

CHAPTER XXII

INDIAN UNREST AND " BIRDIE "

WE now come to the present time, i.e. the end of 1921, when the Reform Act has revolutionised the system of government in India by placing the control in the hands of a combination of Britishers and Indians, with the Viceroy in chief command. As even members of the new Government themselves would emphatically refuse to express any opinion on the probable success of the scheme, I am certainly not going to be so foolish as to pretend to pronounce judgment.

It may suffice to say that the new councils, both imperial and provincial, have, in some cases, begun fairly well, and shown more moderation, statesmanship and sense of responsibility than we expected. At the same time it is a great experiment, not unfraught with danger, and will require much firmness in the handling. More than that, it will require far greater *courage* on the part of Governors and the Viceroy than they have ever been called upon to display before. With the eyes, in many places sceptical eyes, of the whole world looking on, their task is uncommonly difficult.

For the benefit of those who know nothing about India and, I am afraid I must add, care less, let me try to make myself a little clearer. Successful government in India has always depended on the prestige of the British Raj (Rule) being preserved. We do not yet know how this transfer of authority to a combination will be viewed by the masses, who have always looked upon the authority of Government as paramount. The question is whether they are sufficiently advanced, and the educated moderates sagacious enough, to understand the change ; also whether

the latter are brave enough to have the courage of their convictions.

Let me give an illustration. The new Viceroy (Lord Reading) granted five interviews this last summer to Gandhi, who is at present the one great outstanding personality on his country's political stage, and whose dangerous policy of "non-co-operation" I have already alluded to. He had, until lately, the Ali brothers as his most zealous supporters, but they have now been tried, convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment for attempting to seduce the Indian soldier from his allegiance.

The interviews were of course given with the best intentions, and perhaps we should not, at this distance, criticise. But there have been occasions, before Lord Reading's time, when the treatment of this misguided person has been very weak, and has been misunderstood. No good appears to have resulted from these meetings, therefore the belief that Government (in the person of the Viceroy) is paramount is in great danger of vanishing, while the credit for supremacy will be transferred elsewhere. Political agitators have already fastened on this by preaching that Gandhi is superhuman, and most cleverly paint a picture of his immunity from arrest, and his power over the highest authorities.

Indeed their ingenuity does not end here. That is the ingenuity of Gandhi and Co. His last, almost despairing, promise to the people regarding *Svaraj* (Home Rule) was, that he would attain it before the end of this year (1921). As this promise is unlikely to be redeemed something must be published to the dupes by way of explanation. In some districts, I am credibly informed, the villagers have been actually told that India is no longer in possession of the British. The worst of it is the majority believe it!

In one district, at least, a fable has been circulated—to captivate the villagers and to meet the case of those who disbelieve the other fabrication—that before *Svaraj* can come a child, with only one eye, is to be born of a virgin, and a colt, with one eye, foaled by a mare. Delightfully vague of course as to when and where, but very clever. Doubtless when Gandhi and Co. consider the time is ripe, the child and colt will be duly born!

As a matter of fact these men, who direct sedition and undermine the Government, are past masters in gulling the Indian public. They know too well, not only how to play on this most touching frailty of the masses (of being so easily gulled), but also on the excitable and unformed persuasions of the partially educated student.

The main object at present of these malcontents, inspired by Gandhi, is to upset every attempt to introduce successful reform leading to the government and administration of India by any combination of British and Indian. In spite of arrests to date (October, 1921) and in spite of the fact that Gandhi's influence may be somewhat on the wane, this intrigue will continue, unless the *very firmest steps* are taken to stop it entirely.

Hence my meaning that courage and firmness are now so essential. That is to say, prompt and resolute action must be taken immediately events tend to show there is some doubt as to whose authority is paramount. For various reasons a loophole has sometimes been given. There must be no loopholes and no sign of weakness.

Some people may think it is absurd to suppose that even simple villagers in India could possibly credit such tales as I have quoted. I can assure them it is so. My "shikar" experiences alone have taught me the absolutely incredible stories these peasants will believe. Indeed, although it sounds ridiculous to say so, it is a fact, that the more incredible, the more impossible and the vaguer the fable, the more likely is it to be accepted as true. To give only one instance—a natural history one—thousands of forest villagers are convinced that a bird which sleeps on his back, does so because he is a nervous bird and fears the sky may fall on him!

During the war the natives in the United Provinces District were taught, and *firmly believed*, that the Germans had captured Calcutta and the German fleet had sailed up the Ganges. Further, that they, the Germans, eventually were defeated by the civil police at Mirzapore (near Benares) under the collector!

In one conspiracy against us, the Arya Samaj, two points were often raised by agitators with much success, and to which we always had much difficulty in giving an effective reply. The natives entirely believed them both. The first was that we have introduced plague to

reduce their numbers, as no European dies of plague, while millions of poor native martyrs die every day of it. If any of the audience express incredulity, the spouter—a trained as well as a born orator (as most natives are)—rounds on them at once:

“How many people died this cold weather of plague in Narain Das’ household?” he demands.

“Seventeen,” is the answer.

“O ho,” says the speaker, “and how many left this transitory world of the family of Baldeo?”

“Twenty-three.”

“So ho,” he goes on, “in two houses in this tinpot hamlet of yours, nearly half a hundred have been destroyed by the ‘demons’ (the word usually applied to Europeans by these demagogues) in a few weeks, and you dare to doubt me when I tell you that these ‘demons’ introduced this disease—of which *they* never die—to kill you off in droves.”

The second point made is that the “demons” kill hundreds of thousands of lovely cows and calves every day in every slaughter-house in India to give beef to themselves and their soldiers; and that if they did not the agriculturists’ *plough cattle* would be half the price they are!

All very clever and most convincing to the audiences to which addressed, because of the knowledge that plague *was* amongst them, and that slaughter-houses for cattle *do* exist in every cantonment where British troops are quartered.

Prisoners on the North-West Frontier have often confessed that they boldly advanced, without fear, because their spiritual leaders had told them they (the priests) had rendered our bullets futile, and the tribesmen themselves immune. When fighting the Bunerwals, those intrepid warriors at first rushed headlong to death against my quick-firing field-guns. The survivors explained, with touching simplicity, how they had been assured by their “mullas” that all our shells had been rendered entirely innocuous.

Therefore the story of the one-eyed child and colt is so *clever*, because it is just the tale to appeal to, and is so admirably suited to the capacities of, the Indian deinoocracy!



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"MĀHĀTMĀ" GANDHI, THE INSTIGATOR OF NON-CO-OPERATION.

A word about the personality of "Mahatma" ¹ Gandhi, as he is commonly called by his followers, who, from a commander's point of view, is a very dangerous man. He is himself supposed to be actuated by quite disinterested and honest motives, but he has now overstepped all limits by openly tampering with the loyalty of the Indian soldier, and openly inviting arrest. He and his associates are stated to be at the bottom of the present Moplah trouble, a rising which it will be difficult to suppress, even with the intervention of troops not only shooting, but shooting hard. Yet as I write he is at large, and even if now arrested he has collected his crore of rupees (say £700,000) and perfected his organisation.

It should scarcely be necessary to say that there is no duty so distasteful to the soldier as firing upon civilians. But, when to this is added the fact that many of the troops employed may, unavoidably, be fellow countrymen of the rioters, it will be easily understood what grave anxiety the activities of this fanatic causes to us soldiers. Up to the date of writing, his policy of non-co-operation has, in my opinion, made no headway at all in the Indian Army. But one never knows what may happen in a country where feelings are so easily excited, and where any trivial action is often misconstrued so as to beget doubt and mistrust. That is why it is evident Gandhi is so dangerous a man, and his plan for non-co-operation so dangerous a movement.

The influence he has gained over the masses is enormous, both on account of the purity and asceticism of his personal life, and the conviction abroad of his honesty of purpose and devotion to what he considers duty. Again, his appeal to the glories of an imaginary past, before India came under foreign influences, flatters the vanity of the crowd and stimulates hatred of the foreigner. Personally I have never believed in his honesty of purpose. He is certainly no self-seeker, nor does he wish for comfort, luxuries or wealth, but when his "non-co-operation without violence" has utterly failed, he may stick at nothing.

Another cloud in the political sky is the position of the Native States under the new reforms. These rulers are getting nervous, foreseeing, as they do, that the

¹ Lit. great souled: also possessing preternatural powers and versed in occult mysteries.

extremists will continue their efforts to stir up trouble by instigating the populations of Native States to press for a greater share in the conduct of their own affairs than, in such different circumstances, it is possible to allow them. These rulers will require more help and backing than it has heretofore been the custom to give them.

Then we come to Afghanistan and its Amir. Without going into details, I may explain that a mission has been in Kabul since January, 1921, in the hopes of putting through some kind of treaty or agreement between the British and Afghan Governments. The Amir formed a treaty with the Soviet Government in March, whereby, in return for their support and additional territory, he is to establish Soviet Consulate posts in his country. He was also in league with the Kemalists, with the result that Turkish instructors were to be lent to train the Afghan army. Further comment on this is needless.

Besides the reasonable request, with limitations, that any treaty should recognise the right of Afghanistan to maintain direct relations with other countries it is common knowledge (as reported by *The Daily Telegraph* correspondent's cable from India on 7th June, 1921) that the Amir's demands include; a free Afghan port at or near Karachi, importation and exportation of arms into and out of Afghanistan without let or hindrance, free intercourse by Afghanistan of every kind with the frontier tribes, and the establishment of so-called "Consulates" of Soviet Russia at Ghazni, Jelalabad and Kandahar, all close to our borders. Demands¹ so preposterous,

¹ Since writing this (October, 1921) a notification has been issued by the India Office, dated 23rd November, 1921, that a treaty of friendship with Afghanistan was signed in Kabul the day before, as satisfactory written assurances had been given that no Soviet Consulates will be permitted in these three areas.

Under the treaty, which, though subject to ratification, is immediately operative—

(1) Great Britain reaffirms her recognition of Afghanistan's complete independence, and there is to be an interchange of Ministers in London and Kabul and of Consuls in India and Afghanistan.

(2) Afghanistan reaffirms her acceptance of the existing Anglo-Afghan frontier, with a slight re-alignment of boundary demarcated by the British Commission in the autumn of 1919.

(3) Misunderstanding between the two Governments over the tribes on either side of the border having been removed, each

that if the Mission remains in Kabul until they are conceded, Sir Henry Dobbs may resign himself to a sojourn there until he becomes superannuated.

From all I have said it is easy to understand the dangers and difficulties civilians and soldiers alike have had recently to face in India, but it is my last intention that too pessimistic a view of the situation should be taken.

The Reforms have been launched, and they must be persevered with. In this connection it is interesting to note that, some thirty years ago, in the account of his father's life, Sir Auckland Colvin wrote :

"The art of British government in India has hitherto been not to destroy but to correct Eastern methods of administration by applying to them the discipline of the Western mind. Now it is the undisciplined Eastern mind which is to introduce into India Western methods of administration. The experiment will prove of interest and, it is earnestly hoped, of value. But the lesson of 1857 must not be forgotten. Whatever may be hazarded with the educated minority, the real India is to be found only in the masses of her ignorant millions. To govern this real India authority and justice should be in full view, but in reserve must be ample force. These are the only methods which under their own rulers the masses of that country have ever respected ; nor even at the desire of the British Government will they readily adopt any other."—*Life of John Russell Colvin.*

It can hardly yet be too late for the Government of India to show clearly that they mean *their* authority to be paramount. With a firm rule the mental disorder of unrest, already referred to as being by no means common to India, will surely work itself out and pass away. What

Government engages to apprise the other beforehand of any major operation it may find necessary to institute for the maintenance of order near the frontier.

(4) Subject to the continuance of friendliness and the provisions of any general Arms Traffic Convention that may hereafter come into force, the privilege formerly enjoyed by the Afghan Government of importing munitions of war through India is restored, and the Customs duty is remitted, under the usual conditions in regard to goods in transit, on goods that pass through India from ports into Afghanistan.

(5) Provision is made in the treaty for the conclusion of separate trade and postal conventions.

is needed is sympathy between all classes and all races, combined with the very strictest adherence to the principle that the *maintenance of law and order must at all times be upheld.*

There are already some hopeful signs, such as serviceable beginnings made by the new councils under the Reforms Act; the arrest and imprisonment of the Ali brothers; the decision of the Viceroy to agree to no further reduction of British troops; and the acceptance, for the welfare of the army in India, of so many of the recommendations of the Esher Committee.

This last is an enormous gain, for India must have a contented soldiery at all costs. We soldiers look upon that report as the most human and far-reaching document that has seen the light for many a long day. To mention only one item, the generous enhancement of the Indian soldier's family pension, which the Committee so strongly advocated, has caused the utmost satisfaction already. In short, although some of the clauses of the report will have to remain a dead letter until the present financial stringency is relaxed, still, its revelations have opened the eyes of British and Indian alike to the real needs of the officer, the married soldier, and the men generally, in an up-to-date army of the present day.

In case the opinion of an old soldier may be of any interest, let me say at once that I am not one of those who are despondent regarding the future of the Indian Civil Service, or the British officers of the Indian Army. Nor shall I, it is my fervent hope, ever join the present multitude who are continually inveighing against the entry of our boys into either service.

As regards the first (Indian Civil Service) let us trust that our lads are still made of the same good stuff to enable them, as of old, to rise to every occasion, and remain *leaders*, even in the rôle of guide, philosopher and friend. Things may not be quite the same, especially socially. They might even be most distasteful to those of us who have lived in India under different conditions. To assert, however, that there is now no career in these services, no good and useful work to be done, no opportunity to come to the front, are fallacies I can never be a party to.

It seems to me, that under the new reforms, whereby

the Indian becomes a partner of the Britisher, there is more opportunity for the man of character than ever before. When once the situation is fully understood, I shall be vastly surprised if the mere fact of being continually on his mettle does not develop the young Indian Civil officer even more than the glorious traditions of his service have proved to be the case in days gone by.

As for the young British officers of the Indian Army, much the same equally applies. I have talked to many. Few have any original ideas on the subject, only opinions picked up from their seniors. Those who had taken up sport, as a relaxation from their duties, had to confess there was no reason why, in this respect, there should be any diminution. India is, and will still remain, the happy hunting ground of the true sportsman, and those who have not been fortunate enough to gain this grand experience are lucky if they are unable to realise how much they have missed.

Some young officers, influenced by idle talk, dilated on the disadvantageous emoluments in India compared with the new pay and allowances of their confrères at home. This has been touched on by the Esher Committee, suitable recommendations have been made, and many concessions already granted or are in process of consummation.

I would like to add one piece of advice, namely, not to heed vituperative letters in the press, nor the ill-advised vapourings of idle, discontented grumblers. Let young officers weigh for themselves, without prejudice, the many advantages of an Indian career. Further, may I tell them, with the experience of over thirty-seven years' service behind me, that, personally, I have always found the India Office and the Indian Government both fair and honourable in dealings with their servants.

The only other matter of importance, also referred to by the Esher Committee, brought forward by young officers, was their position in the future, with so many commissions given, and to be given, to Indians. It may comfort them somewhat to consider attentively the fact that the ordeals of Sandhurst and its examinations, professional examinations later on, confidential reports, and the amount of time and study to be devoted to his

duties by the officer of the present day, will most certainly eliminate all those Indians but the very best. With these it should be nothing but a pleasure to serve. Moreover, with the Indian Territorial force an accomplished fact, employment is available for those commissioned Indians considered unsuitable to officer units of the regular army.

With the exception of shooting, experiences¹—which will be the easiest of all to write—my reminiscences are now drawing to a close. They read to me more like the memoirs of other people, so much am I indebted to events in the lives of my friends for interesting and unusual incidents. I feel I cannot conclude, more fitly and more happily, than by a reference to the Indian Army, to which I owe everything, and whose members I love so well. (By the "Indian Army" I refer of course to Indian units, as opposed to the "Army in India," which comprises both British and Indian.)

Now the backbone of the Indian Army is the Indian officer, than whom no finer class of man exists. He is our great *asset* and, treated with sympathy, justice, liberality and respect, as I feel is now the case, it is difficult to imagine how things can possibly go wrong. In every good regiment, battery and battalion he wields an enormous influence, and is the link between the British officer and the Indian ranks. The senior one, the risaldar-major of cavalry, or the subadar-major of infantry, in a good corps, has his finger on the pulse of the whole unit, knows and reports every happening in the regimental lines and every feeling that exists amongst all ranks. So loyal, upright and straightforward have our Indian officers proved themselves, as a rule, that it is interesting to relate an episode which occurred to my knowledge in the early part of 1915, when the mutinous Ghadr² party were so active.

The Criminal Investigation Department having received information of the place and time of a secret meeting of Ghadr leaders, deputed one of their most trusted Indian subordinates to endeavour to hear what they had to say. With infinite bravery and resource, this

¹ These are too lengthy to appear in this volume, and my publisher has decreed that they shall have a separate identity.

² See page 283.

man concealed himself below the flooring of the room where the conspirators were to meet, well knowing, besides suffering extreme discomfort for hours, that his discovery meant instant death.

• In addition to other useful knowledge gained, he heard a resolution, passed unanimously, to discontinue any further attempt to tamper with the Indian officer. This was stated by the rebels to be not only useless and a waste of time, but very injurious to their own cause, owing to the probability of the matter being immediately reported.

To one devoted to military training, like myself, it was a great privilege, both as a commander and as an inspector, to move amongst, and have intercourse with, the grand soldiers of our Indian Army. Their keenness, their desire to please, as well as their anxiety to excel, is prodigious, and makes service with them a veritable delight. Well trained, well led and well treated, they are very hard to beat, as we have proved on many a field. To look on them as super-men is ridiculous and extremely hard on the soldiers themselves. For this reason my readers can imagine our disgust at the fulsome flattery and absurd eulogy poured out regarding them in the Press, in September, 1914, on their first arrival in France.

For some time during the War I had under me no less than eight depôts, or units, of the old "Punjab Frontier Force."¹ It was such a real pleasure inspecting them, that it was difficult to keep away. Taking them, however, exactly as they were, that is seeing them at their ordinary work, I knew that they liked my visits, just as much as I myself did the time spent over them. To see their faces lighten up at a word of praise, to hear their mirthful laughter at a well-timed joke, to note their appreciation of a useful bit of training advice, and to converse and chaff with their manly Indian officers, all are joyous memories I shall carry with me to the grave.

Knowing the Indian Army as I do, I can only view with great apprehension—shared by many of my contemporaries—the recent reduction in the cavalry by eighteen regiments. It is easy to disband, but it is not so easy to build up again. Putting aside the extinction

¹ Commonly called "Piffers."

of honoured names, glorious tradition and esprit de corps, India and the countries adjoining it are so eminently suited to the employment of mounted men. Again, the Indian cavalry soldier combines the rôle of mounted infantryman, *par excellence*, with his activity, endurance and good shooting. Extremely mobile infantry is not to be despised.

There is also another aspect to the case, that is, whether the moment for disbandment is well chosen? *All* reductions must fill the villages with discontented men, and reductions in the cavalry hit a class whose loyalty and goodwill are specially valuable assets at the present moment. A class whose forbears have been cavalrymen and whose sons look forward to joining a *risāla* (regiment of Indian cavalry).

In these days anything which causes discontent amongst that small percentage of the millions of India who furnish the army with soldiers must be a dangerous move. Without a loyal and contented army—with a loyal and contented people to recruit it from—all government is very difficult in a country like India.

The reason for this reduction is, of course, financial. With only a limited sum available for the army one understands it must be spent on what the authorities consider essential. What is desirable goes to the wall. It is devoutly to be hoped that the great value of this cavalry has been duly weighed, and that a great mistake has not been committed.

No reference to the Indian Army would be complete without an allusion to its brightest ornament, its finest soldier and its most senior serving general. I mean, of course, Sir William Birdwood, so often referred to in these pages, and affectionately known as "Birdie" of the Indian Army, though also "Birdie" of the Anzacs.

I have known him for a great number of years, soon after the time when as a very smart young officer of the 11th Bengal Lancers he was the best man-at-arms at a big assemblage in Calcutta. I think our first meeting was when he was commandant of the Viceroy's bodyguard at Dehra Dun, where he was as good an administrator and farmer of the bodyguard acres as he proved himself a valuable staff officer and matchless leader in the days to come.



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Photo: Elliot and Fry, Ltd.

GENERAL SIR WILLIAM BIRDWOOD, BT., G.C.M.G., K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E., D.S.O.

He is a man of many parts, and has never failed, while his experiences have been unique. What knowledge must be possessed by, and what secrets must lie buried in, the bosom of one who, besides holding many appointments in the field, was for over seven consecutive years closely connected with Lord Kitchener, mainly as his military secretary; then for three years a brigade commander, followed by Q.M.G.; and finishing, before the War, as secretary to the Government of India in the Army Department.

It was as a military secretary that his kindly, helpful nature first became manifest to the enormous number of officers with whom he had to deal. He was always ready to do a good turn to a competent man, always thinking of the welfare of the Indian Army, and always most jealous of its reputation and good name. Wishing to know where the shoe pinched, and what officers really felt, he never discouraged letters, and his daily correspondence must have been immense. Yet he was never known to leave a letter unanswered, however trivial the subject.

His value to Lord Kitchener was very great, for not only was he impervious to fatigue and possessed of unbounded tact, but he had a very wide inside knowledge of India and India's soldiers. Moreover, if he did not know a thing he would go and ask the best man who did, and everyone was always ready to help "Birdie."

As a brigade commander he was also a great success. With his usual energy he soon learnt all there was to know, which his troops were not slow to discover. His firmness, justice and sympathy endeared him to all ranks, and when he left Kohat to become Q.M.G. the ovation he received at the railway station was quite unprecedented.

But what pleased him most, I think, was the fact that, when touring in later years, crowds of Indian officers trooped to his saloon (when his train stopped at various cantonments for a few hours), because they wanted to see, and shake hands with the beloved general they had known at Kohat.

Sir William Birdwood's name is best known to the public as the successful commander of the Australian New Zealand Army Corps (A.N.Z.A.C.), first in Gallipoli and then in France. Everyone has heard of "Birdie's"

fame and popularity, and many know how Ian Hamilton² in his picturesque despatches so truly called him "the soul of Anzac."

I have before me a letter from one of Sir William's divisional commanders,¹ extracts from which I cannot resist quoting :

"It was the luck of my career to accompany General Birdwood from India to Egypt to join the Australians, in November, 1914. From that time till July, 1918, when I left the Australians, I had daily experience of his kindness and consideration. During the whole of that time I may truthfully say I never saw him lose his temper and never heard an acrimonious expression, while his capability of keeping in touch with everything that was going on was prodigious. His eye missed nothing, and no good deed passed his notice. All ranks knew this, and no commander was ever more adored than was "Birdie" by the Australians. His energy was unbounded, and he had the knack of remembering everybody.

"He was early ashore at Anzac on the memorable 25th April, and though we had experienced a trying time, with many casualties, 'Birdie' was unperturbed, and inspired confidence on all sides. It was a debatable matter whether we could hold on at Anzac, but the decision to dig in was made, and, after some four or five days' strenuous fighting, we established ourselves on the line which we held up to the evacuation.

"From the date of landing 'Birdie' commenced to make the acquaintance of nearly every individual man in the Australian and New Zealand forces. His average daily tour of the trenches was eight hours. Armed only with a periscope, he moved along, speaking and talking to this man and that, varying the programme by periodical inspections of the Turkish trenches.

"In one of these he had a narrow escape, a sniper's bullet ploughing the parting of his hair; a fraction lower, and the wound would have been fatal.

"He was generally to be seen bathing off the beach in spite of 'Beachy Bill,' a Turkish gun, which took daily toll of those whose duty (or pleasure) took them to the beach.

"The necessity to evacuate Gallipoli must have caused
 (1) Major-General Sir H. B. Walker, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O.

him great pain, where so many Australians had fallen. He left many intimate friends and admirers behind there, and it is no exaggeration to say that many of the deeds of valour performed were inspired by the personality of 'Birdie.'

"In France he showed the same fearless energy. Eight hours in the trenches, and then office work, was his daily routine. He knew his trenches as well as any divisional or brigade commander, and always had a kind word for those who manned them, thus leaving behind him a much more cheerful frame of mind.

"Divisional commanders actually used to look forward to being sent for to Corps Head-quarters for conferences, etc. There one always found praise for good work and encouragement to again rise to the occasion."

A mighty tribute indeed from a distinguished officer who served directly under Sir William for nearly four most strenuous years. Later on, when commanding the Fifth Army in France, one heard very much the same tale regarding Birdie's wisdom and popularity.

Mentioning the word tale reminds me that there are many stories about Birdie and his Anzacs. So numerous indeed that, during his recent triumphant tour in Australia, *The Sydney Mail* offered a prize for the best one produced. The response was enormous, but unfortunately the subject of these efforts had to acknowledge, later, that he could only recognise an infinitesimal number of them all.

I have never been able to get quite right the one with a play on his name, but it was something like this:—Birdie was starting off one day for his usual tour in the trenches, with his helmet in one hand, periscope in the other, and his hair cut with clippers very close to his head. One of his staff, noticing that a certain sentry did not salute or stand to attention as the corps commander passed, fell behind to ask the reason. The man replied that he didn't know who it was. The staff officer, walking away, heard the sentry say *sotto voce* to himself: "How can I tell, with his head like that; why doesn't he wear feathers like any other *bird would!*"

That periscope was in constant use. "Birdie" was once telling a friend about a "look peep" he was taking from what seemed a very quiet corner. Though he did

not know it, the spot was a favourite mark for the enemy's snipers, and many casualties had lately occurred there. A sentry, close at hand, spotting a sniper's rifle, and being nervous at the imminent danger to his general, called out in his excitement :

" Duck your b . . . y head, Birdie." " Great Scott," said the friend, " that was a 'let off,' and what did you do ? " Looking at him, Birdie replied, very quietly : " I ducked my b . . . y head ! "

A very amusing tale is one regarding one Australian officer who happened to know the King fairly well, and had been granted an interview at Buckingham Palace. The King said to him : " You really must not allow General Birdwood to continue these daily visits of his to the front-line trenches." Thinking for awhile, this officer said : " Look here, sir, it can't be done " ; adding after a pause : " unless your Majesty will give me a collar and chain, and the requisite authority to chain him up. There is no other way of doing it ! "

General Birdwood's welcome in Australia was extraordinary ; quite embarrassingly so, especially when every old comrade wished to be personally recognised. " Don't you remember the last time you saw me ? " said one man. The general expressing regret, he retorted : " Well, you ought to, because you were going through the trenches at Lone Pine one night, and put your foot in the middle of my stomach." Contact (!) with Australians having taught Birdie great power of repartee, he answered at once : " Well, the incident evidently made a much deeper impression on you than it did on me ! " That sort of good-humoured " give and take " was what the Australians loved so.

One day in the West Australian goldfields, an old comrade jumped on to the step of his car and said in a very confidential manner : " I tell you what, Mr. Birdwood, don't you go for to write a book like some of those other fellows are doing." Appalling visions of !!! flashed across Birdie. He told the man it was as good a piece of advice as he had ever given, but he needn't bother about it, as though the possession of a small Australian grandson might grade him as an old man, yet he hoped he had not quite reached the period of " anecdotage " !

Such is " Birdie " of the Anzacs, now once again *in situ* as " Birdie " of the Indian Army. Is it any wonder

we are proud of him, and proud to think of all he has done to uphold our good name?

At the present moment he is General Officer Commanding in Chief of the Northern Command, perhaps the most responsible post in India. Before I left the country, besides other inspections, he had already visited every single Indian unit under his command, diffusing contentment, satisfaction and good feeling wherever he appeared.

As I have said before, he possesses in a marked degree that wonderful gift of *sympathy*, and that magnetic personality, so like Lord Roberts, which at the present time in India is worth untold gold.

THE END