



to be made of pressed steel rather than American hickory. As to "bicycle" wheels, they are difficult to keep really clean, and have a tendency to rust the inner tube, when in time the moisture penetrates to the tyre via a loosened spoke or two.

Watch your spare wheel. Do more than watch it; lock it. Put a stout chain and a reliable padlock to secure it to the frame of the car at the rear. If you neglect this precaution it will assuredly be stolen at some time or another. These Indian motor thieves are smart fellows, and the articles stolen are never recovered by the police, no matter how many forms you fill up or how brightly the Indian sub-inspector's buttons shine when you waste valuable time going to the right *thana* (police station) to make a complaint.

There is no good to be gained by blinking the fact that most of the cars sold in India emanate from America. For this there are several reasons, chief amongst which is the initial outlay. Secondly comes the question of the ease with which spare parts can be obtained, and their low cost as compared with the prices charged for the spare parts of English cars. These objections are not now so strong as they used to be, for a few English firms have realized the huge market which awaits a good car at a moderate price, and are making a genuine attempt to secure their share of the trade. To compete with the American car, however, the cost of a British car should not exceed two hundred pounds, delivered to the customer in India. A good water-cooling system is necessary, which means a large radiator, and the difference between the two-three seater and the family four should not be too great. And plenty of leg-room is wanted in a country where your foot is for ever resting just on or above the clutch; it is not pleasant to have your knee almost touching the steering-wheel when resting in this position.

Another thing manufacturers might bear in mind is that in cities like Calcutta head-lights are forbidden



within the city limits. Small side-lights only must be used ; and in many cars, both English and American, these lamps have to be fitted as extras after the car has been sold to the customer in India. In all cases a bulb horn as well as an electric one should be standard ; some police authorities prohibit any horns other than bulb, but outside their jurisdiction you want both.

Good hoods are needed ; most of the standard variety quickly crack, and afterwards leak in the heavy rains. And, again because of the monsoon, the higher up the magneto and carburettor are placed the better. All cars for the East should be fitted with a really large and efficient filter for the petrol, before it comes near the carburettor, and the connexions of the latter should be made as accessible as possible, and the nuts and threads large and strong. Most stoppages out East are caused by choked petrol pipes or jets, and anyone who has had to dismantle these things beneath a fierce sun, and with the thermometer standing at 100° in the shade, and heaven alone knows how much on your back, will bear me out when I say that the average pipe connexions are awkward to get off and much worse to replace. And as for the jets, they are not a pleasant job to undertake on the roadside at the best of times.

Punctures and troubles generally usually seem to occur in an Indian city when you are on the way to dinner or the theatre, or hurrying down late for office in the morning, or at noon when you are racing home to tiffin. You see they are always occurring ; and it is mostly because of dirty petrol that your engine fails. This, together with punctures and bursts, caused by the cast shoes of bullocks and careless inflation of tyres, constitute the reason for 90 per cent. of your motoring troubles.

The sets of tools supplied with many motor-cars are usually most inadequate. This is bad enough in England, but perfectly tragic in India ; for tools are not easy to acquire everywhere, and when they are their cost is very high. Will manufacturers please note this ?



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A decent "jack," with a large base, is necessary in a country where the tarred roads sink beneath the tread of your boots, let alone the weight of your car. And if the "jack" is one which can be elevated quickly, by means of a chain, so much the better, for the usual gift variety of "jack" is a trial and a general abomination.

Many self-starters on cars in the East fail to function after a time. Having eliminated all usual troubles, such as the omission to put a sufficiency of distilled water in the accumulator, dirty connexions, and so on, we finally come to the generator itself. All too frequently it is found that the armature winding is insufficiently protected against damp, and one firm I knew finally made it a point of removing the armature from every battery generator and stoving it thoroughly, then waterproofing it again before assembling the dynamo once more.

The springs for cars in the East should all be covered, as is the case in many good makes of car, for and dirt play havoc with steel in India. Of course there are other things also, such as the extreme necessity for particularly well-seasoned wood to be used in all coachwork, more especially in the body of a closed car. Doors usually swell in the rains, and have to be planed in order to make them shut. Then when the atmosphere is dry again these doors are loose, and rattle.

All these improvements, you will say, in a two-hundred-pound car! Well, perhaps not all of them, but as many as possible. And plenty of motorists would not mind paying a good deal more than two hundred pounds if they could be sure of getting a car such as I have described, partially and inadequately I will admit, but nevertheless with a good deal of experience behind my complaints and suggestions. I must leave other transport questions for the next chapter. You will probably agree that the motor-car has had already more than its fair share of consideration.



CHAPTER XVI

Train Journeys—Wayside Stations by Night—Joy-Riders—Dropping Cards—"Not at Home"—Garden-Parties and their Uses

THE Indian loves to travel, especially by train, within the confines of his own country. To go anywhere by sea is a different matter altogether, not lightly to be undertaken. He calls the sea the "black water," and to journey on it means that his caste is broken. This causes trouble; and when he returns to India the orthodox Hindu who wishes to regain his caste must go through certain forms and ceremonies, and pay quite a lot of money, in order to be pure again.

It is not only the poor and illiterate Indian who holds these beliefs; on the contrary, some of those who hold most closely to what we Westerners look upon as silly superstition are themselves the most highly educated and progressive of men. The late Sir Austosh Mukerji, a judge of the Calcutta High Court, and the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University for many years, was an example of the class of Indian who, with every opportunity to travel, and with necessary means, as well as a knowledge of a warm welcome awaiting him in England, would never break his caste by making the necessary sea-journey. He was a most fearless man, an educationist of distinction, and the "Father" of his university. In a tussle with the Governor of Bengal over certain questions regarding the Calcutta University it was generally conceded that Sir Austosh had the better of the encounter. There was nothing servile in his dealing with men, and in many ways he was the most modern of the moderns. But as regards religion he remained a strictly orthodox Hindu. He was born, educated, won distinction, and finally died, universally mourned, in the land he loved so well. He never left its shores.



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Train journeys in India are rather different to those in England ; they are usually much longer, and always much more dirty. A glance at the map of India will show you why their length is greater, while the absence of cleanliness is due most of all to the very inferior coal used for stoking the locomotives. This is such filthy stuff that the whole compartment becomes covered with soot and coal dust, and every now and again when the train stops at a station it is necessary for a sweeper to appear with brush and dust-pan to clean up the carriage.

As most train journeys undertaken by Europeans involve spending one or more nights on board, it is necessary to carry your own bedding and washing-kit with you. If you do not you must sleep in your clothes, for there is no provision made for you in the way of sheets, pillows, etc., and neither threats nor money can procure them once you are on the train. Corridor trains are not fashionable in India on most of the lines. You will always find a refreshment-car on long-distance trains, but you must take an opportunity of reaching it from the platform of a handy station, and you will have to remain in the dining-car until another station is reached which affords an opportunity for a return to your own compartment.

People usually take their own servant with them ; he has a third-class ticket and ensconces himself as near to your compartment as possible, or there may even be a carriage for servants which adjoins your own. When you leave the train for a meal, either at a station refreshment-room or in the dining-car itself, it is well to put your servant in charge of your personal effects in the compartment. Train thieves are fairly common, and to leave your bags and sleeping things lying unattended is simply asking for trouble, for as likely as not you will have the carriage to yourself, if it is a small one, or if some other European is with you it is very likely he will want to get out the same time as you do.

Some people can sleep through anything. An Indian train journey provides an excellent means of discovering



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whether or not you belong to the elect. The usual permanent way of the Indian railway is not as perfect as you are accustomed to in England, and the shaking and noise are fairly considerable. But it is not between stations that you are most disturbed; it is at the stations themselves.

The arrival of a train at a wayside station is an event of sufficient magnitude to bring the entire population of the place out to greet it. Especially is this so at night. The day's work being over, a little recreation is indicated, and here is cheap fun ready to hand. Even if the Indian has no particular friend who is travelling by train he will nevertheless come along and help to congest the platform, and by his presence add to the general tumult and confusion.

The station may be lit up dimly, or not at all. That matters not, for every party of Indians will carry a *buttie*, which is a kerosene lamp of sorts—usually a cheap one of the hurricane variety. If you are awake—and only the really seasoned traveller can be expected to sleep through the din—and let down your window to see where you are, you will find the platform swarming with half-naked brown bodies swaying this way and that, waving lamps and gesticulating wildly. All the time they chatter and scream at one another—a veritable babel of sound. Every passenger is surrounded by friends and all the travellers have luggage.

It would seem in some cases as though the entire contents of a house were accompanying its owner. All kinds of domestic pots and pans, bedclothes, boxes, water-carriers, trestle-beds, here and there a caged bird twittering in fright at the light, and general pandemonium; while little children are dragged by the arm, first here and then there, and tiny babies are supported on the hips of young girls, who are their mothers, but who appear mere children themselves. These will be young peasant women mostly, and they struggle about in pathetic confusion, encumbered in many cases by their *purdah* veils.



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All you can see of them is the glint of bright eyes through the slots in the black wrapping.

It is small wonder that trains stop a long while at wayside Indian stations. A great number of these people must find room somewhere in the train, and they hurl themselves at carriages already filled to overflowing with warm and moist humanity. They are practically all third-class passengers, though some may travel second. A goodly proportion will have tickets, some travellers most certainly will not, and many get a ride without payment. At their destination these people are adepts at slipping past the ticket collectors, and the amount of revenue lost to Indian railways by this "joy-riding" must be very great. In recent years matters have been tightened up a good deal, and additional staff employed to handle the ever-increasing crowds.

I recollect on one occasion when a suburban train reached Howrah station—which is the Liverpool Street of Calcutta—that over one hundred passengers were detained, and charged with travelling without having previously paid their fares. These people were most indignant when they had to appear in court and pay for their temerity; all sorts of people were caught in the net so unexpectedly laid that morning, and the number of lawyers was quite alarming to those of the laity who still retained some respect for the legal profession. In India, no less than in other parts of the world, railways share with insurance companies and the income-tax collector the penalty of being considered everybody's legitimate prey. Thou shalt not steal—except from a railway company, an insurance company or the Revenue Department. And most of us in our hearts readily agree to this amendment to the Eighth Commandment.

When the train finally pulls out, with many creaks and groans, and slipping of wheels, you may settle down on your improvised bed once more, with the certain knowledge that in a short space of time the next stopping place will be reached, and another entertainment



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provided to while away the hot hours of a seemingly endless night.

It is quite possible that you may come into even closer contact with the disturbance. Like a careful traveller you have bolted your carriage door and feel more or less free from invasion. Then, as you lie listening in a semi-conscious condition, the offside window drops down and an arm belonging to some railway servant is thrust through the open window. Before you can remonstrate he has undone the bolt and is in the carriage. The other door is undone, and you sit up angrily to find another European entering the carriage.

"Awfully sorry, old man, to disturb you, but there is no room elsewhere. My wife and I must get in, as we have to catch the Mail at Bombay."

You rise hurriedly and make the necessary readjustments. There will be no more sleep for you that night.

It turns out that the intruder is a local police officer. As befits his importance, he is attended at the station by all of the local force who are not on duty. Round his neck, and that of his *mem-sahib*, are hung garlands of sweet-smelling flowers. The lady gets in looking tired and worn, too tired luckily to bother about your dishevelled state, or even, perchance, to notice you at all. The man remains on the platform until the moment the train leaves. He has to listen to many speeches and prayers; meanwhile, whether he likes it or not, numerous gifts of strong-smelling flowers and overripe fruit are thrust into the compartment. By now the carriage looks like a sort of harvest festival; you and your belongings are completely smothered with the fruits of the earth. They are all there—all, that is to say, with the possible exception of those gigantic marrows; but then they are always at a discount except at the jam-making season.

You inwardly rejoice when the train begins to move. Amid crashing salutes from the police on the platform the departing officer falls back amongst the vegetables, and sits down uncertainly on a bag of ripe mangoes.



You all smile feebly, and the garlanded pair remove their signs of greatness, pitch most of the fruit out of the window, and find a seat somewhere.

They are already feeling better, and presently you forget your temporary annoyance, for they are pleasant people who are off to enjoy a well-earned leave. Soon they will be in London, and become just simple citizens again. It grows rather wearisome, this mothering and fathering of our Aryan brothers. How nice to become your own plain self once more, even if it can last only a few months.

These railway journeys of India may appeal to some people, but, personally, I like them not. I sometimes wish that all my journeys could be by sea. Ocean travel is so much more comfortable, especially in the East.

As you drive round the residential European quarter of any Indian town you are certain to see, if it be late afternoon, that many houses have a little wooden box hung at the entrance. It is rather like the offertory-box in a church porch, except that on its side will be inscribed a married lady's name, and the magic words: "Not at Home."

You may at first imagine this to be an indication of the pure-bloodedness of the owner of the box, a sign that the occupier of the house is a *pucca* European—for assuredly no European can be said to be genuinely at home in India!

In reality the box means nothing of the sort. The lady is probably playing tennis on the lawn behind the house, or playing bridge on the verandah. Nevertheless, when this magic box is hung up, only really intimate friends may enter. To you and all the rest of those outside her innermost circle of friends she is "not at home." But she must not be entirely neglected; you are expected to "drop cards" if you wish to be friendly. And if you are a newcomer you will be well advised to do so, not altogether



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without discrimination, neither with a niggardly hand, but drop some you must, or you will never come to know anybody—at least, that was so in the old days, and to some extent it remains true to this day.

If you and your wife come to India, and take a bungalow in some important town, you may be certain that no friendly neighbour will drop in to see how you like the place and offer a kindly word of welcome. Such things are simply not done in India. It is the part of the newcomer to call first. This you do by the card system; nobody wants to see you until they have first inspected your cards, and made a few discreet inquiries. Then you may get cards dropped in your own little box, or they may come by post. A call may follow; perhaps even an invitation to tennis or dinner; it depends a good deal on the status of your firm, your relations at home, your titles, and your bank account—also the street in which you live matters quite a lot.

It is very wrong to make fun of all this; because dropping cards has its advantages—though I have a shrewd suspicion that the association of master printers instituted the idea. If there is such an organization, that phrase should really be in capital letters, for they must be an important group. Assuredly it is the printer who gets most out of this card game, for the demand is immense; and we should also be thankful because, were it not for cards, the art of copperplate writing would have died out long ago.

Strange as it may sound, the people who really matter will have none of your cards. When you call at Government House, as indeed every European resident must once a season, there you will find a great book placed in a select spot, to which you may easily walk from your car. A large printed notice invites you to write your name and address in the book, and particularly enjoins on you *not* to leave cards.

Truly an excellent idea, and one which is really productive of something, for if you are anybody at all, or



the nearest possible equivalent, you will most certainly get an invitation to a garden-party. That is, at all events, something, and much more than you are likely to get from most of your card-dropping.

In olden days it was customary for the young men to don frock-coats and silk hats every Sunday morning, and to hire a carriage and drive round the town solemnly dropping cards. Nowadays they drive to a friend's house, clad in a tennis shirt and a pair of shorts, and comfortably tucked away in a two-seater, or astride a motor-bike, and drop nothing at all. Indeed they usually pick something up instead, not infrequently a bottle of beer. It may not be so romantic but it is much more pleasant.

Garden-parties are one of the few remaining institutions which are still healthy, and likely to endure for many years to come. They are an easy and fairly inexpensive way of showing hospitality, and are quite popular in India: official and unofficial people give them. The Governor of a province will thus welcome you to the grounds of Government House once or twice every cold weather. Some of the Indian princes who have a town house will also give a garden-party in honour of the Governor, or maybe of the Viceroy himself. Then there are lots of smaller fry who give a party, either in the afternoon or evening. For some reason or other they wish to gather a crowd together: someone is going on leave or has just returned; his friends or subordinates wish to speed his going or welcome him back, so the occasion is made the excuse for some speechmaking, a good deal of garlanding, and the purchasing of cheap cigarettes and doubtful cigars. And, should the affair take place in the evening, for once in a way Australian champagne comes into its own.

Almost everybody goes to the Governor's garden-party. At all events, it is nice to say you have been, and it gives your wife a chance of saying she has nothing to wear. That, of course, means a fat cheque. Then on arrival you all stand about the grounds, clad in the



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modern equivalent of purple and fine linen, and feeling rather foolish though trying to appear as if you were having no end of a fine time.

The Governor, poor fellow, is more bored than anybody else, but he dare not acknowledge the fact—it takes somebody like the Prince of Wales to do that. When in India H.R.H. retired from these entertainments as soon as he decently could, and wanted to know what time the dancing started. But then, of course, the heir to the Throne is privileged.

These official garden-parties at all events give you an opportunity of seeing over the grounds of Government House. The mysteries of what lies beyond the sentries, and within the great surrounding belt of trees with their white railings, are for an afternoon laid bare.

You can sit under the great trees in comfortable basket-chairs, and wander beside lily ponds and artificial lakes; you may even catch a glimpse of some of the staff playing tennis. That, however, is rare, for most of the staff have something to do at these parties. It is their duty to go round from group to group of guests, and see that everybody, especially those of the ladies who are good-looking, is having a good time: and very splendid they look, too, in their gay uniforms. Some military men like the life of an A.D.C., while others prefer soldiering.

All kinds of people are to be seen at the garden-party. There are men in grey "toppers" and morning coats, just a few nowadays, for the ordinary lounge suit seems to have taken the place of almost every other form of dress for men. I recollect, once, three men turning up in a bunch all wearing silk hats and frock-coats. They were just out from London on a visit to India, and had been told to bring this kit along especially for garden-parties. The sight was so unusual that an operator from a firm of local cinematographers turned his machine on the embarrassed trio, and secured a picture which was quite unique in its way. I believe this was the only



occasion that the costume was ever worn in the country by those visitors.

Tables are dotted all over the beautiful green lawn, and numerous bright umbrellas of giant size cast a grateful shade over sugar cakes and save them from melting. The Governor's band plays softly; fair ladies criticize one another's frocks, and mere man stands by as patient as may be under the strain. Groups of the worldly-wise hover as close to the tea-tables as they dare. You quickly discover why, for as soon as the Governor appears on the scene, standing motionless at the playing of the National Anthem, then bowing to left and right as he walks down the red carpet between rows of guests to the special tent prepared for him and his entourage, the hungry and expectant multitude are all aquiver. No sooner has "His Ex" entered the tent, sometimes even before, than there is an undignified rush for the tea-tables. Those people who are left out in this game of musical chairs repair to the refreshment-bar, and are served with tea and cakes as they stand. Or they can go a bit farther on, and discover another bar where other and stronger refreshment is usually provided.

Tea being over, people stand round and chat. They criticize the catering, those who are older are heard telling the younger generation how well Lord So-and-so used to do things. To hear them talk you might suppose these gossips had been there—more probably they were thriving on Mellin's Food at the time.

Almost every other person you speak to says how boring the whole affair is, how they had not intended to come but—you know how one simply must do these things. You smile, and possibly agree verbally, but your thought is: "What would the old thing have said if she had not been asked?"

No one can leave until His Excellency withdraws, and when he does, there is a stampede for cars. The guests go home to tell those of their friends who did not receive an invitation how wonderful it all was, how sweet Her



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Ladyship looked ; what a perfect fright Mrs So-and-so was with her green dress and dyed hair. "Cats," says the long-suffering husband, as he goes off to the club for a drink and a game of snooker. And, strangely enough, no one there even mentions the garden-party.

What then, you will ask me, is the use of it all ? I have often wondered myself, and have come to the conclusion that garden-parties are given principally for the sake of the Indian guests. It gives them an opportunity of meeting, socially, Government officials and prominent citizens. It gives the European non-official a chance of meeting the Indian official and the Indian non-official. He finds out in conversation that the rabid Swarajist is not such an inhuman monster as the newspapers would make him out to be. The Indian extremist, on the other hand, discovers that the European is after all a good fellow, and can crack a joke and unbend in quite a human manner. Both find they have a good deal in common, and the impression will remain through the fire and smoke of later debates and newspaper correspondence.

Also, the party gives the Governor an opportunity to pay some little attention to a few of the wobblers—those politicians who are easily influenced by a little judicial flattery, even a little genuine courtesy and kindness. It is not so easy to revile a Governor whose hand you have shaken, and into whose humorous and kindly eyes you have gazed. And Her Ladyship can do a great deal also in this way to smooth the path which her husband must tread. It is not in these days a flowery pathway, and if garden-parties do anything in the way of cementing friendship between official and unofficial residents of India, between white man and brown, long may they flourish—the sarcasm, scorn and scepticism of the average European notwithstanding.



CHAPTER XVII

The Indian Christmas—Followers of Paget, M.P.—Flying Visitors
—The Law of Divorce—Police Courts—Indian Broadcasting
—A Son of Charles Dickens

IN those parts of India where you get cold weather for several months, at the close of one year and at the beginning of the next, this season is very pleasant. Christmas is, in fact, a cheery time wherever you may be in the East, for it is the spirit of the festival which makes it joyous more than the weather with which English tradition has enwrapped it. I suppose it hardly ever occurs to an Englishman that Christmas had its origin in a hot country. As such is nevertheless a fact, what hinders those resident in the East from having a real old-fashioned Christmas! Nothing at all, I can assure you, having spent several exceptionally happy Christmases there.

Unless you are away up north, in some hill station, such as Simla, Missoorie or Darjeeling, you neither expect nor see snow or ice; but then, praises be! you do not have rain either. The average man spends his Christmas in the Plains; in one of the cities for preference, where everything is Christmassy save cold and snow. It is usually cold enough at night for a blanket and for a warm coat if you are motoring, but in the daytime you will still want your white suit and *topi*.

Shops are gay with Christmas cheer; there is usually a pantomime, starting in traditional style on Boxing Day, and all the hotels give special dinners and decorate their premises with evergreens and mistletoe, imported especially for the occasion if none can be brought down from the Hills. There are, in fact, almost too many attractions around Christmas for the ordinary person to participate in them all. You can dance every night in the week, with the exception of Sunday; there are tea-dances also and



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a special number of race meetings, not to mention polo matches, when up-country teams visit the cities and participate in tournaments on the *maidan*. There are football matches to see, and always tennis to be played, and everything is done in the most pleasant circumstances possible. Of course in Bombay you do not get really cold weather at any time of the year, but in Calcutta you have three good months of it, and the place then is always crowded with visitors. And so it is in many other parts of the country.

Carol singers come round to the hotels. The Salvation Army are particularly enterprising in this matter, and collect a goodly sum from the guests, who give generously, for they like to hear the old carols well sung—it adds a spice of old-world Christmas to their dinner.

Tiffin on Christmas Day is also a cheery meal. A long, specially erected table at the top of the great dining-room groans beneath the weight of good things, including the traditional boar's head; crackers are passed round, and nobody on this occasion is ashamed to appear ridiculous in a paper cap. The band plays a Christmas medley of airs, to the constant accompaniment of the sound of corks popping and wine gurgling.

A great many people who never think of attending church service in the ordinary way have been to the Cathedral that morning. Indeed it is difficult to obtain a seat at a Christmas service; chairs are requisitioned and every available foot of standing room is occupied, while the Governor's band is specially lent for the occasion to add its music to that of the organ and choir.

At an early hour on Christmas morning you are made conscious of the auspicious day, for a whole procession of Indians is quite likely to arrive at your bungalow. It is an occasion known to them as the sahib's *Burra Din* (Great Day), and this means that your clerks, and others who are personal servants, and the messengers of various tradespeople, will all be waiting to salaam you, and hand in trays laden with flowers and fruits, indigestible sweets,



nuts, and even, maybe, samples of wines of which you have never even heard, and tins of cigarettes of a brand which you would never be guilty of smoking.

All these are presents, and if you are a newcomer you may feel quite overjoyed, you are certainly touched by the kindly thought. And you will be touched in another way also, for every man who brings a rupee's worth of fruit expects a handsome tip. Is not it the *sahib's* great day, and is it not the custom to give presents on that day? Assuredly it is, and you pay up as generously as your pocket will allow; but most of the fruit, sweets and other things, including the doubtful wine and cheap cigarettes, go to your bearer and other house-servants. These enterprising fellows either consume them or, as likely as not, sell them to some other Indian, who will take them round to another *sahib*, one who is not in the habit of getting up as early as you are. And he in his turn will likewise make a present, for with him, also, it is Christmas Day.

Your servants will, of course, expect money as well as second-hand presents, so by the time you get away from the house you are relieved of a goodly sum. It is a cheerful system of legalized blackmail, to which every European must subscribe; but it has its humorous side.

Children have just as good a Christmas out East as they usually would have in England. There are special parties at the hotels for them, and the traditional stocking hangs in the accustomed place at the foot of the bed. The child has but to lift up the mosquito curtain to retrieve it in the morning; that net, and the fact that there is daylight so much earlier in the morning than would be the case in England, are really the only differences the East makes to the child's Christmas. The toys and the boxes of sweets are the same, possibly they even come from the same manufacturer; and you can get the child a Christmas tree, and lots of pretty ornaments to put on it, considerably cheaper than you can at home. Indians rather specialize in these childish things, and can



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make all sorts of wonderful toys for children out of paper, and wood, and plaster. Indians are very fond of children, and fall readily into the fun of a children's Christmas.

What you do not, of course, get in India are the family dinners and reunions, which are such a feature of Christmas at home. If this is in some ways to be regretted, in other ways it is compensated for by the fact that, whereas at home the festivities press rather heavily on ladies of the household, here in the East all the work is done by your multitude of servants. You merely have to eat the dinner; the worry of preparation, the week's shopping in advance, the actual labour of the whole business—all this is taken out of your hands. So, after all, you see, Christmas week in the East is not such a bad time as folks in England might imagine. It is hateful to smash a cherished delusion, but we people out East do really have quite a jolly time at the festive season, and I don't believe it costs any more than it does in England.

It is in the cold weather that most casual visitors come to India; they have a right royal time and frequently express mild wonderment if they glimpse a few pasty faces, and marvel at the frayed nerves of some of the European inhabitants. Even in these days there are a good many descendants of Kipling's Paget, M.P., roaming about the world, but the trouble is that they rarely stay sufficiently long in India to be able to recognize themselves as belonging to the stock of so notorious an ancestor.

I well remember meeting one of this kind, but unfortunately for him he landed in the country just when the weather was beginning to warm up. He had miscalculated matters somewhat; but that did not seem to worry him, for he sat in the hotel drinking double whiskies, and laughed at our small portions of whisky and plentiful rations of soda. But he learnt all about it in time, and when I saw him off a few months later he was a pretty sick man, and the doctor had warned him that if he didn't leave then he would probably never get



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away at all. That sort of man will never be told anything; he is a distinct type, and such come and go with unfailing regularity.

There are other kinds of visitors to India. I call them flying visitors—of two kinds. First of all there are those who come by aeroplane and make a short stay at Karachi, Delhi, and elsewhere, and thence fly on to Calcutta where they stay a day or two before proceeding to Burma. They are, for the most part, gallant, cheery souls, and the townspeople come out in their thousands to welcome them on arrival, and give them no end of a good time for the short while they remain in the place. They are wine and dined, interviewed and photographed, and generally made much of by Press and public.

The other type of flying visitor comes stealthily, from no one exactly knows where, and he disappears almost as quietly—sometimes even more so. He may stay a month or a year, but when he finally disappears he takes a good deal of other people's property with him: sometimes it is cash, more often it is jewellery. The tradesmen of India have lost a lot of money over this type of visitor, for it rarely pays to prosecute, and if the police will not do so, few private individuals care to take the risk of running up a stiff bill of costs which will have to be paid by themselves, whether the prosecution be successful or not.

Running a successful "school" of *chemin de fer* has more than once provided travelling adventurers with a nourishing sum of money with which to leave India. Usually the small party arrives at a good hotel and makes friends with the habitual frequenters of the place. One of the gang is generally an attractive woman, and her part is to entice men to the handsome furnished flat which these people contrive to rent in a good-class district of the town. Plenty of drinks and eatables are provided free, and soon a "school" is formed; others are drawn into the net, and night by night large sums of money are lost to the professional gamblers. Finally the police get



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wind of the thing, and the visitors either clear out of the country at the first warning of trouble or, if they are inclined to remain, they are told officially to leave.

This departure, however, does not come about before a number of the local sporting fraternity have been well bled, and although the thing has happened many times in the past it will probably continue to happen as long as there are wealthy young fools to squander the fortunes built up for them by hard-working fathers. All of the victims, however, are not young men. There's no fool like an old fool, and some of the brand you meet with in India are particularly foolish where a young and pretty woman is concerned. People who imagine that the successful practising of the confidence trick is confined to Europe and America, and act accordingly when they come East, are likely to suffer a rude awakening.

Talking about swindling very naturally leads one's thoughts to the law courts. The Indian variety is very different from those in England. The Indian penal code also is different from the law of England, and there is one section of the Indian law which will especially interest married men. If your wife becomes enamoured of another man you can, if she goes off and lives with him, divorce her under the English law, and possibly obtain damages against the co-respondent, though whether the money is ever paid in full is always problematical.

Under the Indian penal code an injured husband can also do this; he can do more, for in India the man who entices away another's wife can be sent to prison. This law is by no means a dead letter, for I can recall several cases where a European co-respondent went to jail, at the instance of a husband who had proved successfully that the man had "alienated his wife's affections."

I understand that this law dates back to the days of John Company, when a trip from England to India was no light or inexpensive undertaking. In those days white women were very few and far between in the country.



It cost a husband quite a lot of money to bring his wife out from home ; she was thus much more of a rarity, and it may be assumed wives were looked upon as treasured possessions in those far-off days.

Evidently the law of supply and demand regulated values in the matrimonial as well as in the business market, and this statute, prescribing the penalties to be suffered by any man who was sufficiently daring successfully to lure a man's wife away from him, was evidently intended to put a stop to a state of things which had become too common. The fact that this law still remains on the Statute Book goes to show the high value which is to this day placed on a white woman in India, also that the gentle art of philandering is by no means a lost one. Wives still leave their husbands, or their affections are "alienated" by the oft-repeated pleadings of some gay Lothario, but the Indian penal code at all events provides penalties sufficiently stringent to make lovers look twice, or even thrice, before they leap.

I am not going to say anything about the High Courts of Justice in India, for they are not sufficiently dissimilar to those in England to call for lengthy comment. The police courts, however, are very different, especially those courts presided over by Honorary Indian Magistrates.

Even in the police courts of rural England there is a solemnity and decorum observed which in India is totally lacking. The police court of a large Indian city is usually a two- or three-storey building and its precincts are made the meeting-place for all sorts and conditions of people. There are pleaders by the score, who button-hole every likely-looking individual who comes into the compound in the hope that they may be engaged to appear in a case which is down for hearing that day. There are defendants, witnesses, and friends of both standing around, while prisoners are led through the throng roped to policemen in case they should try to slip away in the crush. Close by are the refreshment-



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stalls, where *pan* and lemonade are sold to satisfy the creature comforts of the crowd.

Inside and outside the building the babel of tongues is appalling, and as the various courts are situated both on the ground floor and upstairs, the din from one court penetrates into another, until the whole building is one gigantic chatterbox. The staircase gives a fine point of vantage for idlers who wish to overlook the proceedings of a court below, and half-naked perspiring bodies are seen glued to the railings while their owners' heads are pressed forward in an endeavour to understand, from out the babel of sound which comes up from below, just what is happening in the way of justice to-day.

The court below is packed to suffocation, and the smell of humanity comes up in strong overpowering waves. Horrible places these police courts—the modern Black Holes of Calcutta.

It is considered by an Indian a great honour to be appointed an Honorary Magistrate. However old or decrepit he may be he will never willingly relinquish the power and prestige which the position gives him in the eyes of other Indians. So you must not be surprised if you see on the bench an old man, hard of hearing and partially blind, who mumbles through his office and dispenses justice with half his faculties, while the other half just manage to keep him from falling asleep.

It is the police who really run these courts. A prisoner is placed in the dock charged with some minor offence. He almost always pleads guilty as a matter of course, raising his hands in supplication to the bench for lenient treatment, rather than attempting to deny the charge brought against him, or bring witnesses to prove his innocence. Everyone talks at once—the magistrate, his clerk, the pleaders, the police witnesses, and anyone else who fancies the sound of his own voice. The only decorum insisted on is that everyone inside the place shall uncover.



In the most important court, which is presided over by a European stipendiary magistrate, matters are somewhat more orderly, but even there the procedure leaves much to be desired. The accommodation is very limited and the atmosphere heated. The stipendiary is almost inevitably overworked, as before he takes his seat on the bench he has to receive numerous callers in his private room. His signature is required to all sorts of legal documents; junior magistrates wish to consult him; and there are a hundred and one things to be done which no one knows of, save those who have peeped behind the scenes. He is the butt of Press and public, a never-failing easy target for ignorant and careless criticism. The fact that he is a Government servant, and a European to boot, is quite enough to ensure that his actions are kept well in the limelight shed by the Extremist Press.

The police courts of India are good places to keep away from, whether you be prisoner, prosecutor, or a member of the general public.

A considerable amount of misconception exists in England as to the position of broadcasting in India. Perhaps a few facts may help to clear the ether of mental atmospherics.

People have asked me whether it is worth while taking their wireless set out to India with them. Assuredly it is; half-a-loaf is better than no bread, and you do sometimes hear concerts that are worth while listening to, even though the high standard set by the B.B.C. is not likely to be approached in India for many years to come.

It is expected that the new Indian Broadcasting Company will be in full swing this August (1927). Mr Eric Dunstan, the General Manager, has been telling us so in print, and apologizing for the fact that it will not be possible to get going at an earlier date.

This new company should prove a really good thing for everybody concerned, once the possibilities of wireless are realized by the millions of Indians who have the



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means to purchase a set and sufficient intelligence to use it. I imagine it will be rather like the initial stages of the motoring industry in India. As many Indians as possibly could, bought cars, and a week later fifty per cent. of them were out of order. I know Mr Dunstan pins his faith to the crystal set, and I hope for his sake that all crystal sets will be fitted with a permanent detector; the average Indian will not care to be for ever "finding the spot" and renewing crystals. The set for India must be as simple and fool-proof as it is possible to contrive—that is, if millions are going to use wireless. There is no reason why countless thousands of *purdah* women should not listen to music in their solitude. The many out-stations, too, will welcome wireless. What a boon to the weary tea-planter in Assam if he can turn on the music from a decent concert every now and then. I am afraid it will be only now and then, for, with a large majority of subscribers recruited from the Indian population, it seems likely that a great percentage of the music will have to be of the Eastern kind.

Until the formation of the Indian Broadcasting Company, wireless concerts were organized solely by enthusiastic amateurs in such places as Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. Their wavelength was not far-reaching. It may be interesting to recall these, before they slip into a mere memory. Bombay, 2FV, 385 metres; Calcutta, 5AF, 425 metres, 1½ kilowatts; Madras, 20 watts; and Bombay's second station, with the call sign 2AX, 50 watts. Colombo has a Government broadcasting station and operates on a wavelength of 800 metres, and will likely continue so to function for years to come under its present auspices.

In these various towns a Radio Club was formed, and enthusiasts gathered together to study wireless in the early days, and also helped with the programmes. Music, news and talks were sent over the ether twice a day, and the time-signal was given on a gong. The snag, of course, lay in the fact that the organizers of these concerts



had to depend, practically entirely, on the good nature of amateurs who gave their services by day and by night. It was no easy task to keep the ball rolling, and even so, little interest was taken in these affairs once the novelty of wireless wore off.

I can recollect sitting one night in the Grand Hotel, Calcutta, at a meeting of the European Association. Wireless had just started, and as an especial treat the audience was able to listen to a speech sent over the ether from a building not far away. Very little of what was said could be distinguished through that early type of loud-speaker, but what did materialize was naturally of a political nature; and when a bit later on the speaker came back to the meeting he then realized he had been placing the broadcasting people in danger of losing their licence. It was a condition of broadcasting that nothing of a political nature should be sent out, and the speaker was quite relieved to know that he had been well-nigh unintelligible, for he is a well-known local European barrister, and a great stickler for the upholding of law and order. Government, however, never knew, officially at any rate, for the Press agreed not to report the occurrence.

It seems strange in these days that such a performance should have then seemed worth while, when the speech could just as well—in fact much better—have been delivered in the presence of the audience. But of course wireless was then just a toy and nothing more. Why, I can recall a dance in Calcutta when the music was to have been supplied from a studio a few hundred feet away. If it had not been that a band was present in the room as a stand-by, however, we should have had no dancing at all, for the wireless music was audible a few feet away only, and then it came and went in spasmodic jerks, not nearly so clear as America can now be relayed by 2LO.

I can think of few more pleasant ways, from the purely European point of view, of spending a hot summer's evening in India, than by reclining in a long chair, with the inevitable iced whisky in a tall glass by my side, and listening to a good loud-speaker.



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In India, as at home, the question of "talks" is extremely debatable. I knew a man who had a wireless set to sell, in those early days of Indian broadcasting, and he had almost concluded a good deal. The prospective purchaser had already inspected the set, and appeared satisfied, promising to call next day and take it away. He came back during broadcasting hours, and the seller inquired whether his customer would not like to hear what was going on. The headphones were adjusted, and the man's face lit up with pleasure; but as he listened his smile gradually relaxed, and finally a frown puckered his brow. He removed the headphones and laid them down with an exclamation of disgust. He was not at all interested in a long and learned disquisition on the wonders and antiquity of the Great Wall of China, and he left the place refusing to complete his purchase.

It is difficult enough to please listeners in England, where professional material is so easily obtained; how the matter is going to be got over in the East I cannot pretend to be able to explain. Certain professionals who are touring the country may be induced, if the theatres do not object, to broadcast, but it seems to me that for many years to come there will be great scarcity of artists suitable for broadcasting. People may come out from England especially to tour the various stations, but this will be a very costly business, and unless the Broadcasting Company can guarantee them at least their expenses, I do not think the proposition is a feasible one.

How about picking up European broadcasting when you are in India? I am often asked about that. Certainly it can be done, but you must sit up half the night in order that a European concert may synchronize with Indian time. I have heard of a listener picking up the Savoy Bands at Darjeeling on a two-valve set. If he did so it was more or less of a freak, and not to be relied on as a regular source of entertainment. I believe a seven-valve set in Lucknow receives 2LO with fair success, and certainly the programme sent out by Philips Radio Ltd.,



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Eindhoven (Holland), on a short wave of 30 metres, can be picked up by a suitable set any time after 2 A.M. in many parts of India. This is good work, to receive a station, 6000 miles away, at tolerably good loud-speaker strength, on three-valves, and at good 'phone strength on two-valves.

When the time comes, and it cannot now be long distant, that English programmes can be picked up by the Indian Broadcasting Company and successfully relayed to its possible three million listeners, wireless will indeed come into its own all over the Empire, and certainly not least of all in India.

A celebrated actor may yet be enabled to read Dickens' *Christmas Carol* on Christmas Day to listeners all over the world, and Mr Rex Palmer bid the inhabitants of two hemispheres a cheery "Good-night." Only in those days it will have to be "Good-night" and "Good-morning."

The mention of Charles Dickens recalls to my mind a meeting in India with his youngest son. Last year a London newspaper reported that on the fifty-sixth anniversary of the great man's death a wreath of pink and white geraniums was laid on the tomb in Westminster Abbey with the inscription:

"In loving memory, from his youngest son, Charles Bulwer-Lytton Dickens."

The writing, on a half-sheet of black-edged paper, appeared to be in a woman's hand. It was stated that the wreath was placed on the tombstone by an old man, who said he had lately returned to England from India. He had passed out of the Abbey without being questioned by the vergers, who were not aware of the inscription until later.

It appeared that the officials of the Dickens Fellowship were not able to throw any light on the identity of the mysterious stranger, but stated that of the novelist's seven sons, Sir Henry Dickens is now the only survivor. The youngest son, Edward Bulwer-Lytton Dickens, was said to have died in Australia about eleven years ago.



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Despite the difference in the first Christian name I am not so sure that I did not meet this youngest son in Calcutta a few years ago. Certainly this must have been the old man who visited Westminster Abbey. He would be very feeble by now, for he had led a rough life and was in poor health, and it is quite possible that whoever wrote the memorial card made an error in writing "Charles." However, to my story.

Spences' Hotel, Calcutta, is one of the oldest hotels in India. It was there Lord Roberts stayed the very first night he landed in the country; this fact alone will give you some idea of the age and traditions of the hotel. The place is known from end to end of India as a hotel where the best of food is always to be had, and the reputation is based on fact, to which I am glad to testify, having had meals there for several years.

It was at tiffin at Spences' that I met Mr Dickens. He did not know me, but we began talking over the meal, and I soon learnt he was very upset by a film which was then being shown at a local cinema. This film was called *Oliver Twist*, and the old man was furious about it.

"My father would turn in his grave could he see the false impersonation of Oliver given by that boy Jackie Coogan."

The old man's white and abundant hair fairly stood on end with indignation, and a pair of the palest blue eyes I have ever seen flashed blue sparks. I confess to being more interested in the old man than I was in his grievance, but for a while I humoured him, and we discussed the film, which I also had seen, and I rather agreed with his criticisms.

Then, after a decent interval, I asked him if he was really a son of Charles Dickens. He saw that I was rather sceptical and was good enough to give me some of his history. This is as much of it as I can remember, but I have often subsequently heard him referred to as "Mr Dickens" by people in Calcutta. I give these particulars on the sole authority of the old man himself.



It appears that Mr Dickens had all his life been a rolling stone; he had done many things, and certainly had lived in Australia for some time. He eventually came to India, and bought a hotel in the Hills, at Simla, and he lived there most of the year, visiting Calcutta periodically and reserving a room, more or less permanently, at Spences'.

Amongst other stories he related was the thrilling one of the tragic death of the Prince Imperial. Mr Dickens was a cornet at the time of the Zulu Campaign, and was one of the few Englishmen present when the Zulus fell upon the Prince and dispatched him with their spears.

"The Zulus crept out of the field of maize, like so many grasshoppers," the old man told me; "they surprised us as we were dismounted; then, as we got mounted, the girths of the Prince's saddle slipped and he was flung to the ground and killed by the spear of one of the Zulus."

The story was told to me in plain soldier-like language, and I must admit it sounded genuine enough. But he might well have been there without being a son of Charles Dickens. Mr Dickens went on to tell me that at the time Lord Lytton, who then was Governor of Bengal, first arrived in the country he sent for him and offered him hospitality at Government House, in an annexe, saying that he was welcome to live there permanently if he so wished. However for some reason the offer had not been accepted. The old man had his small hotel at Simla and was probably quite comfortable there, and preferred to be independent. He certainly claimed to be a godchild of Lord Lytton's ancestor, who is to this day well remembered in India, and the second name, Bulwer, gives colour to the story.

Mr Dickens, when I last saw him, was a short little man, of rosy countenance, with a small white moustache; he walked with a slight stoop and appeared to be between sixty and seventy years of age.

I wonder what has become of the old man!



CHAPTER XVIII

Burma—A Peep at Rangoon—Wishing and Other “Belles”—
Nightmare Fish—Burmese Theatres

IT is over forty years since the whole of Burma finally came into British possession, and as the Indian army conquered the country under orders from the Viceroy of India, the territory thus acquired automatically became an Indian province. It, however, cannot fail to strike the visitor as peculiar that this very distinctive country, which, including the Shan States, totals an area of 240,000 square miles, should, after all these years, still remain a mere province of the Indian Empire. Burma is not accessible by rail, and is three days' journey by sea from the nearest important Indian seaport, Calcutta ; moreover, Burma is totally unlike India in almost every respect ; its people also are quite dissimilar.

There is a good deal of querulous comment, by both European and Burmese residents, as to the status of Burma ; it is considered desirable that this country of great natural resources should have more say in her own development. Why, it is said, should not Burma have its own Viceroy, and control its own destiny under the British Crown, instead of remaining a province, with a Governor, like its comparatively unimportant neighbour, Assam ? Burma does not care to have all its most important projects decided at Delhi or Simla, and does not like having to send representatives to the Indian Legislative Assembly.

Burma has all along filled the rôle of Cinderella in the Indian household, and disliked being brought into the orbit of the Reforms Scheme. The Indian Government has always grudged spending money on Burma, yet, as a European resident of Burma once put it to me : “ If the Indian Government had spent only half the money



on Burma that was wasted in Mesopotamia on irrigation and other schemes, the country would soon become one of the most fertile and prosperous in the world."

Buddhism is the prevailing religion of Burma; out of a total population of about 13,000,000 more than 11,000,000 are Buddhists. There are 500,000 Hindus, also 500,000 Mohammedans, while some 250,000 of the population are Christians.

The strength of Buddhism may be the better understood when it is realized that its priests number nearly 50,000. They are familiar sights, everywhere in evidence, with their bright yellow or saffron robes, worn like the toga of ancient Rome, and with heads kept close shaven. These priests are known as *phoongies*, and are mostly young men. They are vowed celibates, and take a three-fold vow of chastity, poverty and obedience. The student for priestly office may, before his vow is taken, help himself to anything on the table at a meal, but once he is vowed to poverty he may never help himself to anything; henceforth he must live only on those foods which are freely offered him. He is not allowed to possess money or goods of any kind, and depends entirely for every creature comfort on the generosity of his countrymen. Small wonder that begging has become a virtue in Burma.

Rangoon, the principal port of Burma, is also its capital. As a port it comes next in size and importance to Bombay and Calcutta, and, although situated some twenty-one miles up the river, ocean-going liners come right alongside the landing-stage.

The city is well laid out, is twenty-two square miles in area, and has a population of about 850,000. It is lit by electricity; and taxis, trams and rickshaws are the principal means of conveyance.

Colour and courtesy were perhaps the two chief attributes which most impressed me on my first visit to Rangoon. And I was greatly struck by the gay, independent Burmese, who revel in colour and love flowers



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and all the good things of life. These people laugh and smile their way through life, in happy contrast to the dour and morose type so frequently met with in India.

Rangoon has a rainfall of ninety-nine inches, which has given the city a permanent dress of green. Against this background, restful and pleasing to the eye, the many and varied colours worn by the Burmese show up in brilliant splendour. Gay paper sunshades of all hues protect the heads of the dainty little Burmese ladies, and fresh flowers bedeck the high-piled, jet-black hair, which the proud possessors have had the good sense not to shingle.

To get away from the harsh screaming of the raucous Indian voice was a pleasing relief, and there was altogether an absence of that irritating and constant noise to which one is only too unhappily accustomed in Indian cities. The orderliness and absence of confusion in street traffic, however busy the thoroughfare, was very noticeable; yet the police are Indians, Punjabis for the most part, and very smart they look in a gay uniform, poised erect on their stands in the centre of the road and shaded by canopies of stone or stucco, which look like giant toadstools. These Punjabis have evidently been taught that the more quickly traffic is kept moving the clearer will the roads be—a principle that police forces in India might be taught with advantage.

European sergeants of police are employed to regulate traffic at the most important and busiest points, working in the English style of two men at four cross-roads, and they manage to keep traffic moving at a good pace all day long. Traffic blocks are rare in Rangoon, and the police are greatly helped in their work by reason of the fact that all tram-lines are laid down the centres of the roads, leaving both sides of the street available for the unobstructed passage of motor-cars and other vehicles. It is worthy of note that fast traffic is invariably given the right-of-way preference.

There are lots of bullock-carts in the streets, and they are of much more solid construction than the Indian



variety, while the draught animals appear to be well fed and cared for. If cruelty to animals exists in Rangoon it is more rare, or much better concealed, than is cruelty in India.

Taxis are fairly plentiful, and in a much better state of preservation, and generally cleaner than those which ply for hire in Indian cities or elsewhere in the East. Save for the meter and the distinguishing "T" on the number plate, any of these taxis might easily be mistaken for private cars, so spick-and-span are they.

Perhaps the chief charm of Rangoon lies in its restful atmosphere of almost rural calm and peace, which rules outside the business part of the city. Wide asphalt roads, bordered by deep strips of grass and flanked with trees and hedges in quite an English style, stretch out in all directions. Picturesque, single-storeyed houses, constructed for the most part of wood, and painted a rich chocolate-colour, stand firmly on stout pillars of teak raised well above the ground, each in its own garden, wherein grow flaming red and purple flowers which scent the air and gladden the heart of the passer-by.

It is to this haven of rest and colour that the weary *sahibs* retreat quite early every afternoon (for in Rangoon all business offices close at the sensible hour of 4 P.M.) to seek rest and recreation in home or club. In this residential part of Rangoon it is easy to imagine yourself hundreds of miles away from town and sea, deep buried in the heart of a beautiful countryside, when in reality a fifteen minutes' run in a car will bring you to the streets and docks of a busy port.

It is early morning; in Rangoon you feel able, as well as wishful, to rise early. As you dress, a musical "dong, dong, dong!" comes floating on the breeze at pleasantly recurring intervals. It is the great bronze bell which hangs in the compound of the largest temple in Burma, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. It is the wishing-bell, the prayer bell of the Buddhists.



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Some little Burmese maid, dainty, spick-and-span, has likely risen with the dawn and is solemnly pounding out petitions with a hefty wooden ramrod, swung rhythmically against the stout side of the bell. It is tiring work, for the great bell weighs thirty-seven tons, and its sides are several feet thick. The little maid ceases, her tiny hands are tired; moreover, pounding the great bell is expensive, for an offertory-box is placed near by, with a watching priest, who counts the strokes and sees that just tribute is rendered by the suppliant. For a moment the bell is silent as the girl passes the ramrod to a waiting devotee, then once more the "*dong, dong, dong!*" is wafted on the breeze, telling all Rangoon that yet another worshipper is earning the right to pray for otherwise unattainable blessings. And who will be bold enough to say that the musical prayer, backed by the right motive, will not penetrate higher, far higher, than the topmost dome which glints in the sunlight over peaceful Rangoon! Even the most sceptical among us will not care to declare that the power of auto-suggestion is not aided by the pounding of musical metal.

Time was, and that not many years ago, when every European resident and visitor made a practice of visiting at intervals the great Shwe Dagon Pagoda. Now all that is changed.

The trouble started when the priests in charge of the temple were stirred up, by visiting seditionists, into a spirit of antagonism to British rule. These keepers of the temple were persuaded into making an order that all Europeans who wished henceforth to visit the place must take off not merely their shoes, but likewise their socks or stockings, and climb barefoot the hundred-odd wide stone steps which lead from the street itself to the plinth of the temple and the great courtyard, wherein the great bell stands beneath the shadow of the gigantic sitting Buddha.

These steps are lined on either side with stalls where are sold curios, sweetmeats, mineral waters, cigarettes,



and all manner of other merchandise; moreover, they are rarely, if ever, swept, and filth and garbage of all descriptions lie around in truly Eastern profusion. Smoking and spitting on the stairs was the order of the day, but this filth must not in future be desecrated by the clean sole of an English boot, lest the souls of the Faithful should be endangered.

As this departure was a new and objectionable one, of purely racial origin, the Europeans of Rangoon ceased visiting the Shwe Dagon Pagoda; moreover, they made it their business to explain to visitors why they also should refrain. Europeans visiting Rangoon mostly understood and took the well-meant advice, recognizing the deliberate affront which had been made to the white man. There are, however, those others to whom the people of a strange country are always more dear than those of their own. Thus it was that when Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., set foot in Rangoon he visited the Shwe Dagon, knowing full well the ban put upon it by Europeans. Ostentatiously removing his shoes and socks, he allowed himself to be thus photographed while ascending barefooted the steps of the Buddhist temple surrounded by a grinning multitude.

This was but one of the many indiscretions this modern Paget, M.P., permitted himself. He got into hot water, though, unfortunately, not by any means too hot water, wherever he went, and annoyed all Europeans with whom he came in contact by his foolish remarks and very pro-Indian attitude. There was a lively newspaper correspondence between the gallant Colonel and Mr Harry Hobbs of Calcutta, as straight and outspoken a man as ever walked the streets of the city. The Labour M.P.'s public boast that he paid his bearer Rs60 a month, and considered even that too little, was amplified by the statement that all Europeans in India should do likewise. All who recollect the correspondence will remember that Mr Hobbs got much the better of the exchange of pleasantries, though now I come to think of it not



every Indian would care to be a bearer to a Paget, M.P., so perhaps after all the money was well earned.

As far as I know, the ban on the Shwe Dagon holds good to this day. Certainly when the Prince of Wales visited Rangoon he gave the place a wide berth.

It is the vendors of curios and knick-knacks who are the chief sufferers in the matter of the temple. Their chief source of revenue has departed with the European visitors. I wonder if the priests compensated these unfortunate shopkeepers. Of course not. But I rather wonder what the priest in charge of the offertory-box beside the big bell thinks about it, for Christians used in olden days to give a pound as often as not. Their contributions were most certainly not less generous than those of the Buddhist suppliants.

Rangoon is, of course, frankly cosmopolitan, but nevertheless there is much of the real Burma to be found in this pleasant city. And that mystic "call" of the East is certainly more definite in Burma than is the case in many parts of India. The inhabitants are as yet unspoilt, save for a small party of malcontents which the Gandhi agitation brought into prominence. There are a large number of Indians in Rangoon, and part of the policy of the Indian Swaraj Party was to export seditionists to Burma in an attempt to stir up trouble for Government there. Just before the Prince of Wales visited Burma the police had a thorough round-up of these agitators, and clapped them into jail for the duration of the Royal visit, which thereupon passed off without any unpleasant incident.

In Rangoon there is not the hustling and rudeness which the pedestrian meets with in only too many Indian towns in these days of "reformed" government and decadent manners. The Burmese are an altogether more polite and considerate people. Their cheerfulness favourably impresses the stranger, and their courtesy is most pleasing. But they do not cringe; yet there



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is nothing of arrogance in the sturdy independence which distinguishes the Burman's dealings with the European.

The Rangoon bazaar is a delight to visit. If you are a woman the silk market will be found particularly fascinating. Here are little shops at which a whole family may be found in attendance. The Burmese mother will be there with her two dainty daughters, all richly garbed in silk brought from the mills owned by the family somewhere up-country. These people are well-to-do, and wear handsome ornaments; the diamonds in their rings are splendid stones.

These ladies do the actual selling, but a sturdy little Burman handles the heavy rolls of silk, dragging these down from spotless shelves, and smacking them down on the counter in quite the best London style. There is no haggling or bargaining. The fixed price is quoted, neither cheap nor dear but fair value for good material; you may either buy at the price asked or try your fortune elsewhere; and should you decide to pass on, the Burmese ladies still smile, and maybe hand you a cheroot by way of compensation for having missed so good a bargain. These dainty saleswomen are always glad to advise you on your purchases. You are told: "These silks are made for Burmese ladies, those others will please you better."

You buy or not as you think fit; there is not the least attempt at compulsion. But it is strange indeed if you can resist the rich thick silk made in all kinds of colours, and which gives almost everlasting wear. Few visitors to Rangoon come away without a few lengths of silk stowed away in their luggage, the English silk tax notwithstanding, and with them will go one or more of the fascinating Burmese sunshades, made of waterproof paper, brilliantly coloured and suitable to adorn the upper reaches of the Thames in sunshine or shower. Another useful purchase will be a few hundred Burma cheroots, which will cost you no more than cigarettes in



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Rangoon and are a much more satisfying smoke—but choose the dark squat variety and leave the “whackin’ white cheroot” to the Burmese.

Rangoon is growing in dimensions as well as in popularity, but it has certain limitations. The travelling European finds little to do in the city in the evening. There are no restaurants where you can take tea and listen to a band as you take your drink, or indulge in the festive little dinner which certain happy occasions indicate as fit and proper. In fact, the city itself is a closed book from 6 P.M., and the residents make their own fun in clubs and bungalows without troubling to return to the city until the following day. But if you have friends in Rangoon you will find yourself whirled away with the rest of those homeward-bound in the afternoon, and in the evening will discover that the drinks are longer and colder, and that dinners are eaten later, in Rangoon bungalows than in most places in the East.

Hotels are not numerous, and the largest of them is situated two miles from the town. There is ample room for more hotels, but I am told it is none too easy to obtain a licence in these days when the shadow of Pussyfoot is creeping over Burma—wet though the climate is—though I imagine its progress will be slow and uncertain.

This shortage of hotel accommodation operates against the prosperity of Rangoon, especially during October, when many visitors come from the east of India for their short annual holiday. Many of them are unable to stay in Rangoon merely because there is literally nowhere for them to sleep.

Maybe in some hideous nightmare you have found yourself gazing into a pool wherein are struggling ugly fish, thousands and thousands of them. Every now and then they all surge together to the surface in a mad rush, as if they were about to overflow and engulf you; and you stand and watch, incapable of movement, too horrified even to scream. You awake in a cold sweat, and next



morning at breakfast give the fish-course a "miss," with a muttered imprecation, which is neither understood nor appreciated by your wife, who has nerves of cast-iron and digestive organs an ostrich might envy.

You may repeat this dream in broad daylight any time in Rangoon if you take a trip to one of the lakes and watch the sacred fish. They are just like those of your dream, but the onlookers don't seem to mind, and throw food to these hideous, cold-blooded creatures with a prodigality worthy of a better object.

I enjoyed much better a visit to the timber enclosures, where are to be seen wonderful elephants lifting great solid timbers of teak, placing them in order just where they are wanted. Of all animals the most intelligent, these Rangoon fellows have formed a regular trade union of their own. When the bell rings for lunch in the yards they "down tools" immediately, and not another stroke will they do until the bell sounds again for resumption of work.

There are many delightful drives in and around Rangoon; the Royal Lakes are quite close to the residential quarter of the town, and seen by moonlight are a spectacle no visitor should miss.

Although from the purely European standpoint there is little diversion at night in Rangoon, the Burmese have their own amusements, and it will amuse and entertain you a while to watch a performance given in an open-air theatre. Burma is the land of colour, and even in the darkness of a Rangoon night there is light where high electric standards, from which swing great orbs of white brilliance, look down upon the open-air theatre so beloved of the Burmese. Here are no padded seats, no stout, red-faced, beribboned commissionaires, no programme sellers, even no queues for early doors; and if you wish to be fashionable, 11 P.M. is the time at which to attend.

The performance is held in the open street, where a large crowd of enthusiasts surround the stage, which



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consists merely of a crude elevated platform in the middle of the road. There is no drop-curtain and no dressing-rooms; the actors are on view the whole time the performance lasts. When one performer is tired, he or she just sits down and allows the others to continue.

There were three performers the night I watched one of these "shows," two men, and a girl, who was *prima donna* and *danseuse* in one. Music was supplied by a couple of tom-toms, and the native dance, or *nautch* as it is called, closely resembled the traditional Russian dance, with its whirling and kneeling motions, carried out extremely well. The dancer's turn finished, the lady squatted down on the platform and, drawing out a hand-mirror, proceeded to tidy her hair, the long coils of which had become loosened by her exertions. In quite the approved London restaurant manner she next proceeded to restore the ravages to her complexion, occasioned by dancing in the damp heat of a Rangoon summer's night.

In the meantime the two male performers kept up a dialogue, which, judging by the laughter of the audience, must have been very amusing, though it was quite wasted on me who knew no Burmese. At regular intervals a voice from the audience would call out, to be answered sharply by one or other of the actors. One of these was palpably the clown, for more kicks and slaps came his way than anything else.

The performance recalled accounts of the early Italian tumblers; surely there could be nothing more primitive than this open-air kind of performance. No attempt was made during my stay to solicit money from the audience, nor, in fact, did the players appear to receive any sort of reward for their strenuous efforts to please and amuse. Certainly no money was thrown on the stage, as is the invariable custom in Arab theatres when the efforts of the mummers are especially appreciated.

Maybe it was all done just for the sheer love of the thing, for it is quite possible that the Burmans, as well



as the Europeans, have their local amateur theatrical societies.

I summed up the Burman as a cheery, amiable soul, if somewhat temperamental. He is inclined to be hot-tempered, and rather too fond of settling his disputes by having recourse to the knife—a primitive form of argument which is not encouraged in these degenerate days by the authorities.

I would rather like to live in Burma ; it is a bright, friendly country, and though its rainfall is extremely heavy, and its heat apt to be rather oppressive, there are many worse places than this land of courtesy and colour. The Europeans there are great scouts ; long may they live to enjoy their special curries and wonderful cold drinks. But how any of them ever learn the language of the country is to me a complete mystery. To my untrained ear, Burmese sounded just like the beating together of two thick sticks.

Life would not be sufficiently long in which to learn such a language ; so it was in perfectly good English that I reluctantly bade farewell to green Rangoon and sailed away on my journey southward to Ceylon.



CHAPTER XIX

A Glimpse of Ceylon—Its Beauties and Fruits—Sprue—The Tourist's Paradise—Procession of the Tooth—The Smallness of Ceylon—Disappointing Colombo

A GREAT traveller once told me that Honolulu was the prettiest spot on earth and that Ceylon came next. I give his opinion without comment for I have not been to Honolulu, but Ceylon is certainly a beauty spot, healthy to reside in and wholly delightful to visit.

It is about the size of Ireland, and just as green for the greater part of the year. The climate is warm all the year round ; some people call it a sticky heat, for the air is very humid, but for all that the island is a more healthy place of residence than are most parts of India. There is less disease of all kinds, and the European residents have not the washed-out appearance which is all too prevalent in the plains of India. The centre of the island is very hilly, and the climate of Nuwara Eliya (pronounced Newrallia) is more like the weather experienced during a really warm English summer. There flowers grow in profusion, and at certain seasons the rain and mist are very reminiscent of conditions at home, without the biting cold and wind of the delightful Motherland with its abundance of weather and no climate. Nuwara Eliya is more than 6000 feet above sea-level though but 135 miles by rail from Colombo, which lies practically flush with the sea.

Colombo is the Clapham Junction of the East. Ships bound for India, Burma, China, British Malaya, Australia and New Zealand all pass here, and most of them stay for a day or two on the way. Indeed more and more is Ceylon becoming a winter resort for the tourist who wishes to bask in sunshine and avoid the cold and fog at home.



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These tourists come in shoals—as many as sixty thousand in a year pass through Colombo—and many stay for a month or two, while others merely come ashore while their ship is in port and re-embark for Calcutta, Rangoon and elsewhere. Especially is this the case with those passengers from great American liners chartered to convey the maximum number of people in the greatest possible comfort on their tour round the world. It is possible to land at Colombo and take a motor-car up to Kandy and come back the same day, though one does the thing better by staying up-country overnight.

Thus it is that all visitors stay long enough to disembark for at least one clear day. They are very welcome, for they contribute to the rapacity of rickshaw coolies and the drivers of motor-cars who disdain the use of a taximeter. Hotels cater especially for visitors and charge accordingly, and the servants of these establishments are past masters at extracting the small change left over. But one is not pestered in the streets to the same extent as is the case in Port Said, where goods of all kinds are thrust upon you whether you like it or not; and although beggars are to be found worrying around every now and then, they are not the insufferable nuisance their kind are in India.

The shops kept by natives of Ceylon bulge with ebony elephants, gems of all varieties (some obtained locally and others imported from Australia) and curios of other kinds, including Ceylon lace, which is usually excellent value for the money. Rupees and cents calculated on the decimal system are currency in Ceylon; Indian money is not legal tender, although there is no difficulty in exchanging, or even passing, Indian silver coins. Indeed most Indian customs and habits have to be forgotten when you come to Ceylon, and it is strange how common in England is the belief that the island is a part of the Indian Empire. In fact, the place has no more to do with India than has Newfoundland to do with Canada, or either of them with South Africa. Ceylon is a Crown



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Colony, with its own Governor and local legislature, owing ultimate responsibility to the Colonial Office.

English is the language most spoken in the Colony ; you hear it in the *pettah* (bazaar) as well as in the European shopping centre. Even the rickshaw man has a smattering of English, so the European visitor or resident need not trouble about Sinhalese or Tamil. It is only on the tea and rubber estates that a knowledge of the vernacular is necessary. Your servants all speak English in Ceylon. Indeed the servant who was spoken to in his mother-tongue would show considerable surprise, and possibly resentment, at your presumption of his ignorance of English. He is becoming rapidly modernized, and considers his value is reckoned largely by the test of his ability to think your thoughts and speak your language. The words *sahib* and *mem-sahib* are quite unknown ; in Ceylon it is always "Master" and "Lady." All this seems quite natural to the Englishman fresh from home, but totally foreign to the European accustomed to Indian ways.

There is no income tax in Ceylon, but a heavy tariff on all imports takes its place. Prices of most commodities are consequently high, and residents and tourists alike pay their tax to the country, indirectly but inevitably. The business community seems quite content with this method of taxation, but it is by no means certain that an income tax will not be introduced eventually ; already there are rumours of such a change.

Ceylon business circles are decidedly conservative in outlook and practice. The optimist, imbued with the laudable idea of coming to Ceylon with samples of the latest products of British industry, frequently finds himself up against a stone wall of prejudice. Markets are largely closed against him, as the shopkeepers will sell only that for which there is a steady demand ; competition is not sufficiently keen to call for much salesmanship on their part.

It takes years of spade-work and advertising to get a



new article on the market, but once this initial difficulty is overcome it will take still longer to displace it, and from this sure knowledge the new venturer into Ceylon markets must be content to extract such comfort as he can. Tea and rubber are the staple industries—in fact, practically the only ones of any account, and without them Ceylon would be known merely as a beauty spot. The breezes which blow are mostly from the sea and carry the aroma of seaweed; the visitor will sniff in vain for any trace of spice in the air—just as vainly as he will seek cinnamon in the Cinnamon Gardens, which a rickshaw coolie or taxi-driver will lure him into paying good money to visit. He may find a small park and lots of trees, but that will be the extent of his discovery, for the so-called Cinnamon Gardens is merely the name for a large residential district favoured by Europeans and the wealthy Sinhalese of Colombo, where rents of houses and servants' wages are higher than in other and less popular localities.

Coco-nuts are as plentiful in Colombo as are old maids in South Kensington, and they are similar in that they cluster in groups and live as high up as possible. I had almost forgotten these coco-nuts in speaking of Sinhalese industries. Though not on the same scale as tea and rubber, the exportation of copra is very considerable, and owners of large plantations find them a very pleasant and lucrative means of making a livelihood. Coco-nut palms need little attention, bear abundantly, and are fertile for about one hundred years. The ideal of many a Colombo business man is to retire to a small coco-nut plantation and live there happily ever after.

With a climate which is always warm, yet with a heavy rainfall, Ceylon rejoices in a vegetation which is luxurious. Everything is green which should be green, and there is lots of it; while flowers of the most dazzling and varied hue run riot in gardens, which in size and beauty compare very favourably with the average English country garden. But the penalty is paid in the number and variety of



those vexatious insects which make sitting in a cool garden a really lively business. The chemists are kept busy making up decoctions which are supposed to render one immune from bites. But the Colombo mosquito, if not often malarious, seems to thrive on chemical nutriment, and your ointment is but the sauce which makes more palatable the dainty dish beneath. And the little eye-flies are an even greater nuisance, for their minute size makes their presence almost invisible, though they make straight for your eyes, and worry and badger until their objective is gained, or die in the attempt.

It is strange that so many bungalows in Colombo are not provided with fans, or, if they are, that these very necessary adjuncts to life in the East are so sparingly used. If some of the money wasted on unwanted and unnecessary dishes were spent on electric current, great benefit to health and temper would result. In this respect they do things much better in India than Ceylon.

Fruit is fairly plentiful and various. The mangosteen, the most luscious of all Eastern fruits, has its home in Ceylon. The mango and the custard-apple also thrive there, while the pine-apple grows to a great size, and is infinitely more luscious and acceptable when cut fresh in Ceylon than are those of the tinned variety obtainable at home. Then there are bananas, fat, chubby ones; these are known throughout the island as plantains, though they are in appearance more like Jamaica bananas, and have not the size or coarseness of the plantains obtained from the West Indies. These Ceylon plantains, for delicacy of flavour, have the Indian variety beaten to a frazzle.

Sinhalese papaya, the fruit of the pawpaw-tree, likewise is of a better quality than that one is accustomed to in India. It is best eaten at breakfast, and in general appearance is somewhat like a small pumpkin, with a firm orange-coloured interior and numerous blue-black seeds, small and round as B.B. shot. This fruit contains a great deal of pepsin, and is an excellent digestive.



It is said that if a papaya is cut in half and a thick piece of tough steak placed therein and allowed to remain so encased all night, the juice of the fruit will by morning have rendered the steak perfectly tender. I have not had personal experience of this, but the housewife who at home has been accustomed to good steak will find in the East ample opportunities for testing the prescription for herself.

Bale fruit is another excellent product of Ceylon, though its properties are not sufficiently well known. About the size of a small coco-nut, and with a hard but quite smooth shell, this fruit appears internally as a stringy mass of orange fibre, which when worked at with a fork and strained through cheesecloth becomes an orange jelly. This, when mixed with milk and sugar, makes a delicious dish, very much like mango-fool. Quite apart from its pleasant taste, bale fruit possesses valuable medicinal qualities, being Nature's remedy for many internal disorders. Notably bale fruit can be used with wonderful results in the case of sprue, that dreaded Eastern disease which is yet little understood by medical men either as regards origin or cure. In Ceylon this dread disease is frequently spoken of as Ceylon Sore Mouth, probably because the name is indicative of the usual first symptoms of sprue. Pine-apples are the staple diet recommended by the best authorities in cases of this disease. As a drink, milk may be taken mixed with Vichy water, but all alcoholic liquor must be avoided. Toddy, an evil-tasting juice when tapped direct from the upper branches of coco-nut palm-trees and before fermentation has made it the popular strong drink of the poorer classes of Ceylon, is good for sprue when it is drunk in an unfermented state. A glass of this nasty stuff should be consumed once daily, preferably in the early morning.

All meat, save perhaps a little stewed beef, and ordinary diet must be abandoned, for the food which in health nourishes the body has no such effect when the consumer is a victim of sprue. No usual food can be digested, and



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the body derives no benefit at all from the ordinary sources of nourishment. Sprue is most difficult to cure ; its origin is obscure, and even few doctors profess to know much about this disease, which produces in the victim a speedy wasting of the tissues, so that the patient loses weight rapidly.

With some who suffer from sprue a trip to a cold climate is beneficial, while on others it has just the opposite effect.

I have mentioned this disease at some length because the subject is frequently discussed, and little or no information which is at all reliable can be obtained. People have strange ideas as to the origin and symptoms of sprue. Maybe this short account of the disease will be of service to some sufferer.

I knew two men who had contracted sprue. One was treated in the way I have indicated, and rapidly put on weight. He ultimately became cured of the trouble. The other poor fellow was treated by doctors who wrongly diagnosed his case, and when at length the real trouble was discovered it was too late to save the patient's life.

The visitor can have a splendid time touring in Ceylon. Those who like thrills will find plenty on the rocky roads, where hills tower above on your right and precipitous depths await to engulf a careless motorist who steers too much to the left. And by train, too, you will find it far from dull. Trains travel slowly in Ceylon ; they are obliged to, because of the steep gradients encountered. If when coming down on the night mail you see from your sleeping-berth the form of a man creeping stealthily along the footboard, do not be alarmed ; he is only the guard proceeding warily to the rear of the train to apply the hand-brake. They make up the trains strangely in Ceylon, and you can never be sure just where the brake-van will be situated, nor even where the guard is to be located. Your train winds round and round in an apparently endless spiral ; fast travelling is impossible,



combined with safety. You will understand it better when you pass what is known as Sensation Rock, if you ever have the opportunity of visiting Ceylon.

The student of archæology will find much to interest him in the many wonderfully preserved ruins of palaces, rocky fortresses and ancient temples of a country whose recorded history dates back to at least five hundred years before the landing, in 543 B.C., of the Indian Prince Vijayo. Europeans first came to Ceylon long afterwards. In A.D. 1505 the Portuguese occupied the maritime regions of the island, but the Sinhalese held sway in the interior. It was these Portuguese who introduced Christianity to the native inhabitants, which accounts for the fact that the vast majority of the Christian residents there to-day are adherents of the Roman Church. The Dutch appeared in Ceylon some one hundred and fifty years later and confined their activities to trading; many of them amassed great fortunes by trading in pearls, spices, and other products of the country. Some of the old Dutch buildings are to be seen in Ceylon to the present day, but in matters of religion the Dutch took little concern. The many *de Silvas*, *Periaras* and *Ferandos* which are to-day to be found in the country are in themselves sufficient testimony to the thoroughness of those early Portuguese missionaries.

The visitor who chances to be in Ceylon during August, and who does not mind missing the so-called glories of Colombo's "August Week," would do well to make the journey to Kandy to witness the annual ceremony known as the Procession of the Tooth. It is firmly believed by all good Buddhists that this tooth was once securely fixed in the jaw of the god Buddha. If an unbeliever, you may have strong doubts on the matter, but no Buddhist can confess to any such doubt; and when you actually see the tooth your doubt will be turned into certainty, for it is of immense size. Verily there were giants in those days.

However, there are pilgrims in thousands who annually



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make a pilgrimage to the island from all parts of the East to worship the sacred relic, and it is no concern of mine to pass judgment on their religious beliefs. If you ever have the chance, go and see for yourselves. So, with a warning against the advisability while in Ceylon of openly giving expression to any doubts you may have on the subject of the tooth, I recommend you to see this gorgeous festival, the very existence of which is scarcely known in Western countries.

You may travel to Kandy by train or motor-car. Either way the journey is delightful, but the train takes longer to accomplish the gradual ascent. The scenery is varied and beautiful in the extreme, while Kandy itself is considered by much-travelled people to be one of the most beautiful towns in the world. By distance some seventy-five miles from Colombo, you will be more than 1600 feet above sea-level when you reach Kandy. The vegetation is truly luxurious and the town is set in the midst of thickly wooded countryside, while the climate of Kandy is considered by many to be the best in Asia.

Facing the lake, which is one of Kandy's most notable features, is the Temple of the Tooth, wherein the sacred relic reposes for three hundred and fifty-five days out of every year. This temple is a singularly picturesque building, surrounded by a verandah, and capped on one end by a turret.

If you care for such things you may visit the Library of Sacred Works, which is situated alongside. Here the priest in charge will, for a small consideration, give you an actual demonstration of the primitive methods employed in days gone by in writing the manuscripts which can still be examined in the library. These ancient documents are written with indelible ink, upon pressed palm leaves and in the form of a scroll, in much the same conformation as was customary in olden days in Egypt and elsewhere.

The preliminary rites in connexion with the Procession of the Tooth take place within the precincts of the Temple



itself the same evening the procession is to start. The Head Chief, who is the guardian of the Temple and the lineal descendant of a long line of Sinhalese chieftains, dresses specially for the solemn occasion. His gold robes and headpiece, shaped in the form of a triangle, tone well with a bright-coloured waistcoat, and the combination contrasts strangely with the very ordinary and simple saffron robe of the humble Buddhist priest whose duty it is to wait on the high functionary of the Temple. The priest holds a bowl of water and carefully washes the hands of the Chief, and then produces a fine piece of silk material, which is placed over his outstretched hands. Next, to make doubly sure that human flesh comes not in contact with even the casket which contains the sacred relic, a second cloth, this time of rich velvet, is placed in position over the more delicate silk. And now at last the casket itself, fashioned from pure gold and emblazoned with precious stones, is given by the priest into the hands of the Chief, where it reposes, sacred, safe and sound; moreover constructed so that the Tooth of Buddha can be made presently visible to the worshipping crowds without.

The Chief next proceeds down the Temple steps and carefully places the precious relic, resting on its casket, in the small *howdah* on the back of the sacred elephant, which kneels obediently in the courtyard below to receive its light and supernatural burden. The elephant is clad in trappings of costly velvet embroidery, and the *howdah*, which is used for this special purpose only, is a most tasteful bit of the craftsman's art, and is illuminated by many coloured lights.

All is now ready. The *mahout* whose duty it is to lead the sacred elephant in the great procession stands close beside it. At a given signal the elephant is made to rise; and the Procession of the Tooth is on its way. All along the route Sinhalese men are posted, whose duty it is to hold aloft great flaming torches, and the procession is headed by a couple of score of devil dancers. These men



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are dressed in fearsome attire and carry what appear to be sticks of gold, though in reality these are bits of wood covered with gilt paper. The devil dancers leap, run and twist in the most grotesque manner possible, while bells which are fastened to arms and legs create an incessant tinkle, which music is supported by the more strident crashes of cymbals struck violently together at regular intervals.

Next in order walks the Chief himself, pacing slowly and with fitting solemnity a few yards in front of the sacred elephant, which walks alone, unattended save for the *mahout*, who, unlike others of his calling, must needs walk beside his elephant instead of riding upon the great animal's neck. From the moment the sacred elephant leaves the courtyard with its precious burden its feet are not allowed to come into actual contact with the ground, for fear of possible pollution. A great red carpet is spread out before the animal and it is made to walk along the three feet of width. As it progresses, the carpet is rolled up from behind, until nearly all of the hundred feet or so of crimson glory are used up. Then willing hands spread a shorter piece in front, on which the elephant may walk while the huge roll is brought to the front and once more opened out in elongated splendour. This procedure is repeated along the entire route of the procession, which makes an extended tour of ten or more miles every night of the Perehara Festival, which continues for ten consecutive nights.

Behind the sacred elephant come, in strict order of precedence, other chiefs and elephants. All are most gorgeously arrayed, and as each village sends its chief, a great number of devil dancers, and all the elephants which can be begged, borrowed or otherwise procured for the occasion, it is not to be wondered at that often the elephants in the Procession of the Tooth number close on a couple of hundred. What a procession it is to be sure! It must be seen to be appreciated fully. The whole route is ablaze with primitive lights, and



packed closely at every conceivable point of vantage stand thousands of the Faithful, while here and there are to be seen, in some special position from which a good view may be obtained, alien spectators who are present from no better motive than that of mere sightseers.

It is not until the early hours of the morning that the progress comes to an end and the return to the Temple of the Tooth is accomplished and the relic put back into safe custody until the next day of procession.

You will likely see photographs of this great religious march ; such must have been taken in daylight on the last day of the festival of Perehara. On all other days it takes place at night, for much of its impressiveness is lost in the strong light of day ; mysteries keep better in the dark.

Whatever your religious convictions may be, the Procession of the Tooth cannot fail to interest. It has much the same significance for Buddhists as has the taking of the Holy Carpet to Mecca for those people who are followers of Mohammed. And, quite apart from its religious importance, the affair is one of the worth-while sights to be witnessed in Ceylon.

If you stay sufficiently long in the island you may have the opportunity of going out, with someone who knows the ropes, on one of the expeditions organized by Government to round up wild elephants. You will get plenty of thrills, and maybe some good photographs if you do not mind running a few risks. The way in which a captive elephant will be put in charge of two tame fellows and led off by them to learn the sweets of civilization is a demonstration of the sagacity of the world's largest and most intelligent animal. You can almost hear the whispers of good advice which are poured into the captive's huge ears by the protesting fellow's jailers.

You may even go pearl-fishing if fortune favours you. Whether you are actually present at the scene or not, it is always possible afterwards to purchase a bag of oysters for quite a nominal sum and open them up and find what



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you may in the way of a prize. Assuredly out of a whole bag you will discover a pearl or two of sorts, and you may come on one which has a high market-value. You will notice advertisements in the local papers offering pearl oysters for sale by the hundred. Many a man has lived to bless the day he sported a few rupees and found a pretty present to give to someone who was fond of pearls. The merely mercenary fellow just sells the pearls for cash.

But whichever kind of man you be who goes opening oysters, be sure you smoke a strong tobacco while you pry open the decomposed shell, for, unless the tobacco be really strong, you will likely be bowled over by the sickening odour which will come up at you like poison-gas.

There are lots of other things to do during a visit to Ceylon. You can arrange to stay a week or two with a planter on a tea estate. It will cheer him up to have company, and make you appreciate your cup of tea better when you know the labour and loneliness which have gone to its successful production. You will find the real Ceylon up-country. Your trip to the island will be very pleasurable if you keep to the jungle and the everlasting hills.

To anyone used to the life of Indian cities Colombo is a very dull place. There is little to do there in the evening, and, apart from tennis at the club after office, and perhaps a swim at Mount Lavinia or in the baths at an hotel, you might as well be in the jungle. For, although boasting the pretensions of a modern town, Colombo is in fact only a glorified village, badly built and shockingly laid out. Moreover, the mental outlook of the residents as a whole is extremely narrow and hopelessly provincial. The local politics of Colombo are, frankly, those of the parish pump. Scandalmongering as a favourite pastime is second only to bridge—a disease bred of extreme ennui long endured.



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Snobbishness is rampant. This is always the case in towns like Colombo, where few of the residents are sufficiently sure of themselves to follow their own inclinations. It is so much easier for such people to follow one another, like so many silly sheep.

Ceylon is very small—about the size of Ireland. Littleness and great conceit frequently go together. So it is with Ceylon; for there is a popular local belief that the island is the site of the Garden of Eden, that it is the first and last place on earth, and is entitled to set the fashion for the rest of the East, if not the entire world.

It was my fortune to stay in Ceylon a couple of months, so I know something of its social atmosphere and deadly dull outlook. Colombo may be commended to the notice of tourists who have much money to spend and are not keen judges of values. As a jumping-off place for the rest of the island Colombo is an ideal spot; only be sure you jump quickly and far enough.

If you seek permanent, or semi-permanent, residence abroad, go to India, Burma, British Malaya, Siam or South Africa—you can settle comfortably in any of the towns and make friends in these places—but count Colombo out. You must be of a peculiar type and temperament to be content there, and few of us are peculiar people.

I have the greatest respect for the judgment of Bishop Heber; you will find his considered opinion of Ceylon in that well-known hymn, *From Greenland's Icy Mountains*.

There are some splendid people up-country and just a few in Colombo, and these think pretty much as I do on the subject, but all of them cannot afford to say so. The vast majority of the Europeans who live in Colombo have been there so long, and have sunk into such a groove in the little place, that they have lost all sense of proportion, and forget the size and general insignificance of the island, as compared with the great countries of the world.