

David Garnett on Savarkar

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Introduction:

David Garnett (March 9, 1892-Feb 17, 1981) was an English novelist, journalist, war reporter and editor, whose path crossed that of Savarkar in London in the year 1909. He was profoundly impressed by Savarkar's magnetic personality. He even made an unsuccessful attempt to rescue Savarkar from the Brixton Jail. This, from an Englishman, can only be called an act of treason against Britain, his homeland! In the first volume of his autobiography, *The Golden Echo*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1954, page 271,) Garnett frankly and openly recounts the Savarkar chapter of his life. His abiding deep respect and admiration for Savarkar is evident, though he has made some efforts to whitewash his role in the scheme of things and writes condescendingly of Indians and India.

It was a peculiar set of circumstances that brought Garnett into contact with Savarkar. He was born of very unusual parents—Edward and Constance Garnett. Edward was the greatest publisher's reader of his time and was a trusted friend and adviser to many famous writers. Constance, was an academic and Fabian Socialist, and had translated some part of the Russian literature. Both his parents were in revolt against Victorian standards of respectability and material prosperity; both were unconventional and trusted their judgment implicitly. They were friends with the Russian political exiles, had even helped them in their cause. Political exiles and revolutionaries were not new to David Garnett. To quote his own words, "I had been brought up to accept acts of political murder and violence with sympathy bordering on admiration; I had known and respected at least two eminent assassins, and I should have thought it particularly disgraceful to resent the murder of Englishmen by Indians."

With this background, he became close friends with three Indian students—Dutt, Niranjan (Nanu) Pal and Mitter (Mitra.) It was through contact with them that he went to India House and met Savarkar on the very day he was giving an impassioned speech on the Indian War of Independence, 1857. The following is David Garnett's account in his own words. It has to be noted that the account is not without inaccuracies. Sir Curzon Wylie was *not* selected as a victim by Madan Lal Dhingra by error. Sir Curzon Wylie was a prominent political personality, the head of the Secret Service at the time, and had compiled an extensive file on Savarkar. The last few lines expose his meager knowledge of Savarkar and Indian politics in later times. The account that follows the "Cast of Characters" is given verbatim from Garnett's autobiography.

Cast of Characters

Dutt: Sukhsagar Dutt, younger brother of Ullaskar Dutt, a revolutionary exiled to the Andaman Islands in the Maniktola Bomb Case. This caused Dutt to be strongly opposed to revolutionaries. He was studying to be an actor.

Nanu: Niranjan Pal. Son of Bipin Chandra Pal of the Lal-Bal-Pal fame; aspired to be a director.

Ashutosh Mitter (Mitra) : The third of the trio of David Garnett's friends. Initially studied natural science at the University of Zurich; later studied law in England. Considered the Indian revolutionaries as "frivolous" and felt that the Indian people had a lot to learn from the West.

Constance: David Garnett's mother

Edward: David Garnett's father.

Shyamji Krishnavarma: In 1905, Shyamji Krishnavarma purchased a house on 65, Cromwell Avenue, London to be used as the students' hostel. This was inaugurated as *India House* by Henry Myers. Shyamji also started a monthly magazine *Indian Socialist*. In 1906 Savarkar was awarded the Shivaji Scholarship offered by Shyamji which enabled him to come to England and chase his plans.

Lord Curzon: Former Viceroy of India.

Sir Curzon Wylie: A very high ranking officer, who entered the British Army in 1866 and the Indian Political Department in 1879. He earned distinction in the Afghan War of 1879-80, in Oudh, in Nepal, in Central India and above all in Rajputana where he rose to the highest rank in the Service. In 1901 he was chosen to be Political Aide-de-Camp to the Secretary of State for India. He was also the head of the Secret Police, a fact not mentioned in contemporary British newspapers. He had compiled an extensive file on Savarkar.

Police spy in India House: Kirtikar, previously a translator in the Bombay High Court, lived in India House under the guise of a student of Dental surgery made daily reports to Scotland Yard.

C.C.: Identity unknown

A.A.: David Garnett does not disclose the identity of A.A. Some have intimated that this was Asaf Ali, but there is no proof. There was at least one other in the India House with those initials.

Chaturbhuji Amin: The cook at India house, who turned police informer and implicated Savarkar in supplying the Browning pistols in the Jackson murder.

Older lady revolutionary in Paris: Madame Bhikaji Rustom Cama

Chapter Seven

Many of my clever friends have told me how they escaped from the misery of school by rising rapidly to the top and becoming members of the privileged sixth form. I was not clever and had to escape by other means and I did so thanks to my stupidity. School was numbing to my faculties. I could not memorise what a sine and a cosine were. I simply could *not be bothered* to attend or remember. All I knew was that the trigonometry master had a glass eye, and that in his class there was an eerie flavour of uncertainty and horror. I knew, partly from observation, partly from intuition, that he was on a knife-edge balanced between sanity and madness. He might, I thought, forget that he was teaching a class and suddenly start going to bed, taking his clothes off one by one, folding them carefully, kneeling down in his underwear to say his prayers....

Needless to say, he never did behave in such a way, but by a sort of sixth sense I was aware that some ghastly breakdown of the sort was not far off. And sitting, glued with horror to my seat, I never listened to a word that he was saying about cos, sin and tan. In algebra, I spent my time forecasting when old Cocky would crack his jokes and which one it would be. I was usually right.

My inability to learn anything at school frightened Constance, who began to believe my stupidity was abnormal. So she decided that it was useless leaving me at school, and took me away, just as I was beginning to like Latin and get the hang of it, because I liked and admired Gerald Warre Cornish.

Leaving school was an immense joy and relief. In future I was to attend a “cramshop” in Red Lion Square and prepare to pass the London matriculation. At the London Tutorial College I was treated as a rational being and there was no attempt at social life outside the classroom. The result was that I began to learn rapidly: at the top of the ramshackle building I started zoology with “Flatfish” Cunningham. His other students were preparing for the Intermediate examination. I listened to his lectures and found no difficulty in understanding them, and I invariably passed the matriculation in both zoology and botany, just as I passed it in French. My troubles were in mathematics and English. I had hopes, one day, of seeing the point of mathematics: I knew there was a point. But what a fraud English seemed! What a dreary waste of time to learn about gerunds and gerundials and synecdoche and litotes (or was litotes that fossil like a squashed woodlouse?) and hyperbole (or was that something like a parabola and part of conic sections?)

It was in a revision class of only three or four at the Tutorial College, that I first noticed a brown young man with a head of luxuriant black ringlets. I wondered what he could be and finally decided that he was probably a Madagascan. I had been reading Robert Drury’s account of his experiences as a slave in Madagascar in the early eighteenth century, and I was therefore anxious to meet a native of that island. However, when I asked

him shyly in the passage if he were not Madagascan, he seemed a good deal surprised and laughed, showing white regular teeth.

“No, I’m a Bengali,” he said. I am afraid I may have shown slight disappointment, and he seemed more surprised when I remarked:

“I suppose that is somewhere in India, isn’t it?”

He replied with faint asperity that it was, and that Calcutta was the capital of Bengal. I knew almost nothing about India except what I had picked up from Colonel Meadows Taylor’s *The Confessions of a Thug*, and as I did not think thuggee was the best subject to start with, I asked him if he would join me for lunch at the A.B.C. in Southampton Row. We ate poached eggs on toast, and I explained about Robert Drury and the Madagascans, whom it was clear he regarded as savages for whom he had no wish to be mistaken.

He told me about Bengal and, suddenly remembering that Bengal tigers are found in the finest zoo, I thought it probable that my new friend must be a compatriot of Little Black Sambo. However, to refer to that would have been as bad as talking about Thugs. This first meeting was the only one when I was conscious of being tactful. After that, I said anything which came into my head, even if it was disobliging, and our friendship prospered accordingly.

My dark friend’s name was Dutt. The following afternoon we went at my suggestion to Holburn Baths for a swim. It was a wet and stormy day and Dutt lit a cigarette holding the match in the hollow of both hands, telling me that a Highlander had taught him the trick in India. I joked with him about Highlanders, on the assumption that he did not much care for British soldiers in India. It was obviously a surprise to him that I should take that for granted.

I invited him to come to tea in Hampstead later in the week, but he failed to turn up, and later I got a letter saying he had caught a chill swimming and invited me to tea the following week at 140 Sinclair Road. The English weather, he said, was as formidable as the bayonets of the Highlanders.

I felt penitent and a few days later went off to find Sinclair Road in the wilds of Shepherd’s Bush. When I reached No. 140 I rang and knocked, but nothing happened. At last I pushed open the door and went in. A door opened at the top of the stairs and in the darkness I heard a curious chortling noise. The voice continued to chortle until I called out, when it answered, “Who is that? Please come up,” and then, in louder tones: “Miss Collins, Miss Collins, Miss Collins.”

I went up the dark and narrow stairs into a wave of hot air laden with strange smells. Some were sweet and oily like those in a cheap barber’s shop—sweat and dirty towels and bay rum. Others were clearly compounded of spices: cloves, cinnamon, pepper and sandalwood. An ugly and obese old Hindu was standing in the dark recess

of the landing. I explained why I was there and he continued in an agitated manner to call for Miss Collins. He was very dark and wore rusty black clothes cut so as to suggest a dignitary of some uncertain position in a dissenting church.

At last he understood what I wanted and I went up to a room where I found Dutt and two other young men, who were engaged in looking out of the window. As I entered I was aware of a young white woman with a fiery red head and flying blouse-strings, dashing down to meet the old man, three steps at a time. She was the remaining member of the household.

Dutt introduced me to his two companions, Naranjan Pal and Ashutosh Mitter. Naranjan, or Nanu as he was always called, was a handsome boy of my own age with very charming manners. He was the son of the old man on the stairs, Bepin Chandra Pal, who was one of the minor Indian Nationalist leaders of the period.

Mitter was older than either of the others; taller also and more muscular. He was not handsome, but dark-skinned with rather rugged features. There was a transparent honesty in his face and in his character, which was extremely pleasant. Boxing gloves were lying on the floor. We picked them up and I sparred a little with Dutt, who had a craze just then for learning to box.

Tea was brought in on a tray, so that I should not have to make conversation with Bepin Chandra Pal and Miss Collins, and as there were only three chairs, I said I would sit cross-legged and tried to do so. But Mitter frowned and pulled me up by hand saying, "No more nonsense," and made Nanu fetch another chair. Dutt remained squatting and flashed his large eyes at us, relieved that I should be making a good impression on his friend Mitter, who was usually very reserved and almost unfriendly. After that visit I soon saw them again and took great pleasure in their company. We met in London and once or twice I asked all three to come down for a week-end to the Cearne, when my parents were away.

One of these visits was in the middle of winter. There was a very hard frost, and we walked along the road from Kent Hatch to Crockham Hill to look at the "unknown comet" which swept right across the night sky, its tail spreading faintly visible over an immense arc of perhaps forty-five degrees.

All three of my Indian friends were lively and innocent young men, always full of jokes and leg-pulls, little excitements and enthusiasms. Very soon I learned their states of mind and the problems which worried them. Dutt had given up attending the Tutorial College soon after I met him and was going to a dramatic school as he wanted to be an actor. He had been sent over by his parents to read for the bar, but the idea was repugnant to him.

There were more Hindu barristers in India than ever could be wanted. If he became a barrister pleading in the Courts, he acknowledged the validity of British law and British institutions—and he wished to oppose and

repudiate them. His elder brother was in prison, for he had made the bomb which had been thrown at an unpopular English magistrate at Midnapore—a tragic fiasco, as the magistrate escaped unhurt and two innocent Englishwomen were killed. This affair had set Dutt profoundly against terrorists and terrorism at a time when the awakening nationalism of India was expressing itself in spasmodic series of murders.

Lord Curzon had been Viceroy a few years before and, on his advice, the Government had partitioned Bengal—a division which, since Indian Independence, has been repeated in the partition between Bengal and Eastern Pakistan. However, when Curzon introduced partition it was regarded as a subtle British move to weaken the largest and most educated Hindu community and was violently resented by the Bengalis. Several unfortunate magistrates, Collectors and Police Superintendents were, as a result, assassinated by young Bengalis anxious to prove themselves equals of the Russian Social Revolutionaries. I had been brought up to accept acts of political murder and violence with sympathy bordering on admiration; I had known and respected at least two eminent assassins, and I should have thought it particularly disgraceful to resent the murder of Englishmen by Indians, since I was myself English and to some extent shared the guilt of British imperialism. Of course I took for granted, without investigation, that British rule in India must be bad, exactly as most British boys of my age took for granted that it was good.

In some way I felt that I expiated this supposed guilt by showing that I had no racial feeling and that, at least, was perfectly genuine. But also I was ready to applaud a series of senseless, wicked murders of honest and honourable men working in the interests of the Indian people. And I am afraid this callousness was due to a lack of reality quite as deep rooted as my lack of racial antipathy.

I was not in the least shocked by Dutt's brother making a bomb, but was rather shocked that the accidental death of two innocent ladies should have disgusted my friend so profoundly with terrorism that he would declare: "Killing an honest, honourable man who is doing his best, killing him because of a general situation for which he is in no way responsible, cannot be right---and brave and innocent boys are sacrificed to commit what are really crimes and do harm, not good."

Dutt had decided that the best thing he could do was to devote himself to art and so help to make Indians admired and respected. He had been to see Granville Barker and Beerbohm Tree acting. Tree was in Dutt's opinion our finest actor, and he proposed to model himself upon him. His ambition was to learn in England and to return to India and there raise his own company touring about and acting Shakespeare and Molière, Pinero and Shaw—all of which would have to be translated into the Bengali vernacular. And he might write plays himself. This was a large programme and I sometimes wondered if my light-hearted young friend had the least aptitude as an actor.

Nanu Pal's view's at that time were not so clearly defined. But he was more sympathetic to the Indian revolutionary movement than Dutt, perhaps from a natural reaction against his father's extremely cautious position.

Mitter had been sent by his parents to study at the bar, but he had got off the boat in Italy and had gone to Zurich, where he studied natural science for a term or two at the University. His parents had them cut off his funds until he went to England and studied law. He was enthusiastic about the professors at Zurich. His attitude to the Indian Terrorists was that they were frivolous. The Indian people, he declared, had an immense amount to learn from the West. Only when they had got rid of the clouds of superstition, vanity and wishful thinking in which they existed and become, instead, educated realists, would they be able to achieve the independence they hoped for. Until then their superstition and ignorance would make them the prey of ignorant demagogues. The first lesson Indians needed to learn, he said, was self-respect, and the vice he hated most in his countrymen was the moral and physical cowardice which made them cringe to an Englishman and then console themselves with all sorts of nonsense drawn from the Vedas about the past glories of Indian civilization. The Vedas were said by Indians to provide proof that Hindus had invented aeroplanes and flown in them three thousand years ago. Also wireless telegraphy was known to them. Such statements made Mitter feel positively sick.

In fact Ashutosh Mitter was a remarkably level-headed and intelligent young man, who was, however, more likely to be taken in by the dogmatic pseudo-science of Haeckel and Marx than the chauvinism of religious nationalists.

At the tutorial College I met another Indian student, who was being coached in zoology with the object of passing his first medical. One day, after dissecting dogfish, we were told to draw diagrams of what we saw. All the students drew the streamlined outlines of their fish—except Mr. Rao. When his diagram was shown up it was seen to consist of a drawing which might have been the result of a game of heads, bodies and legs—for connecting the head and the body was thin neck into which poor Rao had been at pains to squeeze the gills and arteries.

“Flatfish” Cunningham stared for a full minute at this extraordinary production and then asked Rao gently why he had drawn it in that way,

“How else could I show which part was *really* its neck?” replied Rao.

That answer has always seemed to me extremely illuminating. Rao had not drawn it wrong out of stupidity, but out of idealism. He knew the dogfish *had* a neck, but since it was not recognizably one by human standards, he felt it better to make it conform to the ideal.

Later I came to realize that Rao's instinct in this matter was deeply representative of the Hindu mind and it is possible that this attitude of mind goes a long way to explain why Indian literature is so extraordinarily meager a birthright for a people numbering hundreds of millions who have enjoyed a lettered civilization for almost three thousand years.

And here, perhaps, I should say that soon after meeting these Hindus they had persuaded me to read Sakuntala, the Bhagavad-Gita, and any translations I could find of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. I also dipped into the Upanishads. Although at the time I was strongly disposed to think as highly as possible of the Hindus, I was unable to persuade myself that Hindu literature was anything but miserable in the extreme—the product of an unimaginative people, hag-ridden by religion and living in the dark ages.

One day, when Dutt came to tea with Constance and me in Hampstead, he suggested taking me on to meet some friends of his who lived in Highgate in a house called India House, which belonged to an old Mahratta called Krishnavarma, who lived as a political refugee in Paris, out of harm's way.

Krishnavarma, like many of his countrymen, had read Herbert Spencer and had adopted that prime bore as his gospel, just as the Social Democrats had taken Marx as theirs. Krishnavarma, in the security of Paris, produced a paper called *The Indian Sociologist*, which was what is generally known as a seditious rag. All the Indians I met made merciless fun of Krishnavarma: he was nevertheless regarded by the British authorities as the leader of a most dangerous, seditious movement. Of all this I, and everyone else in England, was soon to hear much more.

Dutt and I walked to Krishnavarma's house over Hampstead Heath. It was dark by the time we reached a quiet house standing back from the road in Jubilee Crescent. Dutt pushed open the gate and we were greeted by a man standing in the garden. Dutt recognized him and was recognized, and we passed in. Later he explained, with some amusement, that the sentinel had been put there because he was a man they did not trust or want to have at the meeting inside.

Inside the building were about thirty Indians, almost all very young men, for the most part students who, like Dutt, had been sent to study law and had made about as much progress in it as he had.

At my entrance there was some surprise. Nanu came forward and welcomed me and stopped a young man, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, and introduced me to him. He was small, slight in build, with very broad cheekbones, a delicate aquiline nose, a sensitive, refined mouth and an extremely pale skin, which was almost as pale as ivory on the forehead and cheekbones but darker in the hollows.

Soon after my arrival we trooped into the dining-room and Savarkar, after addressing the company in Hindi, stood up and began to read aloud. As I could not understand what he was saying, I looked about the room

without paying much attention to him. The sight of those brown men, some sitting round a long table, others leaning against the walls, all listening intently to the staccato voice of the speaker, was very strange to me. When I was with Dutt or Mitter I could forget they were Hindus and I was an Englishman, but at this meeting I felt alone. My race and colour did indeed create a gulf between me and these brown men. But the consciousness of this gulf did not dismay me. On the contrary, I rejoiced in the sense of freedom which it gave me. In this company I could be myself and say whatever came into my head. There was no question of my feeling shy and, at that age, I was always feeling shy, now I was delivered from that burden, simply because I did not know these people's standards. Whatever I did, or was, would be strange to them. I felt exhilarated. I had embarked on an adventure of my own finding; there was nobody to guide me; nobody to feel ashamed of me. It was a new departure. Meanwhile, how strange they looked. One older man near me was bearded and wore a fez; the others were bare-headed with their black, oily ringlets and black eyes: some sparkling with fun and life, others like dry, black olives. And, looking at them, it was impossible not to classify them as higher and lower racial types, judging them physically by European standards. There were those with sensitive, delicate features and those with coarser negroid lips. Aryans and Dravidians, perhaps.

Then I looked at Savarkar and thought that his was the most sensitive face in the room and yet the most powerful. I watched how he spat out his words, with almost convulsive movements. And, from looking at him, I became aware that he was actually reading aloud in English, not in Hindustani. His accent, his mispronunciations, the strange rhythm of his staccato delivery had deceived me. What a wool-gathering fool I was! But it was a relief to make the discovery for myself. I listened then attentively and made out that he was reading about a battle in which an Indian general called Tatia Tope had been defeated by English troops and Sikhs.

Savarkar was, although I did not know it, reading aloud a chapter from his extremely propagandist history; the Indian Mutiny called *The Indian War of Independence of 1857 by An Indian Nationalist*, which was secretly printed a few months later. When he had finished his chapter, the greater part of the audience went into an adjoining room and someone put a record of Indian music on the gramophone.

A woman was singing in a high falsetto voice. As I listened a picture formed in my mind. The air was hot: the darkness was like a tent: the stars shone like holes in the ragged cover of the night. I thought of pomegranates: the brown skin broken to show a jeweled seed, pale nipples of garnets breaking through the brown rind. The ripe pomegranate was the symbol of the unseen woman singing, while all about her swayed like the king cobras, their coils rising above the cross-legged circle of musicians. For the first time I realized that there were Hindu women as well as lively boys and obese men.

Another Indian song followed, and another, and then Dutt was telling me that the next record was of *Bande Mataram*- an Indian hymn, proscribed at that time. After that, the man in the fez came up and with a teasing

look at me insisted on putting on a record of The Cock of the North “as a compliment to our guest, who must want to hear some real music and can’t be expected to enjoy our barbarous tunes.” This was tiresome of him, but I said nothing. The man in the fez—I learned at his name was A. A.—then put on a record of Harry Lauder.

This was a bore, and I turned and said so to my neighbour, a tall young man with a most gloomy expression, who stood leaning against the door-post. Without replying, he walked rapidly to the gramophone, stopped it and put on an Indian record. I thanked him; he smiled and resumed his station, leaning against the wall in a Byronic attitude. Presently Savarkar came in, talked to me for a while and then joined in the singing. Soon afterwards A.A. came up and began to talk to me with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

He began making personal remarks of a joking kind about my youth and my looks, which embarrassed and annoyed me, and I was uncertain for a moment or two how I should take them. Without my realizing it, all the Indians were listening to us. By strange chance my reading of Indian literature enabled me suddenly to turn the tables. Simply because he was wearing a fez, I guessed he was different from the others, and I suddenly asked him what race he belonged to. He replied that he was a Tamil.

“That explains why I have been so puzzled by you,” I relied. “For the Tamils, you know, are the descendants of Hanuman, the divine monkey who helped Ram to conquer India and I can tell your monkey origin in the witty remarks you are making at my expense, which are such a contrast to the greetings I have received from everyone else.”

This produced roars of laughter on all sides and I was hence forward safe from A. A. For whenever he tried to make a remark at my expense, I would hold up a finger and say: “No more monkey tricks or monkey conversations.” A. A. of course laughed himself, but he did not like it and soon decided to let me alone.

One other figure I noticed during that visit to India House: a short thick-set young man, very dark, with protruding eyes and short fat fingers adorned with several rings. He was, I divined instantly, an unpleasant fellow, and directly he spoke me I knew that I was right. Like Savarkar he was a Mahratta. Later it turned out that he was a police spy. Shortly afterwards I left and, saying good-bye to Dutt, walked back alone across Hampstead Heath. I had entered a new world of my own discovery.

One morning at the Cearne, opening the paper, I read the news that Sir Curzon Wylie had been assassinated at a soiree for Indian students at the Imperial Institute by a young Indian called Dhingra. A Parsee doctor, who had flung himself between the assassin and his victim, had also been killed. Dhingra had been overpowered before he could commit suicide. The name Dhingra meant nothing to me. But I thought it extremely probable that some of my acquaintances were implicated and I wandered down under the great beech tree at the end of the garden as I thought the matter over. Curzon Wylie! Was it possible that the Indian student thought it was Lord Curzon? Or was that too idiotic?

Edward suddenly approached me, the newspaper in his hand, looking pale and shaken. He asked me if I knew Dhingra; was he one of my friends? Did I know anything out him or about this assassination? It was obvious that Edward drew a very sharp distinction between Indian and Russian terrorists. Not that he was ever an advocate of violent measures.

I was able to reply quite truthfully that I had never heard Dhingra's name before and knew nothing whatever about him. But I went up to London that afternoon to find out.

Naturally enough my friends were in a fine frenzy, and as soon as I had got hold of Dutt and Mitter I heard all the details. Dhingra, it turned out, was the Byronic young man I had met at India House, who had stopped the Harry Lauder record at my request. Mitter was furious at the frivolity of the assassination. Bepin Chandra Pal was scared and angry because Nanu had been to India House. Dutt was calm and matter-of-fact. None of the three had known Dhingra intimately: Savarkar and some of the others were his friends.

One result of this assassination was that India House was closed and its inhabitants dispersed. When Dhingra came before the magistrate he asked to be allowed to read aloud a statement. This was refused. I met Savarkar shortly afterwards, and he gave me a copy of Dhingra's statement and asked me if I could get it published. That was easy. I took my first and only journalistic scoop to Robert Lynd, then on the staff of the *Daily News*, and it appeared in that paper next morning. Savarkar was extremely pleased. Curiously enough, after being deprived of his statement, Dhingra had been unable to express himself nearly so well or quite to the same effect. It occurred to me that someone might have written it for him and that he had not bothered to learn it by heart. If so, I guessed who the author of it was and realized that he was an accessory. In due course Dhingra was tried for murder and hanged. During the trial seditious pamphlets with photographs of the martyr who had struck down one of the oppressors of his country, and the patriotic statement which had been suppressed, began to circulate among the Indian students in London. I strongly suspected that Dhingra had been briefed to assassinate Lord Curzon, or at all events someone more important than Sir Curzon Wylie. But I never obtained, nor tried to obtain, evidence bearing out any of my suspicions. My friends were from that time forward kept under close watch by Scotland Yard, and there was usually a detective hanging about, watching their lodgings or following them in the street. It was an easy matter to shake these detectives off in the tube railways.

After India house was closed by the police, Savarkar went to live over a small and extremely dirty Indian restaurant in Red Lion Passage, where Dutt, who had quarreled with Mr. Pal, joined him. I arranged with the proprietor, a large old Jew called Jacobs, to have lunch there five days a week for four shillings a week, paid in advance, and forfeited if I did not turn up.

As a result I saw a certain amount of Savarkar and was more than ever struck by his extraordinary personal magnetism. There was an intensity of faith in the man and a curious single-minded recklessness which were

deeply attractive to me. The filthy place in which he was living brought out both his refinement and also his lack of human sympathy, both characteristic of the high-caste Brahmin. The windows of the room which Dutt and Savarkar shared as a sitting-room, looked across the narrow, filthy alley of Red Lion Passage---one of the dirtiest slums in London. In the room opposite lived an appalling slattern with four young children. Often she was screaming, frequently drunk, sometimes one could see her through the open window, lying insensible upon the floor.

Dutt often spoke of her and her children with horror and pity. But Savarkar was indifferent to her existence and indeed oblivious to his environment. He was wrapped in visions. What was his vision then? I cannot say, but I believe it was that India was a volcano, which had erupted violently during the Mutiny and which could be made to erupt again, and that every act of terrorism and violence would beget further violence and terrorism, until Indians regained their manliness and their mother country her freedom. All the sufferings involved were but a fitting sacrifice to her.

Eventually Savarkar was persuaded to leave England and go to Paris, as another assassination, in which his younger brother was compromised, had taken place in his native city, Nasik.

Dutt stayed on in Red Lion Passage for a time, but left in peculiar circumstances. He was on friendly terms with Jacobs, and one day the old man, chaffing him about learning ju-jitsu, asked to be shown some wrestling tricks and declared that Dutt could not throw him. Dutt did throw him. Mr. Jacobs got on his feet again, apparently none the worse and Dutt went to buy some cigarettes. When he came back, twenty minutes later, Jacobs was dead of heart failure. Dutt packed his bag and went at once to new lodgings. But, before this accident, he was involved in a fiasco in which I played a minor part.

Spain had embarked on one of her intermittent attempts to occupy and subdue a part of Moroccan coast opposite her shores. This adventure was gallantly resisted by a leader of the Riff tribe called Abdul Krim. Savarkar had recently been reading the life of Garibaldi and had been struck by the part which he had played in the South American wars of liberation. It seemed to him that experience in foreign wars might turn out to be useful military training for young Indians. He therefore persuaded Dutt and another Bengali to join Abdul Krim's forces. Just how this was to be achieved was not explained. However, it seemed to them that they had better go armed, since the Riffs had probably no rifles to spare. I therefore lent Dutt the Winchester rifle which Galsworthy had given me. It was, as I had proved, inaccurate at any range over forty yards and ammunition for it was almost unobtainable in Europe. Nevertheless, Dutt was glad to set off with it to Gibraltar on his way to join Abdul Krim.

When the two volunteers reached Gibraltar the customs detained my rifle. The two imitators of Garibaldi went on to Algiers, but found it impossible to reach the Riff and, becoming quickly discouraged, returned

to London. Some months later I succeeded in getting my rifle returned from Gibraltar, thanks to the offices of Thos. Cook & Son. When it turned up I was surprised to discover that a Browning automatic pistol had been sent with it. Dutt begged me to keep it. I noticed, however, that the serial number, by which it could be identified, had been filed off. I asked him why and was told that the pistol was one of a batch, some of which had been smuggled to India, and that its connection with the others might be traced. When, however, I took the pistol to pieces to clean it, I found the serial number on the barrel had *not* been removed. The whole episode began to make me critical of these amateurish revolutionaries and terrorists. Nevertheless it did not lead me to draw back in my association with them, but only to rely more on my own judgment and to trust them less.

When I was seventeen I passed the London Matriculation in January and had therefore to wait until the following October before I could be admitted to one of the Colleges of London University. Constance decided that I had better not be hanging about in town and I was dispatched to Letchworth to live with my aunt Lucy Cowlshaw and her husband Harry, the architect. I shall describe my experiences there later; it is enough to say here that one morning, while I was Letchworth, I opened the paper to read that Savarkar had been arrested on his arrival at Victoria Station from France. I immediately went up to London for the day and saw Nanu. He and Dutt told me the whole story. Some years before, Savarkar's elder brother had printed some seditious songs and had been sentenced to six years' imprisonment by a Mr. Jackson, at Nasik.

Savarkar had sent out pistols to India, and Mr. Jackson had been assassinated while attending a performance at a Hindu theater. Many people were arrested, including the assassin. Savarkar's younger brother had been caught concealing arms in the thatched roof of his house. But the chief feature of the case was that Savarkar's emissary, when arrested, had turned king's evidence. He was the fat Mahratta I had met and greatly disliked, at India House and I was disgusted to hear that Savarkar should have trusted him.

Dutt said that he wanted no more to do with Savarkar or any of his group, and he asked me if I could find somewhere for him to live outside London until he received money from his family which could enable him to continue studying acting.

After telling him I would do my best to find him a temporary home, I went to Bow Street, where I understood Savarkar was up before the magistrate. I did not see Savarkar, but found myself being given a searching questioning by Inspector Parker of Scotland Yard. I realized immediately that it would not do to try to be clever. My best line was the truth. But in my answers I exaggerated my ingenuousness. I explained I was a science student who had met Indians in my classes, had visited India House and become acquainted with Savarkar. Seeing he was in trouble I had come along to see if I could help in any way. When and where could I see him?

Parker's attempts at grilling me broke down before my truthfulness. Finally he told me that as Savarkar was only a remand prisoner I could see him any morning at Brixton Gaol. When I left Bow Street I felt convinced

that Parker had classified me as a young fool of no importance—and he was quite right in doing so. I was only eighteen and certainly looked innocent.

Next morning I went to Brixton Gaol. The prison lies at the end of a long cul-de-sac. There was a big door for vehicles with a smaller door in it for men. The visitor to the prison rang a bell and a warder unlocked and opened the smaller door, and the visitor stepped in. The warder immediately locked the door, took his particulars, and walked across to unlock an inner door of steel bars, and the visitor found himself in the prison proper. It was obvious that the warder's chief duty was to see that the outer and inner doors were never unlocked at the same moment, since there were frequently prisoners passing inside. There was sufficient space between the two doors for a lorry or a Black Maria to stand while they were both shut.

I took in all this at a glance; the strength and weakness of this mediaeval system were instantly apparent to me, and I thought over the weakness of the system as I waited with others in a room. The weakness was the time-lag before the warders in the prison could render help to the forces of law and order outside the gate. Presently we were shepherded along a passage divided into a series of open compartments with arrow-mesh steel wire separating the visitor from the distraught prisoner he had come to see.

The vehement jabber of these distracted creatures, who seemed to be trying to combine whispering with talking at the tops of their voices, was horrible. Presently I came to the compartment where I was to see Savarkar. It was empty. I examined the steel mesh netting. A moment or two later he strolled in and was very much surprised to see me. He was perfectly calm and at his ease. I discussed his defense and offered to collect money for it, and to do anything I could to help him. All he wanted at the moment were some clean collars: the size of his neck was only 13½!—the size of a schoolboy.

From the point of view of the government his arrest was peculiar and required careful handling. They had evidence of his connection with the murder of Mr. Jackson at Nasik, but were not prepared to charge him with it. For the murder occurred while Savarkar was in London and he ought, therefore, to be tried in London. If he were tried in England on, let us say, an incitement-to-murder charge, he would, if convicted, get a sentence of two or three years. If he were tried in India, it would be another matter. The authorities were therefore trying to extradite him to India, but to do so they had to dig up, or manufacture, evidence of crimes committed while he was in India, carefully avoiding reference to the crimes he might have committed in London. This took some time, and while the case was being prepared, Savarkar had to be brought up at Bow Street week after week and remanded, bail being refused.

Eventually, the Indian authorities dug up some speeches that Savarkar had delivered in India several years before, and for which they had had ample opportunity to prosecute him at the time. They then applied for his extradition on that evidence only. The evidence was thin, for the speeches had been delivered at a time when the

political atmosphere in India was completely different. The speeches, which had not been thought worth prosecuting him for at the time, had become seditious as the ferment of unrest increased in India.

I wrote a short letter on the subject, which was printed in the *Daily News* under the heading *past offences*. Meanwhile, I went practically every week to Brixton Gaol to see Savarkar, taking with me clean collars and handkerchiefs and I collected a few pounds for his legal defense.

Finally, the time came for me to leave Letchworth and I returned to London, sending my luggage by train and walking all the way as far as Finchley, starting about nine o'clock in the morning and getting home to Hampstead about six o'clock in the evening. I had meant to walk the whole way, but my heel chafed and the temptation of the electric tram was too great.

Next morning I went down to Brixton and learned from Savarkar that the documents from India were on the way and that it would only be two or three weeks, at most, before the case came up for trial. There was not the slightest doubt how it would go. I hesitated, waited until the warder walking up and down the corridor was out of earshot and said: "Why not try and escape? I have an idea how it might possibly be managed."

Savarkar said he had been thinking of it, but had decided he would have more chances of success on the way back to India, but if I had a plan he would be glad if I would work it out. When I had done so, the necessary money would be forthcoming from C.C., with whom I could discuss it freely. I asked Savarkar a number of questions about prison routine and then went down to the Cearne that afternoon to think things out.

Savarkar was taken every week to Bow Street for the formalities of a remand, always in a taxi and not a Black Maria. He was accompanied by one, or sometimes two, detectives. His going up for a weekly remand had become a routine matter and he was taken from the prison at the same time, within two or three minutes.

The essence of my plan was that he was to be rescued at the prison gates, or within a few yards of them. A watcher would note when the taxi which was to take him to Bow Street drove up. A car would then drive up to the prison with supposed visitors, who would overpower the detectives, and Savarkar would jump in the car, which would drive off with him. The essential feature of the rescue was that the rescuers should not avoid arrest, or to escape themselves. They would have to deal with the two detectives, and the taxi-man, but there would not be time for help to arrive from the prison, owing to the routine of the two gates.

At first I thought I should have to find both the rescuers and cars, but I came to the conclusion that it was impossible for me to do so. Before I came to this decision, I had, however, asked Harold if he could drive a car and if he could find out about hiring one, and had asked Mrs. Dryhurst if she thought there were any members of Sinn Fein in London who might be ready to make a disturbance. She promised the utmost secrecy and

thought she might find the right men. But, when I thought the matter over, I was doubtful if Sinn Feiners would come up to scratch for the sake of an Indian. Finally, I told her they would not be wanted.

Discussion with C.C. was more fruitful. He said there were two men in Paris who would willingly go to gaol for long periods in order to rescue Savarkar. But if they were brought into England, they would be closely watched.

I decided that the best plan was to bring them into England on a yachting trip, land them early on the morning of the rescue, drive straight to Brixton, rescue Savarkar, drive back with him, embark him and sail to France. C.C. also undertook to provide the car for the double trip.

My intention was to arm the rescuers with bags of pepper and loaded truncheons. I discussed the plan with Savarkar who approved it. The time-table was worked out. Instructions were sent to A.A. in Paris to charter a boat. I then had to decide on the route from Brixton prison to the coast. This I did in considerable detail, spending a large number of days bicycling over alternative routes. My chief difficulty was to avoid level crossings and country towns: the level crossing at Uckfield, was a particularly annoying one. Finally, I decided on a route.

I bought a female disguise consisting of motoring hat and veil, then commonly worn by female motorist, for Savarkar. This was to be in the car with a cloak, and he was to put them on as soon as possible. I was to go over to Paris and return with the rescuers, remaining in the car while the rescue took place and acting as a guide on our return to the coast.

During the weeks of preparation I lived at the Cearne and went up and down to London as necessary. I saw C.C. as rarely as possible. We met three times, coming alongside each other in separate hired boats at the Kensington end of the Serpentine on which he often rowed for amusement. The period of preparation was one of intense strain; I was only eighteen and was well aware of my inexperience and unsuitability for the practical tasks I had taken on myself.

A week before the date fixed for the attempt, all was complete on my side, except that I had not found a watcher to observe when the detectives' taxi drove up to the prison. But rather than employ an Indian, who would be certain to arouse suspicion, or a European whom I could not trust, I decided to dispense with him and trust to police routine. Nor did I know the precise details of where C. C. was getting his car, but I trusted him. I then told my parents I was going for a few days' visit to Letchworth and went to London. That night I crossed second-class to Dieppe and reached Paris in the morning. A few hours later I kept my rendezvous with A. A., whom I had scarcely seen my first visit to India House, where we had lunch together. He told me the two rescuers were perfectly prepared to come, but that he had taken no steps to hire a boat. He thought that for an Indian to have done so would have aroused suspicion. The excuse was an after-thought and I did not believe him. But I did not tell him it was a betrayal.

After lunch we drove to the Bois de Boulogne, where we met the rescuers—both of them men I had met before and believed to be brave and honest—a great contrast to A. A. They were extremely angry when A. A. admitted that he had disregarded the orders sent him and taken no steps to get a boat. I said I would get one next day. We went back to a house, where I met an elderly Indian lady who was deep in their councils, and had supper there. Then I drew about two thousand francs from A. A. and went out into the summer twilight of Paris to find a boat. Paris was extremely beautiful that night. I had not slept on the way over and I was very tired and angry, but for a little while the beauty of Paris went to my head and I walked down towards the river. Suddenly I exclaimed that I was glad that A. A. had let me down. I would find the boat, and the greater part of the execution of the plan would be mine. I had walked down to the Quais, in the vague idea that I might see a boat floating on it which would miraculously be available and solve my needs. Looking over the parapet at the water I realized that I had no respect for the Indians, who had revealed themselves again and again as hopelessly incompetent. But for a little while I was drunk with pride. I realized for the first time that I was a man. I had imposed myself on these enemies of my country, who had put their lives at my disposal, an English boy of eighteen, because my leadership might be better than theirs. On what a wonderful night and in what strange circumstances was I alone in Paris. For an hour or two I walked about along the border of the river and asked myself why I was I there? By that time I cared nothing for Indian Nationalism and my feeling for Savarkar was personal. I could not endure to see a man of such intense vitality spending his life in prison. I shared none of his ideas and I wasn't a terrorist. Then my intoxication and vainglory vanished suddenly.

"I'm wasting my time here," I said to myself. "The job has got to be done. I must go to a port. Which shall it be—Calais, Boulogne or Dieppe? No, Havre," I decided. I left Paris in the very early morning on the first train for Havre and reached it in the afternoon. After an hour or so looking around, I saw an old sailor washing down the deck of a pretty little cutter. I walked aboard her, along a plank, and told him I was looking for a boat in which to go for a week's trip sailing in the Channel with some friends. He was a delightful moon-faced old man, and, when he understood what I wanted, he began to swear, almost crying with vexation. If only I had come the day before I would have met the owner of the little cutter. He would have let it to my friends and have gone with us. He was an Englishman, a retired Colonel in the army. He had left for a couple of weeks in Paris. If I could postpone my trip....

I drew a deep breath. That was an escape!

I asked him if he knew no fishermen and said I had always wanted to sail in a smack. After a lot of reflection he remembered that *le patron* Cornu was in port. Together we set off, and half an hour later we were on board a big smack with Mr. Cornu and his wife, wearing sabots and determined that her man should not be swindled. It was a big, strong, extremely untidy boat, which had sailed to the Newfoundland Banks. They had just refitted her. Mr. Cornu agreed to take me and two friends for a week's sailing trip, to provision his boat and provide the

crew for the sum of £40. We argued for some time about details, I gave him four hundred francs on account to provision the boat and then, suddenly, the life almost went out of me, for I was dropping with exhaustion. Fortunately we had to seal our bargain with a drink and we drank black coffee with a generous measure of Calvados in it. That just saved me from collapse. I gave the old chap who had introduced me to Cornu a tip and, going to the station, caught a slow train to Paris.

There were eight French soldiers in the compartment and they shouted songs all night long. It was my third night without sleep. I reached Paris at dawn. The streets were being washed and there was the smell of fresh bread coming from a few bakers' shops. I was dazed with fatigue and went straight to A. A.'s hotel in the Rue de la Boetie. The concierge seemed to be expecting me: there was a note, she said, left the previous night by a small boy. I took it and went up to A. A.'s room to find him luxuriating in what looked a most comfortable bed. He made no move to get up.

"Thank goodness you've come. I've had an awful time. Your father's here and thinks I've kidnapped you---"

"I've got the boat alright," I muttered.

"But it is all off. It's impossible. Your father's here. He's going to the French police."

For a moment rage came over me. I don't know what I said, but I heard A. A. exclaim: "Don't bring the old man's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." And the idiocy of this remark made me burst out laughing. A. A. gave me my father's address, and I handed him the balance of the money I had not spent. It gave him visible satisfaction to receive it.

"Now you can go to sleep again," I said, hoping the contempt in my voice would penetrate, and I walked out. Before going into the street I remembered the note I had been given and opened it. "Don't let the ship sink for ha'porth of tar," I read. I had not the least idea what it meant, but it could not matter now. Later on I discovered that Mrs. Dryhurst had asked Maude Gonne, the Sinn Feinn leader, to find me and give me this warning. I walked along the street, saw a baker's, bought a roll and ate it. What should I do? Go to Germany to study botany at Heidelberg? Just walk off and leave my father to set the police on A. A.? It would serve Edward right for interfering, and it was pleasant to think of A. A. being frightened out of his skin.

However, I must warn C.C. and tell Savarkar. I could not just desert them. So I got into a cab and went to the address A. A. had given. I arrived just as our friends were having breakfast and Edward and I exchanged one look with the message: "Whatever we have to say to each other must be postponed until we are alone." So with the British phlegm I asked if I could join them at breakfast, drank as many bowls of coffee as I could and ate up all the croissants. Finally my hostess realized that I was famished and cooked me an egg and I ate that. Then I had a wash and brush up; we said good-bye and went off to catch the train for London.

On the way to the station I almost said to Edward: "Isn't it rather silly to miss the opportunity of seeing Paris? We may never both be here again together. Let's go to the Louvre." What he would have made of the remark in the circumstances I don't know, but the impulse vanished as quickly as it had come.

In the train we did not speak until a little while before we reached Calais, when he asked me whether I was carrying a pistol.

"I'm not quite such a fool as that," I replied. "I have no intention of ever shooting anybody."

Directly we got on the boat to Calais, I saw that my plan would not have come off in any case. It was blowing a gale and M. Cornu would certainly not have put to sea. A French submarine had sunk just outside the harbour and rescue operations were impossible, but there was a cluster of naval vessels anchored where the submarine had gone down, with seas breaking over them. Edward and I stayed on deck and got rather wet. Edward was violently seasick; for some reason, although I am a very bad sailor, I felt not the slightest qualms. Probably I was too tired and strung up to be sick. Watching Edward hanging over the leeward rail, I felt no pity for him. Only when we were in the train, bound for London, did I ask how he had found out. I had gone to see Mrs. Dryhurst and told her I should not want any Sinn Feinn help, the day before I left for Paris. As I was leaving her house, Harold Hobson's sister Mabel had come in and I was hardly out of earshot when Mrs. Dryhurst had told her all she knew about my activities and that I was just off to Paris. Mabel had reported it at home and the Hobsons had thought it wise to inform my parents. Constance had taken to her bed with a migraine and Edward had set off to find me. When we got back to the Cearne, Constance was still in bed. I went into her room, spoke to her, and went to bed immediately myself. I did not wake up until early the following afternoon; then I sent off a warning to C.C. Half an hour before the rescue was timed to take place I went to Brixton prison and saw Savarkar. The moment he saw me he knew the plan had miscarried. But as I told him the details, he was already trying to console me for my failure. There was not a single sign in him of reproach or bitterness, or even of shock. I told him of the situation I had found when I arrived in Paris; that it was obvious that A.A. did not want him to escape, but to keep hold of the party funds. Then I described how I had gone to Havre and found a boat, and how I had been frivolously betrayed, but that in any case the weather would have rendered the plan impossible for that particular week.

Then Savarkar said something like this: "It does not matter whether one wins or is defeated, whether one succeeds or fails. Care nothing about the result so long as you fight. The only thing that matters is the spirit.

You have done wonderfully and there was no reason why you should have done anything at all. Do not worry about me. I shall escape somehow. I have a plan worked out already, in case your plan failed."

The warder called out that the time was up. A few minutes later I was let out of Brixton prison. As I walked slowly down towards Brixton Hill, knowing that I had seen Savarkar for the last time, a taxi passed me. In it there was one detective. I looked at my watch: it was three minutes to the time I had fixed for our car to appear.

It was clear that, in spite of the rumpus, Scotland Yard had not yet heard of my activities. But they did hear later on, and when Savarkar was taken to the Court for the final judgment and to the ship where he was handed over to two detectives sent out from India, he was, I was told, handcuffed and heavily guarded.

The end of the Savarkar episode left me exhausted, not only physically and for several weeks I stayed at the Cearne, wandering far into the woods with a book under my arm and then lying down under a tree and dozing or dreaming away the morning without opening a page.

Sometimes a band of titmice came near and I watched them; sometimes a red squirrel sprang out to fall lightly from bough to bough above me. But I looked at them with tired eyes; my experience with A. A. was soaking in, and digesting its lessons was a slow and painful experience. For look at it how I could, I saw that I had played a fool's part in the affair.

In the first place it was not my business to intervene. If the Indians could not run their own terrorist movement efficiently, what good could an English boy do by helping them? Would they expect Englishmen to run their country if they ever drove the British out? Nor did I believe in terrorism and I was already skeptical as to what might be achieved by it. Why was I risking my future for a cause in which I did not believe and for a man who had made so many gross mistakes? I was a fool---and the romantic and altruistic emotions which had led me to involve myself were folly. But I was so tired I could not bear to think about the subject anymore.

The Oliviers were away that summer, but their cousin Ursula had come back from Moscow for a visit, and she and her bosom friend, Lenotcha Goncharov, were staying at the Champions. My depression turned to an agreeable sentimentality in the presence of the two girls, with whom I went on excursions to the river at Tonbridge.

One day I opened the paper to find it full of the story of Savarkar's escape. On the arrival of the liner on which he was prisoner at Marseilles, Savarkar asked permission to have a hot bath. After soaping himself all over he managed to squeeze through a port-hole and drop into the sea. It was over half a mile to the nearest land and, as Savarkar was swimming, he was seen and recognized from the liner. A boat was lowered. Savarkar was a good swimmer and reached land just before the boat, but he was exhausted. He had asked for a car to be waiting, but A. A. had once again disobeyed orders and there was no help at hand. In desperation Savarkar rushed up to a French gendarme and asked to be taken to the Commissary of Police. At that moment the sailors and detectives came up and, seizing him, told the gendarme that he was a thief and took him by force back to the ship. The gendarme took no action and made no attempt to stop them.

There were soon interpellations in the French Chamber and Jaurés's protests forced the French Government to demand Savarkar's restitution. The British government proposed arbitration and the case was finally tried at the Hague Tribunal. The decision was that, as the French policeman had not protested, the French government could not raise the matter later. It was an unfortunate precedent for international law.

By the time this decision was reached, Savarkar had been sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andaman Islands. He was let out some fourteen years later, when Lord Olivier was Secretary of State for India, though I never found out if he had intervened and given orders for his liberation. Vinayak Savarkar is today one of the leaders of the Indian extreme religious Nationalists—the Hindu Mahasabha. He was arrested at the time of Gandhi's assassination, but later released for lack of evidence. I have never communicated with him since I last saw him in Brixton Gaol.