CHAPTER VIII

IN 1827 Lord Amherst had started the summer move to Simla. In spite of the difficulties of transport Simla soon became popular. Twenty years later Miss Eden on her arrival there wrote—

> Well, it really is worth all the trouble—such a beautiful place—and our house, only wanting all the good furniture and carpets we have brought to be quite perfection. . . . Our sitting-rooms are small, but that is all the better in this climate, and the two principal rooms are very fine. . . . It has been an immense labour to furnish properly. We did not bring half chintz enough from Calcutta, and Simla grows rhododendron and pine and violets, but nothing else—no damask, no glazed cotton for lining, nothing. There is a sort of country cloth made here—wretched stuff in fact, though the colours are beautiful—but I ingeniously devised tearing up whole pieces of red and of white into narrow strips, and then sewing them together, and the effect for the dining-room is lovely, when supported by the scarlet border painted all round the cornice, the doors, windows, etc. and now everybody is adopting the fashion. . . . We brought carpets and chandeliers and wall-shades (the great staple commodity of Indian furniture) from Calcutta, and I have got a native painter into the house, and cut out patterns in paper, which he then paints in borders all round the doors and windows and it makes up for the want of cornices and breaks the eternal white walls of these houses. Altogether it is very like a cheerful middle-sized English country house and extremely enjoyable.

On a second visit Miss Eden was even more pleased with Simla.

> It is a jewel of a little house and my own room is quite *overcoming* ; so light and cheerful, and then all the little curiosities I have collected on my travels have a sweet effect. . . . I have just been writing to C. E. for a few Chinese articles, a

> cabinet, and a table or so. . . . I have an armchair and a book case concocted at Singapore and a sort of table with shelves of my own devising that is being built at Bareilly under the Magistrate there. That, I think, may prove a failure, but I have a portfolio and inkstand on the stocks that will be really good articles. I got some beautiful polished pebbles from Banda.

And one evening when "we dined at six, then had fireworks, and coffee, and then all danced till twelve", Miss Eden began to reflect that

> twenty years ago no European had been here, and there we were with the band playing the *Puritani* and *Massaniello* and eating salmon from Scotland and sardines from the Mediterraneon, and observing that St. Cloup's *potage à la Julienne* was perhaps better than his other soups, and that some of the ladies' sleeves were too tight according to the overland fashions for March.

And Miss Eden enjoyed the little theatre. Generally the female parts had to be taken "by artillery men and clerks" but sometimes Mrs. C. would act and she was a great change. "She really acts as if she had done nothing else all her life. But then she has been brought up in France." But sometimes the performances had to be postponed owing to quarrels among the cast.

> One man took a fit of low spirits, and another who acted women's parts well would not cut off his moustachios and another went off to shoot bears near the snowy range. That man has been punished for his shilly-shallying; the snow blinded him and he was brought back rolled up in a blanket.

As the century advanced and methods of transport improved Simla became increasingly crowded with summer visitors, with Secretaries and with those who hoped to be Secretaries. Many of the ablest civilians were bored by the routine of district life and aspired to the higher sphere of the Central Government. But how to become a Secretary?

The Secretary was usually marked out for Secretariat employment from his earliest years. Let us turn again to *Vanity Fair* for a satirical impression of a Secretary to Government in the 'eighties.

He has always been clever. He was the clever man of his year. He was so clever when he first came out that he would never learn to ride, or speak the language, and had to be translated to the Provincial Secretariat. But though he could never speak an intelligible sentence in the language, he had such a practical and useful knowledge of it, in half-a-dozen of its dialects, that he could pass examinations in it with the highest credit, netting immense rewards. He thus became not only more and more clever, but more and more solvent; until he was an object of wonder to his contemporaries, of admiration to the Lieutenant-Governor, and of desire to several Barri Mem Sahibs with daughters. It is about this time that he is supposed to have written an article published in some English periodical. It was said to be an article of a solemn description, and report magnified the periodical into the *Quarterly Review*. So he became one who wrote for the English Press. It was felt that he was a man of letters; it was assumed that he was on terms of familiar correspondence with all the chief literary men of the day. With so conspicuous a reputation, he felt it necessary to do something in religion. So he gave up religion, and allowed it to be understood that he was a man of advanced views; a Positivist, a Buddhist or something equally occult. Thus he became ripe for the highest employment, and was placed necessarily on a number of Special Commissions. He enquired into everything; he wrote hundredweights of reports; he proved himself to have the true paralytic ink flux, precisely the kind of wordy discharge or brain hæmorrhage required of a high official in India. He would write ten pages where a clodhopping collector would write a sentence. He could say the same thing over and over again in a hundred different ways. The feeble forms of official satire were at his command. He desired exceedingly to be thought supercilious, and he thus became almost necessary to the Government of India, was canonised, and caught up to Simla. The Indian papers chanted little anthems, the Services said "Amen", and the apotheosis was felt to be a success. On reaching Simla he was found to be familiar with the two local jokes. One of

these jokes is about everything in India having its peculiar smell, except a flower; the second is some inanity about the Indian Government of being a despotism of despatch-boxes tempered by the loss of the keys. He often emitted these mournful jokes until he was declared to be an acquisition to Simla society. . . . I have said that the Secretary is clever, scornful, jocose, imperfectly sinful, and nimble with his pen. I shall only add that he has succeeded in catching the tone of the Imperial Bumbledom. This tone is an affectation of æsthetic literary sympathies, combined with a proud disdain of everything Indian and Anglo-Indian. The flotsam and jetsam of advanced European thought are eagerly sought and treasured up. *The New Republic* and *The Epic of Hades* are on every drawing-room table. One must speak of nothing but the latest doings at the Gaiety, the pictures of the last Academy, the ripest outcome of scepticism in the *Nineteenth Century*, or the aftermath in the *Fortnightly*.

It was not to be expected that Secretariat circles approved of that new writer, Kipling. *Plain Tales from the Hills* caused the utmost irritation by its hints (which corroborated the propaganda of disgruntled missionaries) of loose living among the highest circles in Simla.

Mrs. Hauksbee was an outrageous caricature and though one might admire the way Kipling caught the spirit of Simla gaiety as in

> Eyes of blue—the Simla Hills
> Silvered with the moonlight hoar;
> Pleading of the waltz that thrills,
> Dies and echoes round Benmore.
>
> "*Mabel*", "*Officers*", "*Goodbye*",
> Glamour, wine and witchery—
> On my soul's sincerity,
> *Love like ours can never die!*

Yet the continual refrain that these romances of the hills were only the distractions of bored wives separated from hard-working husbands left on the burning plains was very offensive.

Woman, behold our ancient state
Has clean departed ; and we see
'Twas idleness we took for Fate
That bound light bonds on you and me.

Amen ! here ends the comedy
Where it began in all good will,
Since Love and Leave together flee
As driven mist on Jakko Hill !

Nor were his continual references to intrigues in high places in any better taste. The poem about Delilah's alliance with Ulysses Gunne,

. . . Perhaps the wine was red—
Perhaps an aged Councillor had lost his aged head—
Perhaps Delilah's eyes were bright—Delilah's whispers sweet
The aged member told her what 'twere treason to repeat. . . .

Or the rapid rise of Ahasuerus Jenkins of the *Operatic Own* who was a poor soldier but had a nice voice ; so

He took two months at Simla when the year was at the spring,
And underneath the deodars eternally did sing.
He warbled like a bul-bul, but particularly at
Cornelia Agrippina, who was musical and fat.

She " controlled a humble husband, who, in turn, controlled a Department " and so Ahasuerus Jenkins was removed to Simla and rose rapidly.

Now, ever after dinner, when the coffee-cups are brought,
Ahasuerus waileth o'er the grand pianoforte ;
And, thanks to fair Cornelia, his fame has waxen great,
And Ahasuerus Jenkins is a power in the State !

It was not that Simla circles did not enjoy a number of jokes about each other's intrigues. The joke that you cannot sleep at night at Simla for the noise of the grinding of axes must be almost as old as the hill-station itself. But those jokes were very different from the gibes of a journalist. Consequently when the Bard of Empire's public rapidly

grew, hard-bitten administrators in remote districts melting into unwonted admiration for a poet under the rain of his bouquets and romantic young Imperialists finding in his verses a Message, Simla remained cold. The fellow was clearly a bounder; his stories of life in the Hills were informed by the natural envy of a cad who had sought and been refused an entrée to Simla society. Till her death in 1933 my grandmother continued to speak of Kipling as a subversive pamphleteer given to criticise his betters.

Not that Secretariat circles formed more than a small proportion of Simla society. There were a great many summer visitors from military cantonments and even from the rich business circles of Calcutta. There were even permanent residents who had bought house property and settled down there. The well-known brewing family of Dyer had long ago settled there in a house called Ladyhill, "built on English lines with a big garden full of English fruits and flowers". Bishop Cotton had founded at Simla a school to be run on English lines so that it was hardly necessary to send one's children home for their education, though many of the Simla residents liked to have their children's education completed in England. Mr. Dyer's brewery was at Solon near Murree, but he preferred to live at Simla; for as his son's biographer records he was "the Ganymedes of an Indian Olympus whose gods were the major deities of the Government of India and the minor deities of the Punjab administration, and whose nectar was bottled beer". His son Rex was sent to Bishop Cotton's school. He stammered a little and this exposed him to "the derision of his schoolfellows". But as he was "hot tempered and pugnacious" he was able to take revenge on his tormentors and "frequently came home with the scars of battle on his face". He showed considerable personal

courage on more than one occasion. Thus he was sent to bring his sisters home from school and was returning when

> he came full face upon a hyena, which stood motionless in the narrow hill path, barring his way. Rex, remembering what he had been told about animals fearing the human eye, advanced slowly, staring steadily at the horrid jowl, turned as he passed the animal, and, still staring, walked backwards until it was out of his sight. Thus [adds his biographer],[1] early in life he thrilled with the man's instinct to protect his womenkind.

Shortly after this the boy had an unfortunate experience in the Simla forests. He had gone out with his gun. Aiming at a bird he had brought down a monkey and the pathetic spectacle of the dying creature, its fur bespattered with blood, so distressed him that he gave up shooting.

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New houses continued to spring up, new shops and new hotels. In the 'eighties and 'nineties Peliti's was the fashionable hotel. "The comfortable sitting-room invites him (the visitor) to read and dream in the great chairs, and the well-ordered café is of never-failing interest, for here in the groups of laughing, faultlessly dressed English men and women he finds the true Anglo-Indian." It was here that Mrs. Hauksbee had tiffin with Mr. Bremmil while Mrs. Bremmil remained at home and wept into an empty cradle. And that Kipling considered it the centre of fast life is evident from his lines put in the mouth of a virtuous monkey who boasted

> never in my life
> Have I flirted at Peliti's with another *Bandar's* wife.

Above Peliti's was the Mall down which most of the characters in *Plain Tales from the Hills* made their way at one time or another; Strickland (responsible for how many unworthy epigoni in modern adventure fiction) with Miss

[1] Ian Colvin.

Youghal's horse, Pluffles the Subaltern, Young Cubbon, Peythroppe and the Cusack-Bremmils. And here Sweet Seventeen's rival held her daily review of admirers.

She rides with half a dozen men
  (She calls them " boys " and " mashes ",)
I trot along the Mall alone ;
  My prettiest frocks and sashes
Don't help to fill my programme-card,
  And vainly I repine
From ten to two a.m. Ah me !
  Would I were forty-nine.

And here Young Gayerson and subsequently Very Young Gayerson rode with the " Anglo-Indian deity Venus Anno-domini ".

At the top of the Mall rises Christchurch's noble Gothic structure. It was as certain a rendezvous on Sunday mornings as any church in the plains. But they emerged more sedately from under the Tudor porch with its crenellated roof. Topis were hardly necessary, and though some of the gentlemen wore those odd honeycomb-shaped topis others preferred less tropical headgear. None of the ladies wore topis. Here at last they could sport their wide-brimmed straw hats with banks of flowers and ostrich feathers ; and it was comforting to be able to wear a wide lace collar or even a feather boa without feeling too hot. There was no veranda here, for everything about Christchurch had to be as English as possible. You came out on to a little terrace with a fence round it and a wide view over Simla. There was of course no parade of carriages, for no one but the Viceroy, the Governor of the Punjab and the Commander-in-Chief might use a carriage in Simla ; but the rickshaws waited for their passengers, two *jhampanis*, very smart in white tunics and tall and tapering turbans, stationed by each rickshaw.

There would be hardly likely such opportunity for criti-

cising the sermon as after a service in the plains, for the clergy in Simla were chosen for their ability. An Archdeacon of Simla stood as high above an ordinary cantonment chaplain as a Secretary above a " clodhopping collector ". For a contemporary description of such an Archdeacon let us return once more to *Vanity Fair*.

> He is the recognised guardian of public morality, and the hill captains and semi-detached wives lead him a rare life. There is no junketing at Goldstein's, no picnic at the waterfalls, no games at Annandale, no rehearsals at Herr Felix von Battin's, no choir practice at the church even, from which he can safely absent himself. A word, a kiss, some matrimonial charm dissolved—these electric disturbances of society must be averted. The Archdeacon is the lightning conductor ; where he is, the levin of naughtiness passes to the ground, and society is not shocked. . . . I like the recognised relations between the Archdeacon and women. They are more than avuncular and less than cousinly ; they are tender without being romantic and confiding without being burdensome. He has the private *entrée* at choti hazree or early breakfast ; he has private *entrée* at five o'clock tea and hears plans for the evening campaign openly discussed. He is quite behind the scenes. . . . With the inferior clergy the Archdeacon is not at his ease. He cannot respect the little gingerbread gods of doctrine they make for themselves ; their hocus-pocus and their crystallised phraseology falls dissonantly upon his ear ; their talk of chasubles and stoles, eastern attitude, and all the rest of it, is to him as a tale by an idiot signifying nothing. Of course the Archdeacon may be very much mistaken in all this ; and it is this generous consciousness of fallibility which gives the singular charm to his religious attitude. He can take off his religious spectacles and perceive that he may be in the wrong like other men.

As the rickshaws went jolting down the steep path from the church a cold wind would, in spite of the noon sun, blow from the snowy peaks. Perhaps it blew from the bleak plateaus of Tibet, a country which to those who had " taken up " theosophy was regarded as the last refuge of the mysteries of an older world. There were Mahatmas there

who spoke in broken English, and revealed the secrets of life and of death. They would control vast resources of power; and it was considered rash of Colonel Younghusband to invade their country. At Adyar miracles had already been performed and the discovery by the commission of the Psychical Research Society, that Madame Blavatsky's Mahatma was a Bengali graduate in disguise, was attributed by the faithful to the machinations of the Bishop of Madras. Who could doubt the powers of the followers of the Ancient Wisdom after that picnic in the hills where it was found that the party were a cup and saucer short and a miracle (resembling closely that of the marriage at Cana) saved the hosts from embarrassment, for a cup and saucer, even of the required size and pattern, were found buried in the earth? The wind ruffled the feather boas of the ladies and stirred the ragged clothes of the uncouth hill-tribesmen who wandered along the Mall, and the heavy red coats of the Government orderlies everywhere apparent as they hurried to and fro with important despatches or invitations to tea; it bent the pines and deodars along all the winding roads of Simla; and, in the gardens of innumerable little cottages with gabled roofs of corrugated iron and windows hung with lace curtains, it tossed the white and scarlet fuchsias in their wire baskets and the hollyhocks along the sheltered wall. It blew over Annandale where the famous Annandale roses grew and the ladies held their archery competitions. And it blew up towards Observatory Hill whereon rose the new Viceregal Lodge. The old Viceregal Lodge, which Mr. Montagu thought so charming—"it really is an awfully nice half-timbered house with a glorious garden and a beautiful panelled hall and dining room", had proved too small for the always increasing entourage of the Viceroy and the Dufferins had moved

into the new Viceregal Lodge. Lady Dufferin complained of the great size of their new summer-house and wondered how she would ever be able to furnish it, but by the time of Lady Minto it seemed so small that it was necessary to add a new wing. It was an imposing edifice, though as Mr. Montagu remarked, it had the air of a Scotch hydro, " the same sort of appearance, the same sort of architecture, the same sort of equipment of tennis lawns and sticky courts, and so forth. Inside it is comfortable, with suites of apartments comparable to those of the Carlton or the Ritz." A more usual and decorous way of describing the place was " the stately summer house of the Viceroy, set well back in beautiful grounds. The various Vicereines have tried to make their Simla house as English as possible, and it might be England but for the presence of the grinning little Gurkhas, the Viceroy's Guard of Honour."

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Most Vicereines were enchanted with Simla and found Viceregal Lodge a pleasant change after the oppressive magnificence of Government House in Calcutta. But Lady Curzon was an exception. " The first view of Simla ", she wrote to her husband whom she had left behind in Calcutta, " amused me so—the houses slipping off the hills and clinging like barnacles to the hill-tops—and then our house ! I kept trying not to be disappointed." If the outside was uninspiring, " the inside is nothing fine but nice ; and Oh ! Lincrusta you will turn us grey ! It looks at you with pomegranate and pineapple eyes from every wall." But there was no denying that the situation was unusually fine. As she observed with feeling, " A Minneapolis millionaire would revel in this, and we shall love it and make up our minds not to be fastidious. . . . A look out of the window makes up for all, and I can live on views for five years ",

and when they went on an expedition to the Bagchi forest she found the trees to be "as fine and as immense as the tall pines in California". In spite of the beauty of the scenery, however, she found those expeditions in the hill forests rather taxing and in her diary are many entries such as "At 8.30 we went shooting, first riding and then clambering, climbing, sitting and sliding, and making every effort possible to slay two coveys of partridges. After walking five hours our bag consisted of five head of game and after a break-bone climb we got into camp for a four o'clock lunch."

For different reasons Lord Curzon disliked Simla. "I congratulate you heartily", he exclaimed to Sir Walter Lawrence, "on one thing—on leaving Simla so soon. How I hate the place!" So far from being oppressed by the size of Government House at Calcutta he loved to remember that it had been built in imitation of Kedleston. And while in Calcutta he enjoyed his long evening drives while he meditated upon imperial problems and surveyed benignly the teeming anonymous crowds of his subjects, here in Simla he could only drive slowly down winding lanes where the very officials whom he had been seeing all day would recognise him and raise their hats. The festivities of Simla meant nothing to him. When he had a ball he liked it to be of suitable magnificence such as the "big Fancy Dress Ball of the Wellesley period" which he gave in 1903 to celebrate the centenary of Government House, Calcutta, when he appeared as Lord Wellesley and as a guest enthusiastically wrote: "We became our grandparents again, imitating in spirit, language and dress the high-waisted ladies and stately men who danced in these very halls a century ago." But of the ordinary round of entertainments in Simla society he was almost unaware. He sat almost all day and half the night in his office, the handsome aloof face bent above

the continually increasing files. He might cry out in irritation, " The real tyranny that is to be feared in India is not the tyranny of executive authority but that of the pen ", but he himself was a more determined penman than all his secretaries. The pen hovered for a moment, the pale lips were pursed, and then with a sigh he began to write again in his clear sloping handwriting an admirably phrased minute pointing out clearly, very clearly (for really some of his correspondents seemed unnecessarily obtuse) that the auditorium for the durbar should provide " for a combination of Oriental outlines with European features, such as striped canvas, streamers and flags ", or that the new telegraph office opened by Colonel Younghusband in Tibet was *not*, as was claimed, the highest in the world, for there was a higher one in the Andes. Sometimes there were moments of depression when he could write, " grind, grind, grind, with never a word of encouragement ; on, on, on, till the collar breaks and the poor beast stumbles and dies. I suppose it is all right and it doesn't matter. But sometimes when I think of myself spending my heart's blood here and no one caring one little damn, the spirit goes out of me and I feel like giving in." But such moments were few. He was inspired by the greatness of his task, by his real devotion to India and by the memory of the Queen's last words to him, " Be kind to my poor Indians." There below the line of the hills lay that India where soon he would be diligently from one end to the other, noting, advising, recommending, whether his hosts were district officials or Native Princes.

On these long tours the weather was often trying. At Diu Lady Curzon described how " George was so hot that his collar had gone and he was fanning himself with an immense red satin fan edged with swansdown ", and at

Bombay Lady Curzon almost surrendered, " Oh ! the heat, the heat. . . . Dressing in it is simply awful and with broad swift rivers running down all over you, it is hard to appear dry and smiling at a daily dinner-party." Curzon, however, was, in spite of almost incessant pain, seldom other than urbane and imperturbable. The only thing that roused him to anger was the vandalism that was everywhere doing irreparable damage to the great monuments of ancient India. In Bijapur, for instance, he found that the Public Works Department had saved themselves the trouble of erecting new houses for local officials by converting the old palaces into bungalows, and had torn down many other monuments " to admit air " and the few remaining mosques or tombs were disfigured by " good British whitewash plentifully bespattered about in every direction ". Having dealt suitably with such situations, Curzon could return to Simla as though to an office after a holiday, and shut himself up with the interminable files. Simla society regarded him with awe, not unmixed with a certain malicious amusement at his tremendous pronouncements. One could never be quite certain whether he were in earnest or not ; and Sir Walter Lawrence described how " when he said that no self-respecting woman would allow cold tapioca pudding to be served at luncheon, there was a sensation in Simla ". Many, who felt that the viceregal eye always rested several inches above their heads staring over them at some problem of imperial interests, were inclined to sum him up as a humourless autocrat. But the viceregal eye was more observant than was suspected and the little traits of the officials and their wives amused him. " The red-moustachioed A.", he wrote to Lady Curzon, " wore the same air of blank astonishment at the world in general and read the lessons in church as though they were a Government Reso-

lution ", and his hostess at a tea-party was a " lady with a huge purple feather in her hat, a naughty mouth and a roving eye ".

Though, during his reign, there were many occasions of disagreement between Curzon and the majority of the European community, yet he never faltered in his admiration for " the Englishman in India " and in his speeches he interpreted majestically the ideals and the mission that he attributed to him.

> Oh, that to every Englishman in this country, as he ends his work, might be truthfully applied the phrase, " thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity ". No man has, I believe, ever served India faithfully of whom that could not be said. All other triumphs are tinsel and sham. . . . Remember that the Almighty has placed your hand on the greatest of His ploughs, in whose furrow the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape . . . to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment or a stirring of duty where it did not exist before—that is enough, that is the Englishman's justification in India.

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Such speeches expressed in magnificent language the conscious maturity of a régime, an almost Antonine sense of permanence. And within a decade had come a series of appropriately post-Antonine developments ; the retreat over the partition of Bengal in face of successful agitation, the capture of the Congress by the extremists, Sir Satyendranath Sinha in the Viceroy's Executive Council, and the experiments of Mr. Gandhi, a Kathiawari barrister who had settled in South Africa, in a new form of resistance to authority which he had evolved from a study of the works of Ruskin and Tolstoi and which he named satyagraha or " truth-force ".

These developments, however, hardly ruffled the even tenor of Anglo-Indian life. There was a good deal of distrust of the new Secretary of State, Morley, which is not surprising in view of his occasional rudeness about Anglo-India. But it was consoling to discover that he no more believed in democracy as a suitable form of Government for India than any Indian army colonel. Discussing the proposed Morley-Minto reforms, he announced, "If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily up to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it." He was happy to discuss the writings of J. S. Mill with brilliant young Indian barristers, but that did not prevent him from becoming the "most autocratic and least constitutional Secretary of State ever seen in Whitehall". He was pleasantly accessible to Indian visitors, however, and Mr. Gandhi on a visit to London (during which he gave a vegetarian banquet to his English admirers and spent £2 on a bottle of hair-restorer) found him affable. But once the visitors had gone the official mask dropped off and Morley could write, "I am an Occidental, not an Oriental. . . . I think I like Indian Mohammedans, but I can not go much further in an easterly direction." Such feelings in a Secretary of State were not, despite the vaunted or dreaded reforms of 1909, likely to lead to much change in the Indian atmosphere and earlier alarm at Morley's Liberal expressions passed away.

What was more worrying than a supposedly Liberal Secretary of State was the increasing nationalist agitation. In the west this was centred in Poona where the Brahman intellectuals looked back to the rule of the Peshwas as to a golden age.

SHOOTING WATERFOWL IN THE JHEELS