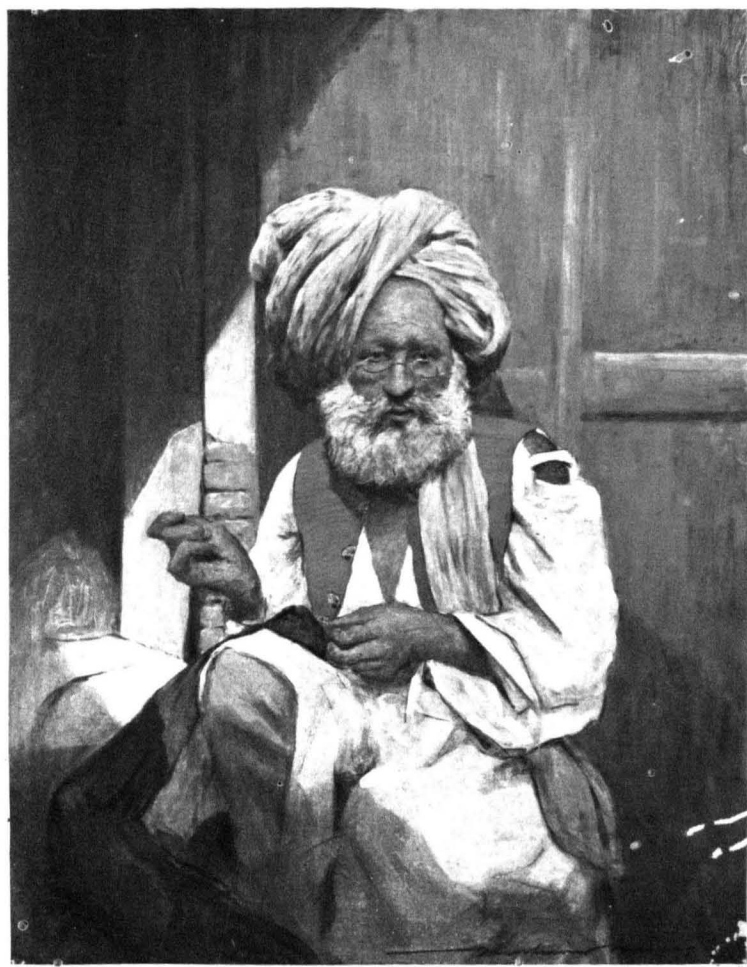


I

THE S.S. *ARABIA*

A TAILOR



UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

Price **20s.** *net each*

WAR IMPRESSIONS

JAPAN

WORLD PICTURES

WORLD'S CHILDREN

THE DURBAR

THE ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS VOLUME WERE ENGRAVED AND PRINTED
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LORD CURZON IN HIS STUDY AT DELHI

IN the face of many obstacles and predictions of failure, he organised and carried to a triumphant issue the celebration of the accession to the British throne of King Edward the Seventh.

•

THE DURBAR

♣ BY MORTIMER MENPES ♣

TEXT BY DOROTHY MENPES

PUBLISHED BY ADAM AND

CHARLES BLACK LONDON W



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I

THE S.S. *ARABIA*

LIFE on board ship, with its flirtations and petty quarrels, is a familiar theme. Peninsular and Oriental journeys are very much alike. They are characterised by the same lazy life, the same bad weather, the same iced food, and the same deck sports. There is even about a P. and O. boat a certain familiar odour. Thus, a description of the journey from London to Marseilles in the S.S. *Arabia*, *en route* for the Delhi Durbar, would be rather tiresome.

The great excitement was when, early one morning, we arrived at Marseilles and leant over the rails to watch people embarking. They were distinguished folk and interesting. It was a fascinating scene, this gay French port, with its crowds of lace- and flower-vendors, the musicians with their guitars and mandolines, the acrobats,

the carriages arriving, the passengers' luggage being hauled about, and the voluble French porters—all a-bustle to the sound of a dozen different tunes, which were being played by a dozen different musicians at one and the same moment. It almost reminded one of a scene from a Gaiety comic opera; and one expected every moment to see that clever comedian, Mr. Edmund Payne, appear on the scenes, in company with Miss Katie Seymour, to say that he was "tired of carrying the luggage from the station."

The first passenger to set her dainty foot on board the *Arabia* was Mrs. Craigie, looking radiant and charming in a coat of silver fur. Immediately in her wake came Lord Stanley, beaming and happy, his arms full of small bunches of fragrant violets. As he reached the middle of the gangway, a buoyant figure sprang along four steps at a time, almost overtaking him. This was Colonel Frankie Rhodes. There was no mistaking him. Who else so young, so energetic? He had almost reached the boat when he turned and saw Lord Stanley with his violets. Immediately he wanted to know where Stanley had found them; and on being told they had been bought from two or three stalls

LATE AFTERNOON



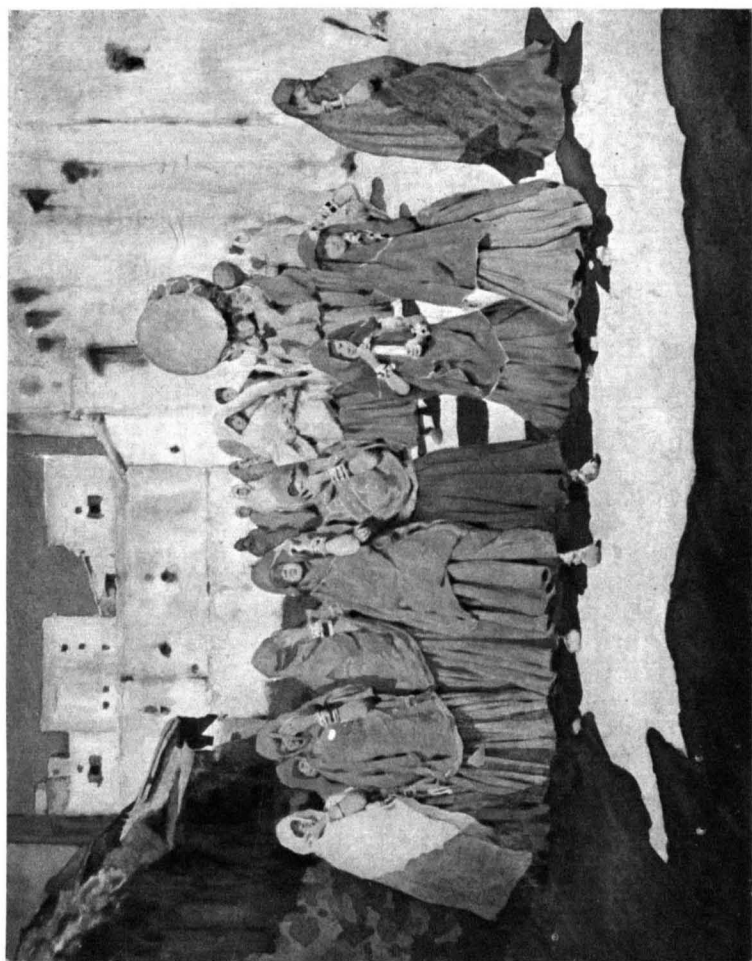
in the market-place, the gallant Colonel, anxious not to be outdone, fled back to the shore. We watched with interest his energetic figure threading its way among the different flower-girls, buying every bunch he saw. At last he darted forward—he had found a stall behind a pillar that Lord Stanley had overlooked—and a few minutes afterwards he came on board laden with violets, triumphant.

While this was going on, the passengers, with their luggage, had been arriving in streams—judges, peers, duchesses, proprietors of patent medicines, and celebrities of all kinds—one continual stream. In the midst of the arrival of Grosvenor Square, with its pomp and bustle and importance, I turned to watch a group of acrobats vainly trying to attract our attention. It was in December, early in the morning and bitterly cold; and to see these poor little people, in their torn pink tights and their gaudy waistcoats, with the spangles wearing off, vainly trying to be funny—this was pathetic. There were children, boys and girls, none of them older than ten, springing about on their fathers' shoulders, clapping their blue chapped hands, laughing and making jokes, yet never raising a smile. No one even noticed

them, and the poor little ragged cap so eagerly stretched up to us for pennies almost invariably returned empty and unregarded.

The first meal after the arrival of Grosvenor Square, which was tea, was an interesting gathering. It reminded one of a Private View at the Royal Academy, and the questions and the remarks one heard on every side by the ignorant and curious were very amusing. "Now, who is that over there?" you would hear some one ask. "Oh, that is Mrs. Craigie!" "And that beautiful woman just behind her sipping her tea?" the interrogator would continue. "That is Lady Poynder." "Who are those men?" "That man over there with the happy face is Mr. Reed, the *Punch* artist. The other is a proprietor of a patent medicine, the greatest advertiser, they say, in the world; and that man in the check suit is Sir George Goldie, eminent empire-maker." And so on. What struck me most was the stateliness of the women. They were all tall and beautiful. I should think one might safely say that never before has so small a space held so many beautiful women as the saloon of the *Arabia*. The conversation, too, was sparkling. The newcomers had got over the fatigue of their train journey;

A BLAZE OF SUN



the boat was steady ; and, what with the stimulant of the tea and the excitement, every one was intensely happy.

It was curious to watch the change which slowly but surely crept over the party towards dinner-time, when the ship began to roll a little—the sobering down, the dwindling of the conversation, the rugs and books that were brought out, and then the utter prostration and carelessness of appearances—all the usual symptoms of the malady of the sea ! At the same time, I was struck with the courage and determination of Grosvenor Square. One could not help feeling a certain respect for the splendid way in which they fought against this sadness that was creeping over them. The night was promising to be extremely unpleasant. A plucky peer twice attacked his dinner, and twice had to beat a retreat. Certainly there was a marked contrast between tea and dinner. The joy and brilliance had evaporated.

The bad weather did not last long, and Grosvenor Square soon developed sea legs. There was very little incident. Each day was very much the same. Every one sat on deck. Here and there you would see groups of people playing bridge, a

judge intent on a game of chess, an empire-maker talking about operas to a duchess, and the proprietor of patent medicine talking in the smoking-room of the difficulty the President of the United States would find in running things without his aid.

It was an ideal atmosphere for the artist: all were so considerate and sympathetic, so intelligent, so strong in artistic instincts. They would come up and ask you how your work was going on, and if they could do anything for you; and altogether they were extremely helpful. A long line of people went down to the saloon every day to be sketched by Mr. Reed. He began very gently with only two or three sitters; but gradually the line became longer and longer, until there was a great stream of subjects every morning, like sheep being led to the slaughter. You would see Reed come up on deck, spot a man, go up to him, and lead him away by the arm—first a judge, and then a duke, and afterwards a soldier—and all would go down, with quick, nervous steps, trying to look unconscious, and as though they had been in the habit of being sketched daily. They evidently did not dislike it—in fact, I think they rather enjoyed it—but they were shy. It was the fashion every afternoon for this sketch-book

A RETAINER FROM RAJGARH



to be passed round for general inspection, and it was curious to see the amused, tolerant look on the faces of the people change into a sickly smile as they came across their own portraits. One waited regularly for the subjects of yesterday to come up to you and say, "Well, what do you think of Mr. Reed's sketches? I think that the one of the Duchess of Marlborough is good, and some of the men are excellent; but that one of me, you know—well, there is no character in it—no one would recognise it. Yes: I must say he really seems to have failed over me." The drawing of a very plain gentleman was so good that the aim of every one on board was to keep it away from his beautiful young wife.

There was one lady who occupied a great deal of attention. She was interesting from the moment we left Marseilles until we dropped anchor at Bombay. She was a very old lady, and always dressed in black—a soiled black dress and a black bonnet which was never quite straight on her head. From the first she was thoroughly pleased with the Peninsular and Oriental line of steamers. She went up to the stewardess, and detained that good person for over half an hour to explain how pleased she was with her cabin.

Then she attacked the head steward. "I am thoroughly pleased," she said, "with my seat at table. This is a very nice boat, and I am greatly attached to every one on board." She always wore the same black dress and the same black bonnet by night and by day. Her luggage consisted absolutely and entirely of kodak films. She informed every one that she was treating the Durbar purely on artistic lines, and that she intended photographing Lord Curzon and incidents by the way. This old lady was a source of great interest. No one talked to her willingly, for that involved hours of conversation. We had all tried, and, as the saying goes, "once bitten twice shy." The officers were the most long-suffering, and any one of them would sooner swarm up the mast than encounter "the woman in black." A clear circle was described about her wherever she went. Still, she was always alert, ready to button-hole some ignorant and innocent passenger; you could not catch her napping. She photographed every one and everything. On a dark rainy day, when it was utterly hopeless to take a photograph on deck, the old lady would walk boldly into the saloon, and take a picture of the entire boat at tea. She would come up to you and snap her

AWAY FROM THE SHOW



kodak four inches off your face, and then look away and think how subtle she had been. I have seen her, as we were nearing a port, rush below to get her kodak, and on the way up, catching sight of herself in the mirror, eagerly photograph it. Then she would come up on deck, and, quite forgetting what she had intended, would run her camera right into Lord Stanley's broad back as he was looking at Aden, and take a snapshot—Ping! Lord Stanley was her favourite subject. She used to photograph him in every attitude—at dinner, asleep on a deck chair with his mouth open—anywhere, everywhere. When any one questioned her, she said that she was the wife of an eminent professor, and that she was going to Delhi to take a photograph of Lord Curzon. And there she was on the 1st of January, in the same black dress and in the same black bonnet, photographing the Viceroy!

Of course, there was the inevitable American girl on board. She appeared towards the end of the pleasant voyage: at least, it was only then that we discovered her. She came at a moment when all had said all that they had to say to one another. She flashed like a meteor into our midst, and then, meteor-like, disappeared. She

was a typical American girl, beautifully dressed, and knew to a nicety how to put on her clothes. She had a pronounced Southern accent; but she took the boat by storm. We called her the "Gibson Girl." One day a gallant colonel was chatting to a clever artist. C. A. said to G. C., "There goes a beautiful woman!" G. C., who had great habits of ladies' society, said, "I quite agree with you," and bravely set out without a word to storm the citadel. Within five minutes he was in the midst of an earnest conversation which lasted for four days, and for four days we saw nothing more of the colonel. He was occupied. That started interest in the Gibson Girl; but the other men were less bold than the colonel. They used to come in swarms, and beg him to introduce them, bribing him by choice cigars and all other conceivable means. It was useless. The colonel was obdurate, and refused to introduce to her a living soul. It was only on the day before we arrived at Bombay that there was a general introduction to her; and that was at a dance, when the colonel was powerless.

A well-known conjuror, an old gentleman, came on at Aden. We all clustered round him on deck. Every one on the boat was there, and every one was

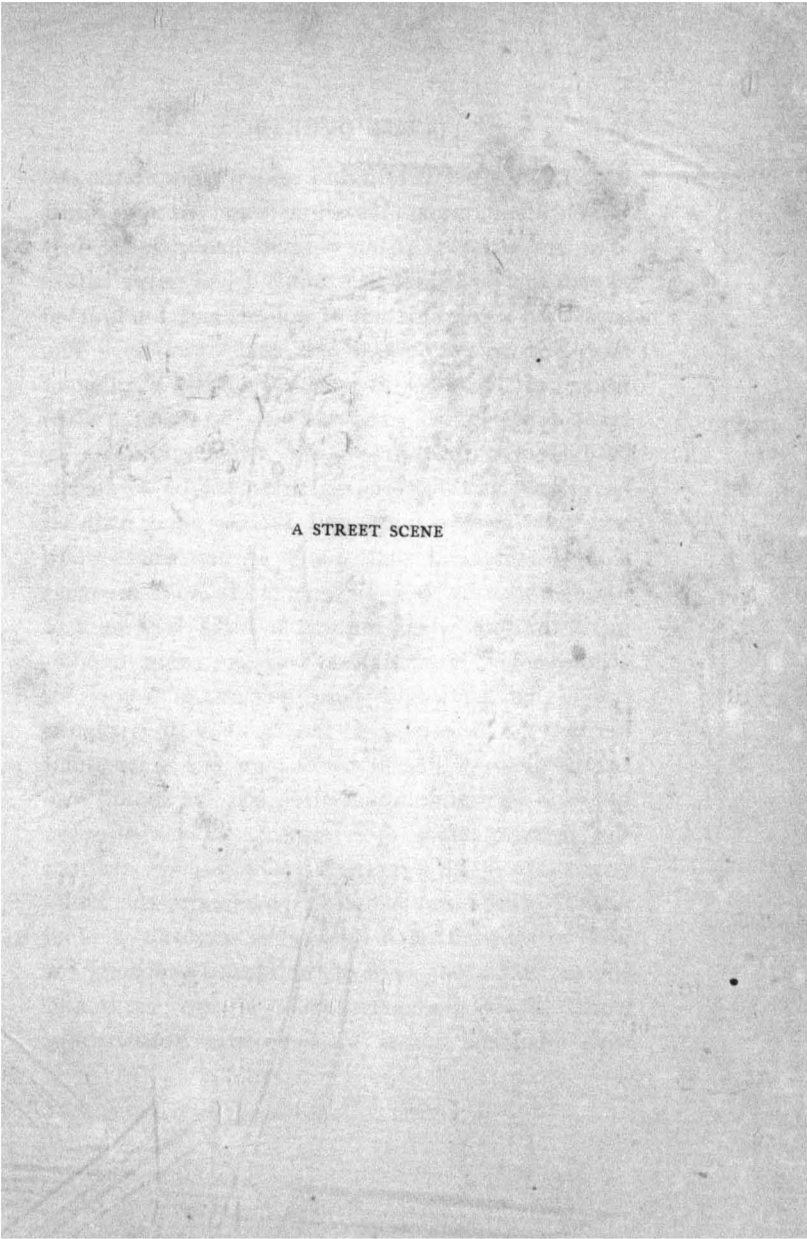
A RETAINER OF THE MAHARAJA
OF CUTCH



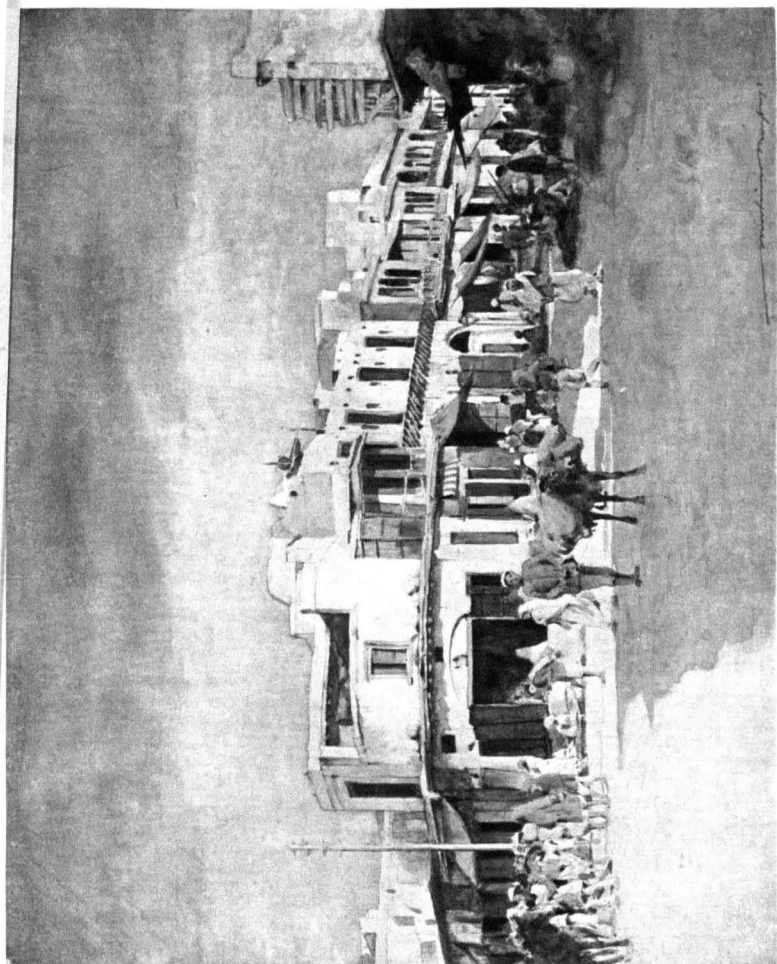
enchanted. He made chickens come out of eggs and fruit trees grow up from seeds. He gave us all nicknames. The Duke of Marlborough was "Mr. Smith." "Now, Mr. Smith, I want you to give me your ring." The Duke did not feel inclined to give his ring, and refused. "Well," said the conjuror, turning to Lord Stanley, "Mr. Masher, you can give me your ring"; and Lord Stanley, who is the soul of good-nature, instantly gave it up. We were all interested in watching the conjuror, and I heard some one just behind me say in a very rapid tone of voice, "How dexterous that was—simply marvellous!" I turned round. It was the Grand Duke of Hesse. He was enjoying the conjuring just as a child would. He took a coin out of his pocket, and showed me how one of the tricks was done. He used a great deal of action, and spoke in rapid English with a slight accent. He executed the trick far more cleverly than the conjuror.

One morning early the Duke called me up to look at a sunrise. I found him on deck, worried and perplexed. "What does this mean?" he said. "Surely Nature is not herself this morning? She is doing something very quaint." Indeed, she

was. The sea was of a dull leaden colour ; the sky was brilliant mustard-yellow ; and in the midst of it the sun was rising, a vivid lemon-green, just like an unripe lemon. Certainly I had never before seen such a combination of colour, and I admitted that Nature was indeed behaving strangely. The Duke of Hesse is himself an artist, a man of great appreciation. He was very interesting when he talked of the Queen—the “Great Queen,” as he called her, Victoria. He said how absurd it was to say that the Great Queen never painted from Nature and that many of her works were touched up by her masters. He told me that many a time when he was a little boy he had accompanied Her Majesty on sketching expeditions, that he might hold a glass of water for her as she painted. Often he had to rush off to the nearest stream to change the water, and be back in double quick time lest she should lose the fleeting effect of a sunset. There was no doubt about it : Queen Victoria always painted from Nature ; and it was extraordinary, the Duke told me, how true her sketches were in general effect. Then he talked of the Queen’s capacity for work. State documents were always smothered with marginal notes in her own handwriting.



A STREET SCENE

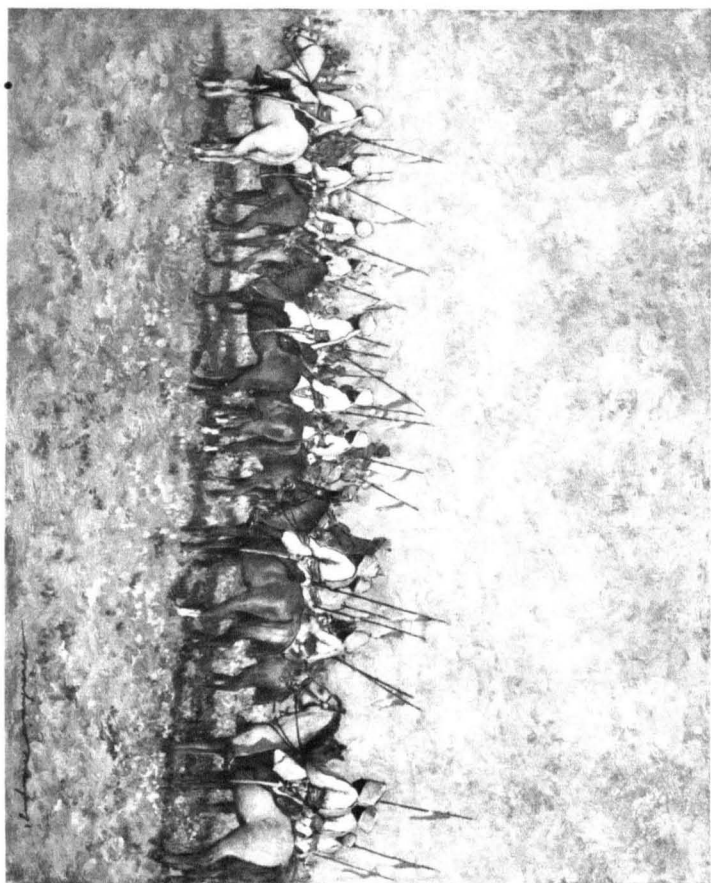


Her Majesty's knowledge of State affairs was quite marvellous. She possessed great powers of persuasion, and sometimes influenced people merely by being persistent. The Duke when a boy often heard long conversations between Queen Victoria and her Ministers. If they refused to give way to her views, she would be so persistent and hold on to her own opinions so tenaciously that in the end they gave way. In foreign politics she was a real power. She had great knowledge and influenced her Ministers to an extraordinary extent. No one but her own family ever knew how hard Queen Victoria worked. Sometimes he would see a light burning in her study window at two or three o'clock in the morning; and on slipping up for a few last words before going to bed he would find her in the midst of many papers, working as hard as any newspaper editor.

The Duke of Hesse is a very clever "contortionist." He can do any mortal thing with his limbs. One day, when we had retired to a quiet corner of the deck, where the Duke was to show me how he could bring the sole of his foot right up to his face, an æsthetic lady appeared on the scene, and said, "Ah! I suppose, now, you two are admiring that sunset together?" and

we had not the heart to contradict her. The Duke is enthusiastic and energetic. He gesticulates a great deal in ordinary conversation, and, in order to keep his legs from swinging about with his arms, he is compelled to sit upon these members, Chinese-fashion. He is a splendid athlete and very strongly built. One curious thing about him is that the two sides of his face are quite different one from the other. If you look at him, profile on one side, you think that he is one man; and if you look at him, profile on the other, you take him for some one else. He is just like a boy—young, fresh, possessed of tremendous vigour and the temperament of an artist. There was a bet as to the distance of the boat from the land. He was anxious to find out the Captain's opinion, and, without thinking, flew up the steps leading to the bridge. When he got to the top he caught sight of the Captain, who is rather a martinet; and flew down again quicker than he came, eight steps at a time. He was loved by every one on board, and was utterly simple, getting joy out of everything. I noticed him spend half an hour one day watching the antics of a cat just as a child would.

A DISTINGUISHED NATIVE REGIMENT



II

SETTLING INTO CAMP

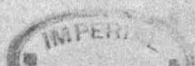
WE took the ordinary train from Bombay, and started long after the "special" containing the Viceroy's guests and Lord Kitchener's. At a station half-way on our journey we came across Colonel Rhodes and Lord Stanley drifting about the platform and looking solitary. They had just left their train in a siding, they said, and were waiting until the mail train passed by. This was at night, midnight, and it was bitterly cold; but all the special-train people were trying to prove what a splendid time they were having, and what a delightful life it was in India. Still, they seemed worried at being left in a siding. As our train steamed past them we saw Colonel Rhodes and Lord Stanley playing a game of bridge.

When we arrived at Delhi we had to collect

our luggage, a feat that required enormous energy and dexterity. It was perhaps one of the most interesting scenes ever witnessed at a railway station, and we lingered a while to watch it. The English valets were paralysed in the confusion. Their masters had to attend to everything. There were officers wheeling trucks, free fights, ladies wringing their hands over lost boxes and quarrelling over the possession of trunks. I was surprised at the very unusual violence of the officers. They kicked the men about them, and swore appallingly. I saw one man tear a trunk away from a railway official, wheel it off, and then spill the contents. It was perhaps the most confused mass you could possibly imagine—such a medley of different nationalities! There among them was our thin black servant, a man who was of a higher caste than the rest, slipping in and out of the people and gathering our luggage without any trouble at all. He was our salvation, and he seemed in an extraordinary way to command respect. Nearly every one else was desperate. The stationmaster gave up shouting orders which were not heard among the confusion of tongues, and stood still, merely whispering. The man into whose shoes he had stepped, I learned, had gone mad

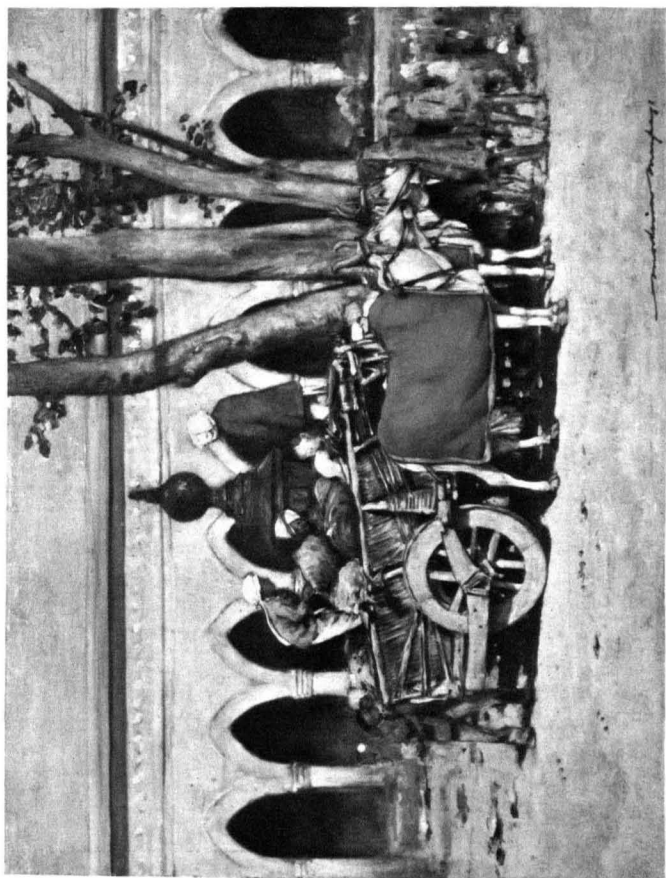
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National Library, Kolkata



SCENE OUTSIDE THE RAILWAY STATION
DURING THE DELHI DURBAR

Always a remarkable sight, and thronged with people
at all times of the day.



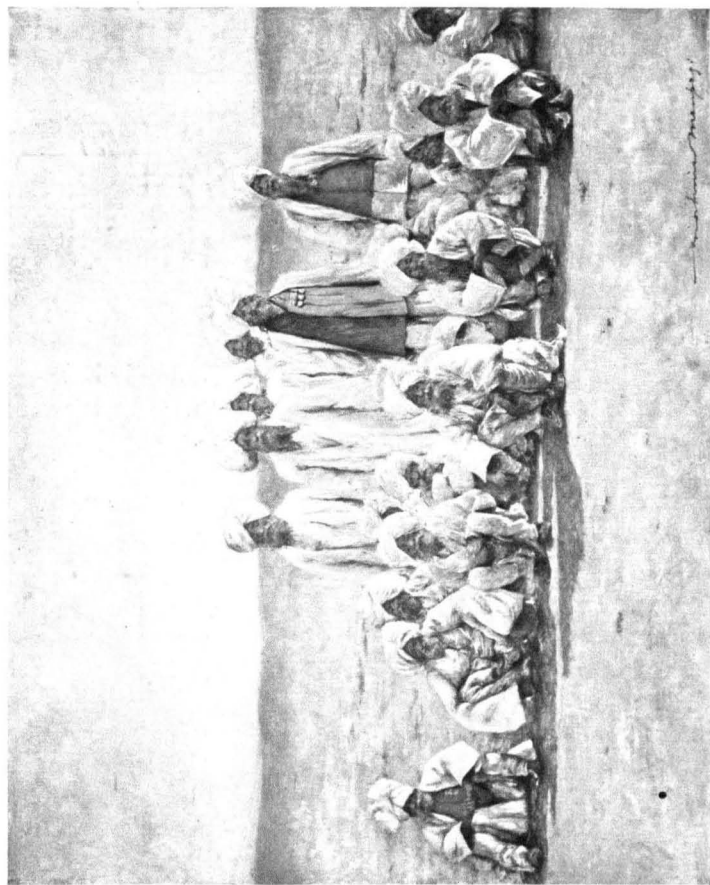
before the arrival of Lord Curzon's guests. Now that they had come, this one was dazed. The strain was too much for him, and he collapsed.

When we arrived at Number One Camp we found that it was a camp for millionaires only. In fact, it was commonly called the Millionaires' Camp. Everything was terribly expensive. One cannot but admit that things were wonderfully well managed. We were shown to our tents, and found that there was very little to complain of. Then we went to interview the officer in charge. We found this poor gentleman literally besieged. The tent was surrounded by masses of men and women. We elbowed through to the inner circle, and even then had to wait some time before we could so much as see the officer. Most of these people were asking the young man futile questions. Just as we entered we heard a lady talking in a very high voice. She demanded of the officer what he proposed doing for the poor cattle. "It is a crying shame," she said. "All the way down from Bombay to Delhi I saw from the carriage window cattle so thin that their bones stuck out of their flesh. It is a sin that you can do nothing to remedy it." The officer was for the moment at a loss how to answer her ; but he had tact, and he

explained kindly that it was the nature of the animal for his bones so to protrude. There were crowds of people all asking similarly absurd questions. One woman wanted to know if he had found her muff. She had been driving about the different camps (scores of miles) all day, and had dropped it somewhere—where exactly she did not know—but she wanted it found. The officer answered her courteously. “Really, madam,” he said, “I think, for a serious matter of that kind, you had better go and see Colonel Baring.” I heard him directing nearly every one to the Military Secretary, Colonel Baring. One man, a knight, elbowed his way into the crowd waving a telegram over his head, and shouting to the officer in stentorian tones: “What do you propose to do for us? We have only single tents. There are no drawers or cupboards or any accommodation for clothes. My wife’s and my daughter’s dresses cannot be hung up, and there are fifteen cases of them. And here is a telegram which, if something is not done immediately, shall be sent off to one of the morning papers.” He read aloud the following message:—“Arrangements in Number One Camp broken down. Guests leaving Delhi.” The poor officer merely shook his head, and said,

ON DURBAR DAY

VETERANS sitting in the sun before the Durbar.

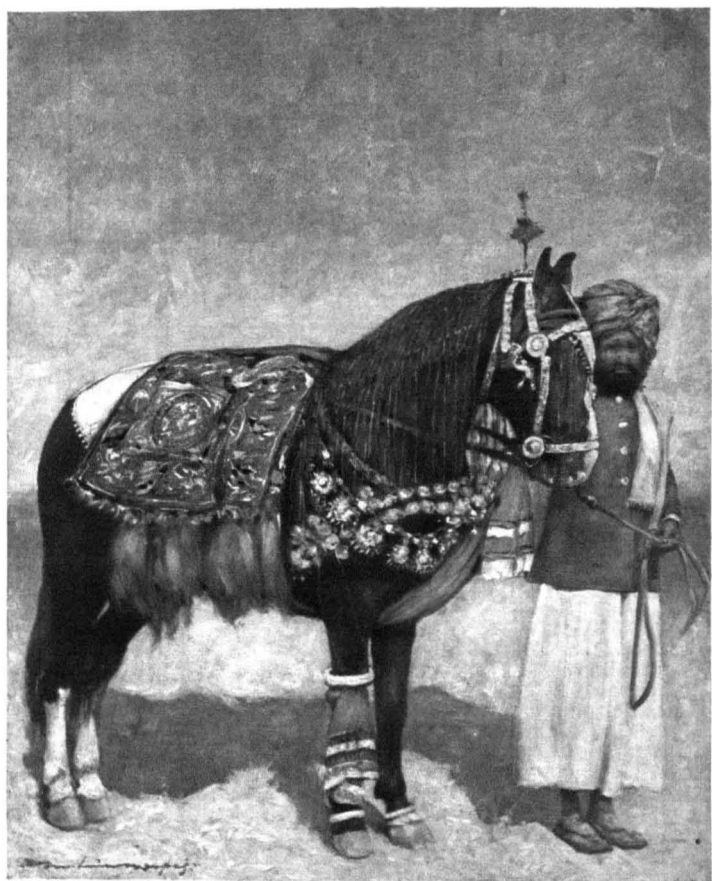


"I think, sir, you had better see Colonel Baring." It was amusing to see how all these people with their complaints were despatched to the Military Secretary. All that day there was a clump of agitated people not only overflowing the tent of the officer in charge, but also streaming fifty yards around, and always a thin line of them oozing out on their way to the Military Secretary. I myself wanted to know something; but, finding it almost impossible to push my way through, I started off independently to visit Colonel Baring. We hailed a tonga and went off to this demigod; but on the way we thought better of it, and decided to start with the Viceroy's camp. We found our way to the tents of some friends; but at the various doorways we were always met by native servants who canted their heads in the palms of their hands, and said, "Sick, sick." It was obvious to us that our friends were all sick. Then we went to the Commander-in-Chief's camp, to call on Colonel Rhodes, knowing him to have been in hale and robust health when we left him at the station some hours previously. Here too we were met with canting of the head and the same "Sick, sick." Things seemed to be becoming serious. It was obvious that some terrible epidemic had seized

upon the Viceroy's guests. We saw as we passed the great man Colonel Baring surrounded by a block of people and well-nigh inaccessible. Therefore we called on the Viceroy's private secretary, Sir Walter Lawrence, who had promised to help us in every way. We found him in his tent in the midst of work, and told him of the trouble in the Commander-in-Chief's camp. Every one seemed sick and ill, we said. He was quite composed. He had not heard of it. When I described the pantomime with the servant, the head in the palm of the hand, he said, with a smile, "Oh dear no! That was *sleep*, not *sick*. I don't think you will find sickness in this camp." Neither I did. All seemed very healthy and wide-awake. Colonel Baring was not at all the sort of man I supposed him to be. Directly he saw me he said, "What can I do for you?" It was said so crisply that I felt he could do nothing: there was nothing I wanted him to do. "Tell me," he said, "is there anything I can do? Have you places to see the Durbar?" I said I had. "Then," he said, "do you want special facilities?" I jumped at that, and said that I did; and he wrote me a letter saying that it was the Viceroy's wish that I should be helped in every way. And that letter proved to

A HORSE FROM JODHPUR

AN animal whose antics, as he passed the Viceregal dais, aroused the utmost enthusiasm.



be of untold service to me. It was a key which unlocked every barrier. In the end this wonderful man satisfied everybody. It was amazing how crisply and quickly he arranged everything. Every one in the end was impressed with Colonel Baring's tact.

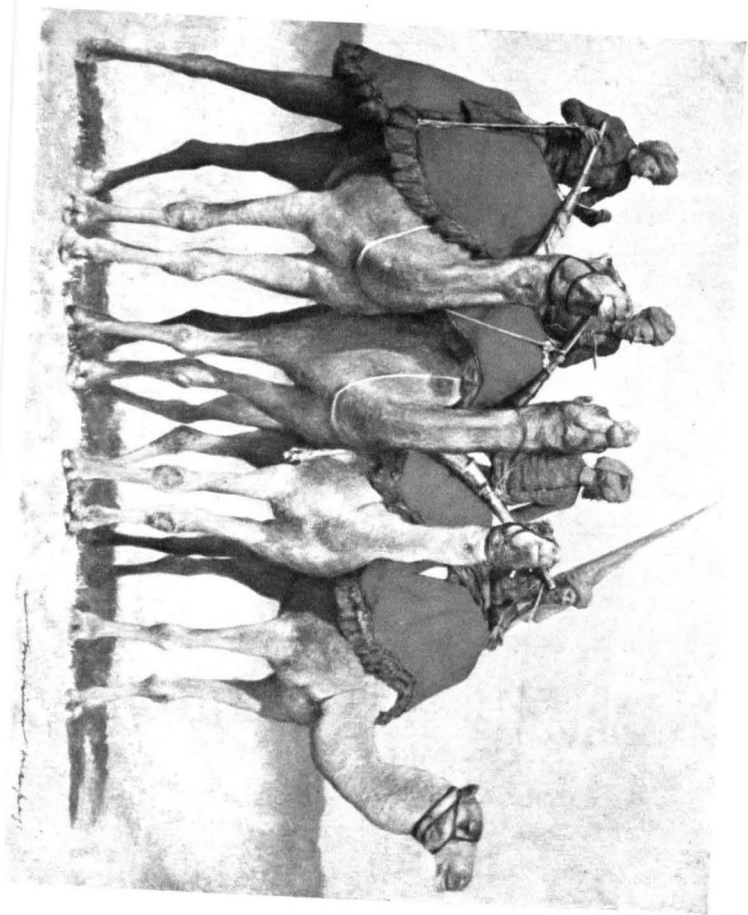
The Durbar was wonderfully organised. To think that this big city, as large as Greater London, was a few short months ago nothing but rice-fields ! Now it was illuminated by electric light ; there were tramcars ; it was an enormous town, and one that looked as though it had always been there.

Camp life in India is not like camp life anywhere else. It is reduced to a state of perfection. It affords the greatest possible comfort. I for one could never find anything to complain of. We visited Number Two Camp towards the end of the Durbar, and the people there were just squaring up their accounts. They found that they had been paying enormous sums for their meals. That was nothing compared with the "extras." They had been in the habit of having an extra little square of cake with their tea every day, and at the end they were charged two rupees for each piece of cake ; and the last breakfast in camp, which consisted of bread and butter and eggs,

cost them eighteen rupees. Here and there one met with complaints of that sort ; but on the whole the arrangements were satisfactory, and every one was delighted. The postal and police systems were not all that one might have wished for. We marvelled sometimes how letters ever reached their destinations at all. The native postmen would come up to you in the streets at all times of the day, and without saying a word would thrust a letter in your face to see if it belonged to you. There were scoundrels about the camp as servants who called themselves Bombay boys ; but, through the kindness of the P. and O. superintendent at Bombay, we possessed a genuine Bombay boy, and he was a treasure. He could do everything—dress hair, fold clothes, pack, and be valet as well as lady's-maid. There were very few Bombay boys. The bulk of servants were men who had crowded into Delhi in the hope of being employed, asking double and treble their proper salary. The life we led was different from that of most of the people at the Durbar. Most of them spent their time in one whirl of gaiety—luncheons, dinners, teas, receptions. There were things going on all the time. People were simply gorged with gaiety. There was too much

CAMELRY FROM ALWAR

THEY carry the ancient swivel-guns—brightly polished metal guns—which shine so brightly that one can see them from a great distance.



of it. What we did was simply to rise at day-break, paint in the early morning, and go back to breakfast. The getting of the breakfast used to be rather difficult. There were very few servants, and they were men of different nationalities. Some of them were Chinese. One had to order things by pantomime, and sometimes it was quite three-quarters of an hour before we could get what we wanted. We always wrote an order for a carriage, and what time it was to call, the day before. All the tonga and carriage business at the camp was wonderfully well arranged. After breakfast we usually went to the camp of one of the native chiefs or to some big ceremony. In the afternoon there were always polo and football matches; but while these things were going on, we were always painting in the streets or in the native camps.

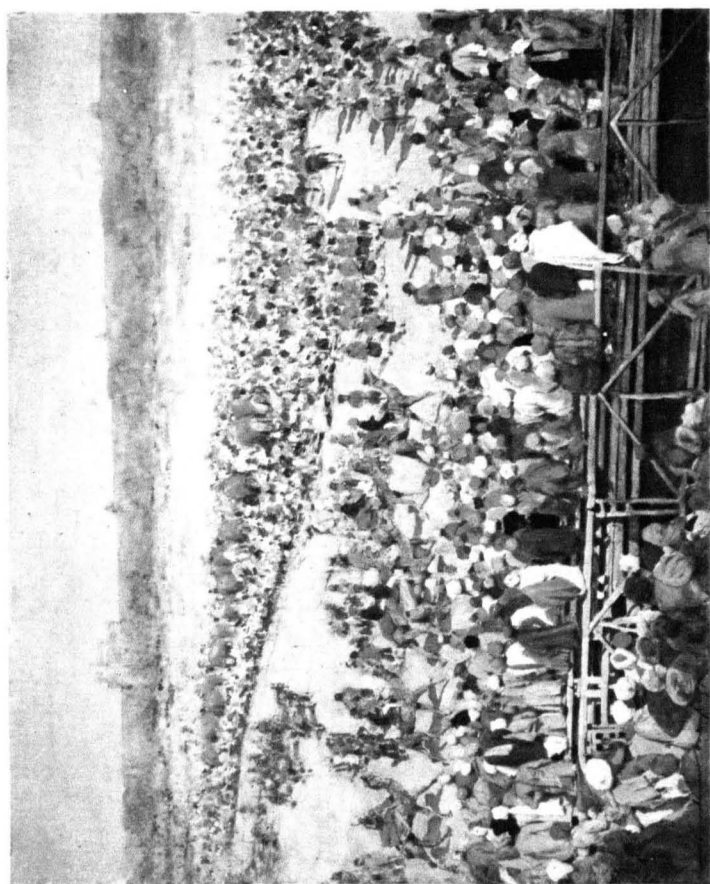
At the end of the Durbar it was extraordinary to see the worn-out aspect of the people who were presumably enjoying the holiday. They had seen too much; they were tired; it must have been a relief to them when it was all over. We in the Press Camp enjoyed every minute, and, as we one and all said afterwards, we should like to have had the whole fortnight of ceremonials over

again. The presence of so many beautiful English women did much towards making the Durbar a success.

Of course, there were very many dinners to attend, and it was marvellous how well all the Viceregal parties were arranged. The night I dined with the Viceroy there were over a hundred guests. One enormous tent was used as a dining-room, and another equally large as a reception room. Every one agreed that Lord Curzon was an ideal host, and the memory of the A.D.C.s was wonderful. They knew the names of every one there. My personal experience was not especially enlivening. I sat near a lady who scarcely spoke a word during the whole evening. Once she turned round, and said, in a gushing manner, "Isn't this an interesting dinner? Do you know, we are all distinguished and interesting people here!" I could not but take her word for it. It is impossible to contradict a lady.

STATE ENTRY

As seen from the Jumma Masjid.



III
THE STATE ENTRY

ON THE STEPS OF THE JUMMA MASJID

TENS of thousands listening for a signal—the Royal Salute—to say that the Viceroy had entered the Imperial city.