and there against a bank of black clouds stood three empty crosses, and the whole scene following the Crucifixion. At the foot of the middle cross mourned Mary the Mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene, and Mary the sister of Martha. With my opera glasses I could see the Christ—a wooden image, with body bent back and face distorted in pain—rather horrible. The two thieves were not to be seen. In the foreground Judas ran about, mad, wringing his hands and foaming at the mouth. "Come fa bene", said the crowd, and he was indeed a good actor in a difficult part.

Roman soldiers, Jews, Gentiles, and priests (with a mask to carry the Semite nose and beard) marched backwards and forwards between the crosses. Behind them was the Roman cavalry (mounted on police horses I was told) looking very fine in red cloaks and shining helmets. The scene was perfectly set, with olive trees gleaming silver and cypresses standing dark and sad amidst the people. Over all, held by a mounted centurion in white, shone a Roman "eagle" with SPQR on it, which reminded one rather oddly of the Fascist claim that Imperial Rome still

survives. All round us were very efficient and civil Fascist police, very different from the old police, whom no one ever paid any attention to.

Someone let off a rocket, which seemed a bit incongruous, and from then on the pageant degenerated. The procession started and wound down the hill towards us. The Roman soldiers joked with their friends in the crowd as they passed. Little children with wings, growing flabby with the drizzle which had just started, carrying the Last Words of Christ. Herod passed, and Pontius Pilate, and the three Marys—the Virgin was fair and very lovely. The women of the neighbourhood are supposed to be the most beautiful in the world, but they lose their looks early.

(I think the Renaissance came to an end because with the increase of luxury the Florentines ceased to move their bowels twice a day; and that if they gave up eating so much macaroni and took calsalettes, or at least more fruit, they might again conquer great regions, in art and literature. Sorry!)

We left early. Yesterday we went down to the Duomo to see the Holy Ghost light the flame not at the altar as I thought, but the squibs in the Carro, which is a sort of small car of Juggernaut, dating from the 15th. century, which used to be a rallying point (and I expect observation tower) to the Florentine armies. A sort of Ark of the Covenant, in fact.

Well, we waited in the crowd, while I reflected, as I often do in crowds, on the farce of democracy. Mussolini is right. How the devil could the common people of any country ever manage their affairs? A country is more than its people, more even than the best minds among them; and the longer I live the more I thank God that I'm an Englishman. But after that I think I'd rather be a Florentine or a Venetian, for they have great traditions too.

The sun was very hot, and I began for the first time in my life to feel faint, and *anxious* (I don't know of what) in the crowd. I have often sensed other people feeling anxious, but have never before been so myself. At last, at noon, there was a fuss among the Caribinieri at the doors of the Duomo, and suddenly the dove, a little contraption of wood, painted white, fussed out of the Cathedral on a tram-wire which led to the Carro, set fire to one squib, and then whizzed back busily. I believe it is worked by electricity now, but it used to go by clockwork, and of course in the 16th century it was something of a stunt to make a machine do what the dove does. After the one squib a whole lot went off in the Carro, including a Catherine wheel on top, which ended with unfurling the Italian flag, the Cross of Savoy, and the lilies of Florence: a delightfully noisy, patriotic, militaristic display, which pleased me greatly.

But the impressive thing was the booming of the great bells in Giotto's tower, which began with the squibs, and saved them from seeming ridiculous.

Their solemn, deep-toned reverberations seemed to carry in them the very pulse of the Renaissance. It was something beyond words—nothing to do with Dante, or Lorenzo, or Simonetta—something in the soil and air it seemed to me, a liberating spirit become articulate. After a bit we fought our way out of the crowd, and passed the great white oxen (four of them) who were being led to the Carro to take it through the streets. They had gilded horns, and a crown of roses and geraniums and gladioli . . .

22 April Fiesole.

. . . I'm doing the article on What Other Men Believe, but have failed to write Majorities Are Always Right. After all, they aren't. Instead I'm going to try to write something about Fascism. Meanwhile the plot for my novel is gradually shaping itself, but even to you I won't tell that until there is something to show. But you might pray for me, and it.

I've seen the Brownings' house—Casa Guidi—from the outside. It is an imposing palace: nothing of theirs is inside now. Also Landor's villa, where the Brownings often went. And Mrs. Browning's grave in the British cemetery: a hideous monument designed by Lord Leighton in the worst mid-Victorian style. There was a pot of gladioli on it: and all round the box hedges smelt delightful. The cemetery is a collection of monstrous tombs, broken pillars, trite mottoes, ugly urns, maudlin statues, but the total effect of this mass of hideousness set amidst the cypresses and spring flowers is somehow charming.

Afterwards Goad and I went to look at a villa in Fiesole which is for sale for £2000. It has one of the most glorious views in Tuscany or the world; and a large terraced garden. It is called Mirabello and is very quiet. In some ways it would do me very well, but I can't make up my mind to come out here and live either alone or with the "Inglese italianati, diavoli incarnati." Not that Goad answers to the latter description. I've never met a man who is nearer a saint, and yet not humourless, or a prig.

26 April 1933. Aurora Hotel, Fiesole.

The Pension where I was staying, despite comfort, was full of old cats of both sexes, and nothing went right. Here, in this little hotel on a hill-top, I have dined off soup, asparagus smothered in garlic, cutlets, nuts and figs, coffee, and half a litre of really good local wine; and now a stove has been lit in my bedroom.

People rush in and out, giving me the Salute of Imperial Rome, while they attend to the stove. The proprietress has just returned my passport—and saluted me Fascistically. So has the boot boy, who brought some kindling wood. So has the maid, who carried in a candle. They call me Signor Majore, and they have heard I am an author (in fact, I stated it on my registration form). Being an author or an artist means something in Florence. Something real. One can feel it in the atmosphere. The people who nourished Leonardo and Dante and Boccacio and so many others, live in their descendants: I feel *freer* in Florence than anywhere except Benares. One day you must come here, Rosalind, and you will remember my words. The picture galleries and so on are so much boloney, but a spirit still lives.

If I had known they were going to light this stove I wouldn't have felt so hopeless about writing. I got stuck in my book. I'm teeming with ideas, yet I can't mould them in the form of a novel. I'm getting desperate . . .

I am reading a very good book by Cecily Hamilton, called *Modern Italy*. She must be a remarkable girl, and she expresses what are my views (that's why I think her remarkable!) about the great virtues and small demerits of Fascism.

No, I don't think artists ever have only a mental life. Not real artists.

No doubt they are impossible to live with, as artists, because their mental life cannot be shared, even with a lover. But that is a reason why no one but an artist should marry an artist. No one but an artist can understand it. If one has the misfortune to be married to someone uncreative, one feels one is all wrong, outside normal life. Whereas one is at its very centre. It is the others, the uncreative, who are out in the cold, waiting for they know not what (tho' they recognise it when they feel it)—the breath of life that makes their dry bones flesh and blood. Naturally they will not, for they cannot, provide that divine afflatus: if they could, everyone would be a poet or romancer.

Yes, I entirely agree about mental enemas, and psychic fasting. Such things are even more important than bodily discipline. But both are only necessary as the result of wrong habits in the past. Enemas are only necessary as the result of wrong habits in the past. Enemas would be unnecessary if one always took the right food. On the other hand, if one always took the right food, one would probably be a bore.

Later. Today it is fine and bright. Florence is laid out at my feet, as I sit in bed writing this.

Perhaps after all I agree with you about the mental life of artists. Insofar as one is an artist, and means to do creative work, one must isolate oneself: while one is writing (or painting, I suppose) one can't think of anything else. One merely wants someone to be kind enough to make one's bed and bring one's food, and perhaps to talk to a little at meals, but without any effort at brilliancy or argument. Yet ideal conditions rarely occur, and if they did one probably wouldn't be in the mood. I know, however, the kind of circumstances in which I could write, and am always looking for them. Just now I can't write, so I am taking the opportunity of going to Rome.

The growth of Fascism, ever since we were in Italy in '31, is amazing. The Roman salute business is rather jolly. I went to the garage yesterday to get one or two things done: the mechanics all greeted me with it, and I did the same, stretching my hand out of the window of the car. Children do it by the roadside.

20 June 1933. Hotel Savoia
Rimini.

This is a wonderful place: glorious sea and sun. I've just been to Urbino. That's a wonderful place too, an enchanted city, set upon a hill. I saw Raphael's birthplace, and the fresco painted by his father of his mother, with the child Raphael in her arms. I think it's the most interesting picture I've ever seen . . .

To his mother Y.B. wrote:

Hotel Savoia
Rimini
16 June 1933

Here I am installed in quite a comfortable hotel, for only 35 francs a day, all found. That isn't bad, considering the exchange.

I drove over the Apennines and stopped to see Predappio, Mussolini's

birthplace. While lunching there, I noticed a good many carabinieri about, and also some people looking at me curiously. Presently the woman in the restaurant who waited on me, finding I knew Italian, whispered "He is here!" I guessed she meant the Duce. Apparently he was at a place 3 miles off; and was expected to pass through to visit the tombs of his Father and Mother which he always does when in the district. He is supposed to notice very carefully every name in the Visitors Book to the cemetery—and may be surprised if he finds that of an Englishman, for I don't suppose many go. The arrangements about his mother are rather grim: there is a room full of wreaths and ribbons sent by Fascists all over Italy; but she died in 1905, a simple schoolteacher. Her schoolroom was first of all a sort of cellar. I photographed the room where Mussolini was born—it is all left exactly as it was, with another peasant's house adjoining, and the other peasant is still living in his house. A cousin of his (M) sells cloth in a little shop opposite the Osteria where I lunched. The mattress on which he was born is stuffed with maize stalks.

The commune has erected a magnificent covered market and a broad flight of stairs leading to his birthplace; but M. wants the stairs abolished, and the covered market made to face the other way, so that it shall not have undue attention called to it. This shows his good sense and feeling. The guide said to me: "He said last time he was here 'What is all this nonsense? I'm not a saint, and I'm a living man. It isn't right to turn my house into a shrine.' Everybody worships him of course; and at the three places I went to and had specially opened for me, no one would take a tip.

From the date of the failure of his editorship of *Everyman* to the end of 1935 Y.B. experienced a sense of great frustration. The letters he wrote to Rosalind Constable, who was then in America, give a vivid picture of this period of his life. His unsuccessful love affair undoubtedly affected him deeply, as will be seen from his letters. They only reached me after the conclusion of the book and were in many ways a surprise to me. But they cannot be ignored by his biographer as they form part of this unsatisfactory chapter in his life's story.

4 Oct. 1934 104a Gower Street
London, W.C.1.

I expect you are opening your eyes in New York about now, and looking out on a new world of glitter.

You'll be seeing N.Y. under the best conditions—climatic and personal. You'll enjoy Chicago if you stop off there on your way West; and give my love to the great deserts you will be crossing between Oklahoma and Los Angeles. One day I mean to stay there . . .

P. came to lunch. She was rather a disappointment at Portofino. She has become rather invalidish, and spent much time painting her toe nails. I can't think why anyone paints their nails anyway.

Ward Price came at the end of our time, and kept us in fits of laughter.

We sat up all one night going to San Fruttuoso. I lost the woolly you made me: it must have dropped in the sea... I wonder if you'll ever make me another: it was the best and warmest I've ever had.

This is really a very dull letter. Perhaps I'll have more to tell you when I'm in the swing of things. Today I've been walking about the Zoo, amongst creatures as caged and alien and unhappy as myself...

11 Oct. 1934 Ibid.

I am sitting amongst a lot of debris in my room, with Billy pasting labels on those eternal piles of mine. (He is putting them on incredibly slowly!) At last I have really finished with my past life, and have gathered some material (not much, alas) which I hope to use for a novel.

This afternoon I'm going to sit in the Turkish Bath and think out a plot. But I shall tell it to no-one, even you, until it is down on paper and ready for the printers. It is my last chance. If I can't produce a success in fiction, I'll retire to the Himalayas...

26 October Ibid.

I see in this morning's paper that a stream-lined train ran from Los Angeles to N.Y. in 56 hours. Somehow that brought you closer!

The weather is keeping glorious, with the well-known tinge of melancholy in the autumnal sunshine. Wilson Harris has just been in, to see this flat with a view to taking it, and has asked me to do an article for the Xmas no: of the *Spectator*. There are the usual sort of cocktail parties going on.

On Tuesday I went to a Saintsbury dinner... You will see that this year in London is much like the last, or the one before, for me... (even to playing squash twice a week with Norman!)[1] Yet it is different. I know I'm going to break loose from all this, even if it is only to retire to a rural beatific vacuity. But Bunny Head is over with Kermit Roosevelt, and says he has a gold mine in Tanganyika. If he suggests it, I shall liquidate my remaining capital and go out there to seek my fortune. That's the mood I'm in. Yes, Madam.

I have just been reading Nijinsky. I rather think the poor devil went mad from taking marriage responsibility too seriously. No artist can do that. I hear Keith Winter is to do a play about Nijinsky...

1 Nov. Ibid.

It is a little more than a month since you left—probably the most crowded days you have every spent. I am longing to hear from you.

On Sunday I went down to Tonbridge, and saw my brother and his family.... On Sunday night I drove back and dined with X. We looked in (at her urgent entreaty) to hear Mosley at the Albert Hall. We only heard the end of the speech, and it was a ranting attack on Jews. X is incredibly silly about him. She is attracted by his personality, and is trying to get me to write to him. I told her he should be left alone, and that I'm sick of him. The January Club will probably collapse; anyway

[1] Colonel Norman Thwaites

I'm not going to the next meeting. Mosley is too vain to ever be any good, and not human enough.

Still I haven't got a plot for my novel. I don't know how to start. I wish you were here!

On Sunday I lunched with Kathryn, and dined with Gerald Kelly. Somerset Maugham was there. We drank seven kinds of claret, and I had a long talk with Maugham about Spanish mysticism, on which he has just written a book.

Yesterday was very quiet, with a healthy game of squash to work off superfluous flesh, flood and alcohol; and in the evening I dined with Evelyn R. We talked of you, and of psycho-analysis, etc. She is thinking of getting married on Nov. 20 now.

Mrs. Hardy has asked me down to Max Gate, and I think I am going there for a week, to lead simple and laborious days. After all, I *can* write (can't I?) and I *must* do so, or starve. But it is very hard to get going again. Something turned up for Mr. Micawber, so why not for me?

P.S. Have just re-read this letter: it is as dull and banal as I feel.

6 Nov. Ibid.

Yesterday I lunched with Bunny Head at White's. He is a successful stockbroker in N.Y. now, after having been the best pigsticker in India there has ever been. He wants me to edit a Sporting Quarterly; but I said it would mean a lot of work for very little reward.

A man in White's lunched *in his hat*: it was the fashion in the time of the early Georges.

I think I told you that there was someone who seemed to be about to fill my horizon when I left for Italy. All the time I was at Portofino I kept looking forward to getting back. And when I returned it was all different: it had lost its glamour. We made gallant attempts to deceive ourselves: we motored hundreds of miles, we drank buckets of champagne, we danced till dawn, but it was no good. Now, thank God, we've separated, with no damage on either side. It's a great relief. . .

I was chairman to John R Hall when she lectured on d'Annunzio last night to the Tomorrow Club. She was dressed in the usual Tuxedo, with a military mantle with gold buckles. Y had her usual square-toed crocodile shoes, and was wearing, cocked over her eyeglass, an Italian Fascist fez, and looked incredibly silly. John's lecture was called "Seven Hours with a Great Man." She told us all about d'Annunzio's villa, and his remarkable collection of china. She said "even in his bedroom there are some remarkable specimens of china", without realising she was being comic. But it was a good talk, and it makes me think I might write a life of d'Annunzio.

I have been offered £1000 by Douglas Jerrold and Harper combined for two books: one an omnibus book on India, and another of Indian frontier stories. Both would require research, and I have no one to do it. Also I would *rather* do a work of creative imagination, if I could. I've told him I'll give him an answer next week.

Today I am going down to Max Gate, Dorchester, to stay with Mrs. Hardy until Thursday, when I drive to Rye to attend Fred Benson's[1]

[1] E. F. Benson

inaugural banquet on his being made Mayor of Rye. And so back after a week's holiday, during which I hope I'll have thought of a plot for this novel.

Yesterday I lunched with Kathryn, looking divine in a Molyneux Cossack costume. I'm getting very fond of her. Afterwards we went to Molyneux to choose another hat, and saw Gertie Lawrence there. And the evening before.

We attracted a good deal of attention at the Café Royal last night of course. Something went to my head (it could have been the beer) and when J said she was going to marry D, I proposed to Y, and was accepted. So we are all going to settle down in Chelsea together. There was a cow-like Russian girl with us, who never opened her mouth the whole time. I suddenly noticed her at the end of the evening: Y said "Oh yes, this is Selena: we had *such* difficulty in getting her over: the police wouldn't let her go." That's all I know about her!

19 Nov. Ibid.

Darling, I hope your cold has quite gone? Here it is a typical November fog. I don't mind it when there is sunshine in my heart, and there is this morning, for no particular reason (unless it be that my liver is working well!).

I am going to see a Jew in the city at 3 o'clock who has political ambitions and wants to run a paper! I don't expect anything to come out of it. But it is pleasant to find a Jew who is a strong nationalist and a patriot with a War record.

The Peace Ballot is exercising people's minds here. It was started by the League of Nations Union. Here are the questions:

(1) Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?
(2) Are you in favour of an all-round reduction in armaments by international agreement?
(3) Are you in favour of an all-round abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?
(4) Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreement?
(5) Do you consider that if a nation insists on attacking another the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by
(a) Economic and non-military measures?
(b) If necessary, military measures?

No. 5 (b) sticks in the throats of the pacifists and the hypocrites also. Of course nothing will ever come of the League of Nations until and unless we are willing to send troops to coerce Japan, Paraguay, or any other League member, if necessary. And as we obviously are not ready to do so, we shall have to alter the League constitution, and let it lapse. Peter Davies tells me that *Dogs of War* is going on selling, and I know it is from the letters I'm still getting. Yesterday Reggie Berkeley wrote to me from Hollywood. He tells me that *Bengal Lancer* is being filmed.

Do tell me about it if you hear anything; but of course these producers are inclined to be cagy. I want to come out. I feel at a loose-end here, and am not getting on with my novel...

My stay at Mrs. Hardy's was restful and pleasant. In the mornings, after breakfast in bed, I used to sit in the study where Hardy wrote Tess and *The Dynasts*. (*The Dynasts* ought to be filmed, by the way.) One day we drove over to see the Borstal Institution on Portland Bill. They (the inmates) were a fine husky-looking lot of young devils: every one of them had been convicted of crime at least 3 *times*: that was the curious thing: many of us have *some* criminal tendencies, but most of us don't get caught. Why did they? Some of them were obviously mentally deficient; but what of the others? ... About 40% of them continue a life of crime after their 3 years in Borstal; so only 60% are "saved" ... I heard that one "house" of Borstal inmates, encouraged by their house-master refused to turn out for Armistice-Day parade, to show their disapproval of militarism. I went on to E.F.B's at Rye and had a grand Mayoral dinner.

I have turned down the offer of £1000 from Jerrold and Harpers for the two books on India. Perhaps I am a fool, but I can't face the idea of making a compilation alone. I'll keep this open to tell you about the interviews this afternoon.

Ibid.

Tuesday Nov. 2. I went to Behrens in his city office yesterday and liked him... I don't think he'll do anything about a paper. But I have a feeling I have found in him a friend and fellow philosopher.

Then I went on to E. Sloan Chesser's, where I met the Contessa Sant 'Elia. She said she was commissioned to ask me whether I would take the editorship of a paper that may be formed. She was very mysterious about it, and said it was being started by men of the greatest influence and highest principles, to combat Socialism. But I believe, as a matter of fact, it is Warden Chilcott. Anyway, I said No, that I didn't want to edit a paper, unless I knew exactly who was behind it, etc. I don't see what else I could have said. Today (Wed) I have received a page of pictures from the Film Weekly showing *Bengal Lancer*, so it really has begun...

Today I lunched with Mme de Grippenberg, the Finnish "Ministress" the one who suggested my going on an air trip with her and six young women; and there was Rebecca West, and an amusing young American couple, the Wilson Macartys. I've made great friends with them, but they are leaving on Dec. 18, alas.

I don't know what I shall do, Rosalind. Perhaps Switzerland. Or Constantinople. Or India. Or even somewhere in the American desert. I met a pleasant lunatic in Dorchester—one John Cowper Powys, who wrote *In Defence of Sensuality*, and now his Autobiography, a jumble of eloquent nonsense—who rather fired me with the idea of upState New York.

It is 7 o'clock, and I still feel full of lunch, and out of touch with you, or the Universal Cosmic Consciousness... *You* know: it was probably

the brown sherry. So good night, or rather good morning, as it is still noonday with you. Send me a little picture of yourself so that I may be sure you haven't disappeared...

26 Nov Ibid.

I have just had a letter from Pasadena, asking me to attend a lecture of "His Lordship Hwang Tsih" next Thursday. It says "a new era is dawning."

Did I tell you that I went to Kathryn's cocktail party last Wednesday and had a talk with Peggy Ashcroft, looking extremely attractive in a dark brown dress with silver stars on its collar. The next day I lunched with Clifford Sharp. He's a very sick man, but has a brilliant brain. In the evening I went to a cocktail party to a new friend, Mrs Winkworth, and met Arthur Waley, the Oriental scholar. He spends half the year ski-ing, and the other half translating Chinese poets...

Warden Chilcott wants me to edit his paper, and I have refused. I went down to my mother this week end, and on Sunday to dine with John Coatman at Pembroke College, Oxford. I sat next the Master, who told me he had read nothing in English literature since Thomas Hardy. He seemed proud of the fact, (and was very picturesque and 18th. century.) But how much more useful, to himself and the undergraduates, would be the Master of a College who modelled himself on the 21st. century. The port was superb, and as early Victorian as the company.

Bond Street is a-flutter with bunting. It is almost impossible to get about the streets, and quite impossible to park a car anywhere, owing to all the Crowned Heads in London. Tonight Gerald Kelly and the famous Jane he has painted so often are coming to dinner, also Evelyn Richards and Dr. Margaret Elmslie...

5 Dec Ibid.

I've just lunched with Kathryn at Rules, and she read me your letter. You seem to be having some excitement, but no work. Today the evening posters say "Hollywood Blaze": I hope you haven't caught fire?

Outside the Winter Garden Theatre is KATHRYN HAMILL in large letters, next to Lea Seidl. I never saw The Waltz Dream: it is a revival from 1905! Kathryn is looking very young and pretty. She has lost some weight, but gained enormously in vivacity, and no wonder: she has a good part, and I am looking forward to seeing her on the first night—the 20th.

I saw the wedding of George and Marina[1] from Warden Chilcott's flat at 36 St. James' Street. Saw George's right glove; and the crowds and horses... The broadcast of the service was very well-done and impressive. Everyone cried a little when the voices of the two young people plighted their troth: not for 20 years has the whole country been so moved and excited. London looked very gay and Diamond-Jubilee-ish. Bond Street was an extraordinary sight the night before the wedding: a solid block of cars from Piccadilly to Oxford Street. Every restaurant was jammed to the doors...

[1] H.R.H. The Duchess of Kent

Every day when I wake I think something exciting must be going to happen, but nothing does. I've promised Michael Joseph to let him see 20,000 words of my novel, but haven't yet begun it, for I can't think of a plot. It's absurd. I've got a talent (small but definite) for certain kinds of writing; yet here I am twiddling my thumbs...

Dec 9 Ibid.

Thanks awfully for your letter of the 15th. Nov which I got on Dec 7—soon after I posted my last. It was a great joy to hear so much of what you are doing. Your amusing description reminds me rather of Vicki Baum's—have you read *Falling Star*? It is good about Hollywood.

I wish I had a map of Hollywood and could picture where you are in relation to the old Beverly Hills hotel in which I stayed in 1932. Since you get a view of the lights you must be up in the northward hills I expect. If you meet a man called F— B—, who makes gambling machines I think, he's a friend, and you'll find him good fun.

I can't think of a plot for my novel. You ought to be able to do so: both your last two stories had excellent plots. It seems to me that if you keep a full diary of names, places, and moods, you should have excellent material for subsequent use. I wish I had done so all my life, and am thinking of beginning even at my advanced age.

Did I tell you I lunched with Eric Hazelton at the new San Marco restaurant, which has been decorated by his friend Oliver Messel. It's in Devonshire House—all done in a dreamy white, and the curtain over the door is exactly like a painter's dust sheet. All very ugly and odd.

On Saturday I went down to Clifford Sharp, who walked and talked and drank... We had oceans of bitter and about an acre of Welsh Rabbit at a place called The Tigers Head, famous for its cooking. Sharp is very agreeable. He was editor of the *New Statesman* for 18 years. Lived on v. intimate terms with the Webbs, Shaw, Wells, etc.

On Tuesday I did my first job of work for months, an article for *World Radio*. Began it in the morning and finished it at 6 p.m. Then I drove down, through fog and drizzle, bicyclists and trams, to Chesham... I think the most trying drive I've ever done, for there are 20 miles of tram-lines on the Uxbridge Road.

30 Dec 34 Ibid.

I got back from my Mother's on the 27th and found your cable on the top of my letters. It was a lovely surprise: you were writing it about the time I was having tea with my Mother in that tiny little dining room...

I wish I could tell you that the mental fertility you wish me for 1935 had descended on me. I have the beginning of a very good story, which involves 7 virgins in an adventure which takes them to India, but I don't know what to do with them when they are there. If this idea doesn't work out, then I am either going to do a book about conditions in industrial England, or I shall go to India. You see, I am at a loose end, as usual, or rather uncertain of my direction. From various cuttings in the provincial papers I see *Bengal Lancer*[1] has been finished. Nothing

[1] The film

about it has appeared in London, and Curtis Brown knows nothing. One day there is bound to be money to be made in writing scenarios for British pictures, but I don't know how to set about it. . . .

I went for a "scavenging party" at Hatherop.[1] We were given a list of things to get between 2 p.m. and 4.30: some sheep's wool, a hair from a horse's tail, a parson's collar, any sort of live fish, an old boot, a live fly, a horseshoe, and a road sign. I went with Henrietta Cadogan and Deborah Castle: the latter kept reminding me of someone, and eventually I discovered it was her uncle, Lyulph Howard, with whom I had been a boy at Harrow. It didn't make me feel old, though, but gave me a sense of the continuity of characteristics, for Deborah is just like him.

We got the parson's collar and the road sign, which were difficult; found an old boot on a rubbish heap; but were stumped by the fish. The winners (Rachel Bazley and Talbot Ponsonby) got a goldfish of whose existence we were unaware. It was quite amusing.

(My cat is mewing to be let out. She is very odd. Almost queer, I think, for she spits at any tomcat who comes near. She sleeps all day, except at meals, and appears to meditate most of the night, watching the raindrops from my window-sill. Ritzine bought a Christmas tree for herself and spent the day with the Nightingales. Emma, the maid, has gone to the country to bury her brother, who has just died. Poor Emma.

It is Sunday afternoon, drizzling outside. A bright fire is burning here, of wood and peat. Soon I shall go to swim at the Bath Club and then to tea with Evelyn[2] and Derek.

Christmas was very quiet with my Mother, who now has a nurse with her permanently. Alan and I played squash with Thomas one day: he has broadened out, and is a very good landlord to all his people at Hatherop. The house has also greatly improved since he and Rachel are running it. . .

Meanwhile, what am I to do with this flat? It costs me about £1000 a year, living as I do. That's much too much, of course.

Later. I've just been looking at my banker's statements. The sums I have spent on living—including everything except my wife's allowance, practically—are

Jan £120
Feb 50
March 136
April 32
May 97
June 112

£547 for 6 months. Of course I shall have to cut down drastically. Yet I ought to be able to earn £2000 a year I should think.

I don't know why I bore you with all this. Your cable has been running like a tune, or like some happy lines of poetry in my head.

There doesn't seem much worth living for just now, but I like to think I can make you happy sometimes.

[1] Home of Sir Thomas Bazley. [2] Evelyn Verschoyle.

New Year's Eve. 1934. 11.30 p.m. Have been dining with Dick Sheepshanks, his laundry has prospered, and is making £5000 a year. . . . He has big shooting parties in his Essex house. I left him at 11 and noticed London looked decidedly drunk and happy.

They are revelling in the Albert Hall tonight. I was asked by two parties, and would have liked to go with the Cohens, but didn't have the energy. I'll hear all about it from Kathryn tomorrow.

I believe I really have a plot for my story now, and shall begin work on it tomorrow: the New Year. If it succeeds, we may yet throw a party together. . .

Poor Emma. Her brother gripped the rail of the hospital bed and died at the moment the King began his broadcast speech on Xmas Day. I was listening at Coln. 100,000 people were bathing on Sydney beach (so we learnt over the wireless) and 10,000 were watching an ice hockey match in Toronto, and 1000 school-children were doing something or other in Winnipeg, and a man near you (about 1000 miles away, now I come to think of it) was sitting on Vancouver Heights, watching a big Pacific liner steam out of Juan de Fuca Straits towards the dawn. . .

Jan. 1. '35

I'm just back from *The Painted Veil.* It's marvellous, don't you think, Rosalind? I think it's the best film I've ever seen, in beauty, plot, effective sequence, etc. Garbo looked odd in the beginning, especially in the little American sailor hat, such as you used to wear at Portofino, but she was divine in the end. I feel more moved over this show than I've been for years: it's something really big. Now I must stop. This takes a whole heartful of love for 1935.

Jan. 6 '35 Lamb House
Rye

Since Friday I have been worried about you: I don't know why. I have been restless myself and always thinking of you. I shall be curious to know if this is telepathy, or my own liver!

But I haven't been drinking, or otherwise dissipated. In fact, I've been leading a regular life, writing hard. Unfortunately, the plot I had thought of for my novel won't do. I have now thought-out another beginning, but haven't begun to rewrite it yet.

Have you read *Cossack Girl* by Marina Yurlova? It is published by Cassell over here. *Read it without fail.* (This means *really*; I'll send it to you if you like.) It is the most moving book I have come across for years: full of horrors, yet the author's spirit shines through, clear and radiant. . .

Alan has been with me in Gower Street for a few days, and now I have come here until Monday. E.F.B. is Mayor of Rye, and spent his whole Mayoral salary in the first three weeks. He'll do Rye a lot of good.

Rachel A. Taylor lunched the other day. She's very depressed, poor dear, and hasn't finished her French Renaissance yet. Yet that woman could be famous and comfortable, if she used her talents aright.

Why have I a headache when I've led a sober and industrious life for over a week? Perhaps it's the surprise my head feels at being asked to do a job of work again.

Charlie has just shown up, a perfect stranger, male, elegant, about 30, who said his wife was in the car outside, and how was I, old chap? He'd met me at "my house in Rye" and it was "a very cheery party." Which house, and which party? I have no clue as to the kind of chap he supposes me to be. However, I've given him my phone number in London...

16 Jany '35 104a Gower Street

It's almost ten days since I wrote, and I have had a sort of guilty feeling for some days that I couldn't return in kind the vividness of your last letter, describing your life in Hollywood.

But then I'm not in Hollywood, but sitting at my little round table in London. I have noted in my diary "began *Seven Virgins*:" on Wednesday the 9th. Jan. May I write "ended S.V." by 9th March! I wish I could believe what you say about there being no reason why I shouldn't write another *Bengal Lancer*: the stuff is there in me somewhere, and thank you for your belief in me. Perhaps I shall be able to dig out what I want. Anyhow I am immersed in my characters, and they seem real to me. The plot is too long to tell, but when I get 20,000 words done, perhaps I will send them out for your criticism.

Meanwhile I have been picturing your life so well since your dear letter of Christmas Day. I have never enjoyed reading anything so much, for I saw beyond your present pains and perplexities (as you did yourself, or you couldn't have written it) to the drama of the thing.

I must read *Poems in Praise of Practically Nothing*. As to English literature, don't you think it is a dreary subject? Abraham Lincoln was able to spill a bibful, having only read the Bible, and a book of jokes; and Chaucer couldn't have read Shakespeare, neither could Shakespeare.

I heard a broadcast from the Saar last night. While the announcer was describing the results, he opened the window, and we heard young voices singing "Deutsch *ist* die Saar,": to me it sounded like the paean of triumph of the new world—keen and clear and purposeful—nationalistic, patriotic, romantic, over the turgid hypocrisies of the old order. But God save us from Mosley in this country! He is no good. Tomorrow we shall hear what Lloyd George has to suggest, but I have little hope from him either: he is too old, too nurtured in the evasions of Victorianism.

Something new is coming into the world. I feel that you ought to contribute to it. You could. Even I could. I am just young enough to be on the edge of the movement. But you are in the very thick of it, and you must pull your weight. You have too good a brain and too good a body to burn incense for long to *Camels*, and chewing gum and gin. So get every cent and every sensation out of Hollywood that it can give you (within reason!) and then come back and conquer the world. There is someone here who wants to help you do it!

24 Jan. '35 Ibid.

How I wish you were here! I wrote you a letter last week when I was rather drunk and dreary, I think. Since then I have been sober and industrious, working every night from 5 o'clock until 12 or 1, and never going out.

The book is going well, I think, but it is too soon to say. It is to be an adventure story, and I think when I've done 20,000 words or so I'll send you a carbon copy, for your criticisms.

Next Thursday is to be the first night of the Bengal Lancer film at the Carlton. They've asked Rudyard Kipling and the Prince of Wales. Lowell Thomas writes from New York that if I come straight over to the U.S. and am prepared to work there for 3 years, I can "clean up $50,000". But I don't believe him.

I'm going on plodding at my own book in my own way. Yet I wish you were here to advise me... Now I must go and lunch at the new Prunier's in St. James's Street with Eric Hazelton. He is going back to Freiburg in a few days, and I have said I'll follow him in a few weeks. I think I shall, if I get to a point in the novel when it is going well.

Prunier's is very crowded. A talkative taxi-driver, as I paid him, said: "Thank you, sir. We *did* need another fish and chip shop round these parts." That's real Cockney humour.

Paramount want me to write a preface to the programme for Lives of a Bengal Lancer and I have consented. I must stop this to get to work on it, and then I'll post this and write you again next week about the show.

Saturday morning 26th. I've done my introduction, and am expecting Paramount's publicity man to come and fetch it. Most probably he'll come and tell me they don't want it after all.

6 Feb 35

I've been looking at my diary with a faint feeling of guilt, for I had intended to write to you nearly a week ago...

I got nerves about the "Lives of a Bengal Lancer" first night, and refused to come, though they had asked me. As you will see from the programme, I wrote an introduction, without having seen the film.

However, I went on Saturday, and I must say it is a wonderful 2 hours entertainment. There is something of the spirit I tried to convey in the early chapters of my book: It is nothing to do with the text as I wrote it, but it does have something which was in my mind. Have you seen it? Curious that such a patriotic film should have been made in Hollywood. Curious also that they should have paid Achmed Abdullah 25,000 dollars for the story. I could have given them the same thing easily, and all the Frontier atmosphere. The latter is very good and genuine by the way. Do go to see it. Here there is always a long queue at the Carlton, waiting to get in.

People are starting to write the usual idiotic letters, and send the usual stupid invitations. I wish some film director would say: "Look here, we ought to be able to produce this sort of thing better over here than they can do in Hollywood: will you come and help me?" But they wont.

By the way, don't you think Richard Cromwell heaven? Have you met him?

Today I lunched (here) with N. She was very pleasant, drank her coffee girlishly on the floor by the fireside, and talked affectionately of you. She is thinking of taking up ju-jitsu. Really, she is almost as remote

from me as a denizen of another world. I haven't fathomed yet what she really thinks about anything. I like her though, instinctively, and I know she's fond of you.

I'm unhappy about my book. I've done 18,000 words since Jan 9th, when I began, and I am afraid that it is stilted stuff, without joy and vitality. The characters seem to me automatons. . .

Sometimes I long to hear the sound of your voice. I do now. People move across my life and vanish. The Verschoyles give a cocktail party. Mrs. Belloc Lowndes crops up. Lady Blackett introduces me to a tense, poetical girl-Guide. It all seems unreal. Even my writing is only real because I think that through it I may meet you again. I see a poster about "Hollywood's Amazing Baby", and think of you.

14 Feb 35 Wimpole St.
London, W.1.

Your dear letter of the 27 Jan came just when I was feeling quite bloody, with a carbuncle on my shin. Directly I read it I began to feel better! Next day Gollancz rang up to say that he thought the new book, of which I had sent him five chapters, was "Marvellous!" He's really keen on it, which is a great encouragement, and I know you'll be glad for you realise what it means to me: the difference between a free amusing life and minging about picking up odd jobs here and there. However, the book isn't done yet, but I am getting on.

Can you read this? I'm afraid it's rather a mess, but I'm writing in bed at Wimpole Street, where I shall be for the next few days.

Last Saturday I was having tea with Margaret Emslie, who is a doctor, and I said I had a boil on my leg. She asked me to show it, and eventually I consented. She said I ought to see a specialist at once, and rang up various people. I didn't think of old Chetham Strode. Eventually she found Dr Canardias in. He's a Greek. He inoculated me and gave me 8 powders to take. After I had swallowed most of them I felt damned queer. Poisoned all over. . . However the carbuncle was much better on Monday, and I discovered the powders contained spider poison, which delighted my cranky mind.

Canardias said that I ought to go to a nursing home for a week, and suggested Wimpole Street. My mother had written that day to say I ought to be nursed, and that she wd. pay for it; so I came here. I feel a fraud, though, for there is nothing now the matter. I have to have fomentations every hour though, so the nurses are kept busy. Old Miss T— came in and gossiped last night. She asked after you: everyone is thrilled to hear you are a sort of Elinor Glyn in embryo. . . . Carter told me how they deal with corpses. Apparently they are always removed at midnight. The nurses perform the "last offices" unless the body is too septic, when it is left to the undertakers. At 11.30 a large plain Rolls Royce drives up, and four young men *in dinner jackets* get out. Then a surprising thing happens: the side of the Rolls Royce opens, and they take out a coffin, which they take indoors swiftly and noiselessly. They then inject the corpse with disinfectant, examine the death certificate, and drive away either to the corpse's house, or to their own mortuary. . . I shall be cremated. . . .

Sunday, 17th March 35 104a Gower St.

This is just a line to send you the synopsis of my story. It sounds rather bald and unconvincing to me, but so far as I've written (20,000 words) Gollancz says it is the best thing I've done. I have given a copy to Mrs. Crosbie here, who has sent it to M.G.M.'s New York branch.

I'm tired at the moment. The noise of buses irritates me, etc. So tomorrow I go for 2 nights to the White Hart Hotel, Lewes, and we walk all day on the downs. Do you remember the day we went there together? It seems ages since you were in England.

25 March 35 Ibid.

I wonder what sort of car you've got, whether you are bathing, sunburnt, generally sober, whether you're well, and writing anything? Where you go for your meals, or do you dine at home? What the climate is like in the Spring?

Here it is glorious. Yesterday I saw the 20,000 daffodils which have been planted in Victoria Tower Gardens (just by the House of Lords) and my heart with pleasure filled. Also I went for 3 days walking tour with Barry Smith. We stayed at the White Hart at Lewes. We walked towards Polegate the first day, but it was misty. The second day was just enchanted: the first day of real spring. We walked across the downs to the Devil's Dyke, and the sights and scents still live in my memory. There is some

Later. Some what? I've forgotten what I was going to say. Some magic in Spring: surely not such a bromide?

I've been lunching at the Ritz with the Gladstone Murrays, Coatmans, and the Kemp Welches: the latter is Baldwin's daughter: I told her that we lunched on a pint of bitter, cheese and onions during our walking tour, and she said: "You should go walking with Daddy: that's just what he loves."

I don't think there'll be war; and I don't think I'll be asked to go to Hollywood, tho' a friend's fortune-teller told her I'd go on a long journey and be very lucky in 7 weeks. She also said that I'd be dead in two years. (So you'd better make the most of me, Rosalind!)

At the moment I'm stuck in the book. My people are all dolled up but have nowhere to go. They're supposed to be going hawking, but it seems rather difficult at the moment. Also my fire's smoking. I never go out at night, but sit here and write. When the writing is going well it's fun, but of course it doesn't always. There's just nothing to tell you, so I will stop.

April 2 '35 Ibid.

I drove down to Coln to see my Mother on Saturday: she is very well and lively for 82. I came up with my brother on Sunday, but he only stayed the night. Yesterday I dined alone as usual, with the intention of working, but something made me revolt. I'm getting nowhere with my novel now. It is becoming dull, static, lifeless. So I had a couple of cocktails, alone, and went to the cinema. All sorts of people came to my mind to ring up, but I didn't feel I really wanted to see any of them.

Alan Bott writes to say that Hugh Walpole has heard that M.G.M. are considering asking me to help with regard to *Kim*, but that it is all confidential and problematical at present. If there is anything in it you will hear, I'm sure. I daren't let my mind rest on the idea of Hollywood, for fear of being disappointed. . . .

13 April 1935 Ibid.

Your letter of the 3rd. got here very quickly and came as a delightful surprise, as it arrived unexpectedly (with a dozen others from America) in the middle of the morning, just as I was beginning to think you must be ill. That was because of Reggie Berkeley's death; I quite understand how difficult it is to write when one is exhausted and irritated. I never wrote to anyone for months on end when I was at Harrow. . .

I'm stuck on the book, over the very point you mentioned. What happens to the World Revolution? Well, I am finding a solution, but somehow the characters aren't being their age. I have only four more chapters to do, and have tried everything, short of hashish, to find inspiration. I have even spent a week in a strictly vegetarian hotel in Bournemouth, where it rained the whole time. Nothing is any good. Like you, my sessions of sweet silent thought yield nothing. We need a change. A fortune teller told me I should be extremely lucky, and would receive an important letter in 10 days time, I wasn't to worry; but I was to be careful about a fair girl, who might ask me for money! There was also a tall dark gentleman who would be very lucky for me. (Gollancz?)

I want to buy a white Buick sports coupé, as advertised in the Sat. Eve Post. . .

I've read two good books lately. One is Maeterlinck's *Pigeons and Spiders*. The other is a new writer Pamela Hansford Johnson: her book is funny in a grim way: it's called *This Bed Thy Centre*. She has enormous evocative power. I must ask Derek who she is tomorrow. He and E. and I are going for a picnic in Epping Forest. The same old things, you see. Today Diana Fitzherbert lunches. Her doctor has told her to eat nothing but proteins (meat, fish, eggs) no vegetables or fruit. After my experience in Bournemouth I'm inclined to agree. Salads and vegetables are all right, if one doesn't stuff oneself and become an expanding gasometer.

Hachettes have taken *Bengal Lancer* in France, and given me £40 advance royalties. I'm winding up the January Club at last. I've been made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature (a portentous but empty title!) and I'm going to the cinema with Evelyn Wrench and Hylda des Voeux. . . Now I must wrestle with my *Seven Virgins*, so goodbye, darling. . .

Easter Monday, April 22 Barley End
Tring

It's a raw rainy morning, so I am writing this instead of playing football with the children. Norman and I have just been to Ritsone to buy a batch of eggs for a broody hen. "Them Indian Game's good mothers, but spiteful," said the farmer. "Now don't give her these eggs till tomorrow. They needs a rest after the shaking in the car. . . Always get a new cockerel every year, I says. And I don't hold with these incubators: they'll hatch

out anything, but if you want good stock you must breed 'em yourself. *Never trust a hen whose tail feathers are straight.*" (he said this with portentous emphasis, fixing me with his eye) "—choose the ones whose tail feathers stick up, like this; them's the layers: they mustn't be too big, either, else your food goes to keeping up their frames, not to eggs. My hens get wheat for breakfast, and maize for tea. Since October I've made £6 out of 'em."

He had 40, and he says he makes £15 a year out of them, 400 would give him £150 and 4000 (which is the size of a largish chicken-farm which 3 people could manage) £1500 a year. I am thrilled by the idea of living in the country. There is nothing now that I want to do or see in London which I couldn't do in the course of a few visits.

My handwriting is bad, because I'm cold; but I feel better than I have for months. I think it is getting plenty of exercise, and living with children. Tommy is really a sweet little boy, 11½, and with a Huxley-Arnold mind. I feel an instant sympathy with him. Dicky has improved too in manner and appearance. He is a reporter on the News Chronicle. Barbara is 13, and about as tall as I. But Tommy is my favourite. I think "being fond of children" is rather nonsense. One can only be fond of individuals. Tommy and I have a bond of sympathy inexplicable unless one believes in the soul. . .

April 23rd. I drove up with Dicky today—gorgeous weather now the holiday is over. I think I'll be able to get on with the book now. When it is finished I shall travel, and am thinking of doing so in America, which really interests me more than India. I think I could get a book out of it, too. My idea is to get into an oldish car at N.Y. and drive across, contemplating the scenery, and camping. It wouldn't cost much.

12.30 a.m. 26-27 April '35 Poldenhove, Virginia Water

. . . Yesterday was an amazing day. Behrens is one of the best types of Jew, a man of great versatility and energy. . .

. . . Then he motored me off 40 miles to visit his uncle Sydney Schiff who writes under the name of Stephen Hudson, and translated Proust's final book, *Au Recherche du Temps Perdu.*

Before this we had a violent argument about Leo Myers' *The Root and the Flower*. Behrens admired it greatly. (You remember, you reviewed one volume of it—it's a trilogy—*Prince Jali*, I think). Behrens thinks it a masterpiece. I, not having read it yet, am inclined to think it's portentous tripe. That is also Derek's opinion.

Well, I found the Schiffs in a marvellous old manor house, absolutely plain and modern inside. They were just reading *Bengal Lancer*. He is deaf. He shouted compliments, and I replied, I hope suitably, at the top of my voice. For two hours we talked about nothing but your humble servant. I don't pretend I didn't like it.

Schiff has the reputation of being discerning about youthful talent, and tho' you can't call me that, he insists I have a Great Future. He says I am too diffident. That I must write out of my secret heart, etc. He is sending me a marked copy of Proust.

Fortunately we agreed about Proust, and about Kipling, whom he admires, (it shows a catholic taste to admire both Proust and Kipling!)

and about The Fountain, which he doesn't. Then we went for an hour's walk, and got back just in time for dinner. After dinner we a) danced b) went for a 5 mile walk in the dark, falling into bunkers, etc. c) raided the kitchen, broke up packing cases, roasted potatoes, ate Camembert cheese washed down with India Pale Ale etc. Bed at 1.30 a.m.; and up at 7.30 so that Behrens could be in his office at 9.30. . . .

Later. Monday afternoon. I've been lunching with Ward Price at the Berkeley. 14 people. I sat between Mrs. Groves and Admiral Barry-Domvile.[1] The latter is most amusing. General Groves is very pessimistic about the air: he says no-one realises how weak we are compared to Continental powers. (But his reply to my question "Who will attack us?" wasn't convincing.) He says Germany is already 3 times as strong as we are. Ward Price has had long interviews with both Hitler and Mussolini; but not for publication. He says—to my surprise—that the international situation is *very grave*. . .

5 May 104a Gower St.

I wish you had been in England for this Jubilee. The people have been hoping for a little pageantry in their lives, and now that they have the chance, they have surpassed anything that Hitler and Mussolini could imagine!

Really it is unbelievable. I don't think anybody anticipated these crowds and decorations. There are supposed to be 2,000,000 visitors. The two centres of interest are Buck. Palace, and Selfridges. Thousands stand in front of these institutions, day and night apparently; for my garage man told me that Oxford Street was packed from end to end at 4 a.m. this morning. Last night at ten it took me 50 minutes to walk from Selfridges to Oxford Circus. People with paper caps of red, white, blue. No Union Jack or bunting to be had for love or money. The East End is vying with the West End in loyal display. (But the wireless tonight reports 10 wounded in a baton charge in Glasgow.) Diana Cooper has put two bay trees outside her house, with silver and blue ornaments on them. Ritzine and I each have a flag. Hugh Walpole has asked Mrs. Hardy and me to his flat to see the procession; and then we go to dine at the Royal Society of St. George, and hear Rudyard Kipling speak. All *very* hearty. . . Typical slogan: "Well played, sir! 25 years not out!" Yes, "such night in England ne'er has been, nor e'er again will be. . ." Because most celebrations are *about* something. This isn't really. The Archbishop of Canterbury preached over the radio about the King: said what a good shot and helmsman he was, and how fond he was of stalking. This strikes me as funny. Isn't it?

This morning at 8.30 I took the car out (I go for a run in Regent's Park every morning before breakfast) and hoped to see Oxford Street. But there was a solid jam of traffic from Cambridge Circus as far as I could see. All the theatres are doing a roaring trade. Bengal Lancer still packed to the roof: curious that no one knew what Bengal Lancers were until this humble student wrote of them. May Seven Virgins have an equal vogue!

[1] Admiral Sir Barry Domvile.

Later. You will have read and seen on the movies as much as you want of the Jubilee I expect.

It was a marvellous morning, blazing sun, cheerful crowd who applauded the mediaeval-looking dustmen of Westminster. First excitement was seeing Lord Trenchard riding along escorted by Fruity Metcalfe. Lady Ravensdale and Edward Knoblock were with us in the balcony. There was an endless stream of cars going to St. Paul's, and they had not finished passing when the Prime Ministers came along. Then the Lord Chancellor, with an enormous mace sticking out of the door, like in Alice in Wonderland. Then the Royal Princes. I was looking at Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose, so I almost missed Marina, who looked very lovely, everyone said. She wore flowing garments: she's 'expecting'. Wales looked smart in his huge busby. The King and Queen made a perfect picture in a great red open carriage drawn by the Windsor greys. After they had passed we switched on the wireless, and heard the description of the arrival in St. Paul's, and the service.

Hugh has bought Epstein's bust of Shaw, which adorned the piano, with red tulips twisting themselves incongruously into his, Shaw's bronze beard. Also a Renoir, a Degas, two Matisses, a Tang horse, more Epsteins. While the service was going on I looked through Hugh's mss. of his books. He always draws a *rabbit* at the beginning and end of each section (I wonder why?) and does the initial letters in red. Sometimes he writes. "Jan 3. 1931. A fine frosty day. This is going to be a devil of a chapter." I wish I had some of his confidence and facility. (But not too much.)

Tuesday morning. The dinner at which Kipling spoke was a dreary affair, but I am told his speech came out well on the radio. It was a remarkable attack on pacifists, and warmed my heart. His head is extraordinary, with its low but intellectual brow and its enormous bushy eyebrows.

After dinner Mrs. Hardy and I drove Norman back. London had taken on another mood: it was no longer serious and curious but decidedly out for a bust. You know the kind of people who collect in groups, singing. Girls invading taxis. People with balloons and bladders. Undergraduates in cars squirting syphons. The Mall, the Palace, Piccadilly all blocked by sightseers. Everything floodlit. Fairy-like islands in St. James' Park... we were back by 11.30 and I read Proust for an hour before going to bed.

This morning I find a letter from Beddington Behrens to say he has hired a private aeroplane and wants me to go with him at Whitsun to see the Swiss flowers. . . . It's bliss to feel the novel moving again: something, I suppose, faintly like the stirring of a child. No more now. I am loth to surrender this link with you of writing, but it must be severed in order to be a link... Isn't that rather a profound thought? There must be a closing of a chapter in order that another may begin...

8 May '35 Ibid.

The Jubilee is over, and I think London is getting a little fed up of

flood lighting, traffic jams, and decorations which are beginning to look tawdry.

But I'm writing this letter in a very different mood to yesterday, when I posted one to you. I've just finished Proust, and feel strangely like him. . . . "Illness which had rendered me a service by making me die to the world (for if the grain does not die when it is sown it remains barren, but if it dies it will bear much fruit) was now going to save me from idleness, *as idleness had preserved me from facility*." Like Proust too in my relations with Albertine, except that I have not ceased to love her. Yet something tells me that for the present my writing to you is becoming somehow forced and unreal. I believe a great deal must have happened to you inside, perhaps things of which your surface consciousness has not yet registered the truth, and that, until we have established some sort of contact again, writing is useless. I don't mean I won't ever write (I shall write whenever I am in the mood) but that I shall not attempt to carry on as if we were still in close and living touch. Something in our relationship has changed. I had intended going to Solomons today, to tell them to deliver you some flowers. You know that in my heart I am still sending them, but something tells me not to have them actually delivered. Is it that you will be away? That your feelings have changed towards me? I don't know. All that I know is that so far our relations have been absolutely sincere, and that if I went on writing and sending you flowers you would not think me honest. . . I think my impulse in not sending you flowers or writing so often is that silence can best express what I feel. I don't want to torture words to express something which had best remain unsaid, which, indeed, would be killed if it were entirely and adequately laid out on paper, but which lives at present like a seed in winter soil.

As a seed it isn't particularly beautiful or interesting, though it has immense potentialities. If ever it has a chance of ripening, *then* it must be watered with loving care and the first green shoots may be watched with delight. But merely to contemplate the seed is a sterile exercise. I'm sure you will agree.

Meanwhile I daresay a letter from you is on its way. Time, which wrecks us in so many ways, has one charming aspect: it is eternally alive: we can trust it to do something with absolute certainty (it is the *only* certainty) whereas there is so much that is seemingly static and dead all around us.

This month, next month, soon, you will have entered a new phase of your career. You may be incubating a brilliant novel, or a big scenario. You may be coming home, and you may suggest we should retire to some lonely Alp. You may tell me you are in love, or even married. While the bloom is in your cheek, and the gold in your hair, Rosalind, there are paths in this world you must explore with a sympathetic spirit.

3 June Max Gate
Dorchester

. . . You'll have seen about poor T. E. Shaw's death. Mrs. Hardy was at his cottage a few days before the accident: she says he was very nervous

and depressed, and almost driven wild by a blue tit which kept hammering at the window. This is a well-known omen in Dorset. Now the people round about say that he is not really dead, and that only a empty shell was buried. One can imagine how easily there might be witnesses to a resurrection. . . .

You will be in New York by the time you get this. I envy you the journey, and wish I had been there, but it seems to me you went too far North? Was there anything to see but desert or wheat between Salt Lake City and Cleveland? (Oh, I forgot the Rockies. Yes, I've always wanted to see Denver.). . .

July 2 104a Gower St.

I don't believe I've written to you for a month, or ever thanked you for your letter of June 10, telling me of Bryce Canyon, cowboys, frame houses, sozzled salesmen. . .

Hugh Walpole wants me to do *Kim* with him in August. . . Perhaps before you get this I'll be on my way to America! . . . As to the book, it isn't going too well. Yet I feel it may take another spurt any moment now. The Cohens lunched here yesterday, and Denis defeated Derek at ping pong. Tonight I'm dining with Evelyn W. and H. des V. On Saturday I broadcast the King's review of the Air Force for 5 mins. during the 9.30 news.

Are you looking for a job in N.Y.? Writing? Where is the story you promised to send? You have material now, a-plenty. Hope you keep a daily journal of *little* things and thoughts. It would be invaluable to you. Hugh Walpole has done so since he was 16. . . Hugh Walpole has written 30 novels, and makes £12,000 a year. He is only 2 years older than I. But, hell, he's diabetic, takes two shots of insulin a day, has pendulous abdomen, etc. How are you feeling inside? I have given up calsalettes and all medicine, and never felt better. All the same, I'll be 49 in August, and I've done so little yet with my life. I think *you* might go mad and suggest something. It's your turn now.

July 8 Ibid.

It *will* be fun to see you again. Yes, Niagara Falls sounds divine. Like Bessie Cotter (have you read it? If not, do) I've never seen it (—them?). . . I shall hope to see you early Septr, the rest is on the knock knees of the goddesses.

I ought to be singing for joy with the sons of the morning, but as a matter of fact I'm quite calm. There's the novel to finish. . . I'm going to pack this flat up and let it. If I return to live in London, it shall be either Chelsea or Hampstead. Am paying Ritzine until the end of Septr: She's too good to lose. My cat goes to the country.

13 July '35 Ibid.

At Lords today I went into the lavatory, took off my spats and threw them with a symbolic gesture into the ashbin. No one is wearing spats this year, but still, I felt as if I were discarding a spat mentality. . .

Last night I took 3 Harrow boys to the Palladium: it was quite a good

show, and they enjoyed it enormously. So did I. One of them said, "Thank God, sir, you didn't take us to the Russian ballet. I hate it."

But the most important news is that I've bought a ticket on the Duchess of Richmond, sailing S'hampton Aug. 20th and arriving Montreal on the 27th. or 28th. I like the C.P.R. boats, and can get a cabin to myself, so as to work. . . .

Another thing. Hugh Walpole has heard from MGM that they do not require my services at present. (They are going to get him to do *Oliver Twist*, and they may have postponed *Kim*.) I shall see Hugh on the 28th when I am coming up for a dinner which the Book Society are giving him. Except for this, I shall be at Weymouth. . .

Later. At 11 I went to the British Movietone News. It was a nervous, interesting job, talking to a film. I made a mess of it at first, but they were pleased essentially, and asked me to come again. My handwriting has gone wonky. I've been correcting the French edition of *Bengal Lancer* all day.

It will be good to get away to the sea-side; and better still to have finished my book, and to be on the way to you. Don't read the old typescript, please. I want to show you the whole thing.

You'll never see this flat again. Well, that'll be no loss. What are you like now, darling? Fatter, thinner? Are your cheeks still pink? I hope you haven't let your hair grow too long. . .

16th. July Ibid.

I have had a long letter from Verne Porter. He says his Hollywood office says:

"MGM is ready to close the deal for Y.B.'s services at 500 dollars a week, with a four-week guarantee, plus first class transportation London-Hollywood and return. If engagement goes over four weeks they want to keep the amount at the same 500 dollar figure. We believe this arrangement will work out satisfactorily and should be accepted because we feel sure that once Y.B. gets over here we will be able to get him other pictures to do and that we can tilt the figure upwards, even if it is another picture at M.G.M."

He goes on to say that they are interested in having a fuller synopsis of the new book because they think I have "a picture mind." It looks to me as if I might be going to Hollywood about October. What's happened is that they've postponed *Kim*, and don't want me until they begin work on it, which may be any time this winter. I don't want to go until the end of October anyway.

Today the Stores came and packed all my books. The flat looks better without them, and I wonder what use they've been to me, anyway? I mean, I read too much: books have hindered my writing.

Have you read Anthony Trollope's autobiography? Every writer should: his was a virile beef-fed mind.

Have been lunching with Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes to meet 2 American editresses, whose names I've already forgotten. Edith and Osbert Sitwell were there: Osbert looked daggers, but I gave him a cigarette, and we made friends. Edith has asked me to visit her in Paris: we talked of cats

and bloodsports. . . Bruce Lockhart was there, and Charles Morgan, and Mr. and Mrs. James Hilton. Hilda Morgan has written a new book, about a housemaid. . .

Now I'm *really* beginning to believe I'm going to America. I'll kiss goodbye to Gower Street without any regrets. . . But I can't picture you, somehow. Have you melted in the heat-wave? Or what? Why can't I picture you, as I used to be able to do? Will you please open your typewriter on getting this and just send me a line to say how you are? I know there's been a heat-wave in N.Y.

19 Brunswick Terrace
22 July Weymouth

. . . I'm living a very quiet life here, writing about 10 pages a day regularly: it is the only way to get work done. I shall never again attempt to combine serious creative work with the social life of London.

My life has been wasted during the past few years, on a crowd of acquaintances, and a mass of niggling little activities. I think I've been able to pull in my horns just in time. A writer should be either in or out of his shell: either concentrated on his work, or whole-heartedly enjoying himself: it is years since I've been either.

Aug 6 Weymouth

It's lovely to think I'll soon be on my way. Here I've been leading a curious, simple life, and really getting on with the book. It won't be finished, though, by the time I get to America. I'll have to work at it for at least a fortnight either at the sea or in the mountains. . .

I've sent your story to Jerrold, who'll let us know quickly. (Before I sail.) I think it's brilliant. . . Do you know, I think the advice Walpole gave to Priestley applies to you. Don't try filagree work: your forte is narrative power. . . God knows I don't want to change you. I've altered too. I've come to understand that my desire to diet people, etc. is a form of inferiority complex. If I was busy with my own creative work, and happy, I wouldn't interfere with other people's lives. . .

I want to a) *see you as soon as possible;* b) do 14 to 21 days work on the novel (these can be done simultaneously); c) see scenes of natural beauty in a stimulating atmosphere; d) return to N.Y. about Sept. 20 for a short time. I want to see Jerrold, who's going to stay with the Agars, my agent, etc. etc.

I shall return early October unless something amusing turns up. I think life is going to be lovely. . .

9 Aug Weymouth

I'm so sorry I wrote such an angry letter yesterday. There was nothing in yours to call forth such an effusion from me, and you may well say that such an erratic and uncontrolled friend is not worth cultivating.

I ought of course to be particularly patient with you, instead of which I'm exceptionally fussy. You naturally think that I shall go right up in the air directly you do something I don't like. Please be patient. A miracle might happen. . . Anyway, God bless you, and please forgive me.

[NOTE by Mrs. Constable: "Francis came to America. As I was seeing him there I received no letters until his return to England. Francis was

worried all the time he was in America, mainly about his future, financially. He was depressed because he did not think he was making enough money, or would make enough, to support a wife.

When he got back to England he rented my flat in Bramerton Street."]

11 Oct. 1935 — 12 Bramerton Street, S.W.3

I've told the agents that if anyone wants to take this flat for six months I am ready to move out at once, so I'm not prejudicing your chances of a better let.

While lying in bed wondering whether to take this or not, Charlie Bury rang me up to ask me to stay in Hammamet for a month. Was I mad to refuse? I don't think so. Here I'm happy and shall do good work...

Please tell me how you are getting on at "Vogue"? Probably the work is pretty stiff at first. I'm sure you can do it, but whether you'll like it I don't know. I doubt your wanting it as a permanency. But it will be excellent training.

Here is a picture of the President (Roosevelt, taken at Lowell Thomas' place at Pawling) to remind you of what was a happy day (for me, anyway)—I was proud of you. I am always proud of you; and I have never met anyone like you...

I'm just off to my brother till Monday, then I have a tea party with the Ethiopian Minister. John Bayliss and I are gambling on the Stock Exchange: so far we have made £50. On Tuesday I'm dining with Dulcie Sassoon... We'll all feel strange at the absence of Rosalind.

The flat is quite clean, and I shall look after it well. One night I thought I was going to commit suicide, but it was only indigestion, I think. My plans are still uncertain, but I hope to go to Switzerland directly I've finished the book.

15 Oct — 12 Bramerton Street, S.W.3

I don't know why I feel impelled to send you a line by the Normandie, but so I do.

Staying with my brother in Tonbridge was acutely uncomfortable, for the house was ice-cold, and *more Anglico*, they did nothing about it but shiver and sniff. But they had very warm hearts, and they brought mine to life again. Lately it has been in cold storage.

I've found an Alsatian dog in china, also another group: they stand on each side of the mantelpiece, representing Fidelity and Tenderness.

You had an old card table: it was put in the garden by the last tenants and is now a soggy mess. The round mahogany one is quite all right. "John Bull" has refused that article I wrote in Canada, as not up to standard. I think I agree with them. Here I am looking at life with slightly more humour and vivacity, tho' I'm very depressed at times.

What do you think of writing a life of King David? That's what I want to do when I've finished the novel.

31 Oct — Ibid.

When I last wrote I think I was indulging myself in an orgy of self-pity over my affairs having gone wrong. I got bored with that, however, and something (maybe it was Hylda des Voeux, who wrote suddenly

to say she knew I was unhappy, and was praying for me) set me on my feet again. I'm leading a sober and ascetic life and have three books and some short stories in my mind.

The novel I've abandoned for the time. I can't get on with it, but the mood will return, no doubt.

I've just met Madge Garland at the Jutas's cocktail party. She has bought a cottage near Rye, and is working on "Vogue". So I told her I had met you, and what you were doing. She was very well-dressed. Before that I had been to the Winston Churchills' cocktail party for Duncan Sandys, who has married their daughter. It was at Wimborne House, all tapestries and candlelight. There I met Baba Brougham and Jack Stanmore, whom I hadn't met for years. Last week end I was also mixing in grand society, for I went to the FitzAlans. He was the last Viceroy of Ireland, you know, and is Earl Marshal, whatever that means. I sat next an amusing old woman the first day at lunch, who quoted the Bhagavad Gita in Sanskrit! Really the British aristocracy are amazing.

Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes was there, telling stories of erring human nature. I'm dining with her on Monday to meet Edith Sitwell. On Tuesday I dine with the Gollancz's, and early Wednesday morning go to Mrs. Hardy at Max Gate. I shall enjoy the peace and good air there.

As a matter of fact I've been near a nervous breakdown, entirely due to too much drink. It is humiliating that a man of my age and experience should let himself go like that, but fortunately I've pulled up in time. Or is it rather that the taste has left me? I don't really enjoy vice of any kind! Not for long, I mean. But I'm enjoying London, and am glad I'm settled in your two nice rooms. Some instinct made me come here. My brain told me I'd be unhappy, but I'm not. I feel quiet and rested when I sit, as I'm doing now, in your armchair with the rather too-high arms.

Willie Kirby has been writing frantic letters that he cannot face the responsibility of looking after our interests at Portofino, and that one of us ought to come out. So my brothers want to send me, with power of attorney for my mother, and I shall probably go in the middle of December, and go on for winter sports. But it all depends on my work.

I have been house-hunting, but have found nothing suitable. Ritzine has a very sensible aversion to basements. There is some idea of sharing a house in Mecklenburgh Square with the Verschoyles. On the other hand, I may go to India to write a series for the Spec. . .

Tomorrow I go to the Jerrolds for the week end. I'll like that. Good talk, and good drink in moderation. He has offered me £25 to do a 2,500 word introduction to an American book of murder stories, and I think I'll do it. . .

Dined with Ward Price, who was full of stories of Rome and Berlin. The general opinion is that Mussolini is off his chump. But he has us in an awkward position, all the same, for he has 300 long-distance Caprini bombers in Libya, and we have only 100 short distance machines in Egypt. England is practically undefended by sea and air; we have sent everything to Cyprus, Malta, and Egypt. And still our pacifists are saying, "why not close the Suez Canal", as if it were as easy as shutting a door to keep out the draught.

Later. Baldwin is talking a lot of bilge about the possibility of collective security, but everyone knows that no one is going to help us defend the British Empire. We must be strong enough to do it ourselves.

Have you seen Paula Wesseley in an Austrian film called *Episode*. She's swell. Not goodlooking, but just drips personality. Another good film is *Turn of the Tide*—perhaps the only good film made in England. It is a new company.

I hear Walpole is working on the script of *Kim*, so presumably they don't want me. . .

Max Gate, Dorchester.

A Miss H., very young and pink and white, came to see No. 12 while I was lying in bed with a cold. She was enchanted with it, brought her mother to see it, a hard faced little woman, who looked at me with gimlet eyes, trying to gauge whether I was lying to her about the comfort of the bed or the amenities of the garden. Silly, to be so suspicious. I daresay in other walks of life she is a British Israelite, or a Holy Roller. Anyway, they've taken the flat for 5 months from Dec. 1. and they'll be careful tenants. I think you ought to move out some of your books, and your Teddy Bear, etc. But where should they go?

I can't make up my mind (YET!) whether to live in
Sevenoaks
India
Kitzbühel
Cheyne Row (where I've seen a *sweet* little house)
and whether
to continue trying to write my novel
to write a life of King David
or Lord Buddha
or Mahomed.

I've got an introduction (25 guineas) to write for Jerrold and an article (10 guineas, I *hope*) for the Spec. Also a review for the *Sunday Times* (4 guineas?). My spirits are reviving and its nearly full moon. Something exciting is going to happy soon. Perhaps I'll get to work.

There's a very pleasant and clever man, with a charming wife, whom you'd like particularly, staying at the Pierre Hotel. Their names are Norma and Wilson McCarty. Say you are a friend of mine. (Or aren't you?) You won't be disappointed if you do, and they'd be delighted.

Yesterday Mrs. Lawrence, mother of "T.E." and her missionary son, Bob, came to tea. She is a wonderful old lady: 70: active: alert: most emphatic in her opinions: still attractive: talks of T.E. but more of Will, another missionary son who was 6ft. tall, and as clever as T.E. so she says Bob was like a sheepdog, guarding her. When they went out into the night to return to Bournemouth, I felt they were like babes in the wood. Yet that woman has made history.

Nov. 10 MAX GATE, Dorchester.

. . . Yes, we'll share the cost of Chambers if it can't be found. But I think it will be, somehow. Anyway, you shouldn't worry if you are going to be earning 100 dollars a week! Darling, you deserve it, and more. The

cruellest (and silliest!) thing you ever said to me was that I didn't believe in you. What have my actions revealed? You and John Bayliss were the brains of Everyman. You will soon be worth 10,000 dollars a year to some magazine. But I hope you will do creative work as well. I wrote Bengal Lancer when I was doing 2000 words a week of reviewing for the Spec. I used to fly from journalism to the refuge of creative work. Now that I have no journalism, I feel lost; and that is why I shall take it up again.

But I don't feel lost here. At this large, plain table, and on this wide comfortable chair, on which rested respectively the eyes and bottom of Thomas Hardy, I am clear-headed and reasonably confident.

Reasonably confident. I doubt my capacity as a novelist. I can't see a book about Yoga, unless wrapped up in some kind of way, perhaps as a life of Buddha.

King David can keep. I hear Barrie's play for Bergner is about David. I must say he seems to me a fascinating figure.

Sevenoaks, but my address will be
c/o Cooks
Kashmir Gate
Delhi

15th. Dec. 1935

It's ages since I wrote: I've been busy, and often thinking of you. . . . I suddenly decided to go to India, and submitted a scheme to the Spec. and to Gollancz. The former have offered £200 for 12 articles, and the latter £100 cash down in advance of a £500 advance when a travel book on India is completed. I hope to have it written by May and published July 13. . .

I'm writing this in the hotel at Sevenoaks, where I intend on my return to take a disused billiard-room (minus billiard table) for 30/- a week, and turn it into a library and study. Barry Smith lives here, a former colonel of my regiment, and an intelligent "Colonel Blimp." I shall work in the mornings and play golf with him in the afternoons.

It's impossible to get much work done in London, I find, now that I'm alone. When I had you to steady me I did stay in o' nights, but now I go out and drink too much, and get to bed at 2. . .

Ritzine, my maid, I am giving 10/- a week to, as a retaining fee. On my return to England, probably in June, or July, I'll establish myself in a small house or flat in London; but I shall also spend a good part of each week down here, leading a healthy life. It is near my brother at Tonbridge too, and only 30 m. from E.F.B. at Rye.

Lancier du Bengale has just been published by Hachettes, and I should have liked to go over to Paris but can't. Time is too short. All next week I have to see publishers, editors, etc. I hope also to arrange some broadcasting, not only with the B.B.C. but perhaps over the N.B.C. If I do the latter I'll let you know. . .

I'm flying to Delhi on the 31st. of this month. My address will be care of Cooks, Delhi. I'll go to Calcutta, Madras, up to the N.W. Frontier, of course. If there is time I shall go up to Kashmir and take a houseboat on the Dal Lake, seeking inspiration for my novel there.

I wish you could come, but I fear "Vogue" is unlikely to give you a roving

commission to the East? When will they send you to London? What work do you do exactly? Who are your friends? What are your hours? Darling, you know how your life, every detail, interests me. I know you are busy, but still you might write.

My cat is going to have kittens. I am proud of having made that neurotic creature into a normal, self-reliant mother. Many nights I had to get up at 3 a.m. to let her in, six toms wailing on the wall outside. Now she will have to go to the vet I suppose, and all kittens not required to dry her milk will be put down. . . "This is the end of every man's desire."

18 Dec. 1935. Bath Club

I see by the New Yorker that they have typewriters for babies now, with animal pictures instead of letters: and English bicycles "like the ones in Bermuda", and the Cadillacs are called "The Royal Family of Motordom", and "It's smart to serve sherry. . ." I'm homesick for New York: there's something delightfully idiotic and vital about it. I know I shall miss the New Yorker when I'm in India.

There are large advertisements of the Europa and Bremen: they say they are booming since the Jewish boycott of them.

I wish you were here tonight. I feel extraordinarily lonely, for no particularly reason, except that I *am* lonely, and that the only person who might understand is one Rosalind, who doesn't bother. She is too busy being misunderstood herself.

I had a dream I was killed, the other night: but I wasn't. I showed a lady the spot where I had died, and picked up a bit of black stuff, like a truffle, and said "That's my liver." Wasn't it grim?

CHAPTER XXI

STILL SEARCHING FOR A *GURU*

A HAPPY interlude was his visit to India the following winter (1935–1936). He was anxious to undo the impression of *Dogs of War*. With Wilson Harris,[1] new editor of *The Spectator* and with Y.B. I discussed the idea of "Bengal Lancer" returning to India after fourteen years' absence, and contributing a series of articles to *The Spectator*, which were to form the basis of a book to be published by Mr. Gollancz. Y.B. spent five strenuous months touring round India and gathering material for *Lancer at Large*, which contains his most comprehensive account of that country. The book sold over ten thousand copies, and while this figure fell far short of his earlier successes, it showed that he had still a large public, and broke the run of bad luck which had been dogging his footsteps.

At the very outset of his journey to India Y.B. had a narrow escape. Before starting he was informed that he could not leave Croydon by the machine which made connection with the through plane. He dismissed the event in a few lines:

"I suffered agonies of disappointment. So the 'City of Khartoum' flew without me, and was wrecked without me . . . Anyway, instead of lying with a broken skull at the bottom of the Mediterranean, here I am, alive and kicking, and about to explore those avenues to an inner citadel without which all excursions into the world are vain."[2]

The Indian trip provided welcome and salutary change of scene from Europe and its problems. He was back again in his old haunts—still seeking for a *guru*. He visited the country of the Lord Buddha, met two remarkable Indians, one a Christian and one a Hindu in the State of Travancore. Sitting on a rock, near the extreme edge of the toe of India, where it points southward to the great untrammeled spaces of the "roaring forties" and the Antarctic regions, he discussed the eternal verities.

It was nearly fourteen years since his last stay in India. His spiritual wanderings started with a visit to the north, of which, while seated by the mound where the flames consumed the body of Gautama, he wrote:

"In the Nirvana Stupa I felt a reverence for mighty associations, but here my feeling is more immediate and spontaneous: the silence, the gentle air, the wide brown plain below me, the trees and villages on the

[1] Mr. Wilson Harris was appointed editor in 1932.

[2] *Lancer at Large*, 20.

soft horizon, and the influence of this banyan tree under which I am sitting—*a living* influence—allow the senses, senses which I cannot locate or explain, to pass into another dimension, and take the mind back to a remembrance of things past.

"It is easy to write that, but hard to convey the sense of an actuality which is at the same time other-worldly. Often and often I have distrusted these subjective experiences. But here, with the Sadhu sitting mute in the tree above me, as the moments and minutes pass, something of me (that elusive 'me' which is as independent of me as my cat, sometimes purring on my lap, sometimes ranging wild through the garden) has slipped through the meshes of time, and stands before the body of him who 'gave our Asia light that still is beautiful.' "[1]

Y.B., despite moments like those described above, had nevertheless lost much of the fervour and enthusiasm of the young Bengal Lancer, although he was still a seeker for the path of enlightenment. At the Ashram of the Hatha Yogis, at Gorakhpur, he discussed Yoga with the Mahant, famed for his wisdom. The seer soon perceived that Y.B. did not possess that concentration of purpose necessary for success—he was trying to be author as well as Yogi.

"We stroll through his garden, talking of this and that. As so often happens when speaking to gurus, who are chosen largely because of their intuitive awareness, I find that two conversations are in progress, one on the surface, the other subliminal and unspoken. By the time we sit down together, he knows the purpose of my visit. He knows, and speaks my mind as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to read my thoughts; as indeed it is to him.

" 'You are searching for a guru, but you doubt whether you have sufficient time for your quest. I doubt it too. You know enough not to jump down our throats, like the Americans, who are always in a hurry; but you find your time difficult to manage. Yet you are keen on Yoga.'

"We are speaking in Hindustani. The word he uses implies affection. 'You will have to choose,' he continues. 'A lover must have single vision. You will have to meditate. Meditation needs practice, and practice takes time. I do not think you can find the Way so long as you are engaged in your present writing.'

"His brown eyes meet mine: they are very cool and refreshing: looking into them is a kind of spiritual shower-bath. I am not being searched and scrutinised: he knows all about me already, or at any rate all that he wants to know at the moment: I am being stimulated and vitalised. He is telling me, not asking questions."[2]

"The Yogi continued:—'You also have much to do. You must earn your right to leisure. You desire the knowledge of Yoga, but desire is of no avail without discrimination. That is the first virtue of the Path. I hope you will be able to choose between what is necessary in your life'—he pauses here, and again his eyes hold mine—'and what is not so necessary,' he adds.

[1] Ibid., 59. [2] Ibid., 61–62.

"True. I am trying to do two things at once. Grinning like a dog and fawning on the Higher Wisdom. Only fawning. I ought to put this book aside until next year."[1]

At Allahabad Y.B. visits "Her Holiness", Sri Sankari-ma, of Benares, a well-known Jogini, reputed to be a hundred and nine, who had spent forty years of her life in remote caves in the Himalayas, "where she learned breathing exercises which rejuvenate the body, from a *guru* who was then 300 years old". Y.B. was moving in a strange world but he was now more in the mood of the journalist, seeking copy, than of the neophyte searching for inward peace. He writes:

"Although her face is heavily lined, her complexion and eyes are clear, her teeth are sound, her hair black, and she holds herself like a young woman. She sleeps for only one hour out of twenty-four.

" 'We all sleep too much,' she tells me. 'It makes us heavy. To acquire lightness you must breathe rightly. It is easier to learn that in the mountains than in the plains.'

" 'Why?'

" 'Because the gross aspect of your personality gets left behind in a mountain atmosphere.'

" 'Will you teach me these breathings?'

" 'Will you spend five years at Uttarkashi in the Himalayas? No, I know you will not. Then come and see me in Benares.'

" 'I will indeed'. I know I sleep too much: eight or nine hours a day.'

" 'Yes that is too much for a man of your age. Wakeful relaxation is better than sleep. I think I could show you how; but at present I am busy from my meditations.'

" 'I would like to learn from you.'

" 'In a few years I shall take some *chelas*. I shall live another seventy years, my guru told me. He died six months ago, God bless him! There is no hurry. Hurry is always a waste of time.'

" 'You are meditating? . . . On what? . . .'

"Her black deep eyes twinkled as she answered:—

" 'On the love of God.'

" 'The mother is praying for the sins of the world,' her disciple adds, confusingly."

Y.B. thus sums up his impressions of the interview and tells us an elephant story:

"How is she praying? For what sins? And is she really a hundred and nine years old. I would like to question her further, but she is telling me the history of the two she-elephants who are standing near us, with a baby elephant between them. 'They each had a child last year,' she says. 'One of them died so we lent the other to the mother who had lost hers. She helped to feed it. Now she imagines it's her own. You see what a

[1] Ibid., 62.

strong baby it is! It is a fine *karma* to have two mothers. Each of them think it belongs to her, but the false mother spoils it most. This is a world of illusions, sir!' "[1]

We learn more about the curious and bizarre in Yoga on this visit than at any other time. Y.B. had undoubtedly given up the idea of vanishing to the Himalayas to seek peace. If he had met the right *guru* miracles might have occurred. As a matter of fact his meeting with the sage of Chidambaram was his last Yogic experience.

It was at Trivandrum, the lovely capital of Travancore State that Y.B. had two spiritual encounters which left an abiding impression on him. Earlier in his career as a soldier, it is at least questionable whether his soul would have been attuned to the voices that reached him at the Brotherhood of the Syro-Malankarans,[2] for in those days the Christian approach did not appeal to him.

The story of his meeting with Doctor Ivanios, as recorded in *Lancer at Large*, strengthens my conviction that Y.B. in the last decade of his life, felt increasingly sympathetic to the Christian way of approach. The fact that Doctor Ivanios was head of a Christian Church in India that blended east and west within it, undoubtedly captured his imagination. He was impressed by the Archbishop's personality and by the fact that he had founded many schools and two Orders, the Brotherhood and the Sisterhood of the Imitation of Christ—forest hermitages in the typical Indian tradition.

"I am inclined," writes Y.B., "to date certain happenings, now to be recorded, to the influence of the Archbishop . . . Not that he did or said anything specific. Perhaps he did nothing consciously. We were friendly: he gave me a walking-stick; he may have prayed for me. However, I left that little monastery feeling a new man, in body and spirit. Next day I found a teacher.

"I ask myself why, if such was the influence of Doctor Mar Ivanios, I did not follow him instead of a Hindu swami. Such is my Karma: that is the only explanation I can find. I have gone too far along the path of the Vedanta to turn back now, and must follow it to its end, where I see a Cross."[3]

The Archbishop and his visitor went into the little Chapel of the Ashram. There the Archbishop knelt in silent prayer, with Y.B. beside him.

[1] Ibid., 77–78.

[2] The Syro-Malankarans believe themselves to be the oldest Christian sect in the world. The Head of the Church, Dr. Mar Ivanios, went to Rome in 1931, and as a result of the visit the Pope established the ecclesiastical province of Trivandrum, designating Doctor Ivanios as its first Archbishop Metropolitan.

[3] *Lancer at Large*, 160.

"To an Indian," continues Y.B., "it is the veriest commonplace that an atmosphere may be charged with spiritual vibrations; and to me, kneeling there, came a realisation of the faith surrounding me, and my own lack and need—and—and of something else before which my soul's nakedness stood revealed."[1]

". . . I do not imagine that I had a vision. I saw nothing, but there was a Thought-form beside me, evident to other senses than my eyes: an incorporeal presence of loving kindness.

"These things are difficult to describe. Perhaps impossible. My attempt to do so here in England, when the 'immortal moment' is already distant, may mar the sequence of my story. It would be better, more logical and dramatic, at least, immediately to ring up the curtain on the guru whom I met next day. But if one writes about oneself at all, one should try to tell the truth, however irrelevant it seems . . . my mind, which a moment before had been mewling and crawling about in the unconscious like a new-born kitten, seemed now inspired by a sense of purpose and direction . . .[2]

"At the moment I had nothing with which to bind up my bundle of impressions, except an unseen Presence. A Presence of Light, 'wherein the soul babbles not of God,' being content in her own stillness, and in the ecstasy of her own essence. Was it a coincidence that the words of Meister Eckhart should come to me in this place, where monks had been worshipping under his Rule. I did not pray for faith. I did not particularly want faith, but the Light came.

"Perhaps it is worth recording that this was the effect on me of the silence of Dr. Mar Ivanios."[3]

That night Y.B. revelled in a moonlight bathe at Kovalam, near Trivandrum, of which event he writes:

"The water is so warm that one can stay in it for hours, and yet there is always a freshness in the sea at night, a glory and a grace in surrendering oneself to it after the daily troubles of the tropics. I might have felt guilty, for I had been six weeks in India, and had not written a line of my articles, except a few notes: on the contrary, I was utterly happy. Everything was gorgeous: the scented night, the huge, flat, phosphorescent sea, the palms, the people . . .

"When a friend told me he wanted me to meet a retired Civil Servant who was a renowned Vedantic scholar, a swami from Chidambaram, I guessed that something exciting was in store. And so it was. My private search in India was coming to a conclusion.

"Next day, however, when I went to lunch at my friend's house, my mood had evaporated. I was not sure that I wanted to see any more swamis. But there he was, sitting in the cool dark verandah. My friend introduced us . . .

"As I shook hands, I felt a shock. A physical shock of recognition.

"The swami seemed to be myself, though somewhat older and thinner. At once the flattering thought crossed my mind that he had been described

[1]Ibid., 169–170. [2]Ibid., 170. [3]Ibid., 171.

as a person of renown. When I saw him more clearly, I realised that he had brown eyes, a broader forehead than mine, a squarer jaw. Still, he seemed to be myself."[1]

They talked of Emerson and then of the Ashram of Arabindo Gose, at Pondicherry, where the strictest celibacy prevails among the members of the community; even the married people living there must pledge themselves to abstain from sexual relations.

" 'But why? What is it all about?' " Y.B. asked.

" 'It is a quest for the superman,' said the Chidambaram Swami. 'There is a long training in stillness and silence, to hasten the ascent of the Divine. Somewhere, sometime, a waiting *avatar* will find in living spermatozoa the vehicle of his desire, and will incarnate himself again to save the world.'

" 'I shall not go to Pondicherry', I said, 'The superman is beyond me.

"The Chidambaram Swami laughed, and quoted Emerson: 'If you find no God, it is because you harbour none'."

"When I was leaving, I found myself saying (and listening in surprise to my own voice), 'Could you come with me to Cape Comorin tomorrow?

" 'Easily,' he replied, 'but more easily over the week-end'."[2]

On the drive down to Cape Comorin, one of the most delightful in all India, Y.B. and the swami sat silently side by side. When my wife and I made the same journey early in 1942, we ran across many tracks of Y.B. The same escorting officer who had been with him accompanied us, so his pilgrimage became very much of a reality to us.

It is a thickly populated country of palm trees and thatched villages, and we were for ever encountering a pageant of Indian life. The men dressed in white, the grey-blue oxen on the highway, the roadside shrines, the ponds with lotus on them, the temples, and an occasional Christian church. At the end of the drive, with its crowded stream of moving humanity, the quiet of our inn at the tip of the toe of India, to the left the scene Y.B. describes, and to the right a small Christian mission of a Roman Catholic Order, with a simple cross that stood out against the crimson and gold of the setting sun.

During the drive Y.B. must at moments have wondered why he had embarked on this adventure, which was to last for three nights and two whole days. From the bedroom window of the small rest-house at Cape Comorin we looked out to sea on to the very rock where Y.B. and the swami talked and meditated. It was on this rock that Vivekananda had meditated before he resolved upon an attempt to conquer the west with the teaching of the Vedanta.

"A hundred yards to the south" (of the Virgin's Shrine, one of the oldest temples) "at the very tip of the triangle of India, is a smaller shrine

[1] Ibid., 171–172. [2] Ibid., 173.

for the worship of ancestors. Here we undress, and swim out, a few yards, to two domed rocks, against which the rollers of the Indian Ocean surge lazily, decorating them now and then with a lovely lace-work of foam."

There it was that Y.B. and the sage of Chidambaram had the talk which is dealt with so fully in the pages of *Lancer at Large*. He began by asking the *guru* some questions about incidents in the Gospels: why the fig tree should have been cursed, why an evil spirit should possess the swine, and so on. The swami tried to deal with these problems by asking other questions and led the conversation towards a clarification of Hindu thought, by stressing two of its fundamental beliefs—the doctrine of Divine immanence, and the belief that the sense world is an illusion.

" 'If you want to know Reality,' he said, 'when a thought occurs to your mind, do not follow it outwards, but turn inwards on yourself, and enquire "To whom has this thought occurred?" Gradually you will find that the thought of "I" vanishes. What is left, is the Eternal Self. The Self of all creations, which is beauty and bliss.' "

"Out to sea a black triangle moved. It was a shark's fin. I pointed to it saying:—

'Oh, world as God has made it,
All is beauty!'

" 'Yes. Certainly the shark is beauty,' said the swami. 'Everything is beauty to him who sees the One in the Many. And knowing this, is love... What further can be sought for, or declared? That is a summation of the whole Vedanta. You can find God anywhere, if you learn to look for Him with the seeing eye.' "

Y.B. specified the particular information he was in search of. He said:

"I want details. A working plan. Paramahansa Bhagawam-Sri gave me such directions twenty-five years ago. Breathings and positions."[1]

"The swami realised this line of approach was futile, so replied:—

" 'I shall go to pray in the temple this afternoon. Afterwards, if you like, and if the time seems right, I shall tell you something of my guru's teaching.' "

The following extracts are taken from the resumed talk:

" 'To know yourself you must train your mind. You have feared to do so. The disciplines you have known before have left your emotions cold. You must rouse your emotions consciously. Until you do, your mind is at the mercy of every passing gust. It must be still. A pool ruffled by the wind cannot reflect the stars.

" 'Here is the discipline which you and I can follow. I know that

[1] Ibid., 177.

you can follow it, because I have been to the temple, and have been given light on your future. I am sure now that our minds have met in the present, as they have in the past. My feelings are the same as yours. We may have been pupils of Patanjali together. He wrote his "Aphorisms" at Chidambaram you know.' "[1]

Readers who wish to sit at this *guru's* feet must turn to the pages of *Lancer at Large*, where they will find detailed instructions as to intestinal cleanliness and ablutions, and the necessity of devoting the first waking hour to meditation and breathing exercises, and the desirability of keeping one room, or at least part of a room, for meditation only. Y.B., who had been a great believer in the asanas—standing on one's head, and so on—could not altogether have liked the swami's views; the sage replied:

" 'That (the asanas) is another path, and seems to me an unnecessarily complicated one. Take plenty of exercise which you enjoy. Stretch like a cat. Cats are great Yogis, and spend a great deal of time meditating on the Absolute. Do not be self-conscious about the body. It is a good servant if you treat it well, but a bad master.' "

It was possibly this advice that led Y.B., in later years, to relax in the performance of many of his Yogic exercises.

To write authoritatively on the whole subject of Yoga requires knowledge and experience which I certainly do not possess. His own book *Yoga Explained*[2] is admirably clear and deals with aspects that interested him. Throughout his life it was upon Hatha Yoga that he mainly concentrated, and he reminds us that three of the Yogic positions and exercises are now incorporated in the physical culture systems of the west: the head stand, the touching the toes while keeping the legs straight, and the shoulder stand. "It is worth remembering," he writes, "that the Yogis anticipated our physical culturists by twenty or thirty centuries."

The exposition of the swami thus concluded:

" 'You may repeat the gayatri (the oldest prayer known to man), the most sacred Hindu mantras: (O face of the True Sun, Divine Saviour, inspire our minds to know the Light of Thy Reality!') 'and call down blessings on everyone in the house where you are living, everyone in your town or village, everyone in your country, everyone on earth, all creation, vocal, dumb, animate, inanimate, visible and invisible. May he be happy! May she be happy! May all God's earth rejoice!' "[3]

Y.B. concludes his account of his pilgrimage to Cape Comorin:

"I am up long before sunrise. The papaya palms by the temple stand up black and tall, as if guardians of the shrine. The temple of the Virgin

[1] Ibid., 178–9. [2] Published by Victor Gollancz, 1937. [3] *Lancer at Large*, 188.

was old in Marco Polo's time. It has seen many Europeans come and go, many faiths, many dreams of Empire . . . Beyond the black palms the Indian Ocean lies silver and still. Nature seems to be worshipping, with breath arrested, between the divine dark and the coming light.

"After the Chidambaram Swami had shared my meditation, he took me out on to the verandah and we sat together, silent, watching the slow march of the early morning shadows. There are times when the chariot of speech stays idle, its owners moving along other paths."[1]

The tasks set by the swami were evidently too difficult for Y.B., the author. He makes several references to his own inability to pursue the road to "The Temple of the Undistracted Mind".

"I feel inclined to skip my time in Bombay, because although I stayed with the most charming hosts imaginable, I suffered from a constant and irreconcilable conflict between the claims of Mammon, and the inner life of meditation. . . . When I meditated in this enervating climate, my thoughts ran in such worldly channels that I began to despair . . ."[2]

"That night I sat down to write to the Chidambaram Swami. I confessed that I had failed in my meditation, and that I could not continue it until I was in a better mood, and living in a better climate."[3]

Y.B. thus finally sums up this episode in his life:

"Well, I have gone on living, and I am still looking for the way to the true Self. I have been false to my own instincts, and have neglected the teaching of the Chidambaram Swami: when the path became a little difficult, I strayed away, saying that I was too busy to follow it."[4]

The Chidambaram swami has kindly forwarded me copies of the letters he received from Y.B.; from them are taken the following extracts with the swami's comments:

"February 21st, 1936, in which he addressed me, as ever afterwards, 'Dear Guruji.'

"In this letter he says:—'It seems strange to be writing to you: the memory of you is still so vivid that you seem at my elbow! My days at Cape Comorin are an unforgettable experience, and I shall always be grateful to you, whatever happens to me on the Path.

" 'Already, alas, I must confess to backsliding. I arrived here (Coonoor) utterly exhausted and tired out; you see, I am very impressionable and the effect of so many crowded experiences and contacts as I have made has left me with a mental indigestion which has now transferred itself into the physical plane . . . At any rate, I missed my exercises this morning, and I am not sure but that I will not have to defer them until I am in a more settled state, say at the end of March, when this constant travelling and work is over.

[1] Ibid., 190. [2] Ibid., 208. [3] Ibid., 215. [4] Ibid., 253.

" '. . . Please do not think I am not serious, or am weakening in my resolve. Far from it; it is because I realise the need of steadiness and continuity that I am doubtful about undertaking a task which I may find it impossible to fulfill during the next crowded and strenuous month.

" 'All good wishes and blessings go with you. My gratitude you know you have, pressed down and brimming over.'

"On his way he halted at Delhi and broadcast about Buddhism. He did not fail to visit Agra and the Taj.

" 'The Taj has been a great solace and joy. I went to it full of worldly cares and in a flash, in a twinkling of an eye, they had vanished in face of its transcendent and ethereal beauty. Now that I am older I can appreciate its loveliness better than when I was a boy. To me it stands supreme amongst all the artistic creations of the world; in fact, it has become a person: some particle of the spirit of Shah Jahan seems to have merged and mingled with me, so that I feel anew the unity of all life, and can apprehend that rapture in which not only the Taj but all Creation was made . . . You will understand, I think, what I feel, though I express it in halting and hurried words!

" 'Tomorrow I go on with my travels, and looking back I know now that the two most vital moments on this journey were the quiet evening I spent with you at Cape Comorin, and yesterday, when I sat alone in a minaret, watching the sunset and the moonlight mingling in the holy Jumna. I wish you had been there!

" 'Au revoir. Soon I hope, and many blessings, yours . . .'

"From Risalpur, he wrote again 21st March, 1936.

" '. . . I am doing my best, under different circumstances; but things are straightening out, and I shall have more leisure after April 6th. No chance of Rishikesh this year, though.

"At present I am on my way to Malakand, where barren hills form as complete a contrast as is imaginable to the verdure and gentle air of Trivandrum.

" 'No more now, but I will write again soon. With many thanks for your help and guidance, which I constantly feel. As ever yours.' "

"He was at this time living at Sevenoaks—28th October 1936:—

" 'I am living in a small hotel, where I have taken a large empty room as my study. I find this an ideal arrangement. When in London, I was continually being tempted to go out: here I am alone with the trees and wind. Never have I seen the English country looking so lovely as it was this autumn. Today, for the first time, I have seen the trees entirely bare of leaves (there was a great storm last night). So now winter has begun. But winter is beautiful too, and I shall enjoy looking for the coming spring that will bring me nearer to you and India. With all good wishes and affectionate thoughts.'

"The next letter refers to 'Lancer at Large.' It is from Kitzbühel, Austria, and dated 14th January, 1937.

" 'Your letter was a great joy and comfort to me. Here I am on holiday, amidst gorgeous sun and snow, and crisp, bitterly-cold nights: in short, a climate as unlike that of Travancore as can be found in the world. But both are beautiful in their own ways . . . .

" 'I have sprained my shoulder ski-ing, and am leaving tomorrow on my homeward journey, stopping a few days at Munich where there is a Museum I want to see.'

"Referring to another visit to India he says:

" 'Some film people have asked me to prepare the scenario for a film about the life of Aurangzeb; and I look on this as being possibly the finger of Fate, pointing out my path to India. But I know that in the time appointed we shall meet . . .'

"Again he expressed his longing to come to India:

" 'I read of India with interest, and long to return, but am uncertain when I can do so.'

"Then he gives a peep into his travels in the 'European Jungle':

" 'Recently I have been into Spain, and have written some articles on that war for the *Observer*. Now I am engaged in a tour through Europe, somewhat similar to that which I did in India, only less strenuous, to study the sinister machinations and intrigues of the Communists, who are trying to set us all by the ears. Their deliberate aim is to stir up strife, not only between class and class but between nation and nation. Do you believe in the Devil? The principle of evil is certainly a reality, but I presume a monist cannot dissociate Satan from the Almighty.

" 'How I long to get back to India! It will happen in 1938, I feel sure. Today has been a lovely sunny day, and now, towards evening, the cow-bells are tinkling on the hills and the lake below me (Lake Leman, at whose other end is Geneva and the League of Nations) has taken on the marvellous gold-purples of sunset. This is a lovely, peaceful, sensible country. In a world rent by faction and threatened by war it will probably hold aloof—if it can—and I think it has a better chance than most of Europe to survive the cataclysm . .'

" 'After going to Spain I was ill for some time—exhaustion and overstrain, I think—but I am now quite recovered; and next week I go to Germany to see the Nazi Party Conference at Nuremberg. It will be interesting, as I am going as a guest of the German Government. Of course, I am *not* a Nazi; but all the same I think a system that has the enthusiastic support of the enormous majority of 60,000,000 highly-intelligent people is likely to have some good in it. . . Will write again in a few weeks to tell you of the Nazi Conference . . . God bless you, Guruji. You are so often in my thoughts, and although I was interrupted in Spain and by subsequent illness, I am now doing my exercises again regularly. . . . May we meet soon. Yours as always.'

"He wrote from Heathfield Hotel, Sevenoaks, dated November 15th, 1937:—

" 'This seems a very small bit of paper on which to send all that is in my heart, and to convey this book, which tries to represent a part of what you have taught me. But at the moment I am immersed in pressing business affairs; and although I would not let the occasion of the publication of "Yoga Explained" pass without sending you a copy; yet I have not time to write.

" 'Please read it and tell me frankly of its faults, which I know are

many. (Amongst other things it is full of misprints. This has not occurred in the American edition.) With love, and blessings, your affectionate Chela, F.Y.B.'

"In a letter dated 19th September, 1939, he concludes thus: 'We are slowly but surely developing enormous strength in this country with which to confound our enemies; and we are a united people, confident that the right will prevail. We are all in God's hands, and He will know what is right. I count the days when I may see you again, and bring my wife to see you, and the peace and beauty of your land. Ever yours.'

In forwarding his letters from Y.B. the Chidambaram swami then writes to me:

"1. I have rarely come across a gentleman who combined in himself seriousness, simplicity and sweetness in such abundant measure as the author of 'Bengal Lancer.'

"2. Though a soldier, leading, fighting, and suffering in prison, his inner life was in the realm of spirit. It is my honest conviction that he belongs to that noble band whose messages tend to bring into harmony the East and the West, and completely falsify, sooner than later, the prophecy of Kipling regarding the meeting of the two.

"Dear Sir, if I know that at least a fragment of these jottings has been of some use to you, I shall not have done this little service in vain.

"Hoping you will give a corner of your heart to this obscure friend of yours and wishing you all success in your work,

"I remain, Dear Sir,
Ever yours sincerely,
Chidambaram."

In his chapter "In Holiest Hindustan" in *Lancer at Large*, written in 1936, Y.B. records what must have been one of his last experiences of Yoga. It was undoubtedly a disappointment to him; perhaps the feeling of frustration after his talks with the swami was the wrong preparation for his visit to Rishikesh: certainly the chapter begins and ends on a note of disillusionment.

"Rishikesh is a physically stimulating place, but I do not feel, as I did at Cape Comorin, that it could be for me a scene of revelation. The dirty, dishevelled little town is a sort of University centre of Yoga, full of the influences of thought and history: and full, also of an atmosphere of mutual academic admiration.

"Mosquitoes and monkeys swarm, as well as Mahatmas. The monkeys, from centuries of tolerance, have become exceptionally thievish and tiresome, instead of growing kind and gentle. They have no family affection, and no chivalry, these monkeys: the strong bully the weak, fathers snatch food from their wives and children, and the leaders of the community lead mean, rapacious lives until they are too old to fend for themselves, when they go away to starve to death. Gardens are impos-

sible, for they tear everything up by the roots. Even the Mahatmas complain of them."[1]

At the end of the story of his visit to Rishikesh monkeys still absorb his attention.

"My meditation was interrupted that night by an elderly monkey, who burst through the screen door and seized my only bunch of bananas. He ate only a little, and squashed the rest, amused by the mess.

"There was nothing I could do, except put chairs against the doors. With a slight effort, I asked God to bless the monkeys and make them happy.

"I think I must have a complex about them. When I was in the Bengal Lancers my men once crucified a monkey. I didn't approve of that, but the poor beast was dead when I saw him. Never again did any of his tribe come near our barracks in Bareilly.

"I wish I hadn't thought of that distant scene: it has welled up unbidden . . . I think there *is* a Devil, and I am quite sure, in spite of the kindness I have received here, that I shall be glad to say good-bye to Rishikesh."[2]

Yoga undoubtedly attracted Y.B. because it was not an alternative religion, but a way of life with not too clearly defined boundaries. The question what effect it has on his life is answered by him in *Yoga Explained.*

From India Y.B. wrote to Rosalind Constable:

2 Feb 1936 Government House
Calcutta
c/o Cooks, Delhi

I wish you were here now, to compare notes. I find open arms—brown and white—wherever I go. It is all very amusing. Today I met Dame Elizabeth Cadbury, Rosita Forbes, Indira Cooch Behar, Begum Shah Nawaz, Duchess of Richmond, and Barindra Ghosh, a famous retired revolutionary. I've been hobnobbing with ecstatic swamis and with charming Indian women in saris, dining with Governors, conversing with naked ascetics.

What I'll write about it all, God knows. My mind is a jumble. X is here. I think she's rather torture: well dressed and sometimes witty, but incredibly *tiresome*. She always wants to make one *do* something. Find a match, get a better table, buy her medicine. . . there seems no peace or poise, and really it is peace that men seek with women. Or rather peace strangely blended with excitement. X gives me neither.

The educated Indian women like Begum Shah Nawaz are cleverer than the English, and infinitely more graceful.

I can't begin to tell you all I've done. I flew out on the plane after the City of Khartoum, after having tried my best to get a passage on that

[1] *Lancer at Large*, 261. [2] Ibid., 285.

ill-fated machine. Long distance flying is very boring. Have just met Eric Rice: we were both hurrying in opposite directions like scalded cats. How I should hate his life! I'm enjoying mine, tho' I'm a little anxious about the articles.

Tomorrow I leave this hot-house atmosphere of murder and mysticism, go to Madras, then to the matriarchal State of Travancore (where women have ruled for 2000 years) and up to Delhi, Lahore, Peshawar. Back to Delhi to broadcast the new Viceroy's arrival on April 18 and then home. I'll be back about May 15, so write to me at the Bath Club.

It would be nice to see you again. I often think of you, Rosalind, but you seem very far away tonight. Perhaps it is just as well. Your Christmas card made me laugh, but I suddenly stopped and thought—where is Rosalind? Where are you darling? I saw a glimmer of you once or twice in America; and then, by my fault, you were gone like a will of the wisp.

I laid down my pen, and thought of that first evening on the lake, when I insisted on walking round, and the happy afternoon on a boat, and when you went in the airplane, and Olly Olson and the Chateau Papineau.

It seems long long ago that we went to the 70th. floor of Radio City and saw the red glare of sunset over Hoboken. Have you ever had a better party than ours at the Savoy?

I am quite heart-free out here: happier than I have been for a long time, for the work is interesting. It is a pleasant solace of middle age to be able to look on beauty without desire.

When we meet again I daresay we will be very different people. I know I shall be: I watch the world slipping away from me without regret. An Indian today told me that I was very near Enlightenment. Am I, I wonder? Certainly I am near some turning point in my life again. . .

April 25. 36 The Royal Hotel
Naini Tal, U.P.

This may just get to you in time to bring my good wishes and love for your birthday. I can't send flowers from this country, but I lay an English rose at your feet in imagination, and six yellow carnations.

I was glad to hear you were robust when I was in Peshawar. I was enjoying myself then. Since that time I have had ups and downs. It has mostly been pretty damned lonely and dull. I can't remember when I laughed naturally last. And I'm rather alarmed about what my articles are going to be like.

However, I'm sailing by a German cargo boat from Bombay on May 5: arriving Antwerp May 17. They tell me they have plenty of iced beer on board. By that time I'll have done the articles and be half-way through the book. My idea is to settle somewhere in the country: London holds no lure.

Here is my bearer with tea. I must go up and write my name in the Govt. House visitors' book. I've met some interesting people. Otto Niemeyer, Rosita Forbes, The Willingdons, Gandhi, etc. On the whole Anglo-Indians are *deadly*. I've had no time for riding or games. This is a foggy sort of letter to send you on your birthday, darling. I'll drink your

health on board the "Ehrenfels", and do you drink mine at 66 Park Avenue please.

I want to see you again very much. I'm always thinking of you—or if that is an exaggeration, at least often. With love and 28 kisses from Francis.

On his return to Europe from India Y.B. wrote to Rosalind Constable:

12 June 1936 Heathfield Hotel
Sevenoaks

I meant to write ages ago, but I was busy on board ship (a German cargo boat—cheese and sausages for breakfast, hamburgers and cheese for lunch; soup, hamburger, sausages cheese for dinner—I flourished on mixed proteins) finishing my Spectator articles. These I have sent to you, by the way. They have been written so as to offend nobody, but the book will be better and more personal...

But I have so much to tell you that I must skip all India. (It was hot and amusing: now I must finish my book about it for Gollancz by July 30.)

Today the McCartys were coming to lunch, but telephoned they couldn't get here till 4. They arrived at 5, and stayed till 7.30. Wilson had interviewed his bank manager, got drunk, been sick (last night)—so tonight he only drank 4 absinthe cocktails. He has a fine head on him, but I think he'll come to a bad end. (He killed himself by jumping from a window of Chesham House. RC)

I've become much greyer since India. Drinking doesn't mean a thing. Not cocktails. I would enjoy a bottle of wine with a friend tho', and can look forward to seeing E.F.B. again.

Darling, when you come back we must be friends. Your letter thrilled me extraordinarily. I do hope Vogue gives you a job in London. You could probably hold it permanently, and do very well. It would be more interesting here. Are you being ambitious? I want to see you whatever you are! Paris wouldn't be any good now. I've been predicting the crash for months (curious considering what an idiot I am over my affairs, that I have a *flair for international prediction*) and have sold forward £500 worth of Dutch guelders, which will move in sympathy with the franc. (The franc is too expensive to speculate in.) I stand to lose about £25 if France doesn't devalue, and to make anything up to £150 if she does. And she must. Then I'll buy you a nice hearty pair of shoes from Kember, like those you got last time.

One day, of course, there'll be a Fascist reaction in France, and the Croix de Feu will rule the country. The same in Belgium, where the Rex party (progressive Catholics, from Christus Rex) are making headway. But you probably know more about these things than I do.

And why am I here, in the billiard room of a little hotel? Answer: I hate London to work in. Here I have taken this large room for 30/- a week, and a bedroom en pension for £3. 3. a week. There is a kitchen garden, so I get healthy food, salads, etc. I propose to work from 8 to 1 every morning, play after lunch, and work again after tea. Early bed and a virtuous life. I'm looking forward to it. All my books are unpacked, and three cocktail glasses, in case, as happened today, friends come to see me. When I'm tired of it I can get to London in 35 minutes.

CHAPTER XXII

EUROPEAN JIGSAW

THE WRITING of *European Jungle* was the culmination of years of study and thought. Few Englishmen were better acquainted with the European scene during the 'thirties than Y.B. He had been to every country on the continent, excepting Portugal, but including the little Republic of San Marino, "with its agreeable jam tarts and strong white wine". These light touches, inserted in his writings, made them very readable for the ordinary mortal—but he paid a price for this light touch; his views were not taken too seriously. Nevertheless his views on Europe are entitled to consideration by those desirous of obtaining a true picture of the pre-war decade. In a previous chapter I have dealt with his enthusiasm for the Corporate State and its achievements in three directions which appealed to him:—slum clearance, land reclamation, and the training of youth.

When he travelled to and fro, gleaning material for his books, or as special correspondent of *The Observer*, he looked on the bright side of the new order. He genuinely wanted to give a true picture of what he saw, but he was profoundly influenced by the belief that democratic institutions now belonged to a passing age. A new and better way was in its birth throes. Personal liberty, in his view, mattered but little—provided the State flourished and its citizens were healthy and happy. Certainly the bands of young Germans he encountered, singing as they marched, in the woods of the Fatherland, and the parties of skiers in the Austrian Tyrol, convinced him that the Nazi system was making a real contribution to the well-being of youth.

Throughout his life *mens sans in corpore sano* was a watchword. If a government was truly solicitous for the welfare of its people it could count on his whole-hearted admiration. His horror of the slum conditions in Great Britain clouded his appreciation of his own government's actions in the period between the two world wars. In theory, of course, he admired the British way of life, but on returning from his frequent visits to the Continent, he became increasingly disturbed by our happy-go-lucky methods. He was a fervent believer in the British World Empire, but he feared that existing Parliamentary institutions were jeopardising its future.

He considered that British foreign policy, especially as manifested

during the Abyssinian crisis, in the Spanish Civil War, and at the time of the *Anschluss* was heading for disaster. The only book he wrote during this period was *Yoga Explained*, of which less than four thousand copies were sold—although, as he tells us, he took great pains over its composition. The public that eagerly read his earlier works no longer seemed interested, or perhaps it was because the European *malaise* made them disinclined to embark on a subject so remote as Eastern thought. *European Jungle*, his comprehensive survey of Europe on the eve of the second world war, was published on 19th May, 1939.

Much of his time was spent in studying the European scene. There were the usual visits to Italy, and a journey to Spain, where he met General Franco, and returned home an even stronger partisan of the *Caudillo*, and incensed by the manner in which the British Press treated Spanish affairs. He joined the Committee of the "Friends of National Spain", and tried to present the facts as he saw them.

In September, 1937, he attended the great Nazi Annual gathering at Nüremberg, when he met Hitler. Mr. Ward Price thus describes the occasion in a letter to me:

"During the last ten years of his life Francis took a deep and anxious interest in Central European politics. I used often to meet him in Germany, Austria and Czecho-slovakia, when he was on his travels obtaining material for *Spectator*, or *Observer*, or for the admirable books which he produced during the critical years that preceded the second Great War. He had a great gift for rapidly assimilating the essentials of a complicated situation, and his charm of manner procured for him a wide selection of influential and informative contacts.

"One thing was, I felt, a source of slight chagrin to him. It was that he was better known abroad as a write on Yoga and as author of 'Bengal Lancer' than as a student of foreign policy. Moreover, it was not so much his famous book that has thus broadened his fame, as the film of the same name, which had enjoyed a wide vogue in Europe. I remember one year when Y.B. was among the large party of distinguished British guests whom Hitler had invited to the Nüremberg Party Congress, that orgy of impressive parades and ceremonies which was the climax of the Nazi year. It always ended with a large tea-party, held in the Hotel Deutscher Hof, and Hitler would walk round the whole circle of his foreign visitors shaking hands with each of them in turn. I happened to be standing next to Y.B. and I had heard that 'Bengal Lancer' was the Führer's favourite film, so that when Hitler's A.D.C. introduced 'Major Yeats-Brown', I interjected '*Verfasser von "Bengal Lancer."*'

"Hitler's face, which had hitherto worn a stiff and formal expression, became suddenly transformed.

"'*Was!* 'Bengal Lancer!' he exclaimed. 'I have seen that film five times. It is a splendid story. Has it been translated into German?'

"Y.B. modestly attempted to explain that the film-producing company had taken considerable liberties with his text—but it was evident that

he was the only Englishman present for whose achievements Hitler felt the slightest interest.

"Yeats-Brown had a clear sense of the impending clash of political systems in Europe, which began to threaten with the progressive spread of the Totalitarian system. Free from all prejudice, he was always eager to examine and inquire.

"It was for this reason that he became a member, for a brief period in the middle nineteen-thirties, of an association called 'The January Club', whose chairman was Sir John Squire. Its purpose was to hold a monthly meeting which would be addressed by advocates of the various political ideals then contending for public support. In politics, however, it is always difficult to hold to a position of judicial impartiality, and it soon became evident that Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirt Movement saw in the 'January Club' a ready-made opening for propaganda. This led to Y.B's resignation from that body. He himself was too much of a philosopher to be a politician. While ready to investigate new trends of political thought, he was not prepared to surrender his own independence of judgment.

"Perhaps as a result of his cosmopolitan upbringing and career, 'Y.B.' was not a typical modern Englishman, still less a typical British soldier. He resembled more closely the best type of his fellow-countrymen in the Elizabethan age, who combined the spirit and courage of the warrior with the gentler qualities of the scholar. His nature was as highly tempered as a Toledo blade. Fine-drawn and graceful in his bearing, his character had the resilience and strength of steel. In kindness of heart, modesty of disposition and sense of duty, he was the Sir Philip Sidney of our time."

Y.B. greatly valued his connection with *The Observer* as he considered that Mr. Garvin was one of the few British journalists who was a realist and understood the European situation. His articles in *The Observer* gave on the whole a very fair picture of conditions in the immediate pre-Munich period, once the fact is accepted that up to March, 1939, he believed in Hitler's good faith. In response to a request for his recollections of Y.B. Mr. Garvin writes:

Gregories, Beaconsfield, Bucks.
April 5th, 1945.

So glad to hear from you and the more sorry that there are no letters from Yeats-Brown in my possession.

I was very fond of him as well as an admirer of his writing. Sometimes we met at the *Observer* office in London; sometimes he came here, where we talked for hours about all the world, and wondered about its future—we well might! That was pre-war. After the outbreak our lines of work and intercourse became different and prevented our meeting, except at chance moments now and then. Needless to say my remembrances of India, and the fascinating study of it after, helped me to appreciate his vivid knowledge, and that common interest ran like a parti-coloured thread through everything else. He felt that he was understood here. I see

and hear him now with courtesy and amenity in all his ways, with his quietness of manner, when his imagination was in swift play, and with the humour and keenness that mingled in his smile."

When Y.B. first visited Germany again after the first world war, he was inclined to take the usual view of the patriotic Englishman that the country had brought just retribution on its head by its acts. Ten years later, however, he had revised his views. He wrote in 1939:

"In the past Germany was badly treated by us and by the French. In my view, from 1919 up to September 1938, through twenty years of crises, each more hectic than the last, Germany had reason on her side. She was justified in slithering out of Reparations, whose total was never fixed; she was wise to elect Adolf Hitler, who gave her back her self-respect; she was entitled to re-occupy the Rhineland, which was German soil; and to take Austria, which had repeatedly voted for reunion; and to rescue the Sudeten Germans. Her methods were rash and her words bitter; but I was prepared to justify the indignation of a great people against the Treaty of Versailles. That is the past. Germany has many cards in her hands, but she has overplayed them, as so often before in her history, and lost the ace of hearts, which is the confidence of Europe.

"Mr. Chamberlain took the right line, and is pursuing it with clear vision. Appeasement was a sane and Christian policy. It is no discredit to him that it has for the moment failed.

"Austria and Czechoslovakia and Spain are already history—history made against a barrage of histrionic and unavailing protests from a duped and doped democracy of two hundred million English-speaking people, because—as I see it—we were always on the wrong side (until March, 1939), and always trying—in the name of democracy, if you please—to prevent the accomplishment of the will of the people concerned. Today, however, Germany, by her deliberate disregard of Mr. Chamberlain's efforts to promote goodwill, has done her best to make the most sinister prophecies of Madame Tabouis, Mr. Vernon Bartlett, and Commander Stephen King-Hall come true."[1]

In the spring of 1939 Y.B. was convinced that the majority of the nations in Europe subscribed to the new order, and points out in *European Jungle* that "now (besides Italy) Germany, Spain, the Baltic States, Poland, Roumania, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and Portugal—say 258,500,000 people in Europe alone, many of them admittedly of high culture and intelligence—have come to the conclusion that they have discovered political systems superior to the British".[2]

The political event which had probably most to say to his distrust of the British Government's foreign policy was its handling of the Abyssinian crisis. His erstwhile enthusiasm for the League of Nations, as a serious factor in European affairs, had long since vanished. Whatever the rights

[1] *European Jungle*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939, p. 12, 13, 19.
[2] Ibid., 22.

and wrongs of the case, he felt that a weak and unarmed Britain was in no position to dictate to Italy, or to any other virile nation. He did what he could to arouse his fellow countrymen to the danger of war. He was convinced that force was the only factor that counted in Europe. Besides he regarded the possibility of international co-operation as unlikely in the extreme.

He understood the minds of his Italian friends and knew that the Fascist government was bent on expansion both north and south of *Mare nostrum*. He sympathised with those Italians who thought their country had been unfairly treated in the peace settlement in 1919. If Italy was bent on expanding its empire it was only following in the footsteps of Great Britain a few decades earlier. Y.B. had studied the literature of Italian expansionists and knew that since 1870 their eyes had been on Africa. Words strongly resembling those of Mussolini had appeared in *Il Diritto* half a century earlier, when Italians were exhorted to become strong men, afraid of nothing, with the sacred love of the fatherland in their hearts. In despair Y.B. watched the Sanctions policy of the British Government, and wrote: "Yes, poor England, if we were to continue the shifts and equivocations of policy which led us, ill-armed, to the brink of war, and which contrived to infuriate Italy . . ."[1]

As I have pointed out, in an earlier chapter, Y.B's sympathy for Germany's Physical Fitness campaign existed long before Hitler came into power. I have never forgotten the deep enthusiasm with which he studied the methods of the German government in 1927, and watched the classes of embryo physical instructors of both sexes, hopping, diving, jumping and skipping; after witnessing their exercises he was enthralled by the wonderful machines, gadgets and graphs of the laboratories where the scientific Teuton mind was applied to the problem. He was amused when his own heart-beats were recorded, typed, and tabulated on card indexes. Ten years later, at Nazi gatherings at Nüremberg and Berlin, he felt quite at home, in the Physical Fitness of the massed thousands of young Germans whom he watched marching and manoeuvring. He was witnessing the inevitable result of thoroughness and attention to detail.

It is impossible to read his articles in *The Observer* and elsewhere in 1938 on Nazi Germany without realising that to one to whom physical fitness meant so much, Nazi methods of promoting health, their attention to eugenics, their youth camps and training centres, and K.D.F.[2] organised trips, inevitably made a deep appeal. In those days, as he believed, once German grievances had been removed, this all-pervasive energy would not lead to war. The views expressed six years earlier had changed, as will be seen from the following: "But young Germans are not being militarised; indeed, the opposite is true. The spirit of the people has changed and is

[1] "The Sad Story of Abyssinia", *Observer*, 10th October, 1937.
[2] *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength Through Joy).

far less militant than it was when I was a boy in Coblenz thirty-five years ago, and used to hear on all sides that 'The Day' approached . . . Germans have always liked doing things in good order, collectively, to the sound of music. The Nazis have canalised this taste, and turned it towards a different *Weltanschauung*: the pillars of its world-outlook are Work and Brotherhood: war is regarded as a necessity only if the German race is threatened."[1]

Y.B. had already told us in a passage quoted above that, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, he no longer believed in Hitler's peaceful intentions, but certainly after the Munich crisis his confidence must have been rudely shaken, for in April, 1939, he wrote:

"Yes, the boys and girls of Germany are a fine sight. (No finer than our own youth would be if it had a chance to organise itself), and a heartening sight, for unless Herr Hitler were mad, which I hope he is not, he will turn all this faith and fervour to good account.

"But to an Englishman the faith and fervour that Herr Hitler inspires is rather disturbing. It is quite unlike the affection the Italians have for Signor Mussolini. If the latter went mad, Italy would know of it at once. But if Herr Hitler were to make a speech lasting thirteen hours instead of three, would anybody dare to interrupt him? I think not."

Hitler's appreciation of the film "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer" naturally gratified Y.B. He was present as a correspondent at several of the dramatic events prior to Munich, and had many opportunities of studying the Nazi Leader at close quarters. He writes:

"I have met many of the notable figures of the world, but only Gandhi and T. E. Lawrence gave me the sense which Hitler does of inner strength and Franciscan simplicity. All three were ascetics. Complete sexual abstinence would presumbly bring the world to an end, if adopted by mankind at large, but practised by rare people like Hitler gives them magnetism and mastery. 'Practised' is the wrong word, Hitler is utterly unself-conscious. He lives for his mission, which is to regenerate Germany.[2]

"In the personalities of Gandhi and Lawrence one saw shining a strange inner light. The same is true of Hitler. Like the others, he is humble and ascetic in private life; like the others, but even more vividly, he sways the individual and the multitude by a power seemingly outside himself. In his lifetime Hitler has received more fervent and more genuine admiration from the masses than any man in history. . . .

"How does he sway the masses? I have heard him many times, and have heard more fluent and more melodious voices, but never one that weaved such magic ties between the speaker and his audience. During the three-hour oration at the Kroll Opera House on February the 20th, 1938, the whole speech was read, and read very quickly, with no pauses,

[1] Article in *Observer*, 10th April, 1938.

[2] *European Jungle*, 118. Y.B. would certainly have had to revise his views had he lived! —E W

except during the applause. Even during a solid hour of statistics, he kept every one galvanised by the cadence of his sentences. During the rhetorical passages his voice mounted to the pitch of delirium: he was a man transformed and possessed: we were in the presence of a miracle: fire might have fallen from Heaven or the chandelier of the Opera House might have come crashing down; the tension was almost unbearable until the passionate voice was drowned by the cries of those who listened. The delirium was real—Hitler was in a frenzy at these moments, but he was able to create this atmosphere—this curious sense of collective hysteria —without losing his own self-control: whatever his emotion, a steady hand turned the pages of his speech. He possesses that rarest of mental combinations, intense passion harnessed to a cool brain."[1]

In his *Observer* article on Hitler Y.B. writes:

"Can we put our faith in this extraordinary man? After all, if we can, we can look forward to at least twenty years of peace. If not, then a shocking cataclysm is inevitable.

"I have given my reasons for thinking that he is a man of wisdom and honour; and anyone with half an eye can see that he is trusted in Germany as no man has ever been trusted before. This being so, the questions of Czecho-slovakia and the former colonies of Germany need not be insuperable barriers to a better understanding. Once these difficulties are settled —settled not necessarily according to Germany's wishes, but at least on the basis of friendly compromise, the way will be open to disarmament and conciliation all round."[2]

Some of his comments written in the spring of 1938 sound strange to us now in view of subsequent events, but they show how genuinely he, with many others, still believed that Hitler's absorption in plans of social betterment and internal development, was greater than his desire to embark on schemes of external aggression. On two occasions, when dramatic events were in the offing, Y.B. went for a few weeks ski-ing to Kitzbühel. It was a good place to take a care-free holiday before plunging into the vortex of Vienna. Y.B. had been in the Austrian capital at the time of the *Anschluss*. From Kitzbühel he followed the quick-moving events resulting from Doctor von Schuschnigg's announcement of his famous plebiscite in eighty-four hours, on Sunday, 13th March. This is how he describes the scene:

"In Kitzbühel, on Friday evening, we heard over the radio, of the postponement of the plebiscite, of Doctor von Schuschnigg's resignation, and that Austrian Nazis were to maintain law and order if the German army advanced.

"Next morning, Saturday, March 12th, when Doctor Goebbels read his Leader's fateful proclamation, we were sitting—some twenty or thirty

[1] Ibid., 121–2. [2] *Observer*, 24th April, 1938.

of us—in a little *Weinstube.* We were just an average Kitzbühel crowd: people from the village, hôtel guests, ski instructors, and some of us, I know, were by no means ardent Nazis when Doctor Goebbels began to speak in his resonant voice. But a miracle occurred when he said: 'This morning the soldiers of the armed forces of Germany are marching across the Austrian frontiers, while in the blue sky above our German aeroplanes are soaring!'

"The audience was German. There was magic in the name. Never have I felt so unmistakably the influence of unseen forces as in that little room, the scene of many careless hours, now suddenly being filled with history. Under the sway of a common emotion the audience rose to its feet and sang 'Deutschland über alles.' . . .

" . . . No one was coerced. The joy of the pepple was real; they felt that everyone must be delighted at the swift movement of troops, at this dramatic, decisive ending of uncertainty. No longer was Austria a lone child; now she was part of the most powerful nation in Europe. Austria was German and answered the call of the blood."[1]

Y.B. then made his way to Vienna and witnessed Hitler's arrival in the capital. This is how he describes the scene:

"Eight deep, ten deep, people were standing in the Ring. . . It was a gentle spring evening. Plane-trees were just beginning to bud. Aeroplanes loomed against the sunset and dipped at us with a full-throated roar . . . A radio van came past, announcing from nowhere visible that 'beautiful Vienna lies in the sunlight, awaiting her Führer', and the voice melted away on its rubber tyres, impersonal, fantastic, and not strictly truthful, for the sun had already set.

"I made my way to a balcony of the Bristol Hotel. From here I saw the greatest crowd that has ever been assembled in Vienna . . . All Vienna was not rejoicing—the Jews, for instance—but the scene below me left no doubt about what the majority were thinking.

"Hitler came almost unexpectedly as dark was falling. I had thought that there would be some elaborate pageantry; instead, there he stood alone in a big grey car. Vienna has seen the ebb and flow of many conquests, but never a conqueror who once shovelled snow in her streets."[2]

In the midst of all this turmoil, typically, Y.B. managed to escape to the riding school, where the perfection of "*haute ecole*" was performed by the famous Lippizaner horses.

"It is the tradition of the Spanish School that everything is taught by kindness. The riders carry sugar in the pockets of their old-fashioned double-breasted coats; they never raise their voices; they never do more than touch with the point of their whips the satiny coats of their pupils, whose ears are pricked and whose eyes are shining with the pride of their accomplishments. Their lovely movements are artificial, of course, for

[1] *European Jungle*, 132–3. [2] Ibid., 137.

no horse of the steppes ever danced a caracole or performed the piaffer, but they are magnificent in their harmony and in their emphasis on a poise and dignity which this world is losing in this age of machines.

"A million people were gathering in the Ring to see Hitler enter. Here was I almost alone with these superb animals and their riders, alone with the ghosts of eighteenth-century Vienna."[1]

Certainly Y.B's career as special correspondent reached high-water mark in 1938. He moved absorbedly—if somewhat fearful for the future—from storm-centre to storm-centre, Vienna, Berlin, Prague, Rome. The meeting of Hitler and Mussolini in Rome in May was not only the culmination of his career on *The Observer*, but also marked the turning point in his Fascist phase. Till then events had moved rapidly. The new Italy and the new Germany were forging ahead, their relations were becoming ever closer, Rome was more and more looking to Berlin. It appeared as if nothing could stop the onward rush. Y.B. still had hopes that their triumphs need not necessarily mean a European war, but doubts unquestionably began to assail his mind. However, he still allowed his hopes and enthusiasms free play. The meetings and junketings in Rome were all to the good. In his view they made for European stability. True, they strengthened the Axis, but they also made for the upholding of the *status quo*; Hitler had, it was commonly understood, agreed to accept the Brenner frontier as the permanent boundary between Germany and Italy. Thereby one of Europe's likely causes of war had been removed. In return for this concession it was assumed that Italy would support German action in Czechoslovakia on behalf of the Sudeten Germans.

The great air display, and the manoeuvres of the Italian fleet in the Bay of Naples, were designed to impress Hitler and the Germans and other visitors. They certainly achieved their purpose. Y.B. wrote:

"At the naval review at Naples on Thursday two hundred vessels took part. The morning was magnificent. Vesuvius smoked lazily over the finest view in the world.

"Undoubtedly the big moment came when ninety submarines, ranging from 600 to 1,300 tons, steamed right between the battle-cruisers, and submerged at a given signal.

"It took one's breath away to think of the 2,000 men on board, sinking down like this amongst the dolphins, who, inquisitive as ever, were playing and plunging about amongst the fleet. . .

"Herr Hitler must have been struck, as were all the experts, by the smartness of the Italian fleet and its precision in manoeuvre."[2]

From Naples Y.B. turned northwards and from Prague described the mounting discontent of the Sudeten Germans. He sympathised with many of their grievances, and apparently accepted the German state-

[1] Ibid., 136–7. [2] *Observer*, 8th May, 1938.

ment that all the Nazis wanted was that their kinsfolk in Czechoslovakia should be fairly treated. Though he admitted the difficulties, for he knew that the Czechs were naturally doubtful whether an authoritarian group could ever co-operate with a party in a democratic State. He writes:

"This ideological conflict, in miniature in Czechoslovakia, and on a larger scale between the nations of Europe, will have to be solved soon unless we wish to return to the controversies of the dark ages."

The autumn after Munich cannot have been easy for Y.B. He, like the rest of us, watched breathlessly, the unfolding of the drama with deep concern over our unpreparedness. In his case the love of his own country —and he loved it passionately—was not the only emotion involved. His position was complicated by his love for Italy and his deep admiration for the new order. He had witnessed the many triumphs of the two Dictators, and hoped that his own country would benefit by adopting some of their methods. He feared that the British and French democracies were but ill-equipped to face embattled Nazism and Fascism.

The following letters were written by Y.B. to Rosalind Constable in the immediate pre-war years:

Monday May 30, 1938 In the train from Prague to Bucharest

The other day I had the most curious dream about you: it was simply that I saw your face, looking so lovely, but there was despair in your eyes! I felt I must write to you to ask if you *were* despairing (I despair about once a week I suppose) on Friday evening, May the 27th, between 7 and 8 in the evening, Czechoslovakian time. That would be between 1 and 2 o'clock p.m. in New York.

I was motoring with a Sudeten-German friend, and had been gathering material for a message to the Observer on the Czech crisis. The night before I had been up late, drinking with "useful friends", and up early to send an airmail letter to the Observer. All day I had been seeing people and driving about, so I was very sleepy. Although I often and often think of you, and wonder what you are doing in New York, and think how nice it would be to see you again, and compare notes, and dance, I must say that at the moment I was entirely concentrated on what I had just seen, and on the probability of an eventual war between Germany and C-S. Suddenly, almost as in a vision, I saw your face.

Do write to me to the Bath Club. I shall get your letter in Italy, where I mean to stay, when I have finished with the Balkans, until I have finished my book, which is to be called *The Red House of Troy*. Or do you think *Lion Rampant* a better title? I have only just thought of it. It doesn't matter what the book is about, which is the best title? I'm doing the book for Douglas Jerrold: it will be Right-wing reflections on the present state of Europe.

Are you a clear political colour now? Red or true blue? I think most pinks and mauves are unhappy. So are the godless.

Why do people who have political difficulties, like the Czechs and the Irish and the Russians, always leave their lavatories so dirty? Is there a connection between civic emancipation and an ability to pull the plug? There is material for a University thesis here: I wish the Carnegie Trustees would endow me to conduct the research for three years.

Yugoslavia is the most fascinating country I've seen, so far, and Serajevo the most enchanting city, dreaming amidst its hundred minarets in an emerald valley. A veiled lady accosted me in a mosque. She only wanted to sell me some embroidery, but she looked charming (the veils are thin) and her hands were beautiful, with a tiny dot of henna on each nail, instead of the ugly Western glaze and colour. I bought a lace cap from those pale hands, pink tipped!

Darling, do write and tell me you haven't broken your leg, or got cramp while bathing?

8 Aug 38 — Albergo Montallegro
Rapallo

I ought to have written weeks ago telling you that I was going to get married, but you know what it is, especially when a new Magnum Opus is on the slips. Besides, I've written to no-one except Mother.

We are very happy and go down to bathe most days. So far we haven't been that famous walk that you and I went, do you remember? sore-footed down to Zoagli, where we limped on to a train. Max Beerbohm and his wife came to lunch the other day,—our only guests so far.

I had a delightful trip through Europe, and met 3 kings, and collected the photo of a new dictator to add to my gallery,—Metaxas.

Are you still with *Fortune*? Do write, or better still come home. We will always have so much to say to each other.

5 April 1939 — Bath Club

Your letter gave me all the old accustomed thrill. It is extraordinary the effect you have on me still, now I'm no longer in love with you. I mean, I'm so excited to hear about you, and value your good opinion. Yes, I value your opinion, in spite of disagreeing so much with your friends and your whole outlook on life. Basically, of course, we are both thoroughly English, and though you will probably marry an American, as I have married a Russian, there will always remain deep ties between us, and I am glad, aren't you? Don't you think it will be fun to meet again? I am looking forward to that day.

I am happy, Rosalind. There is no ruin or rapture about marriage; one grows fond, and *settled*, and far more content. Please tell me as soon as you are going to be married. What do you mean about bleeding in a shell hole? There will be no war this year, though I admit the efforts of certain people who shall be nameless, for we should disagree on the subject, are bringing war closer. While Chamberlain survives I think we shall keep out.

I am speaking on National Service for the government in one or two places; and have also just finished a book *European Jungle*, which will infuriate Americans. I will send it to you when published in May.

For six months we have been stewing here in London, writing the book. Tomorrow we go off for three weeks: Dorsetshire, Scotland, etc. Olga has never seen England, nor I Scotland. Then back to a very uncertain future. It is curious I don't feel anxious, with a wife and a red-haired step-child of 8, about how to support them. Something will turn up, but I daresay I shall become a grey, shrivelled little sub-editor. Shall you enjoy the World's Fair, I wonder? and where do you go for your holidays? I never see any of our mutual friends now, except Derek sometimes. I love him dearly, but am rather out of touch with him.

PART III

1939–1944

CHAPTER XXIII

SECOND WORLD WAR

WHAT COULD have been more suitable than that Y.B. should have been married in Italy?—above all at Genoa, the town of his birth? Even more appropriately the civil ceremony (on 26th July, 1938) was performed at the British Consulate. Y.B. must have thought of his grandfather's and father's long association with Genoa as Consuls.[1] The happy couple also appeared before the Italian civil authorities, and during the morning they went to Church to ask for a blessing on their union.

His wife, Olga Phillips, of Russian parentage, born in Riga in 1909, was the widow of an officer in the R.A.F. She was the daughter of Colonel Apollon Zoueff, formerly Military Commandant of Brest-Litovsk, and Madame Zoueff (née Baroness Stempel). Most of her childhood was spent on the family estate near Kiev. In winter she went with her parents to Yalta, the delightful seaside resort at the foot of a rugged chain of mountains in the Crimea, now famous as the last meeting-place of Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill and Marshal Stalin.

For long Y.B. had been feeling the loneliness of life, and when my wife and I were spending a day with him at Sevenoaks, in the early summer of 1938, he told us of his intention of getting married. Certainly at the age of nearly fifty-two, with much experience of the world, and greater wisdom and poise, he was better equipped to make a success of marriage than he had been fourteen years before, and so it turned out. His wife gave him deep devotion. The fact that she was Russian provided just that element of the unknown and unexpected which appealed to him. British husbands are sometimes said to be dull, but Y.B. provided his wife with all the stimulus necessary to make marriage an adventure! She had a small daughter, Anna, then aged seven; later on he taught her to ride, and in his last year rejoiced in her growing interest in journalism.

He and his wife had chosen a moment of political upheaval for their marriage, and when the Munich crisis burst upon the world they were still in Italy. During the first months he was busy assembling and co-ordinating the vast mass of material required for *European Jungle*; his wife, a proficient typist, was kept very busy. Most of the book was written

[1] Though as a matter of fact, I understand the Consulate had long before been moved from its former home in Aqua Sola.—E.W.

while they were staying after their marriage at Montallegro, above Rapallo, which may account for the vividness of the pages dealing with Italy.

The next year was, from the political standpoint, the most difficult period of mental readjustment Y.B. had ever to face. There was not only the growing fear that another world war might break out at any time—his hopes that somehow or other peace might be preserved varied according to his moods—but war with Germany, and possibly also with Italy, represented to him almost fratricidal strife.

Once he had finished revising the proofs of *European Jungle*—no easy matter with the situation changing from day to day, and above all after Hitler's seizure of Czechoslovakia had been accomplished—Y.B. placed himself at the disposal of the authorities. He undertook the advocacy of national service with the passion of a crusade. Hitler's perfidy had entirely disillusioned him, for his conduct proved him to be fanatical and unscrupulous, and bent on the dictatorship of Europe. The only possible policy for Great Britain was to organise its resources on a national basis, as thoroughly as had been done by Germany.

The lecture platform seemed at the moment the only opening available. He addressed various groups in London, Rotary clubs and factory workers in the north. He threw his heart into this task of awakening his countrymen to the peril of unpreparedness. At this supreme moment he advocated conscription and the conscription of national wealth.

He still clung to the belief that Europe's problems could be solved by negotiation. I was in Berlin at this very moment (July, 1939) and realised only too well that the time for negotiation had gone for ever. Y.B. still was a firm believer in Mr. Chamberlain. "Just what Neville Chamberlain has saved us from, I hope we shall never know. I believe myself that at the time of the September crisis we were so unprepared that if we had intervened in Czechoslovakia our Empire would have gone down in ruins." At a talk to factory workers two months before the outbreak of war, he said: "If there is another war, we'll all be ruined, and all be half-starved, whether we win or lose."

Y.B. and his wife were staying at Villars in Switzerland at the end of August, 1939. As the news became gradually more ominous they motored rapidly across France, leaving their car at a Channel port, to be claimed later, and arrived in England just before the declaration of war. He immediately set about trying to get war work, but the authorities were not "forthcoming"; he sensed a certain coolness. The truth of the matter was Y.B. was docketed in official files as, till comparatively recently, a warm supporter of Fascism. Under these circumstances the treatment meted out to him was understandable, for the nation was involved in a life-and-death struggle. But once the inevitable turmoil and rush of these first weeks had passed, surely the authorities might have taken cognisance of

his devotion to his country. There must have been many jobs where his military experience could have been turned to good account.

He was appointed military correspondent by the *Daily Sketch* two months after the outbreak of war, a position he filled till April, 1941, when he resigned. Six months later he resumed the connection, this time "at a retaining fee for military comments".

On one of the rare occasions on which he dealt with Indian problems at this time, in an address to the Ashridge Conservative Circle, he said:

> "I know India, and it is the plain truth I am telling you, without casting the slightest slur on any of my Indian friends, that if we left that great country tomorrow, before the many nations that compose it have time to take form and shape under modern conditions, she would become a prey to tyranny and misery, more dreadful than anything that even the Nazis or the Bolshevists have done to Poland."

In the autumn of 1939 Y.B. and his wife settled down to wartime existence in a London of complete black-outs. Their first real home was at 37, Ennismore Gardens, and there they continued to live until they were bombed out.

After the collapse of France he went through moments of profound depression. The brave ally of 1914–18, under Petain, the defender of Verdun, had collapsed like a house of cards, and worse was to follow. His beloved Italy had gone over to the enemy; the agelong friendship between the land of his birth and his native land had been shattered by Mussolini's "stab in the back".

If, in face of these disasters, Y.B. formed too gloomy a view of British prospects, we can hardly be surprised. He could not foresee Hitler's attack on Russia, nor Pearl Harbour, events which brought the two most powerful nations in the world to the British side. Still, desperate though our plight was in 1940, as long as the British Navy and the R.A.F. were intact, we were an ugly customer for the Axis to tackle. Hence he reasoned that the right moment to make peace was while British soil was still inviolate. He did not think victory over Germany was now possible, because France had been essential to our war effort. He was convinced that Great Britain would never have come to such a plight in 1940 if his views, advocated in *Dogs of War* and ever since, had been listened to. But his was a voice crying in the wilderness. He hoped for a peace which would leave the Empire intact—though how he thought this possible in 1940 with Germany confident of victory, it is difficult to understand. Much as he detested the Soviet he rejoiced at Hitler's colossal blunder. If the Soviet could but stand up to the furious onslaught of the Nazis, the British Empire would be given breathing space, in which to mobilise its vast resources, and a flood of American munitions would soon be pouring across the Atlantic.

Probably to escape from the grim present Y.B. spent much time in ruminating on the past, and rummaging among his papers and possessions. He was assembling the autobiographical material which he hoped to use; it is from this source that I have drawn considerably. In gloomy mood he wrote that no one would ever look through his mouldering files and albums; the fact was that he little realised how useful they would one day be to his biographer.

"Even now, in the autumn of my days," (he was only 53 when he wrote this), "when the lights of Europe are really going out, one by one, I am not usually depressed. The lights will be relit one day, and it is not my fault that we are fighting, and that I am not in it. But this evening, looking at old photographs of friends, and horses, old programmes of race meetings, old menus of dinners, with curtains close-drawn for the black-out, and a dismal blue bulb to see by, it is sad to confront myself with myself in sunlit days and times. I feel asphyxiated, but perhaps it is only the gas fire . . ."

In another fragment Y.B. records his arrival at Bareilly as a young subaltern, and continues:

"With all speed possible I arranged an overdraft at the bank and bought two ponies. One of them was an elderly bay Arab gelding, the other a young bay mare, which I bought from an Afghan horse-dealer for £14, and named Judy.

"Reflecting on these purchases, and on an insurance policy taken out then, and now falling due, an absurd fit of depression overtakes me. Absurd because it is obviously foolish to write of these trivial details in a gloomy spirit, and doubly absurd because I have had a very pleasant life on the whole.

"Nobody will look at these mouldering files and albums when I die. That is why I am explaining them now. There is in them much of interest to me, but of entire unimportance to others. The registration form and instruction book for my 16 h.p. Scripps-Booth, for instance, which I bought in 1919. Its very name has vanished from the world of cars, but in its hey-day it was described by its makers as 'the automobile with a social significance.' There is a picture of a girl with a hat that the change of fashion has made modern again, sitting at the wheel of its 'beautiful stream-lined body', and there is another picture of its dashing torpedo tail. What happened eventually to the steed of the nineteen-twenties? One of the garish blue discs which covered its wire wheels once flew off at Hyde Park Corner, and bowled against the railings, nearly ending the life of an angry old gentleman.

"Once a friend drove me in it into a duckpond.

"Once the steering column broke.

"And once I proposed marriage on those cushions to a rich young widow. How different, and how much duller, my life would have been if she had kept to her original intention of accepting me!

"Do any components of the Scripps-Booth still linger on some remote scrap-heap? And what of the two Baby Austins which I owned before the Ford which is now lying juiceless and vaselined in a country garage?

"The true story of the travels of my cars would make—even perhaps some of their periods of immobility a longish and pretty readable book, supposing I could write it. But I cannot: it would open up old wounds (otherwise it would be worthless) and although maybe it is true that the unhappy man who once has trailed a pen 'lives not to please himself but other men', I hope to please you while pleasing myself. So I by-pass cars, the faded photographs of women, the Taj Mahal, a wedding at which I was best man ('Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us, O'er the world's tempestuous seas'—it is sad to think of the shipwreck to which Satan led that charming couple), and mementos of my godchildren, who haunt my conscience.

"There is plenty left. I have ridden some good horses, won races, played in a champion team at polo, owned two beautiful bulldogs, who took a first prize and a 'reserve' in the Naini Tal Dog Show of the summer of 1911 and—the delightful things that came my way must be recounted in order.

"Let me here only remind myself (for I have nothing else to say about freemasonry) that at my Installation Banquet in June 1913, when I became Master of Lodge Rohilla Star, I ate iced watermelon, caviare, asparagus soup, fillets of fish, quails in aspic, roast beef, *pêches à la Melba*, a strawberry ice basket, sardines in gin, cheese straws, and dessert. That was a good meal for the terrific heat of an Indian summer, and well in the Victorian tradition."

And there, alas, the fragment ends.

I have found singular difficulty in writing this chapter dealing with Y.B's record during the last world war. After his varied life in two hemispheres the crisis of civilisation should have provided something dramatic to record in his biography. The work of a military correspondent in England, telephoning his copy to the news-editor, his duties in the Home Guard—however important the services of that splendid citizen army—do not seem an adequate role for "Bengal Lancer". His thoughts and meditations were inevitably sombre and there were phases of acute boredom.

In moments of relaxation he and his wife went to the Gargoyle Club with their friends; several of the Club menus, dating from the beginning of 1940 are before me. They are covered with his writing. Evidently the diners had been making lists of the most lovely things in creation and of life's pleasurable sensations.

Y.B's jottings illustrate his capacity for vivid enjoyment. The lists include the following:

"To lie in the sun when dripping with salt water.
"To sleep after bathing and a good lunch in Italy.
"To dance all night with beautiful women.

"Running in the spring, walking in the autumn.
"Feeding one's children oneself.
"Correcting or reading proofs of one's own works.
"The onset of sleep, waves of drowsiness.
"A hot bath.
"A breeze when it is hot.
"Coming down ski-ing in a slight snowstorm.
"Sea air in the Channel after town life.
"Walking barefoot in damp grass.
"Cooking food when hungry.
"Autumn leaves.
"Pine forest on a hot day.
"A wood on a frosty dawn in autumn."

Of lovely things he mentions: Dawn. Full moon in snow. Sky full of stars. Fireflies. Buds unopened. A tiny puppy playing with a huge elderly dog. An apple orchard in spring. Getting into a warm bed on a cold night.

His flat at 37, Ennismore Gardens was bombed on 16th September, 1940, and henceforth Y.B. ceased to be a Londoner. His wife writes:

"Our flat was blasted by a bomb that fell near by, the convent next to us was razed to the ground, but a small statue of the Virgin and Jesus Christ was left standing in the little courtyard amidst the rubble and fallen walls,—it looked so curious in this setting . . . At Ennismore Gardens we made friends with an amusing cat called Peter, who belonged to another tenant, and had been left behind by its previous master. After the bombing Peter was found by Francis looking dazed and miserable, so we took Peter with our belongings down to Alan,[1] at Waterside, where we went to stay for a time. Peter is still there. When Francis went to see Alan for the last time, he came back awfully pleased because Peter looked so happy and fit, and recognised him."

The only fragment in Y.B's autobiographic notes on the bombing is the following:

"The ruined flat. Statue of the Virgin and Child. Blue dog.[2] Our excitement at the bombing rapidly diminishes. These notes will seem out of date but will have some value if written from day to day. This book is being written to convince myself that I am alive. Everything seems a nightmare. Peace will some day return. Meanwhile I shall fill up the middle with reminiscences. They will show through my own self, which is all I have to guide me, how England has reached her present state. In office I worked when air alarms were frequent. Bomb with explosion while we all sat working. Living in cellars. Nearby bombs."

[1] His eldest brother, who lives at Coln St. Aldwyn near Fairford.
[2] Little restaurant near the flat, where he and his wife often had their meals.

Two letters, typical in their anxiety about his friends, written to Harold Goad, give a glimpse of London during the autumn blitz.

Waterside, Coln St. Aldwyn, Fairford, Glos.
27th September, 1940.

Dear Harold,

I was so glad to get your letter, and also one from Muriel[1] who said you are quite unconcerned with bombs and blasts! We were blasted out of our flat (but were sleeping elsewhere when it happened) and now a tiresome time-bomb forbids our approach to that part of Ennismore Gardens.

Then the whole editorial floor of the *Daily Sketch* was reduced to matchwood by a bomb, but fortunately only one man was killed. It happened at 4.20 a.m. on Wednesday morning, the 25th. So I have had some hectic travelling to do lately, but now I am going to do my articles mostly by telephone, coming up to London once or twice a week.

I wish you could come down to the country to be with friends. If I can find you a room in this neighbourhood, would you come? You could feed with us. It would be lovely to have you, and I only wish there were room in this house, but there is not. We are living with my brother in his cottage.

Olga sends you much love, as I do. Take care of yourself, and let me have a line: it will take some time coming but will get here eventually. And in the event of emergency don't wait to telephone. On arrival at Fairford, telephone to us and we'll send out to fetch you. It is only 3 miles away. It is as well you should know all this in the event of a bomb turning you into an "evacuee", which God forbid!

With blessings and love from

Francis.

Waterside, Coln St. Aldwyn, Fairford,
October 3rd, 1940.

Dear Harold,

I rang you up on Tuesday afternoon, and you had just gone out. After that I rang again several times, but the 'phone would not function. I do hope you are all right. It is very trying these days, not knowing how one's friends are.

To-day we are looking for a room where we can have friends down for a few days, and I'm sure we can put you up somewhere if you can come. It is noble of you doing A.R.P. work.

My daily article still appears: I haven't missed a day, tho' on the 25th when they had the bomb in the Editorial department of the Daily Sketch they didn't publish it.

I'm afraid conditions will inevitably get worse in London as the winter goes on: the authorities must make it front-line trenches, as it were, and evacuate everyone who isn't actually fighting. "Business as usual" is impossible in a battle.

[1] Miss Muriel Currey, who helped him on occasions with his work by typing and research.

Mr. Arthur Bryant in this letter deals with other aspects of Y.B.:

"I was very fond of him and had seen a great deal of him since 1936, when I first made his acquaintance. The quality I loved so much in him was his complete sincerity and boy-like enthusiasm.

"I always remember in particular, an occasion when he came to my house on New Year's Eve, expressly to hear the bells chiming across the Buckinghamshire fields, having read a description of their doing so in an *Illustrated London News* article of mine a year before. Unfortunately on the night in question a strong wind was blowing so that it became absolutely impossible to hear the bells; this did not, however, stop Francis from rushing round the house at midnight, putting his head out of every window. He was convinced he heard the bells and oblivious of the fact that he was carrying all the while a mechanical china tankard. My married couple had just brought this as a present for me with our midnight punch, and when raised to the lips, it started to play a tune and continued to do so merrily throughout Francis' tour of the house.

"I am afraid I have described this very badly, but the instance somehow typified for me Francis's invincible enthusiasm and his intense loveableness. Though human to a degree, he was one of the most unselfish creatures I have ever known; I shall always remember his kindness in the first spring of the war, when I was ill and marooned in solitude over the Easter week-end."

Miss Currey, who acted as his amanuensis at times, writes:

"It was at the end of November (1940) that Francis telegraphed me to ask if I would join them at 'Barley End' in order to help him with a book on the first year of the war. I arrived at the beginning of December and we both settled down to a gruelling four weeks for the book had to be delivered by January 10th, 1941. To begin with, we decided on a definite division of the work; each chapter dealt with a different phase of the war; some of these Francis wrote entirely, I wrote the preliminary draft of others, which he then revised, while I typed and checked what he had written.

"We worked to a regular time-table; writing all the morning, going for a walk after lunch, then writing from tea to dinner, and usually doing revision and research till midnight. Francis was asked to write the succeeding volumes in the series, but refused. I think he felt (though he was too modest to say so) that the type of book gave no scope to his vivid imagination, his power of description, and his sympathy with the individual fighting man."

Coln St. Aldwyn was too far from London to serve as a permanent home for a military commentator and travelling was slow and uncertain. Y.B. and his wife went to stay with his friend Colonel Norman Thwaites at Barley End, near Tring.

He enjoyed cultivating the plot of ground allotted to him, and wrote in his diary:

"We planted spinach, lettuce (with cloche) parsley and radish and six rows of garlic; dug up a patch and manured it. I felt glad to be near to the rhythm of the earth, yet it was a relief to get away, for a walk to Ivinghoe Beacon. The colouring was perfect, and the line of the Ivinghoe Hills filled my soul with peace and content.

"What enormous human labour goes into all our food. The few onions and lettuce I ate tonight must have caused men to sweat.

"And yet men would be found to cut temples out of the living rock!"

During the second year of the war, especially after the collapse of France, it appeared as if the world had gone askew. Modern warfare was shorn of much of its glamour. His diary records in realistic fashion a walk with Miss Currey.

"We saw an object on the beach, hunched on the shore, lying on its face with arms in sand, as if it was trying to crawl up. It was the body of a German airman, washed up by the last tide. His uniform was more or less intact, and his parachute on his back unopened. They took him to Martlesham, where they found his identity disc and a photograph of himself; quite a good-looking young man. They thought he belonged to the machine which crashed in the creek last November. It certainly did not look a four-months-old body.

"There it lay in the soft spring sun, with bare white skull looking somehow old and wise, but someone is grieving for him in Germany."

Immediately under this he pasted a cutting:

"A Persian Love-Song.

If any ask, 'How looks the moon?'
Stand on thy roof and say, 'Just so!'
If any ask, 'And how the sun?'
Show him thy glorious face aglow
If any ask 'How Jesus Christ
Quickened the dead to life again?'
Kiss him upon his brow, and me
Upon my lips, and all is plain.

C. Field.
(From 'Jalaluddin Rumi')."

To Rosalind Constable Y.B. wrote:

21 May 1941 — Barley End, Tring, Herts.

I wonder whether I have ever answered your letter of 30 Sept. '39! I came across it when putting away some papers. We are here, living in the back of Norman Thwaites' house, and until recently I was the

Military Correspondent of the Daily Sketch, writing a daily article. That came to an end at the end of March, and I have meanwhile finished a book on the war for Hutchinson. Now I am contemplating a huge work on religion, which will take me two years to write. Meanwhile I am in the Home Guard, and digging a small vegetable garden,—a foul job, but extremely healthy.

Everyone in England is extremely healthy, living as I always said they should do (do you remember?) on coarse porridge, vegetables, and salads. The children evacuated from London are 100% healthier and 50% more intelligent than when they were surrounded by bricks and mortar. Altogether the war has knocked a lot of nonsense out of us, and personally I shall find the world a better place to live in, I think, even if I am destitute.

Olga does all the housework now, and she is also a trained nurse. It is curious how, since we were bombed out of our London flat, this upheaval, which has uprooted so many, has anchored us to a regular, quiet routine for the first time of my life. Of course I often hanker to be doing something more active, but cannot, for reasons beyond my control. I so often think of you, and sometimes dream of other days, and wonder what you are doing. You were wise to have remained in the U.S., and are no doubt doing a very useful job there. . . Write and tell me what you are doing and if all goes well, as I hope.

The following letters were written by Y.B. to Mr. Henry Williamson during the winter of 1941–42:

Barley End, Tring.
8 Sept. 1941.

Dear Williamson,

I'd sell my soul to be a farmer, and my wife is gradually turning to the idea. Wife is essential part of scheme of course: wife can object to many of one's habits, and still contrive to live amicably, but if she hates the country there's an end of it. She doesn't, however, and has farming blood in her veins. It would mean living and working for at least six months as farm workers with some friend, to see whether we liked it; serving an apprenticeship. Alas, at the moment this is impossible. "They" have asked me to command the Hemel Hempstead company of the Home Guard, and I felt I had to do it, for a time at least. As I write this to you, the sudden realisation comes (it has been simmering for some time 'behind my eyes' as you say) that I won't do this job for long. Home Guard soldiering here in the interior is a bit unreal. As soon as I have cleared up the mess left by my addle-headed predecessor—which will take, say, a month—I shall ask to revert to the ranks, explaining that I am not a man of means who can afford to take unpaid work.

You hardly realise how lucky you are to be your own master. But of course there must be many anxieties. Here also the oats were sprouting in the sheaves: now the weather is grand and my heart aches to be sitting in an office most of the day. But being so unpleasant does appease one's conscience: I have been feeling I haven't been doing anything to help the country. Now at least I know that I shall have a couple of months' unpaid drudgery.

Have you read Douglas Reed's *A Prophet at Home*? It is good. Very good in parts, in spite of his fanatical hatred of the Tory party, which is no *worse* than the Liberals and Labour in hypocrisy and self-complacency. But all the old parties are going by the board—"Time, with its ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away," and we needn't waste ink on the past. There will be plenty for us to do in the future—you and me, and those who think like us—provided we are not liquidated in the meantime. . . .

Ahead of me are only ten or fifteen years of active life, given good luck. What can I do with them? The problem ought to keep me awake at night, but it doesn't. I can't see ahead at all—when the war will end, or what I ought to do. The land and people of England I love, but here I am close enough to London to see the filthy mess we have made of both: sub-human people and ghastly villas—but you know all about it.

Do you notice a sort of mental paralysis in this letter? When I am talking to you, I can speak more freely than to anyone, for we think alike so much, and anyway, even if we disagreed you would still be English and *akin*. But there is nothing to write about now: no schemes, plans, ideals seem worth discussing in the present darkness; and to write about the things on which we agree—the Jews, for instance—is platitudinous. . . .

Yours ever,

Y.B.

If I re-read this I should probably tear it up, so if it doesn't make sense please forgive my wasting your time.

Barley End, Tring.
28 Sept. 1941.

Dear Williamson,

Many thanks for *The Flax of Dream*. It is, I know, from having already read *Dandelion Days*, far more than "a juvenile record of a forgotten age." The age will not be forgotten. Neither will you be. It is grand that you have saved most of your bumper crops. May it be an earnest of spiritual salvage in England. Actually this war has done us a great good already, and I don't think things will go back to the hideous between-war state. Obviously they can't; and in spite of a black strategical outlook (how the hell can we get "Tanks for Russia" to the places where they are wanted? over the Caucasus, or over the Pamirs?) I think something surprising will happen to end the war not too badly for us. The courage and endurance of our native stock is magnificent. As to the aliens, peoples' eyes have been opened in the length and breadth of the land.

Already it seems to me the B.B.C. are most English in their outlook. The papers are as silly as ever. Nobody believes them. What men are saying in the London clubs I don't know. I never go there now. I am commanding a company of the Home Guard, and am glad to be doing it, for it's grand to be in an unpaid and wholly voluntary show with such fine people. But I hope I shan't have to do it for long, for it interferes frightfully with writing. "Buddha, Christ, and Muhammad" seemed so far from this battle that I lost interest in the book I had planned. I'll get back to it sometime, but at present my mind is lying fallow. I read

Carpenter's *Towards Democracy*—what bosh. But Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* is good virile stuff. There's a neighbour of ours, Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, who has written some very good history in *The Victorian Tragedy*. Do read him if you get the chance.

I am longing to see you again. Perhaps I shall give up the Home Guard (or at least my present job in it) at the end of October, for with winter there will be no likelihood of invasion. But travelling will be *very* difficult. The other day I went to a reception of the Royal St. George's Society for people who had won the George Medal. I sat next to a grand fellow, an ex-trooper of the 17th Lancers. . . . over the head of the President of the Society the Union Jack and the Hammer and Sickle were inter-twined. Can you beat it? I daresay you could: the world today is a comic place. . . .

Yours ever,

Y.B.

Barley End, Tring.
13 January, 1942.

We are longing to get out of this place; but I feel that if I go as far as Norfolk I would also have to sever such journalistic connexions as I still have (I still get a small salary from the Daily Sketch, tho' they rarely ask me to write) and that I can't afford to do at present. So we have decided (very sadly on my part) to give up the idea of farming for the present, for after all it couldn't be expected to provide one an immediate living, and to move to a furnished cottage, when I shall write an enormous book on religion, which I have been perpending for a year . . .

Somehow I feel all this is unsatisfactory: that I want to dig my teeth into realities (writing a book is real enough, but not this Home Guard stuff, or popular journalism) and that I might have found with you the very place and atmosphere to save my soul. But perhaps all this will come to pass in some other way.

What cold! My hot water bottle in bed is the only comfort, for I don't get enough exercise by day to stir the blood. And I can't find anything I want to read. This is a hideously dull letter, emanating from a frost-bound head. . . .

Au revoir, then. I felt when meeting you that I had found a friend, and I do hope my erratic "gestures" in suggesting a visit, postponing, etc. etc., won't be a bar to happy and fruitful intercourse in better times, if they ever come.

Yours ever,

Y.B.

Do write to me again if you have time and say I am forgiven. I know I have treated you stupidly, being prone to sudden changes of mind.

Barley End, Tring.
16 Feb. 1942.

Dear Henry,

Let's meet on Monday night 23rd and dine somewhere, and talk at leisure, and ease. . . . Any way, I'm looking forward to seeing you frightfully. . . . Nothing decided here, except that I must get out of this Suburban villa in the offing. Better than this. I don't like myself, or my

surroundings, or Mr. Winston Churchill. Maybe liver? Or a deep-seated sickness of heart. . . .

Your letter is brilliant, Henry, and carries me to your farm like the heavenly horse of the Prophet took him to Solomon's Temple. . . .

It is only 10 o'clock, but I'm dopy with sleep and potato pie.

This not being friends with oneself is frightful. After 55 years of myself, I oughtn't to hate this body and brain, whatever their obvious faults. And I'm beginning to. Anyway, bless you. It is good to have a friend who understands, when all the world is so intent on making one do ugly, boring, useless things, and calls one lazy, stupid, selfish, perverted, if one can't, or won't. Goodnight, and God bless.

Francis.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOME OF HIS OWN

WITH REGARD to the question of Y.B's religious beliefs, the general consensus of opinion amongst his friends is that undoubtedly his interest in Yoga and Eastern thought had been steadily waning during the last eight years of his life. There had been, however, a brief recrudescence of interest, brought about by his visit to India in 1936, and his talks with Chidambaram swami. Certainly in his last years he called himself as Christian. When in Old Delhi, a year before his death, he always came with us to Early Service on Sundays at St. James's Church. I think the war had made him ask himself, what would the world be without Christ?

Among his possessions is an old note-book, in which both at home and abroad, he entered poems of his own. They start off with "Rhymes of Saint Francis". Even in his most unorthodox phase, he felt the spell of Assisi. In later years he visited most of the Franciscan shrines in Umbria under the expert guidance of his great friend Harold Goad. Other poems are on the Stigmata, St. Anthony preaching to the fishes, the Swallow's Sermon, and an Ode to the Saints. The first poem "To Saint Francis" is as follows:

"I am your Little Sheep,
I kiss your holy hands
And feel my dear love leap
Across the times and lands
That part us, holy saint,
And keep me from the path
You trod, where never taint made mould in passion's path.

Keep all my senses bright
And keen, edged tools to hew
A pathway through the night
Your brother mystics knew:
The fog of pride, all cold
And crass, envelops me . . .
Oh sweet St. Francis, fold me in simplicity.

Grant that, in fast or feast,
In body's ache or ease,
I pray with bird and beast
Sometime, beneath your trees.
My soul in friendship keep
And grant, whate'er betide
That other little sheep be always at my side."

Perhaps the most moving of Y.B's poems is called "Night Thoughts". He put into words what many who loved him felt about his dual nature. It is the lament of the seeking soul, seeking always, seeking and conscious that it was capable of much greater effort in its search for the Unseen God, were it not for the cross-currents of desire. .

"I'm sleepy, Lord. I made the pace
Too fast, and now the odds
Are all against me in life's race.
I worshipped many gods—
Was friend to all that made me live
More free beneath Thy sun.
All I have eaten, Lord forgive.
All I have drunk and done.
I have sunk low and risen high
But now the seas divide
My alien body from the 'I'—
The Jekyll from the Hyde.

Twin-souls within a single flesh
All-wise, Thou seest in me,
A minnow caught in matter's mesh
A monster in Thy sea—
An atom of a moment's space
An avatar that teems
With life and thought—Now of Thy grace
Let me swim out to dreams . . ."

After Russia's entry into the war as an ally Y.B. had to readjust his values. There is a revealing reference to a public function at which the Soviet flag with those of our other Allies, was flying alongside the Union Jack.

"Over Lord Queenborough's head was pinned the red flag of the Soviet Union, the first among the banners of our Allies. Sir Jocelyn Lucas asked me to come to a reception for allied officers . . . to meet the Bolsheviks, I suppose. We are vying with each other in England to praise the Soviet Union. It sticks in my throat to do so, and I remember that in this very hall, not so long ago, (three years, wasn't it?) many of the same people were present to applaud the leader of German women who had brought us a message from her Führer . . . Strange world that Joe Stalin should wear a halo, and be acclaimed almost as a British patriot, while I am considered almost a traitor. I thought I might be many things at various times of my life, but never a traitor."

These words give us a glimpse of what Y.B. went through.

War, or no war, he craved for a home of his own. He and his wife were always on the look-out for a small house and garden within easy reach of London. But the rest of England was similarly engaged! At last, in desperation, he put an advertisement in *The Times*, and on 28th

March, 1942, moved into the house which was to be the only real home he had ever had in England. "Kenya" was on the edge of Berkhamsted Common, and Y.B. loved it from the very first. Here at last, he could escape from his sense of failure and frustration. Strange that he had never owned a foot of land till his fifty-sixth year, and now one cherished dream had at last been realised—a bit of England was his to do with as he liked. His love of the soil went deep, probably in part an inheritance from his Cumberland ancestors. The joy of opening wide the window of his room and surveying the wonders of an English spring in buds and blossoms that were his own property, was intoxicating. Even the rustling of the wind in the branches held a new and enchanting music for him. His garden enabled him at times to forget a world in chaos.

He studied seed catalogues, and read gardening columns in the Press; he planned a programme of growing vegetables and herbs to suit his dietetic principles. He was a new boy again, but in nature's school there were none of the drawbacks of his youth, he was absorbed and happy. In Canada he had harvested the fruits of other men's sowing; here he watched the miracles of growth day by day, and rejoiced when the seeds and cuttings he had planted waxed strong.

In addition to his literary work, and his gardening, Y.B. devoted much of his time to his duties in the Home Guard, and served in almost every rank from private to Major. His Commanding Officer, Colonel Peter de Soissons, writes:

Stocks Cottage, Aldbury, Tring.
18th April, 1945.

I have no letters from "Y.B." as we all called him in the Home Guard, for we did everything by personal contact. He was quite one of my most valued officers, and I was more than sorry when pressure of work made him give up a Company Command.

His career with the Home Guard was out of the ordinary. First a volunteer in this village, then a sergeant to Lieut-Colonel Norman Thwaites, who had become a subaltern and Company I.O., then a Company 2nd Lieutenant, Company Commander, then back to Lieutenant and Battalion Transport Officer, and finally a Private again before becoming a Lieut-Colonel and leaving for India. We once drew up a fever chart of his promotions and voluntary "demotings."

Personally I owed "Y.B." a great deal, for he helped me out of a wretched difficulty when he took over 7th Company.

Some of us old crocks were not really up to the strain when the original L.D.V. had to be turned into a modern fighting machine. At very great personal sacrifice of time and nerves, Y.B. first took over 2nd Lieut. and by his hard work and tact gave me the time to readjust matters without awkward trouble.

. . . Later, he made a most hard-working and effective Company Commander, and one whom both I and the Company were very sorry to lose when his work made it impossible for him to carry on.

I scribble as I think, to try to give you a picture of a man in poor health, driving himself very hard, and finally stopping work because his sense of duty was such that he would not half-do a job. We did not always see eye to eye, but he was wonderfully good about sinking his own views to give a novelty a fair trial. No Company officer could have had a more loyal and willing Company Commander.

Perhaps I should try to explain the above. I always had the feeling with him of two warring personalities, the man of action, and the fellow who saw the other man's point of view so much that he was reluctant to force his inclination. Every now and then he wanted to water down rather drastic orders, which I gave, using the other fellows' excuses to me. Nothing was too much trouble for him personally, but he would let off a subordinate if he reasonably could. Our "clashes", such as they were, came from a different interpretation of what was reasonable. Put in another way, his was so kind a nature that he always started by taking another's excuses at face value, while I tend to discount them at once.

Anyhow, he handled a very large and awkward Company—it numbered close on 700 at one time—with very great tact and ability and was always spoken of as "dear old Y.B." when he left them.

I wonder if anything he ever said to you or anybody else gave the impression that he was fey when he went to India. I saw him two or three times just before, and on his last visit he cycled over with ten volumes of Surtees, whom we had been talking about a day or so before, "Read them while I am away," he said, "and if anything should happen to me, I should like you to have them as a souvenir." The last time I saw him, after lunch here, about a month before his death, we mentioned them again, and then he remarked to me that "It will be a long time before I want them again." This may be pure coincidence, but had you any other such incident in mind, it might be of some use.

His chief literary venture during these years was the writing of *Indian Pageant*.[1] The Indian problem was looming on the horizon in view of Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to Delhi. Y.B. was back amongst familiar scenes in spirit, and had of course much accumulated material at hand. As in the case of *European Jungle* his wife did the typing. The book was written very rapidly, he only started it at the beginning of April and finished it by mid-June. It met with gratifying success and its sales amounted to 17,000 in Great Britain—the highest figure since the appearance of *Golden Horn*. He was steadily regaining his public. *Indian Pageant* provided a very readable and vivid survey of India within two hundred pages.[2]

Another letter from this period when he was living at "Kenya" is to Harold Goad:

Kenya, Berkhamsted
6th February, 1943.

Dear Harold,

Your book is a fine education. I am learning a lot from it, and am certain you ought to find a publisher for it now rather than later. So far I

[1] Published by Eyre & Spottiswoode in 1942.
[2] A revised edition is shortly to be published with the permission of his literary executors.

have only read Part I up to the end of Church Latin and I am much looking forward to the next two parts, which ought to teach me much in my work as a writer.

Latin always caused me floods of tears at school I really hated it, and I see now why. (Of course it was a grave defect in my mind, combined with a disagreeable teacher.) I couldn't bear its austerity and compactness, and no one ever told me about the people who used it: I longed to be taught my own language and of course wasn't. I still remember the wonderful revelation it was when E. W. Howson[1] the poet, took my form at Harrow, and taught me some things about Shakespeare and Milton.

Now my brother writes to me that he thinks conventional English a slow stupid way of expressing ideas. He says that one graph will illustrate, e.g. population tendencies, far better than pages of description. Technical books rely on diagrams and specially-taken photographs. What will happen to human thought if this tendency continues, as it will? Why read history, if you can see a film of it? Perhaps you have considered these points later. I hope to see you soon, but I wanted to jot down these ideas, before I forgot them. Bless you and au revoir.

Francis.

P.S. The effects of teaching Indians are not altogether good. Many minds are maimed and crippled by it. In the Osmania University at Hyderabad Arabic and Urdu are the chief languages; and in the Hindu University at Benares Sanskrit and Hindi. This brings students in touch with Oriental classical traditions nearer their own milieu. They can learn English later, *and use it correctly*, whereas the boy who is taught English too young is often permanently "babuised." He never seems able to avoid clichés and circumlocutions.

If I can find an essay the late Sir Akbar Hydari wrote on the subject I'll send it to you if you like. I wonder whether it is the premature teaching of English which has caused our difficulties in India? Gandhi, for instance, was given the powerful weapon of our language at an age when his mind ought to have been forming under the pressure of his own Hindu traditions. He read Tolstoy, etc., etc., without any background, swallowing a whole literature of wise men from Moscow, Paris, London, Athens, Jerusalem in great gulps. Result, life-long mental intoxication. I'm sure whatever teaching anyone is given, and in whatever language, should be accompanied by physical disciplines in agriculture, or factories, ships, etc., but this is getting off the point.

What was to be the subject of his next book? He had no further vivid personal experiences to draw on. His unspectacular days in the Home Guard, and his own reflections would not provide material for a war book. The time was not opportune for attempting his autobiography. Drama was being enacted at home and around the Seven Seas, but there was little of the dramatic in his immediate surroundings. Where was the theme into which he could throw his pent-up energies? Two subjects appealed to him at this time: a comparative history of the three great

[1] Edmund W. Howson, Fellow of King's College, and Master at Harrow.

world religions, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam, as interpreted in the lives of Christ, Buddha and Mahomet. Certainly a gigantic undertaking, worthy of any pen, but too gigantic when he came seriously to consider the project. He turned therefore to his wife's suggestion of a history of that remarkable woman, the Empress Catherine II of Russia. He had always been interested in the career of the young German girl who had ruled that country with a firm hand for thirty-four years. He had had the project in mind ever since his mother-in-law had handed him a life of Catherine, in French, when they had been staying in Italy shortly after his marriage. He became deeply engrossed in Catherine's life and in his researches into Russian middle and late eighteenth-century history.

He wrote some thirty thousand words about Catherine's girlhood, and was just settling down to record the dramatic details of her marriage and widowhood, when the Government of India invited him to write a book about the Indian Army. He gave up his work on the proposed biography with reluctance, and consoled himself with the conviction that he would resume his task on his return from India.

For some time the question of inviting Y.B. to come to India to write about the expansion of the Indian Armed Forces, and of the country's war effort, had been discussed in Delhi. In my position as America Relations Officer to the Government of India, I had often wished that Y.B's vivid pen were available to explain the Indian scene to the American soldiers and civilians then in India. I referred the matter to Sir Olaf Caroe, then Secretary of the External Affairs Department, who, in consultation with Sir Frederick Puckle, then Secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Department, and Major-General Cawthorn, cordially approved of the proposal. Cables were, therefore, sent to London, applying for Y.B's services for six months, the position to carry with it the rank of Lieut.-Colonel. He was to be attached to my office and work in close association with me.

The following letter to Harold Goad records his acceptance of the proposal:

Kenya, Berkhamsted.
July 23rd, 1943.

Dear Harold,

Astonishing news came to me when I called at the India Office the other day. I was asking for a passage out, to enable me to write a book; when they said that they would make me a Lieut-Colonel and give me a job out there for 6 months. (It is under Evelyn Wrench, and something to do with propaganda, though I am not clear what.)

I have of course accepted, and shall be going out in September: glad to be of service where I can be useful, yet just a little sorry to miss being on the spot when something happens in Italy. So what could I have done? You and I and Muriel are suspected of being Fascists. Or do you

think that wiser counsels will prevail? They must need people badly who know the people and the language. As to Rome, what do you think? It was better that it was done by daylight, if it had to be done. As soon as Sicily is clear I expect we'll attack Taranto, and then get troops into the Adriatic . . .

The following letters were written by Y.B. from "Kenya", Berkhamsted, to Henry Williamson during 1942 and prior to his arrival in India, in October, 1943:

3 March, 1942.

You ought to see the newsreel of the surrender of the German generals at Stalingrad.

Look at the face of the Bolshevik who is interrogating Paulus and you will see what is in store for Germany.

That Germany must be defeated I have no doubt whatever, but I think any sane man seeing this film will hope that we get to Berlin first. Anyway, see the film for yourself—it is symbolical and historic.

Bless you, and may the sun shine on your heart and land.

May 18, 1942.

What are you doing now? You never answered my last letters, but I realise now, (having a few onions and a beehive to look after) how busy a farmer can be.

Have you read this pamphlet? I am angry with them for not having included *The Story of a Norfolk Farm*, which is the best book on farming, because it's absolutely sincere. . . . A farm is lovely if you can go ski-ing in Wengen, and spend a month in London to see the shows, and a month on the Riviera. . . .

Still, I like Rolf Gardiner very much and think he's a grand fellow. How and when is this war going to end? If you will meet me in London, and come down here, where Olga will give you a warm welcome, I shall prophesy, pontificate and what you will. Or, better, let you talk.

Am stuck in my book. The weather here is glorious. My bees are full of activity, and stung me damnably when I passed their hive stripped to the waist.

I daresay you have a lot of machines over you now? So have we.

July 10. 1942.

I see a gloomy prospect ahead of this country: . . . But what is the good of talking? No one agrees. I wish I had your luck and were a farmer, with concrete problems to tackle, and my own master. . . .

20 Aug. 1942.

Many thanks for yours. I was on the point of writing to ask whether you would have me as a harvest hand when this raid cropped up, and as I am writing for a paper I thought I had better stay put.

The war may take a turn for the better. Or for the worse. Depending on "Mr. Bullfinch."

Did you hear Kimmins broadcasting about the Malta convoy? It was

a fine talk—so rare to hear a vital voice, and terse, tense words. And a good show, but we can't relieve Malta often.

Perhaps I could help to carry corn in September? This weather must be doing you good. God bless, and come again. I think of you with affection, and thank God there are still friends to find on this earth, which seems to be getting colder and grimmer as I get older.

Well goodnight!

September 24. 1942.

This lovely day! How I long to be in the fields instead of at a desk looking after stupid nonsense. When can we meet? I am very unhappy. All my own fault. Robert Donat is grand in *The Young Mr. Pitt*, poor film, but grand acting on Donat's part. Love from us both.

October 6. 1942.

How I would love to be your farming student, I should have to give up my job on the Sunday Graphic. Or perhaps not, I might catch an early train up on Friday, writing my article in the train, and return later on Saturday. . . .

October 25. 1942.

I am reading Spengler's "Decline of the West". Yet why the hell? I would rather learn to use your tractor. Well, bless you, my friend; you were very kind and I love your children, and the buoyant atmosphere of your farm. You say you have troubles? Yes, but how thrice-blessed you are compared to the poor muts who sit in offices or suburban bungalows. . . . I am inclined to think Spengler is fundamentally nonsense. For instance he says on page 47 that it "became perfectly clear (to him) that no single fragment of history could be thoroughly illuminated unless and until the secret of world history, to wit the story of higher mankind, as an organism of regular structure, had been cleared up". Everybody who ever thinks at all becomes conscious of this, in looking at a cow or cowslip. He goes on to say that he finds a "style-congruence between printing, long-range weapons, and contrapuntal music on the one hand, and the nude statue, the city state, and coin currency"—"there are identical expressions of one and the same spiritual principles". And so one to half a million words in two volumes.

Historians like Fuller and Jerrold tell me it is worth reading. But I feel sure the results could be condensed into a short article. Keyserling and Rosenberg have much more meat . . . and they are all diffuse enough, God wot.

24 Nov. 1942.

Now it's more than a month I haven't written, and your letter of Oct. 22 was one of the most brilliant pieces of reasoned depression I've ever read. I put it aside to answer worthily, and now I've let all this time go by.

Please forgive me. Henry, it was really a clever and good letter, and you could capitalise your moods of sorrow, as well as your glorious elation and joy in nature. If I send it back to you, will you promise to

put it into a book, just as "written" hot from the anvil of a self which is in every man, but so rarely finds expression.

Nobody has that view of the unresting land: the incessant struggle: the certainty of eventual personal defeat—for we all go under or into the land. I say nobody has this vision because the average farmer, though he feels it perhaps, can't bring it to birth in words. You who can, should.

My days with you were a landmark: like none I ever spent, and delightful every minute. There is tremendous vitality about your place. You are not being drained dry; you only think you are. At the same time you should certainly have some teaching work to do also, and have a good bailiff. Impossible to find in wartime, I suppose. Yet Murry did.

What of the news? It is good I think, because we can see the end. I don't think Bolshevism will conquer Europe. I have an idea that we won't let it; and that when the men return from service there will be a strong reaction in favour of the things you and I believe in.

The frontal attack at El Alamein must have been a feat of high courage, carried out of course by British troops. Chiefly English. The pursuit may not have been so good. I don't know. But there is no question the American landings were a brilliant bit of staff work.

Am I an optimist to believe that what was good in Nazism will survive, and that the Jews will not rule the world, as they confidently expect, and that this country will be regenerated? On the last point I'm doubtful. It's up to people like you and me—but especially you, with your deep knowledge of the land—to help.

Bless you, and love to Ida and the children. I'm going to try and write an amusing book now. A life of Catherine the Great. No good writing about politics at present, or the conduct of the war, of which we know nothing.

1 Dec. 42.

How I wish I could have you at the Holborn Town Hall! So we aren't all sheep, and we still want to hear of British Union! You must be a good speaker, I think, with your fierce energy, and quick mind, and knowledge of things that matter.

. . . I have to hand over my Home Guard command, attend an officers' reunion, and do all sorts of things which it would be frivolous to escape. How pleasant after the war, to be frivolous, even at the age of 57. Something in me is being killed by strict attention to routine.

"The Old Stag" will take me into another world. Thank you so much for sending it. The extravert side of you—and I think in the present day of every man—is the needed side. But if the extravert can also be a Buddha, so much the better extravert he.

Landgirls, yes, not fat white men that nobody loves. A school for landgirls? You ought to have a school. Of course I want to come again, *must* come again, please. I have had a bad fit of not working. *Can't* do a talk on India. Who cares? No money in it. Nobody but a fool writes except for money. Publishers make money . . few authors. Why not have one's own printing press, rural, combined with a farm, and a weekly paper? In which one says what one damn well pleases, after the war?

After the war . . . it looks as if it really might end. What do you think?

Ibid. 20 Feb. 1943.

Here I have been immersed in 18th Century Russia, writing a life of Catherine the Great. It is an excellent escape from the sordid realities of today to consider those far more elegant and really warm-hearted villains of 200 years ago. But I'm terribly bored with life. I don't really know why I'm living, except in the hopes that the future will be more interesting. . . .

What of Beveridge? I haven't studied the plan at all carefully, because it is all contingent on how we come out of this war. And having won it, and marched to Berlin (to protect the Germans from the Russians?) and having still the Japanese war on our hands . . . is it any good making plans for 1945? My own idea is that we must begin with agriculture, not social security: that if we can somehow (I admit it's difficult) ensure that our land is cultivated, i.e. that farmers can make a good living and employ a larger number of people on the soil, that everything else will fit into place. I will not have anything to say to Benn's Individualists because Benn is a believer in Free Trade and cheap food.

March 2, 1943. Ibid.

My Russian book is in the Doldrums. The 18th century is difficult, there has been so much written about it, and I feel I must understand Diderot and Voltaire before going back to Catherine. The more I think of her, the more interesting she becomes; she is more alive for me than contemporary figures seen perforce through a cloud of censors. . . .

So Gandhi feels much better after twenty days fast. . . Shall we start an Ashram together? We would get a laugh out of it as well as a living. Have you ever kept bees by the way? That is a matter on which I want to consult you. . . .

July 25. 1943. Ibid.

My Catherine is dreadful: so awkward and stodgy, and only 35,000 words written, they will have to be entirely re-written on my return from India.

Ibid.
3 Aug, 1943.

Of course it isn't a little stone of hypocrisy you have flung: you know quite well it is a well-aimed carefully chosen pebble that David has slung at the Goliath of our national complacency. Go on using your sling, and you will come to the throne of David and dominion over Israel.

No news of the Indian job. I am very keen to go: it will be so restful and amusing to be paid by the Government again, even though only for a brief period. And I think Olga will benefit by doing a war job, instead of this daily round of cooking. I'm sorry to leave my bees, and the curious herbs I planted, all of which came up. The camomile has enchanting flowers like daisies. I'm too old to labour heroically as you do upon windy uplands, driving throbbing tractors or dealing with bulls; but I shall nurse and cherish some little things when I get back. Talking of which, reminds me of Tiddler, whose amber eyes already regard me reproachfully, for she has guessed I am going away. A spaniel winds

itself round one's heart and I don't know what to do with her. London would be impossible, better death.

But has Tiddler guessed right? I have had no further news from the India Office. The Lieut-Colonel will become Private Y.B. again, in the Herts H.G. perhaps. But I have let this house for a year. So what? I'll let you know what happens.

I see they've released Barry Domville, and am writing to Truth to congratulate Colin Brooks on the paragraphs he wrote about 18B.

The Italian collapse is momentous and I'm glad to see they haven't called in the five Freedom parties, who probably represent nobody, but the King, Badoglio and the Pope. Messrs. Gollancz, Laski, etc. want a revolution throughout Europe and will be furious if Italy comes out of the war without one. I think she will. What we want are Corsica, Rhodes, the heel of Italy, and Valona. I don't see what we want with the Italian mainland at present. As to the Italian fleet we must and I suppose will insist on its surrender; it will be quite useful in a landing in France, and I daresay we can man it with Italian volunteers ready to fight against Germany.

Brave Adrian Bell with 87 derelict acres. I suppose he has some guarantee of getting land girls or other labour for it. My derelict ¼ acre remains as you and Freda and Susan left it, and I still admire the neat way you sawed off the branches of the oak and ash. Nothing done, and garden full of weeds.

August 20. 1943. Bath Club. London.

There is much I want to discuss with you. Adrian Bell very good: then Douglas Reed—have you read his "Lest we regret"? The chap talks sense, but why need he be so devastatingly dull and humourless?

You have amazing energy, Henry. Give us a lead, out of your enthusiasm and experience. Personally, "I do not ask to see the distant scene: One step enough for me". If the destinies of this country could be firmly held in English hands, especially the hands of farmers, I think the future would look after itself. I disbelieve in Utopias or long-term plans. Out with the aliens and make farming pay should be sufficient signposts to a better world.

Airgraph. Cairo.
9th Oct. 1943.

. . . a month's travelling has only brought me here. I'm sick of Cairo: the only interesting thing I've seen is the face of the Sphinx. As to Rameses, King Zozer, and the rest of the sights, including my countrymen relaxing from the war, I'm not interested! I'm longing to return to the peace and certitudes of rural England. God bless you, Henry, and many messages to your wife and Windles, and all your family, and au revoir.

Colonel Norman Thwaites writes:

"I am sending you a letter from Francis about our boy, Tommy. Y.B. did not carry his heart on his sleeve, and few of his friends knew what a

wealth of devotion he gave to his pals. He was very fond of Tommy, my elder boy, killed at Orvicto, when, too impetuously, he was pursuing the retreating Hun through Rome, and to points northwards. He drove his machine gun carriage over a mine-field, and was instantly blown up with his servant."

Crowe Hall, Stutton, near Ipswich.

Dear Norman,

Olga telephoned to me last night to say Tommy was killed in Italy, and I don't know what to say to you, my dear friend, to console you for your loss. As you know, I was devoted to Tommy ever since he was a child, so I do know a little of what you must be feeling. Please give Eleanor my love and sympathy. I have been thinking of Tommy half the night. How I wish I had been able to see him in Italy; I tried to do so and failed. He always made me wish I had children of my own, and he was certainly the best boy of his generation that I knew. Alas, that war always takes the best.

I would like you to tell Barbara and Anne and Peter also how much I feel for them. There was something so radiant and sunny about Tommy—it was a joy just to see him about. Please don't answer this. I'm coming back to London on Friday.

Yours ever,
Francis.

When you can tell me, I would like to hear details. You will be proud of him and of what he did, but it is a poor consolation for the passing of his bright spirit. Still it is all one can have. I'm sure his men must have loved him, and that he led them splendidly, as you would have done if you had been younger.

CHAPTER XXV

FAREWELL TO INDIA

Y.B. WENT by convoy to Egypt and thence flew to Karachi. It was twenty-eight years since the Mesopotamian campaign when he had first looked from the skies over those historic lands. Much had happened to the world since then.

On the evening of 12th October, 1943, he stepped out of the Frontier Mail on to the platform of New Delhi station on one of those fairy autumnal nights, peculiar to India. There was a caressingly soft freshness in the air that brings new life to poor exhausted humanity after the gruelling summer and monsoon heat. He was in excellent spirits, happy to be back in India, happy to be used by the Government, happy to be a Colonel and happy at our meeting after a parting of three years.

Immediately opposite the place where his compartment drew up was a slumbering sadhu (Holy Man), completely naked, lying at full length on one of the station seats; indifferent to the nip in the autumnal air, and to the station lamp lighting up his thin body. His tangled hair hung down and almost touched the ground, his torso was smeared with grey ashes. Y.B. glanced at him but showed no surprise; for once in India he was attuned to the unexpected.

On the drive from the station as we neared the Viceroy's House, the focal point of the imperial city of New Delhi, Y.B., in reminiscent mood, pointed to the place where, as a young subaltern, he used to indulge in his beloved pig-sticking, over the very ground on which the Viceroy's House and the Secretariat Buildings now stand. We deposited him at the Commander-in-Chief's house where he spent his first two days with Sir Claude Auchinleck. With him he discussed his plans for bringing his knowledge of the Indian Army up to date.

On his third day he moved to the Hotel Cecil, where we had been for nearly two years. It was a favourite haunt of his, close to the Kashmir Gate. He was an early riser, and often went for walks before breakfast, visiting scenes connected with the Indian Mutiny, which he was studying with a view to writing a book about it. Certainly Y.B. was fitted to undertake such a task, with his special knowledge of India. It would have been a suitable culmination to his career as an author. Alas! it was not to be!

Friends of Y.B's have often asked us about his health while in India, and whether we had noticed any signs of his coming illness. During his months in Delhi he was certainly in excellent trim.

He was entirely care-free until well on in the New Year, when he realised suddenly that time was passing and he had only two months left in which to obtain all the necessary material for *Martial India*. Then undoubtedly he showed signs of worry and anxiety. Was he making the best use of his time and gathering sufficient interesting material?

When the plans for his Indian visit were originally discussed, I had always assumed that he would spend only two or three weeks in Delhi and would pass most of his time on tour. As a matter of fact, he spent many needless weeks in the capital and showed a strange disinclination to travel far afield. He enjoyed the comforts of the Cecil; it was in the Old Delhi he so loved, in contradistinction to New Delhi, which he abhorred. He had all his meals with us and enjoyed this interlude of home life. He spent his mornings in New Delhi dictating or making official calls. After lunch he took a siesta, as had been his wont from early days. Then he worked again at his book.

He told us that the authorities had invited him to fly to Ceylon, the headquarters of the South East Asia Command, and we were much surprised when he refused and said the only long trip he was prepared to make was to the Burma Front. Several times I suggested to him the need for readable pamphlets for distribution to the American Forces concerning the Indian Army, Navy and India's war effort; but he was unresponsive and did not seem to have the energy left over to undertake anything except his book. I have often wondered in retrospect whether this decision, not to be away from Delhi more than absolutely necessary, was not perhaps a subconscious awareness of approaching ill-health, and a craving to remain with old friends, in comfort, near his early haunts.

When Y.B. first arrived in India in 1905 he had applied himself to the study of Urdu and Pushtu, and one of the happiest incidents of his visit was meeting after forty years, the *munshi* who had taught him as a young officer. These encounters were not an unclouded joy, for his former Indian friends on several occasions greeted him with the words "How old you look, Sahib!" It is true that fifty-seven seems much older in India than in Europe, but nevertheless he was very sensitive on this subject. I think he had never realised that the old life had gone for ever, for he had actually brought his polo boots from England and was much disappointed when he was told that there was no polo in wartime.

I had provided him with a room in my office at the United Nations Centre, New Delhi, of which I was in charge, under the External Affairs Department; just opposite were the American Military Headquarters, and within fifty yards was the U.S. Office of War Information. A very efficient secretary had been engaged for him, and much of her time was taken up in copying the first draft of *Martial India*.

Each morning after breakfast I took Y.B. into New Delhi, six miles distant, in my small Ford, driven by the faithful "Matthews", an Indian Christian. Y.B. was just as much absorbed by every-day Indian life in

1943 as he had been in 1905. Little escaped his keen observation, and it was a privilege on the daily drives from Old to New Delhi to have at hand someone who could explain the surprising sights that met our eyes. One day we had been making some purchases in a Bazaar and on coming out on to the pavement, found a small sacred bull, about the size of a Shetland pony, bedecked with a head-dress of sea-shells, and wearing a coat of many colours—the centre of an admiring crowd. The animal was being taken round the country by its owner as a means of collecting *baksheesh*. When the bull turned round we saw what it was that attracted the crowd: from his hump a fifth leg dangled. Y.B. was much interested, as he had never seen one of these deformities before, although he had often heard of them. He told me that the leg is grafted on when the animal is quite small, as a means of adding to the family exchequer.

One problem always puzzled him: "Why do the bulls in this country behave in such platonic fashion towards the cows they meet?" He often wondered whether the Indian climate might not affect their virility and ferociousness. On the *Maidan* (open space) we used to look out for an enormous Frisian bull, which in Europe would have been enclosed in a well-guarded field. He would probably be peacefully nibbling the grass on the edge of the highway, oblivious to the playing children and passers-by.

On one occasion when we were turning a corner near Kashmir Gate, to my amazement I saw a man, wearing a loin cloth only, stretched at full length on the dusty road, rotating slowly along the highway, all the while deftly holding aloft a small brass pot without spilling its liquid contents, and bellowing at the top of his voice. Matthews grinned and said: "Pagal!" (madman!) But Y.B. explained that the man was a religious fanatic, rolling himself to the banks of the Jumna as a means of acquiring merit. He told us of having seen on one occasion a holy man rolling his way to the sacred Ganges carrying a small few-months-old baby aloft. We agreed that driving to one's office in England would henceforth be a very humdrum affair!

There were certain sights we came across nearly every day—the funeral procession with its sorrowing crowd of male relatives and friends—for no woman took part in these ceremonies—the corpse wrapped in scarlet carried aloft on a bier. A family of "untouchables" living under a railway arch and surrounded by their earthly possessions, pots and pans, bundles of rags; and a few odds and ends, with a couple of pi-dogs with their ribs showing, hunting for scraps. The procession of *dhobies* (washermen) on their daily rounds, sitting proudly on the top of their bundles of clothes, piled high on the back of their patient cows. Herds of buffaloes and goats driven by children to pasturage; manacled prisoners escorted to the lock-up by fine-looking constables of the Delhi Police; the string of supercilious camels from the Mofussil (up country district) dragging incredible carts like travelling menagerie-cages on wheels, filled with the villagers'

produce; or, when in the neighbourhood of the old Moghul Fort, British soldiers looking hot and weary after a morning's march. This was the veritable India of "Kim" unfolding itself along the Grand Trunk Road.

When in India Y.B. was really divided into two personalities, his British *ego* and his Indian *ego*; but even the latter was sub-divided into Hindu and Muslim, for he had deep sympathies with both. When oppressed by the Western world, after retiring from the Army, and while living in London, he sometimes used to talk of escaping to a lonely valley in the Himalayas, where he longed to sit at the feet of his *guru* and shake off the encumbering embrace of modern civilisation; this stage in his spiritual explorations had definitely passed.

In the winter of 1943 bitter feelings had been aroused in the Hindu-Muslim conflict; many Indians felt very violently about this problem. One would go from a Hindu household to the dwelling of a Muslim neighbour and hear diametrically opposed opinions expressed. It was rare to find an individual able to enter into both points of view and feel real sympathy with the two parties, this Y.B. undoubtedly achieved.

As many of his years in the Indian Army had been spent in the North, he had naturally a ready understanding of Muslim aspirations; during this last visit to India he had several talks with Mr. Jinnah, with Mr. Rajagopalachari, the distinguished Hindu statesman, Doctor Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, and others. Y.B. was convinced there could be no solution of the Indian problem which ignored the wishes of the vast majority of the Muslim "minority" of ninety millions.

One day he persuaded us to visit with him the *Sufi* Shrine of *Nisan-ud-Din*. After lunching with friends in Delhi in a very British atmosphere, we motored a few miles and found ourselves in the unchanged Muslim world of the fourteenth century. The old Mosque and the tomb of the Muslim Saint, which he had first visited twenty years previously, held a strong fascination for him. Although it was the last day of October, the sun grilled down upon us, and following his example, we kept to the shady side of the old-world courtyards, with their tombs, minarets, praying Muslims squatting on the ground, and a Fakir, stripped to the waist, droning extracts from the Saint's writings. Y.B. was greeted almost as a brother by the head of the Shrine, *Khwaja Hassan Nizan*, clad in a long white robe, a tall bespectacled Muslim in the sixties, with flowing black locks, a black beard, and a little yellow skull-cap. Y.B., whose Urdu was rapidly coming back, acted as interpreter, for the *Sufi* did not speak English.

When we got to the central courtyard we were asked to remove our shoes, and followed the *Sufi* in our socks; for my wife it was more of an ordeal, as, like the rest of her sex in India, she wore no stockings. We had to tread warily down the narrow alleys and open courtyards bespattered with chewed betel-nut, a very familiar sight. Inquisitive goats meandered around, and pigeons, fluttering down from the trees, attracted

the attention of a cat, tied by a piece of string to the gate of one of the tombs. When we had completed our tour of the Shrine, the *Sufi* took us to a verandah giving on to a courtyard, where, surrounded by his correspondence and papers in neat piles, he sat on a mattress. A telephone receiver beside the mattress seemed rather incongruous in a scene like this. We were given tea and candied vegetable-marrow, and *chupatties* (cakes of unleavened bread), while he and Y.B. carried on an animated discussion.

On another occasion Y.B. escorted us with equal zest to the huge convention organised by the Hindu community in India to pray for the peace of the world—the *Maha Yajna*, on the banks of the Jumna, near the Red Fort in Old Delhi. It was three hundred years since a similar "great purification", as the convention is called, had taken place. This remarkable gathering is described in *Martial India*. Brahmins from the fastnesses of the Himalayas and the great temples of the far south, were present. We were the only Europeans on that particular afternoon, and, escorted by a Hindu friend, wandered round the vast city of tents, in which religious rites were being performed by yellow-clad priests. The organisation of this great gathering was impressive and the Hindu side of Y.B's personality was temporarily caught up in the atmosphere. At the office the following day I overheard him discussing the gathering with a devout Hindu member of my staff, who proposed arranging for him to visit a Brahmin of great sanctity, who had come down from his *ashram* in the Himalayas and would be in Delhi for a few days only.

From Karachi to the Burma Front Y.B. visited American rest camps, military depots, aerodromes, hospitals, and recreation centres. Before he set out on his investigations he had wondered how the American Forces, straight from the Western world would react to the unchanging East, where even in some of the large cities methods of sanitation similar to those in vogue in Noah's days were still considered adequate. The first weeks in so alien an environment, with dust, insects and other discomforts, cannot have been easy for our Allies; he was delighted to find the excellent spirit in which the American soldiers settled down in these strange surroundings.

When he returned to Delhi after his various trips he was encouraged by what he had seen; on the whole he found that once the British and Americans were doing a job side by side they soon got to understand one another. The relations between the R.A.F. and the men in the American Air Branch were particularly good. The wonderful spirit of camaraderie existing between the American and the British personnel on the staff of the South East Asia Command especially impressed him. After going to SEAC Headquarters, then in New Delhi, he often wished the pessimists could have seen Admiral Mountbatten's staff at work; British and American officers were sitting side by side and one never knew in advance whether a query would be dealt with by an American or an Englishman.

Never in history had there been closer working together between allies.

In the cool of the evenings, when staying at the Hotel Cecil, he took strolls on "The Ridge" or wandered among the Hindu shrines, on the banks of the Jumna. On many of these evening walks we accompanied him; we would watch him converse with the priest at a wayside shrine, or stroke the grey Brahmini bull that was an important inmate of the forecourt, and as a rule was apprehensive when a white face ventured too near. Or perhaps we would visit a disused Muslim graveyard, overgrown with scrub, with stone turbaned tombstones lying about higgledy-piggledy, where we frequently saw jackals furtively starting off on their nightly prowls; while overhead emerald-green parrots, homeward bound, flashed across the path of the setting sun.

In less ambitious mood he would stroll round the gardens of the hotel, while my wife gave him botanical lessons, into which he threw himself with the zest of a boy. He was strangely ignorant about India's flowers and flowering trees and eagerly examined under her magnifying-glass the miracles of loveliness thereby revealed. This was to him an entirely unknown world. Even his knowledge of European flowers was elementary and he jotted in his note-book, from which he was never parted, the botanical facts thus gleaned, with a view to improving his garden at "Kenya".

If I had to sum up Y.B's contribution, both to his native land and to the country in which he spent so many years, I should say it was his capacity for making friends with Indians of all kinds, creeds and classes. It was little short of genius. Whether he was talking to the *guru*, whose thoughts he revered, to the Muslim Nawab, whose sportsmanship he respected, to the mendicant by the roadside, whose poverty he pitied, he was entirely at his ease, and always himself. He, who suffered from shyness in the West, thoroughly enjoyed meeting Indians, hearing their views and attempting to fathom their thought-processes. They felt his sympathetic understanding; they knew his friendship and affection for India were fundamental.

CHAPTER XXVI

LAST MONTHS

COLONEL H. S. STEWART, of the Bhopal State Forces, brother officer and life-long friend of Y.B., writes:

Bhopal,
September 20th, 1945.

I first met Francis Yeats-Brown when he joined the 17th Cavalry at Bannu. I also was a recently joined but more senior Subaltern, who had transferred from the British Service rather late in life.

We immediately became great friends, took a bungalow together, and continued to be great friends till his death....

Francis had a dual-sided if not a triple-sided nature. When one saw him on the Polo Field, or out Pig-sticking in the jungle, or as an Adjutant training his Recruits and Remounts, one would not have thought that he was either a journalist or a writer, or anything other than a man of action. At times he was an idealist and at other times a realist. Sometimes he was a mixture of the two. He was always faced with the problem of synchronizing what he knew to be the facts, with what he felt ought to be the facts.

He and I often discussed India; here his dual outlook came in particularly. When he was in England he persuaded himself that there must be a lot in the political theories about India held in England, and consequently he attempted to attune his mind to these.

But as soon as he arrived back in India, he once again clearly realised that nobody either in India or elsewhere ever seems to discuss Indian problems in harmony with the actual facts. He knew that those who do not know the facts, (such as English politicians) base their ideas on what they imagine to be the facts. Those who really know the facts most frequently for fear of being called reactionaries conceal their knowledge so carefully, that in the end they themselves succeed in forgetting the facts.

Francis knew well that India contains many more nationalities than Europe; and that these are even more distinct, because they are differentiated by religion as well as by race. He knew that there is no such thing as an "Indian", and that there is not even a word for "Indian" in any of the numerous languages of the Continent. He knew that the various nationalities are not in 'segments' as in Europe; they are superimposed one on another like a pile of pancakes. He knew that the departure of the British would not free the bottom pancake, but would only remove the top layer of the pile!

He knew that the Hindus prefer the British to the Mohammedans;

that the Mohammedans prefer the British to the Hindus; and that neither wishes to co-operate with the other. He knew, therefore, that nobody really desires the British should leave India, but that certain politicians merely desire the well-paid jobs and the real authority for themselves. That even then they desire that British officials should continue to do all the essential spade-work as subordinates to the politicians, so that both profit and pleasure to the latter may result.

He also realised that none of the inhabitants of India really believe in Western Democracy or desire it; that a few pay lip-service to it, hoping for some advantage. He knew that Islam is really extremely democratic compared with Christianity, but that it does not believe in deciding problems by counting heads. He knew that Hindus, while not democratic, do not, like the West, consider wealth is the deciding factor in status.

Therefore, with many undigested ideas in his mind he was never able to bring the best use of his knowledge and experience to bear on Indian problems.

He liked and was interested in India. He certainly desired to visit it frequently during the cold weathers. He was very well liked by all classes in India. Frontier freebooters or Brahmin ascetics, interested him equally. Once he said to me: 'I am sure in some previous existence I was a Brahmin.' . . .

I think Francis reveals his own mind most truly in two of his books "Dogs of War" and "European Jungle." Neither of these was a success; but I know that they represented much of what he really thought. His newspaper, "Everyman", also truly reflected his mind. It dealt with the side of Yoga that interested him, and it also advocated the politics he favoured.

Francis's difficulty as a writer was that he was not imaginative enough to invent plots for stories. His strength lay in the charming way that he could write about what he knew. In my opinion he wrote best when he was not too serious.

I think Francis was always enthusiastic about Yoga *as he liked to think of it*; but I know he never believed in it as a religion. To him it was merely a system of establishing and maintaining control over his body, in whole and in part. I do not think he got any less enthusiastic about Yoga as he grew older. Perhaps his publishers in his earlier books encouraged him to give an exaggerated emphasis to his leanings. As far as religion goes, Francis had a definite sentimental attachment to a very Evangelical form of the Church of England, but I do not think that his religious sympathy affected his life; it merely stirred his emotions at times. I think psalms and hymns pleased his ear. He did not like the English High Church, although he was lenient to the Roman Church abroad.

He was, as you probably know, a Past Master in Masonry. He highly approved of its precepts, but I do not think that these exercised any definite influence over his life. I am not sure that he went on with Masonry in the later part of his life.

It is necessary to define a little what you have in mind when you enquire about his service to India and to the Empire. These terms mean different things to different people; and today many are afraid to speak

of the 'Empire.' In my opinion Francis' chief contribution to India and the Empire (as I understand these terms) was to give a practical illustration of an 'officer of the brutal and licentious soldiery,' understanding and sympathising with the inhabitants of India far better than the ill-informed voters of the U.K. considered possible, and also in understanding the people of India far better than most of the idealistically-minded Indian Civil Officials do. The fact that in this understanding he was merely a good representative of the Indian Army Officer type will probably be generally disbelieved. But in India it was the old type of Indian Army Officer who got to know the rural inhabitants (especially those of the martial classes) far better than any other British official, partly because he had wider contacts; and through understanding these, was able to understand all the other classes.

Well-informed Civil Officials have always admitted that the old type of I.A. Officer was in much closer touch with the inhabitants of India than the Civil officials. This has become more especially the case ever since the latter have ceased to spend the cold seasons camping in their districts. Nowadays there are Civil Officials in important charges who scarcely know any inhabitant of India intimately except their own clerks and subordinates. The latter merely size up what the officers want to hear, and report accordingly.

I think Beverley Nichols and Francis had much in common. The fact that Francis wrote "Dogs of War" to refute "Cry Havoc" merely bears this out.

Beverley Nichols came out here with a preconceived set of ideas which his intelligence rejected when he came to observe things for himself.

Francis did not have to be disillusioned; he always knew in the back of his mind the ideas that English politicians consider to be Axioms, are merely dreams. Francis, like Beverley Nichols, was attracted to the Pakistan project. Here he allowed his sympathies to drown his realism, and failed to realise that this dream was also founded on wishful thinking."

Colonel Shad Mohammed Khan, Staff Officer Bhopal State Forces, writes:

"I, as one of the old members of the 17th Cavalry, have been asked by Colonel Stewart to write all that I can think of about Major Francis Yeats-Brown.

I give a brief statement of what I can remember.

Major Yeats-Brown was serving as a Subaltern in the 17th Cavalry when I (at the age of 14) enlisted in that Regiment. My father (Captain Hamzullah Khan who is mentioned in Major Yeats-Brown's books) was then the Risaldar Major of the 17th Cavalry. . . .

Major Y.B. during his youth was apt to become very angry, very quickly, about very small things. In my opinion the reason for this was his constant contact with stupid and illiterate subordinates who did not readily understand his idealistic views.

I noticed that Major Y.B. during his walks when he was at leisure used to talk to himself. This also occurred when I on occasions accom-

panied him during his rides, and in country walks. At one stage during the full bloom of his youth, he used to sing in a gentle voice while walking.

At parties or in meetings with his fellow officers he talked very little, and tried to listen to what others said.

For some years Major Y.B. continued to hold the appointment of Adjutant 17th Cavalry, and he was a very successful Adjutant. He never interfered with the Eastern civilisation, customs, etc., and very often encouraged Eastern sports amongst his recruits by even taking part himself.

He was very fond of sports and was a good polo player. He took part in tent-pegging also, but having weak eye-sight he was not first-class at this.

During his youth, he used to wear very fine clothes.

He was a fine type of British officer and was just the sort whom we Indian soldiers liked very much. It was noticeable that he frequently paid due respect to Indians older than himself.

He will always be remembered by his friends without any regard to the religion to which they adhere. His private servants, too, liked him very much.

I consider Major Y.B. a very farsighted although peculiar man, who had a great desire to lead an individual life of his own, and not to be under the influence of others.

To my great pleasure, he came last year to Bhopal and saw the two Bns. Bhopal Sultania Training Centre and the 3rd Bhopal Inf. which then were both under my command.

He told me then he was writing a book on the Indian Army and on the Indian State Forces.

He made enquiries from me about my opinion of the 'Parda' system for Indian women, and whether I thought that the Muslim ladies would ever give this up. My reply that the people were accustomed to the system and that the lack of education supported its continuance, and that the Mohammedan custom had the purpose of preserving the honour of Indian ladies, satisfied him to a certain extent.

At his departure from Bhopal I and Colonel Stewart gave him a send-off.

I received letters from him both from Delhi and London, saying that he would come back again to India, at which I was very glad.

I have just read for the first time what Colonel Stewart has written to you. I think what he said gives a true picture of Indians, but I would like to add one point which he left out. Whenever any of us has a case in Court whether we are Hindus or Mohammedans we try our utmost to ensure that our case comes before a British Judge, and not before any Indian whatsoever, even if he belongs to our own religion. In the Army everybody, no matter what his religion is before taking service, wishes to know whether there is any British officer in that Unit; and about the Command they prefer to serve under a British officer.

Shad Mohammed Khan,
(Lieut-Colonel)
Staff Officer "A" Bhopal State Forces."

Y.B. took leave of us on Old Delhi railway platform early in April, 1944. He had still some work to do connected with the writing of *Martial India*, and had arranged to fly home by way of the Italian front, where he hoped to visit units of the Indian Army. We made the journey to Egypt in a troop ship. On our arrival in Cairo we found a letter from him suggesting an immediate meeting, but he had, as it turned out, been obliged to leave for Italy that very morning. Of his visit to Italy he wrote:

"Now we must get into our plane again—and fly all the long way to Italy.

"It was an Indian division—the 8th Division of the Eighth Army—which was chosen as the spearhead of the attack which took us across the Rapido River on the historic night of May 11-12th, and then broke the Gustav line. I met General Alexander soon afterwards, and he told me how well this division had done, and how highly he thought of the skill, courage, and tenacity of the Indian soldier.

"This feeling was universal throughout Italy; moreover, the British soldier has taken the Indian to his heart, and *vice versa*, as never before. Of course, Gurkhas and Sikhs have always got on well with British troops. But now the friendship has spread and increased, and it is considered an honour to be brigaded with the Indians. The reason is not far to seek. British troops saw how Indians fought at Sidi Barrani in 1940, and at the grim battle of Keren in 1941, and in the fluctuating struggles in the western desert, culminating in the victories of El Alamein and in Tunisia, and then in Italy. It is a friendship that has been cemented under fire.

"I don't think I have ever seen troops in better heart than the Indians who were driving the Germans back in the battle for Rome. They were dusty and dirty and short of sleep, and they had suffered some pretty heavy casualties during the first night and morning; but now they were taking a lot of prisoners and hugely enjoying the chocolates and other comforts which they found in the deep caves of the Gustav line.

"I travelled across Italy three times, from Naples to Lanciano, in order to see all the Indian troops I possibly could. They were enjoying Italy; the sunshine and the fruit and the plough-oxen were familiar to them. Rations are good, and the climate suits them; there is less sickness among the Indian troops than there is among British. Most of them—except the Sikhs—are wearing the khaki beret instead of the turban, and look smart in their new headgear. The only grouse I heard was over the cigarette issue.

"On my last day I joined a Frontier Force Regiment which had just taken a village in the Liri Valley. The adjutant was a Parsi, and the second in command and two of the company commanders were Punjabis. In one corner of the ruined village they were still killing snipers and small pockets of the enemy who held out, but where I was they were taking prisoners, who were all so frightened that they could hardly hold up their hands. One little corporal with an Iron Cross was brought up to where I was standing and had his pockets searched. He said he was an Austrian, and I couldn't help thinking of that other Austrian corporal . . . I went away for about twenty minutes. When I came back this prisoner was

sitting amongst a group of P.M's[1] with a cup of tea in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He had given his Iron Cross away!

"Before leaving the Front I climbed up to the Cassino Monastery, which had then been in our hands three days. There was a storm blowing, which kept the red and white Polish pennant and the Union Jack straining at their flagstaffs, tied to the very top of the ruins. Below me the battle still went forward.

"I could see the plumes of white dust, which were the Canadian tanks, in close support of Indian battalions advancing on Piedmont and Pontecorvo. There I must leave them, on the way to Rome. . . .[2]

It was curious that Y.B's last contact with the soldiers of India should have been on Italian soil.

Major E. W. Metcalfe writes:

"I met him the night he arrived back in this country and I dined with him at a West End Club. He said at once: 'Count me out for any picture of India as a united country. *Never* has India been so disunited.' "

There is no doubt that the chief impression he obtained of India during his last visit was of its disunity. There was hardly a day during his stay in Delhi when he did not refer to this theme.

It was unfortunate that his house "Kenya" was let. He often talked about it and wished that it had been possible for him to have completed his book on the Indian Army in his own home, surrounded by his books of reference. He did not want to return to London as he felt that he never did his best work there. His wife was employed by the American Red Cross and he wanted to obtain her release so that she could make a home for him and do his secretarial work; but the Labour Department was obdurate. He, therefore, went down to stay at Crowe Hall, Stutton near Ipswich, where he plunged into the task of re-writing *Martial India*,[3] Miss Currey once again acting as his secretary.

The last lecture Y.B. ever gave was to the members of the East India Association, with Lord Birdwood in the chair, on 27th July, entitled "With the Indian soldier to-day". He was glad to have this opportunity of addressing a distinguished audience about the changes in the Indian Army caused by the war. He held that the sepoy, the same stout-hearted peasant whom he had first known forty years ago, was quickly adapting himself to mechanisation. He vividly described the thousands of motor vehicles he had passed on the Imphal-Chindwin Road mostly driven by Indians—"a year or two ago these lads were twisting bullocks' tails".

In his usual vivid way he describes a visit to a Gurkha camp overlooking the Chindwin Valley, he said:

"An orderly takes me to a bamboo hut, and brings me a half-basin of water. Water is a great luxury for it has to be brought up on mule-back

[1] Punjabi Mussalmans.
[2] *Asiatic Review*, October, 1944.
[3] Published by Eyre & Spottiswoode in February, 1945.

from two miles away. After washing off the dust of the Imphal Road I am taken by the orderly (for otherwise I should never find my way), to a bamboo mess tent, to dine with the officers at a bamboo table. The Gurkhas are past masters in making hats, beds and tables with their *kukries*. Within a few hours of reaching camp they have cut down the necessary number of bamboos, built themselves everything they want, and then vanished into the jungle. Everything is hidden, men, ammunition, food, equipment; and unless you know your way about you would imagine you were in virgin forest.

"That night I lay on my bamboo bed and listened to a sound like rain, and the distant barking of deer. The jungle is full of game, as well of insects; elephants, bear, tiger, wild boar, and the wild ancestors of our English hen. Also of Japanese.

"Presently I got up, to find out if it was really raining. It wasn't, but the dew was so heavy that drops of water hung on each leaf and shrub. They told me afterwards that the sound I had heard was the rustling of the leaves of the teak trees; it sounds exactly like a heavy shower. Presently I woke with a start, wondering if the Japs were attacking, for riflemen were moving swiftly and stealthily into their slit trenches. But it was only the stand-to, carried out in absolute silence, an hour before dawn.

"And there below me was the Chindwin Valley, and a streak of white mist shining in the full moon . . .

"On my way back to Tamu I passed some twenty elephants, building a road-bridge. There are hundreds of them working in the Tamu valley, . . . the elephants as far as I know, are still there waiting for their mahouts to come back. When we made a similar withdrawal in 1942 they were turned loose in the jungle, and left to shift for themselves, which they are well able to do. The Japanese couldn't catch them, because they will only come when they are called by their own masters.

"Tamu is one of the most unpleasant places in the world, hot, unhealthy, full of snakes, and inches deep in dust when it isn't a quagmire of mud. Also, the mosquitoes must be seen to be believed. The Japanese must be enjoying them now; the native variety and our Mosquitoes."[1]

On his return from India Y.B. wrote to Henry Williamson:

Flat 43, Redcliffe Buildings,
258, Old Brompton Road,
S.W.5.
June5, 1944.

Dear Henry,

Here I am after my travels, and longing to see you. We are living in a tiny flat of a friend of Olga's, and I have some 6 weeks work still to do at the India Office, before I finish my book.

Then I want to live in the country, until my house is again vacant (which might be September of this year, but probably not till March 1945: he has the option) and I am wondering whether you would possibly have me as a lodger? I am well accustomed to cooking and cleaning and would (I think?) not be a troublesome guest.

[1] From address given before the East India Association, 27th July, 1944.

Can you *really* use a stomach pump on a horse? I never heard of it.

I'm afraid the May frost has damaged your fruit trees, like so many others? But the bud and blossom and fruit of your own mind is more important and now is the fruiting time: one feels it in the air: sees and hears it in the air, grimly, yet I suppose Old Kaspar was right when he said

> "Things like that, you know, must be
> At every famous victory."

As from Bath Club,
74, St. James St. S.W.1.
16 Aug. 1944.

I am writing from "Kenya" in Berkhamsted, where our tenants have allowed us to come for a fortnight while they go to Wales. I get back to London on Aug 21, and shall be there till the 25 when I go to a cottage near Aylesbury and write a new book until the war ends, I suppose. . . . I think the war will end soon, don't you?

> "What they fought each other for,
> I could not well make out,
> But everybody said," quoth he,
> "That t'was a famous victory!"

Sirens wail here sometimes, but explosions have been distant. Not so in London, where there have been hits all round me. Have been reading *Norfolk Life*: how good it is! And you tell me of three new ones—*Sun in The Sands*—what a good title!

Are you having this glorious weather? 80°F. with light breeze. Have rarely enjoyed a holiday so much: just lying down. My new book will be out in November: *Martial India*: part-propaganda about soldiers who will have fulfilled their function by then, so nobody will want to hear about them any more.

I would like to make some money now. Farming is impossible for me. I was 58 yesterday. But I believe in the things you believe in, and have done, bless you; and would like to help. (But of course that is *not* the way to make money.)

I shall not be able to get back to Kenya until March '45, and what a lot will have happened by then! For one thing H.W. will have produced at least 3 best sellers, and Y.B. will have one on the slips, D.V.

Morgans,
Drayton Beauchamp,
Nr. Aylesbury.
28 Aug, 1944.

Many thanks for yours. I am more or less settled here, waiting for proofs, and beginning a new book; and there is a semi-paralysed farmer, with 4 Italian labourers, who wants me to help him talk to them, and report to him what I see on the farm. I can certainly talk Italian, for I

spoke it before English, but as to knowing wheat from barley, I don't. But it may be interesting.

My poor head can't take in all the good news: the war will be over . . .

Morgans, Drayton Beauchamp,
Near Aylesbury.
12 Sept, 1944.

That was a very moving article you wrote for the *Evening Standard* yesterday: so striking in its expert simplicity and grim seriousness: worth a dozen books on "we must make farming pay." But I do hope that the final result is not as bad as you hinted, and that all your corn is not spoiled. You say much of it is, but I do hope more than you thought has been saved?

I read *I Bought a Mountain* the other day, and liked it, but it doesn't fascinate me, as your books do.

Have come to London to do my proofs, but they were not ready. Must return next week. Promised to go to lecture on India in the North, then ratted at the last moment. Had slight malaria, and deliberately malingered for the first time in my life: telegraphed couldn't come owing to fever. Travelling is very hard these days, and I have grown to hate it.

I think people are finding out this war is purposeless. The Poles knew it long ago and yet went on fighting. So will we. But if as a result of this war we could really establish an agricultural way of life in England—that is, make it the test and basis of all our policies, that our people must be able to earn a good living on the land, whatever else suffers, because without farmers we shall perish mentally and physically, *then* I say the war will have been worth while. Nothing else could have taught us, except fear of starvation. And how long shall we remember?

On his return from his last visit to India Y.B. wrote to Rosalind Constable:

31 Aug 1944 Bath Club.

I wonder now, when people will begin to dart about the world again, when you will come over? If you do, you will let me know, won't you? Someone told me you were one of the editors of Fortune. (Incorrect. R.C) If so, you must certainly stand me a drink. Since I last wrote, I have been to India, to do a book on the Indian Fighting Forces: they made me a Colonel and sent me all over the place by air. It wasn't much fun, except for a fortnight in Burma, and a perfectly heavenly ten days in Italy, where I had a jeep to myself and saw the fighting. Modern battles are delightful, provided one is only a spectator. I haven't enjoyed myself so much as I did during those 10 days for years. But the writing of the book was a bit dreary. That is over now, and I am vegetating in the country, thinking over a new book, and feeling "out of it" again.

My wife, Olga, is in London with the American Red Cross and comes down for week ends. The flying bombs are better now. She sleeps soundly in a basement in a big block of flats near Earls Court, but works by day in an all-glass building.

What great victories we hear of, every day! Yet I am afraid living in history has its boring moments: everyone here would like to get back to their own affairs. As soon as Portofino is liberated I hope to go there. I found the Italians I saw very friendly in spite of everything. Bless you, Rosalind; I wonder how you are wearing your hair now? It must be ten years since we were all at St. Maxime; and I suppose that Derek is one of our few mutual friends. The last I heard of him he was in Italy, but they told me at the Reform Club he was expected back soon. With love from

Francis.

CHAPTER XXVII

LAST DAYS

AT THE end of October, 1944, we managed to secure a small flat in Curzon Street, and Francis was our first guest. He had just completed the correction of the proofs of *Martial India*; the book had caused him considerable effort, and had been re-written several times. We were greatly struck by his lack of vitality; everything seemed an effort to him. We discussed the state of Europe. He was apprehensive of the problems that would confront us when peace came; the prospect of a continent dominated by Soviet Russia did not fit into his picture of a contented and settled Europe.

Apart from his somewhat pessimistic outlook, he was also preoccupied with his own immediate future. He deplored the fact that his house was let till the following March; he yearned to be back in his own surroundings and able to plunge again into the biography of the Empress Catherine. When it was finished he hoped to go to Italy with his wife and step-daughter for a while. He told us that shortly he was going to spend a day in the country with his dog "Tiddler", to which animal he was devoted. We did not take his lethargy very seriously, ascribing it to a passing wave of depression. When we parted he asked us to dine with him and his wife the following week.

Some days later he rang up to say he was suffering from a slight attack of shingles, and suggested that the dinner be postponed for a week. He kept in almost daily touch with us; he did not appear to be shaking off his mysterious complaint. He was alone all day as his wife was only able to get back to him from her Red Cross work in the evenings, and the time hung heavily on his hands.

One telephone conversation in the middle of November stands out in my mind. Francis rang up my wife to say that the Doctor had told him that morning "he was very seriously ill". This seemed ludicrous to him; his comment was: "I am going to no pay attention to this; as a matter of fact the moment the Doctor left I got up and went out to see if I could get a valve for my wireless set. The Doctor thinks I ought to move into a nursing home." When my wife said she hoped he was telephoning from his bed, he said "No, I am talking in the passage where the telephone is, but I have got a coat over my pyjamas."

A few days later we were glad to hear from his wife that she had moved Francis into a Nursing Home (on 19th November) in Cheniston Gardens,

near Kensington High Street. We went round to see him, taking with us the wireless valves which he had been unable to obtain locally; he at once sat up in bed trying to fix them into his set, and was as delighted as a small boy with a new toy.

He had a nice airy room with a large bow window looking out on the quiet street. Opposite the fireplace was the exceptionally high bed on which he sat looking small and frail amid the shining and well kept surroundings of the Nursing Home. He had singularly few private possessions or books with him; he told us he did not feel much inclination to read, the wireless was his great stand-by.

For unorthodox Y.B. to surrender himself to the tender mercies of orthodox medical methods was not easy. He deeply regretted that the nature cure institution conducted by his friend Mr. Lief, the osteopath, was closed for a month to enable the staff to have a holiday, but he hoped to go there for treatment at the beginning of the new year. In the meantime his doctors and nurses cannot have had an easy time. His wife often rang us up in the evenings, distracted by the problem of how to get him to carry out their instructions.

On the top of his bad attack of shingles carbuncles developed; he suffered excruciating pain and his nights were a long drawn-out misery as he was unable to take morphia. But people recover from carbuncles; when about the same age as Francis, his father had had a very bad attack.

Mrs. Buckley, in a letter containing early memories of his youth, writes:

"When he was four or five his parents and Francis stayed with us at Nervi, where we spent a winter at Villa Crossa, a house with a beautiful garden stretching right down to the sea. Uncle Monty was at that time recovering from a series of very bad abscesses . . . carbuncles, in fact."

I only learnt from one of his fellow prisoners, six months after his death, that Francis himself, while at Afionkarahissar, had suffered from carbuncles and had been treated by the Turkish military prison doctor. There was evidently an inherited tendency.

When we last saw Francis there seemed to be an improvement in his condition. He was more cheerful and sat up by the fire in his dressing-gown, smoking a cigarette. He consulted us as to where he should go to recruit and mentioned Brighton amongst other places. He was much interested in a baby of Anglo-Chinese parentage whom one of the nurses, anxious to keep him amused, had brought in to show him; he insisted that we should be introduced to his small friend, and accordingly it was brought in for our inspection. We left him feeling much happier than on the previous occasion. Alas! the respite was but of short duration. We never saw him alive again.

Francis was suffering so much that he was not allowed to see anyone. In the interludes, when the pain was quiescent, he would ring us up and give the latest news of himself, and his wife telephoned a daily bulletin.

Although we knew he was seriously ill we still could not bring ourselves to believe that his life was in danger. It was fantastic to think of such a thing; his father had lived till his eighty-seventh year. His mother came from long-lived stock: her father had died at the age of eighty-nine, and she herself, less than five years before Francis, at the age of eighty-seven, the last of her generation.

On 16th December his wife rang up to say the doctors had decided that an immediate operation was necessary to remove one of the carbuncles. The following day she told us that the operation had gone off successfully; when he emerged from the anæsthetic, he felt he was released from the torture chamber. It seemed almost too good to be true.

His wife tells me that he used to say to her "when the pain is really bad you can't control the mind" and during his illness he several times complained of his inability to relax since his return from India. She did not think he had any real presentiment of death, although he was undoubtedly thinking much of death while in the Nursing Home. On his last evening he was in good spirits, his wife tells me, "He sat up to cut his toe-nails, read some poetry, wrote out some cheques and said how much better he felt. The last thing he wrote was an inscription in the Bible which he was giving Anna for Christmas." During his illness Francis bore his suffering with wonderful fortitude. After his death the doctor said to his wife: "Your husband has been through hell".

One day after a very distressing talk with him on the telephone when he was suffering acutely, my wife had sent him some rough notes on the mystery of pain, thoughts which had come to her when she herself was going through a difficult time. When her letter arrived he could not concentrate on anything, and the first time he was able to read it properly and ponder on her reflections was on the Sunday afternoon after the operation, two days before his death. She had written as follows:

"Pain and Evil? No answer to that question. A great mystery. The Why of it beyond our understanding. But what we can do is to try and see Our Lord's attitude towards them."

(a) "His whole life was a conflict with great powers outside Himself. The conflict took the form of resistance to temptations of earthly power, of earthly methods, of mis-use of His miraculous powers. Temptations—towards the end of His life—to bitterness, to disillusionment, to despair. Above all the temptation to lose faith in the Voice from Heaven 'Thou art my beloved Son.' This temptation comes again and again right through His life, from the Wilderness to Calvary—'*If* Thou be the Son of God . . .'

(b) "In inward conflict He conquered always—in His human contacts He could not defeat the powers of evil unless man did his part. In that sense He is not omnipotent. Read Mark ix, 14–29. The powers of evil too strong for the disciples. The father's despair:—'If Thou canst do anything . . ' Our Lord's reply: 'If thou canst believe . . .' His power to

help depended upon man, depends upon man still. Read accounts in Matt. xvii and Luke ix as well, so as to get the complete picture; they supplement each other. Sense of struggle with evil and pain in the whole story.

"Where there was no faith even He could do nothing: 'He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief,"—He still can do no mighty works where there is no faith. That is what we always forget. We do not do our share, and then say:—'There is no God,' or—'He cannot save.'

"The power of God can only prevail when man reaches out to lay hold of it,' but no limit to what can happen when man does that. 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'

(c.) " 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'

"He would not have been Very Man as well as Very God if He had not tasted the utmost agony of all—the agony of darkness and desolation. And man would have felt when he endured it 'He does not know.' All the sin and all the pain of the whole world closed in on Him and shut out the Face of God as He hung there in physical and spiritual exhaustion and agony.

"What He made of Pain,—He took it into His creative hands and fashioned it into redemptive power.

"Those who were 'afar off' heard only 'My God, my God, why—', those who stood near enough to the Cross heard the words which followed: 'Into Thy Hands I commend my spirit,' and '*Consummatum* est,' ('It is consummated,' which means so much more than 'It is finished')—but only those nearest the Cross, and that is for ever the same.

"God's need of us in the tremendous conflict between the Powers of Evil and the Armies of Light.

"We can understand nothing about it all except that He has come right down into it all, that He has suffered the utmost, that He has made Himself one with us, that there is nothing He does not share.

" 'On Calvary the Heart of God was laid bare'."

On Monday morning, the day before he died, Francis wrote the following letter to my wife:

38 Cheniston Gardens, W.8.
6 a.m. Monday 18th December, 1944.

Dearest Hylda,

This is the very first letter I've written since I came here a month ago, but you will know how often I have been thinking of you and E., and I have been conscious of your help and strength throughout; which were needed especially in the night hours, so difficult to pass when the level of pain rose beyond a certain point.

Now Olga will have told you the good news: they opened up the top carbuncle. . . . The surgeon had never seen such a big one! The hole, they say, is the size of a grape-fruit. If it had been left to natural processes it would have taken 3 months. Now, thank God, I have hardly any pain

at night, and what I have is not of that nasty kind that seems seeking for an outlet and not finding it.

Only yesterday was I able to think over what you say of Pain and Evil, and to look up the references to that particularly tough "spirit" which could only be driven out by prayer and fasting. But the accounts leave one wanting to know so much else: see especially Mark 17–29. Jesus tells the Father "all things are possible to him that believeth", but He tells the disciples "this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting". In whom is faith chiefly necessary? Not in the poor epileptic boy, who doesn't know what he is doing. In the Father then? Or chiefly in the healer? So that Jesus meant to tell His disciples that they could affect such cures only when in a state of prayer and fasting?

Well, as to Pain, I have read several modern books on the subject, but they leave me no wiser than before. I haven't read C.S. Lewis on the subject, who I believe is good. But it seems to me enough to merely accept Evil, ugliness, etc., as the necessary opposite of truth, beauty, etc; and that to insist on a full explanation of their existence *now* would tell us nothing. It would be tantamount to the reason why God made the world as it is. If we knew the answer it would be meaningless to our minds until all the steps in the process are fitted in.

Have been doing very little reading. I like something of which I can read a page or two and think over for an hour. Wavell's "Other Men's Flowers"—Trevelyan's "Social History" are my stand-bys.

How dull "Esmond" is! I'm beginning to think Thackeray over-estimated. Even "Vanity Fair" could be enormously improved by being cut down 50% by a competent Fleet Street editor.

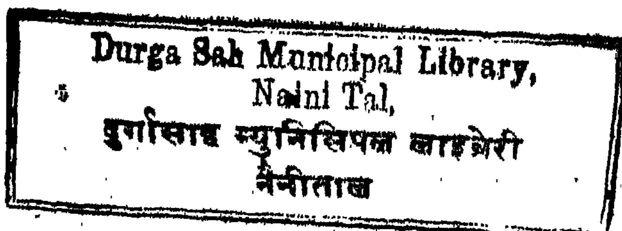
Much love to you both. It has been great fun writing this, dear Hylda, and I smile to think of you two cosily on the sofa reading it aloud.

Yours ever,
Francis.

Poor, poor Viva. I was so sorry. I valued her friendship."[1]

On the morning of Tuesday, 19th December, his wife rang us up at eight o'clock to tell us that Francis had died in great pain two hours before, from heart failure—just twenty-four hours after this letter was written. It reached us after breakfast, and seemed to us like a direct message from behind the veil. We did read it, sitting together on the sofa as he had imagined, but little did he know the sorrow that would be in our hearts.

[1] Mrs. Butler Brooke, our sister-in-law, who had died two weeks before. She had an attack of cerebral hemorrhage in the train returning to Oxford after having spent the day in London with us.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APPENDIX A.

LIST OF BOOKS BY F. YEATS-BROWN

Caught by the Turks (Arnold) 1919.
The Story of the Seventeenth Cavalry from 1858–1922 (Pioneer Press, Allahabad). (For private circulation as purely of interest to the regiment.)
Bengal Lancer (Gollancz). 1930. Book Society's choice.
Golden Horn (Gollancz). 1932. Book Society's choice.
Escape: A Book of Escapes of all Kinds (Eyre & Spottiswoode). 1933.
Dogs of War (Peter Davies). 1934.
Lancer at Large (Gollancz). 1936.
Yoga Explained (Gollancz). 1937.
Confessions of a Thug (Eyre & Spottiswoode). 1938.
European Jungle (Eyre & Spottiswoode). 1939.
Indian Pageant (Eyc & Spottiswoode). 1942.
Martial India (Eyre & Spottiswoode). 1945.

(a) The rights of *Bengal Lancer* were sold in Italian, Spanish, German, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Roumanian.
(b) The rights of *Golden Horn* were sold in Italian and Swedish.
(c) The film rights of *Bengal Lancer* were sold for $15,000

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