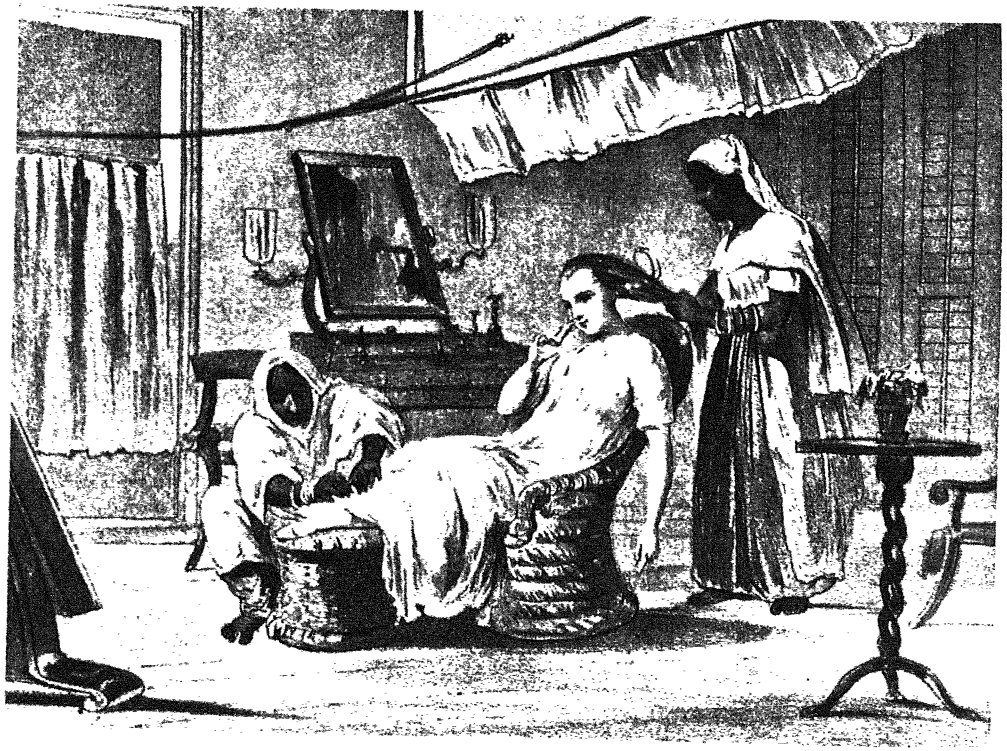
CHAPTER III

IN 1639 Mr. Day obtained leave from a Hindu prince, the Naik, " out of our spetiale Love and favour to the English to build a fort and Castle in or about Madraspatam " which long South Indian name the English soon shortened to Madras. The official reasons for the choice of this site, as conveyed to the Surat Council, were that it provided " excellent long Cloath and better cheape by 20 per cent than anywhere else " which inspired the Surat Council to " hope of a new nimble and most cheape Plantation ". But the gossip-loving Hamilton believed that " the Gentleman who received his Orders to build a Fort on that Coast, chose that Place . . . because he had a Mistress at *St. Thome* he was so enamoured of that made him build there, that their Interviews might be the more frequent and uninterrupted ". Apart from Mr. Day's convenience, the proximity of St. Thome was generally considered a nuisance by the senior factors—

> not in respect of any hurt the Potugalls can doe the ffort but because of the many idlers, both men and women, who frequent the ffort so much that divers of the English Souldiers are married ; which must necessarily be tolerated, or the Hotshots will take liberty otherwise to Coole themselves.

And even if Hamilton's story of Mr. Day's mistress in St. Thome be an exaggeration there was little of the Puritan about Mr. Day.

> " 'Tis no strange thing," said Captain Trumball, " for Mr. Day to be drunke. Drinkeinge with Moores and Persians at Ballisara hee soe disguised himself in theire presence that they



THE MAGISTRATE'S WIFE

sent him away in a Pallankeene out of which he fell by the way. . . . And another tyme hee made himselfe soe drunke he Rann into the Sea."

Day had two assistants. The first, Cogan, after building the fort, returned to England to fight for the Royalist cause, leaving behind two sons, one of whom entered the service of the King of Golconda and became his " Chief Gunner " and the other " is Runn away to St. Thome and there is turned Papist rouge and goeth every day to Mass with his wife ". The second assistant was Harry Greenhill, to whom Mr. Day was grateful for taking his mistress off his hands and establishing her in a " very faire house with orchard and garden " and " at the christening of his seconde childe there was shott off 300 brasse bases with three volleys of small shott of all the Souldiers in the castle and 13 gunners from the fort ; but the powder was paid for by him." [1]

Greenhill succeeded Day as Agent, or head of the factory, and one of his first concerns was to strengthen the garrison which up to then had only numbered fifty. A Mr. James Martin applied for the post of commander of the garrison, and a commission sat to consider his qualifications. He was called in and " severall questions were demanded of him, where hee had been bred a souldyer and in what quality ". Mr. Martin " declared that hee did commannd some Tennants of Mr's the Archbishop's in Yorkshire ; but that hee never was a commissioned Officer ". It is not surprising that " an objection was made against him by a Gentleman present ". But this objection was overruled and the commission rashly decided " to entertaine the said Mr. Martin to command their Souldyers at the Coast at the yearly salary of 40 l." Rashly I say, because within six months of his appointment a formidable indictment had

[1] *Indian Records Series*, Madras, Vol. I.

been drawn up against him by his colleagues entitled "Captain Martin's Abuses and Blasphemies". This portentous document began thus :—"Imprimis, the said James Martin hath bitterly inveighed aginst Independents, Presbiterians, Protestants and Papists; and . . . hath inveighed against Governor Cromwell" (the year is 1652) "in this manner, how that before those Warres begunne he was a pore cowardly fellow and would take a Cuff on the eare from any man." But the real gravamen of the charge was that "James Martin hath frequented Punch houses in Companie of the private Souldiers and hath played with them at Cards". Instead of being abashed by this last revelation of a taste for low life Martin replied, "I am forbidden to keepe company with the souldiers, though some of them be as good as those whome the Agent hath made his greatest Companions and" he added, warming to this topic, "what is the Agent but the sonn of a greased Butcher?" In spite of these spirited exchanges this truculent officer kept his command till his death more than two years later.[1]

As in Bombay there were both sepoy regiments and "City Train bands"; but the latter were only called up on the rare occasions when a Maratha attack seemed imminent, and then hasty instructions were issued that they should be at once "instructed in Millatary Exercise so as to acquaint them with the Points and Bullwarks". The chief difficulty in maintaining a proper garrison was that no one ever knew when to expect reinforcements from England; when they had been demanded they never arrived, and when least expected or needed several troopships would suddenly appear and unload some hundreds

[1] Full details of Martin's period of command in *Indian Records Series*, Madras, Vol. I.

of half-naked and scurvy-rotten recruits, causing the Agent to wonder how on earth to feed them " seeing all provisions being still very scarce and deare and none of the publicke houses will be persuaded to entertain or dyet them ". Moreover they had immediately to be provided with " a Coat each, one Capp, two pair of breeches and three shirts " and the only satisfaction the Government derived from this unexpected outlay was that they could stop the soldiers' pay until these clothes were paid for. Generally the soldiers went about the streets in rags and saved their new clothes for Sundays, when, as had been ordered by a recent decree, they had to " weare English apparell ". They had no uniform at first, until the idea suddenly recurred to the London authorities, and was explained in an almost interminable lecture, that—

> It being found here in Europe very convenient for the Soldiers to have coates of one collour, not only for the handsome representation of them in their exercise but for the greater Awe of the adversary, besides the encouragement of themselves, we have thought that our Soldiers with you should be put into the like habitt, for though it be hott in the daytime yet the night being coole (which it is so rarely in Madras, but the droning voice never pauses to consider this) it may bee a meanes to preserve their healths.

After much more in this strain the letter concludes " And cause the turning up of the coate sleeves to be frill'd with something of a different coler ". After all these expenses the Government were not going to follow the costly Bombay experiment and import women for their white subjects. Instead they decided to " induce by all means our Soldiers to marry with the Native women because it will be impossible to get ordinary young women to pay their own passages " ; that is, of course, passages out from England to Madras.

The garrison was needed not only to defend the town against external assault but also, in the absence of organised police, to preserve order in the settlement itself. In 1652 occurred the first communal riot with which British authorities had to deal. Two castes in Madras, the Belgewars and Berewars, were on bad terms. One day "a Belgewar told a Berewar that he was not worth a Cash". The latter countered with what must be the feeblest retort in history, "that if himselfe were not worth a Cash, the other was not worth two Cash". However poor as a debating point, this reply provoked a riot and the garrison had to intervene.

While the arrival of recruits from England was, for the recruits, a dismal experience, civilians generally landed in the highest spirits. They had been charmed with the first view of the city, the white buildings among green trees, the wide clean sweep of sand and the blue hills in the distance. The soaring imagination of a Royal Academician[1] even compared the appearance of Madras to that of some "Grecian city in the age of Alexander". The passengers disembarked in surf-boats built of planks lashed together, paddled by the fishermen. As the boats approached the rolling line of surf the oarsmen jumped out and carried their passengers on their shoulders through the leaping spray. If the passengers were ladies, this task was chivalrously undertaken by young officers from the garrison who always hurried on board each ship from Europe to see if there were any ladies disembarking at Madras whose acquaintance they might make. After the passage through the spray the new arrivals were glad to set foot on shore; but they found the sand "scalding hot" and hurried towards the long palm-avenues from whose cool shade they could admire the gardens and green rice-fields beyond

[1] Hodges.

the city walls, the square fort against whose walls the waves broke in a line of foam, the house of the President with its dome and fretted balconies.[1]

The President, whose palace was grander than any Government building in Surat or Bombay, lived in a style appropriate to his residence. "His Personal Guard consisted of four hundred Blacks, besides a Band of fifteen hundred men ready on Summons. He never goes abroad without Fifes, Drums, Trumpets and a Flag with two Balls on a Red field." [2] He and the Members of Council were shaded from the sun by scarlet umbrellas, but any ordinary person who used an umbrella was fined. There was never a public table as at Surat or at first in Bombay; but the President dined in solitary state or with the Members of Council, while the younger men had their meals in taverns.[3] Of the life of the factors, Myddelton wrote: "This is an expensive place and from the drunkennesse thereof good Lord deliver me; all gamesters and much addicted to venery." Not that Myddelton himself was averse to liquor for, as he complained, "Sacke is too deare, yet wee have other goode drinke to remember our friends withal." [4] The favourite sports, he found, were hawking and cock-fighting. The game-cocks were armed with penknife blades instead of gavelocks which made their encounters even more savage than usual.

Public events and festivals were celebrated with great magnificence. The news of the marriage of the Prince of Orange with Princess Mary was greeted with prolonged drinking of healths and firing of salutes. The accession of James II was celebrated by processions down the main streets of the city (the Indians being all ordered to decorate

[1] Details from Fryer's *New Account*.
[2] Fryer.
[3] Letter of Sawcer to the Hon. Company.
[4] Myddelton's Letter.

their houses, which must have made even more puzzling the order three years later to show the same pleasure at this king's fall), processions in which marched all the

> Chief Merchants and Gentul Inhabitants, Elliphants carrying our Flags, the kettle Drums and Musick playing before them. After that went twelve English Trumpets with Silk Banners and six Hoeboys all in red Coates playing by turnes all the way.

The ambassadors of Persia and Siam were received in solemn audience by the President and offered their congratulations on the royal accession; they were invited to "a Banquet and Dancing", which gave them "great satisfaction"; though, accustomed to the passive rôle of guests at dance-parties in their own countries, they must have found strange the spectacle of gentlemen, from the President down, posturing, pointing a toe, bowing and retreating, and the ladies with their broad Caroline shoulders and high, scarcely-hid breasts, smirking and quizzing behind their tinselled fans. But the evening ended with fireworks and bonfires which must have been more to their taste, and more familiar as a form of celebration. There were similar entertainments on Gunpowder Day when the King's health was drunk on bended knee and twenty-five great guns were fired and rockets shot off; and on the King's birthday wine and arrack were served free to the garrison.

Till the accession of William of Orange relations between English and French in the East had been cordial; Dr. Fryer refers admiringly to Louis XIV as "that stirring King"; and English, French and Portuguese all combined in hatred of the Dutch. But on the accession of William III, announced in a General Letter to the Eastern agencies as "this great change that it has pleased God by his wonderful providence to make in the Government of this nation", the English in Madras found themselves transformed into

allies of the Dutch and enemies of the French. The Dutch governor of Pullicat, whose name was, oddly enough, Lawrence Pitt, hastened to Madras and " came to an anchor, paying all accustomary civilities to the place " and on his arrival in the city " the President made an entertainment for him and the rest of the Dutch people, showing him all the respect and civilities imaginable due to his quality and employ ".[1] In return an English President visited the Dutch settlement at Geldria and was

> treated with a very Splendid Dinner, the Table being spread with about 100 Dishes of Meate, and Wine of all sorts in great plenty ; five healths were drunke about at Table, and all the Canon in the fort and some at the Redoubt, in all fifty-one, fired every time ; 2 healths after Dinner while Cannon fired.

Then they all went to the garden of one of the rich Dutch merchants where they had " a very handsome supper and other divertisements of merry making till midnight ".[2]

At Madras, too, entertainments were often given in the gardens outside the walls. In these gardens were " Gourds of all sorts for Stews and Pottage, Herbs for Sallad, and Flowers as Jassamin, for beauty and delight ; cocoes, Guiavas a kind of pear ; *Mangos* the delight of India ; a Plum, Pomegranates, and *Bonanoes* which are a sort of Plantain, though less, yet much more grateful ". With their orchards and mango-groves these gardens resembled the Continental idea of a *jardin anglais*. Travellers like Fryer were interested in the exotic plants and strange trees, but there seems to have been little skill in the design of the gardens and during the hot weather when the grass disappeared and the plants wilted garden was often a courtesy title. Mr. Hickey was invited by a friend to visit a " boasted garden ". But—

[1] Consultation of 1690 quoted in Talboy Wheeler's *History of Madras*.
[2] Streynsham Master's *Diary*.

> after going over what I conceived to be a wild and uncultivated piece of ground, with scarcely a blade of grass or the least sign of vegetation he suddenly stopped and asked me what I thought of a Madras garden, to which in perfect simplicity, I answered "I would tell him my opinion when I had seen one." This answer he replied to with, "When you see one, Sir, why you are now in the middle of one." The devil I am, thought I.

There was no attempt at imitating the splendid parks at Pondicherry where everything was sacrificed to elegant geometrical designs, great square lawns with star-shaped flower-beds and long well-swept walks protected from the sun by creeper-hung pergolas, in whose shade gentlemen in high-heeled buckled shoes exchanged compliments in as leisurely and elaborate a manner as if they were at Versailles or Marly. Moreover, while the English at Madras made little effort to grow fruit, the French took the trouble to lay down vineyards in Pondicherry and were rewarded by a surfeit of delicious grapes. This was provoking enough; but all Madras exclaimed at the mercenary spirit of the French in refusing to sell their grapes to the English for less than a rupee a bunch. When a Mogul embassy was received by the Madras authorities in some newly decorated summer-house in their gardens, it was considered a proper compliment to the guests for the President and Members of Council to wear Mogul dress; and it must have been interesting to see those stout red-faced merchants pulling on the white satin jodhpurs and painted tartar boots and patting down their starched and transparent muslin shirts. Obviously they felt less comfortable in their costume than some of their French rivals who delighted in Mogul display. But the French adapted themselves much more easily to Indian habits than the English; and young men fresh from France were at first appalled to find that all the ladies of Pondicherry had copied the Indian custom of chewing

betel-nut which stained their lips bright-red, and that they would even testify to their favourable reception of a compliment by offering the new arrival a pinch of their own powdered betel-nuts from silver comfit boxes, putting the youth to the uncomfortable choice of giving offence to a lady or himself tasting the repulsive-looking stuff. As they naturally chose the latter alternative, they soon adopted the habit themselves.[1] Also the French colonists, in spite of the irritating power of the Jesuits, who interfered in every appointment, were mostly agnostics with no prejudice whatever against either " heathen " customs or " heathen " behaviour ; indeed, they often arranged parties to visit Hindu temples on the occasion of great festivals and watch the elaborate rites of Hindu worship.

The English occasionally gave private parties in their gardens, but this was more rare than at Surat for the country round was much more disturbed than at Gujarat. The gentlemen only unbuckled their swords when they reached the rendezvous and even while they ate armed servants kept a look-out for stray bandits. But the possibility of sudden interruption did not weaken à determination to be as comfortable as possible. In the shade of mango-trees carpets were spread and cushions and mattresses, and mosquito nets were hung from branch to branch enclosing the party in an airy tent. There would be fish and cold meat and fruit and at a picnic at which Madame Dupleix was present the duck paste was particularly appreciated.[2] While they generally rode out to the picnic in the cool of the morning, they liked to return in palanquins, shaded from the noon heat and, after a heavy meal, pleasantly

[1] *Memoirs du Chevalier et du General de la Farelle,* edited by Laurel de Farelle, Paris, 1896.

[2] *Vie de Johanna Begum* Yvonne Gaebele, Editions Leroux.

lulled to sleep by the swaying of the palanquin and the melancholy chant of the bearers.

Generally, however, parties in the gardens were of a more formal nature and the receptions of Mogul envoys were occasions of considerable pomp. The Mogul embassy of 1692 was received in the gardens with a guard of infantry and cavalry, and with " accustomary ceremonies of musick ". The envoys and the English representatives exchanged presents, the gift of Prince Kam Baksh to the English President being a horse " covered with a Velvet State cloth and furniture, the headstall and crupper imbost with plated Gold ". Then began the ceremonial reading of the Prince's letter, on behalf of the Emperor Aurungzeb,

" In the Name of God, Great and Merciful,
To you Excellent in Countenance and Elected to Great Favour
Elihu Yale . . ."

The titles must have pleased Mr. Yale, for he was a great autocrat. His butler left his service without proper notice. Yale directed he should be hanged. " But on what charge ? " the legal advisers queried ; for though hanging was, by English law, the punishment for a large variety of offences, it had not, by some oversight, been attached to the offence of leaving employment without notice. " What charge ? " said Yale " Piracy, of course." And hanged the servant was, on a charge of piracy. Born in America, where his munificence was rewarded by the naming of the famous American University after him, Yale died in England and was buried at Wrexham, where his tomb in front of the church door bears these lines :

Born in America, in Europe bred.
In Africa travelled, in Asia wed ;
Where long he lived and thrived, in London dead,
Much good, some ill he did, so hope all's even
And that his soul thro' mercy's gone to heaven.

Another Mogul embassy headed by Nawab Daud Khan in 1701 was welcomed by Governor Pitt, grandfather of the Earl of Chatham. The reception was even more splendid than that of Kam Baksh's embassy. The Nawab was met by the Governor some way outside the city. They embraced each other and Pitt presented the Nawab with " a small ball of Ambergrease cased with gold and a gold chain to it ". After exchanging a number of compliments Pitt took the Nawab into the fort and set by him " two cases of rich cordial waters and wine " and then began the drinking of healths, accompanied by salvos of artillery. The Nawab, in spite of his religion, was no teetotaller and evidently enjoyed the freedom of a town where Aurungzeb's harsh laws against wine-drinking did not run. When it was time for dinner (at which there were " about six hundred dishes, small and great, of which the Nawab eat very heartily ") the Nawab needed some more drink and so " French brandy " was set by him, and becoming increasingly good-humoured he especially commended the " dancing wenches " who postured before the diners. In the morning the Nawab was supposed to leave Madras but " having been very drunk over night, was not in a condition to go, and deferred it till to-morrow morning ". He announced he would like to spend the morning in the gardens. So the Governor " ordered immediately to beat up for the Train Bands and the Marine Company, and drew out a detachment of a hundred men under Captain Seaton to attend him and those Gentlemen of the Council who went to the Garden to receive the Nawab ". They arrived at the garden, the soldiers were drawn up in ranks ready to salute, the gunners standing to attention waiting for the word to fire the salvos of welcome. They had come in a hurry to be sure of arriving before the Nawab so as to receive him

with proper honours, but it seemed that they need not have hurried. Time passed but there was no sign of the Nawab. Mogul nobles travelled slowly, of course, but as hour by hour went by, impatience changed to alarm and messengers were sent to bring news of his whereabouts. They returned to say that, while on his way " The Nawab was got into a Portuguese chapel very drunk and fell asleep ". He did not wake up till 4 o'clock in the afternoon when he sent a man running to the Governor " and desired him to send a dozen bottles of cordials ", which were duly sent. It is sad to record that the Nawab, so far from being grateful for this rousing reception, became increasingly hostile to the English after his return to his headquarters, and, in the following year, sent an ultimatum ordering the surrender of the English mint, which demand Governor Pitt dismissed as " rhodomontade stuff " ; but when the Nawab tried to enforce his demand by attacking Madras he was bought off by a present of twenty thousand rupees, " and five thousand privately " to his secretary.

Five years later the Emperor Aurungzeb died, and south-eastern India fell into confusion which was increased by English and French intrigues and only ended by Clive's conquests. But the merchants in Madras city were less concerned with the rights of the various contending armies than with the good sales of cloth they were able to effect with the different commanders for their soldiers' equipment ; reporting to the home authorities that " the fine broad cloth as scarlet, aurora, some blue and yellow is used for the inside of tents, and for covering clothes for the elephants and hackarys " whereas " Perpetuanos are only used among the meaner sort of people for caps ". The Council, on the other hand, was deeply disturbed over some recent unsuitable marriages of Englishmen in Madras. Many of these

kept slave-girls, as mistresses, but this did not cause concern ; it was the marriages that were unfortunate, especially when the " Young Gentlemen were of good families in England ". For instance " one Crane, was married to a Frenchman's daughter of this place on Sunday last ", and " one Dutton, an ordinary fellow, married Ann Ridley ", who was a Catholic, so, " for the preventing the like practices for the future " it was enacted, after considerable discussion, that no Christian should be married in Madras without leave from the Government.

It was unsuitable marriages the authorities objected to ; they connived at less regular unions. These were so common that no social stigma attached to them, and sometimes they brought great happiness. Henry Crittleton, a Company's officer, kept a Brahman mistress called Raje ; and in his will he refers to her with obviously sincere gratitude and devotion, leaving to her all his property. General Pater was so fond of his mistress Arabella that when, on her death, the chaplain refused to bury her in consecrated ground, he had her body interred in a field and then built a church over it, the church of St. Mary's, so that in spite of the chaplain she should lie in consecrated ground. These were men of means, but many a poor sailor and soldier showed a similar affection for his mistress. The sailor James Buller left his slave-girl, Noky, her freedom and fifteen Arcot rupees a month ; and William Stevenson left his Maria a third of his " estate " provided she remained virtuous. When the sailors were called away on a long voyage or the soldiers ordered inland they generally left their girls with some friend. This was often a thankless task for the friend and David Young complained of one young woman to whom he had offered shelter. " Bett is making the damndest noise that ever I heard from morning

to night; we can have no peace with her; and when I gave her her monthly allowance, she kicked up such a dust that I could not still it. I shall have a fine time till your return if she goes on at this rate."

In 1720 the town was intrigued by the pretentious will of young Mr. Charles Danvers who died at the age of twenty-one.

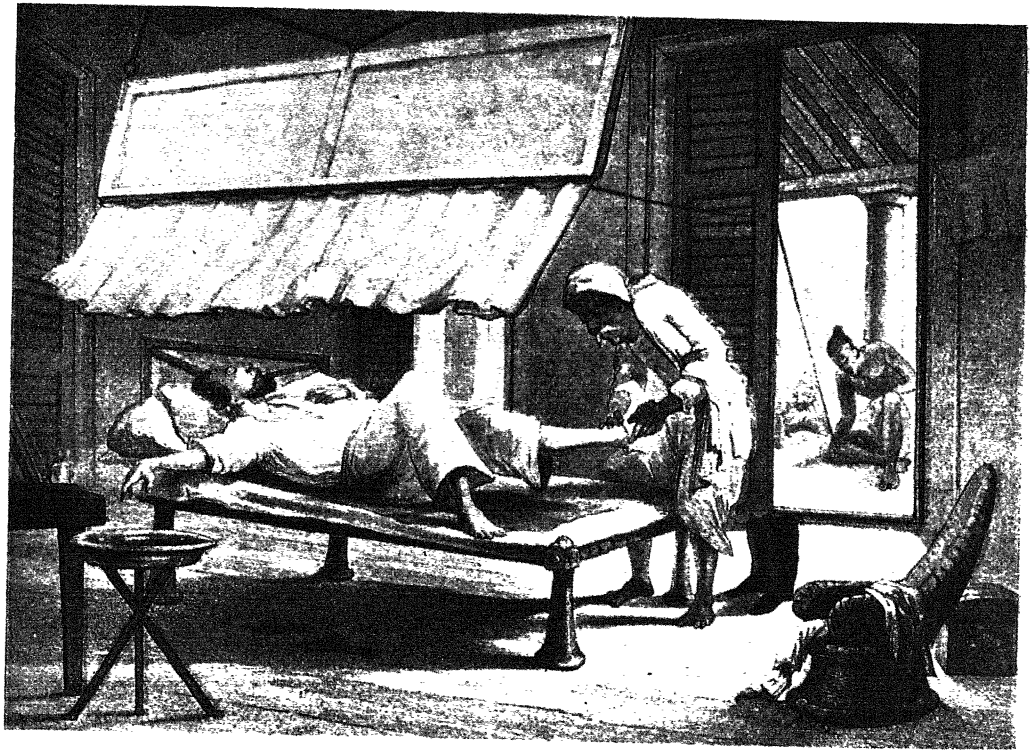
> My corpse [ran this will] to be carried from the Town Hall at seven o'clock at night. I desire that all the free merchants of my acquaintance to attend me in their palankeens to the place of burial; and as many of the Company's servants as I have had any intimacy within my life-time; that all that attend me may have scarves and hat-bands decent. I desire that Mr. Main and the charity boys, may go before my corpse and sing a hymn; my corpse to be carried by six Englishmen or more if occasion; the minister and the rest of the gentlemen following. I desire of the Honourable Governor that I may have as many great guns fired as I am years old, which is now almost twenty-one. . . . After my corpse is buried, which I desire may be done very handsomely, the remainder of my estate I desire may be laid out in rice, and be given to the poor at the burial place as long as it lasts.

It is to be noticed that this young man's pay was only £5 a year; he had been out in Madras three years, but he died wealthy. For in spite of the anarchy outside the walls (and in spite of considerable embezzlement within) the riches of the English community increased very greatly during the first half of the eighteenth century. In the letters of the Council both to England and to the other settlements, there is seldom any but vague and indifferent reference to the wars and anarchy along the coast. The accessions and depositions of Nawabs, the raids and retreats of Maratha armies, were of far less interest than an occasional scandal in the Fort, such as that caused by Miss Elizabeth Mansell's charges against Captain Cummings which were

investigated at great length in solemn session of the President and Council and formed the subject of eager gossip for over a year. Miss Mansell, the niece of a Member of Council, had come out to Madras to stay with her uncle. As soon as she landed she made a formal charge of rape against the commander of the East Indiaman in which she sailed. This was, of course, a capital charge, and Captain Cummings was arrested and confined in prison till the first hearing of the case. The captain conducted his own defence and cross-examined the prosecution witnesses with some skill. His case was an admission of intimacy with Miss Mansell; but he alleged that from her arrival on board she had not ceased to pester him with her attentions, and when Mrs. Cummings was seeing her husband off at Portsmouth she was so alarmed at Miss Mansell's manner towards her husband that she "burst out into tears, which he had much ado to overcome by promises of a prudent behaviour". Rather early in the session Miss Mansell's character began to suffer; one witness admitted that at Portsmouth she was caught "playing at Tagg with a couple of footmen". Miss Mansell's chief witness was a Mrs. Mary Coales who deposed that she had often seen Miss Mansell cry and exclaim "She could never be happy" on account of the captain's behaviour. Captain Cummings put to her this subtle question: "Did she not fall into a passion *whenever I took any notice of you*?" Simpering complacently, Mrs. Coales admitted this was so. Other witnesses, cited to prove Miss Mansell's distress and despair, made increasingly damaging admissions. Mark Romney, for instance, saw her sitting on a chair beside the captain at eleven o'clock one night, and she suddenly put her arm round his neck, called him "her dear captain" and gave him a kiss. Mark Romney thought this so entertaining that he "beckoned

to a midshipman, who was a small distance off, to come and look; who put his finger to his nose but would not come". Other witnesses admitted that Miss Mansell had been intimate with two other young men on the boat, so that at this stage the Council broke up the trial and formally acquitted the captain. Obviously Miss Mansell ought to have been prosecuted for perjury, or the captain awarded some compensation for his imprisonment; but then the prosecutrix was related to a Member of Council and so the Captain while being acquitted was treated to a severe lecture to the effect that his "relation to this young woman would be a perpetual Blot on him", since he had taken away her character. And when the wretched man exclaimed that she had no character even before she came on board he was "stopped from proceeding in this sort".

Most visitors, however, arrived in less dramatic circumstances. But they were scrutinised and criticised none the less exhaustively. The charms of the young women were eagerly canvassed. An increasing number of them came to India in search of a wealthy Nabob for husband. "By this time," wrote Dalton to Clive, "I reckon you are able to give me an account of the new-arrived angels. By God, it would be a good joke if your countenance was to smite one of them and you was to commit matrimony." There were among the new arrivals plenty of rough diamonds for the self-consciously correct to laugh at, and a newcomer's table-manners were sometimes delightfully informal. The Reverend Mr. Yate, for instance, who was invited to dine with the Governor soon after his arrival, was at first surprised to find several wine-glasses beside his plate; but when the claret came round he filled all his glasses at once and drank them off happily; he repeated this each time the claret returned to him and presently exclaimed, "Upon



THE BEDROOM

my conscience this is the prettiest custom I ever saw in my life, and I wonder it has not been adopted in Ireland."

Then, as always, the clothes of new arrivals were a source of the greatest interest. The Company's ships when eastward bound generally put in for a few hours at Boulogne or some other French port and all the gentlemen hurried ashore to buy smart French suits. The French tailors traded on the general English ignorance and sold them a fantastic array of coats with high waists and enormous skirts or very low waist and skirts like a short kilt, and breeches of crimson satin and waistcoats hung with spangled lace, all recommended as the very latest fashion from Versailles. Then the gentlemen visited the barbers and had their hair dressed in Parisian fashion with tier upon tier of side curls and so thick a layer of pomade that at night a thick hair-net had to be worn. This was not a fashion of hair-dressing that commended itself to India, however, for the rats were attracted by the smell of the pomatum and when a gentleman was sleeping often bit through the hair-net and ate up all the hair.[1] And to go with the Parisian coiffure one had to buy a fine French hat. Mr. Hickey bought what he was told was a Chapeau Nivernois, " a little skimming dish of a hat ", which caused a sensation in Madras where very large hats were still being worn. He wore it with some complacence at a party at Government House ; but unfortunately at supper his neighbour, an elderly gentleman who had been eyeing the hat " with peculiar archness ", suddenly snatched it away and hoisted it on the point of his cane for the amusement of the assembly.

It seems to have come as a surprise and disappointment to the young officers and cadets that they could not wear

[1] Hickey.

their fashionable finery when they set foot in Madras, but had to be content with the regulation uniform. A general order had to be issued : " Except on occasions of taking some manly exercise, such as playing at cricket, fives or other game, no cadet shall appear out of his quarters otherwise than dressed in the uniform established for the cadet company." And the Commander-in-Chief had to announce that he " positively forbids officers appearing in fancy uniforms or in any but that of the corps to which they belong ".

These smart French coats and hats could only be used on gala occasions and most new-comers hurried to local tailors to order clothes more suited to the climate of Madras. As these were run up in great haste and by unskilful bazaar tailors they were seldom well cut. Mr. Hickey's friend, Mr. Rider, found his new gingham breeches far too tight, but he had no other breeches suitable for the climate and he rashly wore the new pair to fence in. There were several ladies watching the match, and it was unfortunate that during a neat lunge Mr. Rider's gingham breeches split the whole way up the back. The ladies were most tactful, however, and instead of increasing Mr. Rider's confusion by laughing at his discomfiture they contented themselves with " an interchange of arch leers ".

Towards the second half of this century there was a change in the financial interests of Madras. Trade with Manila, Java and the Far East declined and Company officials began to turn their attention to the possibilities of profit nearer home. In the prevailing anarchy of the Carnatic a prince remained in possession of his territories only if he could pay his troops. The Nawab of the Carnatic began the practice of borrowing from Madras and was followed by numerous chieftains and princelings ; they

were charged 2 per cent. a month and were consequently never out of debt; to meet arrears of interest they applied for new loans and presently there was hardly a noble of that province who was not in debt to the Company and hardly a Company official who had not benefited from the gratitude of the debtors. As these princes sank deeper into debt their politics and administration became of very urgent concern to the Company's officials; if their debtors gained territory it was an increased security for new loans, if they lost it the security for old loans was diminished. Political control of the province, secured by Clive's victories, was the necessary conclusion to these transactions. Meanwhile the officials did well. In nineteen years Pigot received £1,200,000 in bribes from the Nawab and even the more modest Wynch pocketed £200,000. The Nawab's self-constituted banker in Madras was Paul Benfield; through him many of the bribes were paid and he helped the Nawab to raise his loans. He became so rich that he could dictate the policy of the Madras Government. True to the tradition of Finance, he professed an ardent attachment to liberal principles of individualism. He was even prepared to fight for these principles rather than submit to Government control or even opposition. When finally the Government attempted resistance, he seized the person of the Governor and installed a body of nonentities as Council who took their orders from him and from the Nawab. Later, his wealth at last gone, the Nawab declined into a dignified figurehead. He lived in Madras and might be seen out driving most evenings. He owed everybody money and since he could not possibly pay off all his creditors he paid none. His excuses were conveyed in Persian letters of exquisite courtesy. Everyone liked him for his charming manners and his ready smile and as he grew older and more

and more dignified he became one of the sights of Madras, and a positive attraction for tourists.

A French capture of the city and the looting of the suburbs by Hyder Ali, whose troopers ruined many a " Gentleman's Seat " outside the walls, were dramatic interruptions of the quiet prosperous life of Madras ; but after a few angry expressions at the general barbarity of foreigners and natives, the English settled down again soon enough, rebuilt their country-houses and ordered new furniture from England. Furniture was always expensive. A bill shows that a " Europe chair " cost 27*s.*, " a dining table in two part " £6 ; " a Mahogany bureau " £10. There would be pictures, too, and we hear of the purchase of " 24 French pictures in crayons " and " 20 Europe pictures " ; and to cover the walls " China paper ". Most East Indiamen carried consignments of furniture and glassware which the captains sold to the factors and their ladies. The captain's chief concern was to time the arrival of these consignments so that the demand always exceeded the supply ; after a period of stormy weather sometimes half a dozen ships arrived together and then it was difficult to find sufficient purchasers for their consignment ; they had to be sold while the ships were in port in Madras, for it would be a dead loss to take them back to England. A Mr. Douglas solved the problem by buying up a quantity of glassware and then disposing of it by raffles and lotteries. He was " a gay and dressy man ", whom you might have mistaken for a French nobleman ; he always wore a sword, a number of rings, and his hair was brushed straight back from his forehead into a high crest, with three tiers of side-curls. He was a tireless dancer and never missed either minuet or country dance. His skill in dancing and his energetic flattery impressed all his partners. He would praise their

common sense and business capacity and when they assented breathlessly he would whisper that as a mark of his esteem he would let them into the secret of a most exclusive lottery which was not open to the public. He always had the documents ready in his coat-pocket and seldom failed to obtain his partner's signature to an engagement to buy an expensive lottery ticket. By this method he made £100,000 in quite a short time. His dupes do not seem to have borne him any grudge. English furniture the ladies had to have, whether ordered direct from London or bought from East Indiamen captains or won in Mr. Douglas's lottery, to fill those enormous rooms in which they lay for hours on sofas drawn close to the doors hung with moistened grass screens through which the wind came cool and damp. Reading matter was scarce and there was very little light literature. In 1754 in the catalogue of the Madras library (which had been founded by the purchase of a retiring chaplain's books) there were a number of Christian Fathers, and classical authors; Blackmore's *King Arthur*; the *Lusiad*; Drayton's *Polyolbion*; *Hudibras*; a single romance called *Don Feuise*; a number of law-books and some travels. Some of the greater houses contained private libraries with Hebrew, Greek and Latin authors; Bacon and Locke, Butler and Steele and Addison; the poetry of Pomfret and Akenside. Officers on campaign often took with them an impressive number of books; *Tom Jones*, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas* were all popular. But few of these authors would appeal to the ladies. And their main recreation seems to have been repairing their complexions with rouge, with Venus Bloom and Mareshall Powder, freshening their hands and shoulders with Hungary water, lavender, and bergamot and changing their jewels and dresses. Even visitors fresh from the raffish extravagance of London commented on the

gaudy ostentation of the ladies' diamonds and on the extraordinary colours and designs of their dresses. Not only the dresses of the ladies, for the "gay India coats" of the Madras gentlemen startled their friends in England. Even in the remotest factories inland lonely Englishmen piqued themselves on their fashionable appearance. In an age without fans or ice, when houses were built with no regard for the rigour of the climate, these flowered coats and white breeches soon required washing. As a result, gentlemen's wardrobes were remarkably large. One lawyer owned seventy-one pairs of breeches and eighty-one waistcoats. For office wear, gentlemen left aside their brocades and silks and were content with sleeved waistcoats, plain cotton shirts and breeches of dimity or nankeen. And as they settled themselves at their desks the writers would pull off their wigs and wear in their place little starched white caps.

While the gentlemen scribbled with their long quill pens or raised their voices in the law courts there was nothing much for the ladies to do till dinner-time at two or three o'clock and yet they had to wear "fashionable undress and large caps" for fear an acquaintance should call. Dinner was a welcome event. Even in the hottest weather there were eight or nine courses with a wide variety of wines such as "Mountain wine, Rhenish Syder, Galicia, Florence, Hock, Canary, Brandy, Claret and Skyrash Wine". The doctors advised heavy draughts of port in the hot weather as a specific against fever. One doctor recommended plenty of meat to strengthen the blood, but it was appropriate that he suddenly "fell dead after eating a hearty dinner of beef". In fact the doctors must have been responsible for as many deaths as in the previous century. Their charges were enormous, a gold mohur for

a visit, and their one panacea was bleeding ; little children were cupped till they fainted from loss of blood. After the bleeding a ferocious purge was administered, a source of a little extra profit for the physicians who charged a rupee for an ounce of salts and three rupees for an ounce of bark. A councillor died because his doctor's assistant " negligently powdered pearl in a stone mortar wherein arsenic had been before beaten, the mixture whereof with the pearl is supposed to be the occasion of his death ". A physician sued his patient, claiming £30 for medicines supplied. These medicines consisted of six phials of " Hysterick drafts " containing " cordial waters and juleps, tincture of castor, spirit of lavender and hartshorne ". The hospitals were in a strange state and in 1794 a complaint was made that in the Presidency Hospital, " it is not an uncommon practice of the patients to form parties, often with the sergeant of the guard, to go into the Black Town, where they generally remain during the greater part of the night, committing every act of enormity ". If the huge meals and heavy drinking were not among the causes of the heavy mortality they must be held responsible for the general irritability. Though Madras never rivalled Bombay in the number or violence of its feuds, it is certain that men's tempers were short and personal assaults common. Even chaplains were not safe from attack. " What ignominy ", as an unfortunate clergyman complained, " can be greater, or reproach more severe, than to be kicked ? " But it was sometimes a clergyman who inflicted this ignominy on others. The Rev. St. J. Brown kicked a servant off a terrace twenty feet high and deprecated any attempt at rescuing him with the concise " Let him go to hell." Mr. Isaac in a petition addressed to the Company, complained that one of the Company's servants, Mr. Powell,

> came into your memorialist's house and . . . your memorialist in a polite and friendly manner invited the said Powell to sit down, but the said Powell . . . flew into an outrageous passion and . . . assaulted your memorialist by raising his closed hand over your memorialist's head, and dared your memorialist to go out of his own house and offered him a shilling so to do.

Compared with such behaviour, the conduct of Lieutenant John Holland in calling Mr. Emmanuel Samuel "an infamous coward and a detestable Poltroon" could hardly be taken too seriously and the justices let him off with a fine of fifteen pagodas.

In the evenings a drive or ride along the sea-front was the favourite recreation. The sea-wind was refreshing and there were ships in the harbour and perhaps visitors from Calcutta with the news and gossip of that greater city. Or perhaps a party would be leaving by ship. There would be a crowd of friends to see them off, the gentlemen flushed and unsteady after a round of farewell dinners. The catamarans were rowed near to shore, the ladies were carried on to them and the gentlemen climbed on as best they could. The boatmen waited till three great waves had broken and then tried to rush their frail craft over the rolling swell. Once across the belt of surf the gentlemen bowed and saluted their friends on shore and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs. It was a relief to have escaped a wetting, for one always wore one's smartest clothes on an occasion like this, with one's friends lined up on the beach and the captain of the ship waiting to welcome his guests on board with fiddles and a fanfare of trumpets.