

### **The Rickshaw Man**

It was February 1945. Fateh Baz, my orderly, was with me in Calcutta. 'With me' meant that he was lodged in the basement of the Grand Hotel with the orderlies of other sahibs like myself, who were staying in the hotel. On the one whole day we were in transit in Calcutta he went his way and I went mine.

Having toured the shops and wandered a long way I decided to take a rickshaw back to the hotel outside of which we duly arrived. Then the haggling started with the rickshaw man. I knew the going rate and had no more of offering more. He knew that most officers at the Grand were new arrivals to India and therefore a soft touch. As the words and gestures and noise grew, up loomed Fateh Baz, resplendent in his uniform, tall, hook-nosed and with the air of a Pathan (which he was). He pushed between me and the rickshaw man, grabbed him by the front of his coat, lifted him momentarily from the ground and said to me in Urdu, which the rickshaw man understood perfectly, "Sahib, I want your permission to kill this man". The rickshaw man wriggled free, grabbed his rickshaw and fled at high speed. Fateh Baz relaxed his fierce features and smiled at me, and I put my intended fare back in my pocket.