

# With the Prince in India

## Some Days in Calcutta

Our Illustrations from Photographs by Mr C. Leys, of Auckland, N.Z., and Messrs Bolme and Shepherd, of Bombay.

(From a Correspondent.)

Everything is done that forethought can suggest and ingenuity contrive to make the fatigue of the journeyings of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales as little fatiguing as possible, and when one considers what they have to do, more especially the Prince, realisation comes of how necessary this is. Travelling in India is not, with the ordinary traveller, surrounded by the luxuries that the tourist is wont to grumblingly accept in Western countries. Huge distances have to be covered in trains that are in the daytime both hot and dusty, at night the latter, and in many cases tediously slow and lumpy. I have travelled on main lines here where the vibration was so considerable that it were nigh to impossible to read even large print without undue straining of the eyes. Over the northern route, which the visitors have so far followed, there is little in the landscape to please. For the most part a vast plain stretches away from the carriage window, broken by patches of stunted trees, or the outcrop of an isolated drab and dirty native village, while occasionally the sky-line is broken by a chain of low brown hills. The small outcroppings of the ryot, or native farmer, that might at another time vary the landscape are this year brown and barren, the land crying for the periodical rains, which can alone relieve its sterility. From Lucknow on to Calcutta there has been at least sufficient rainfall to partially retrieve the crops from utter failure, and here also the beneficial results of the immense irrigation works are in places noticeable. India has more extensive irrigation works than the rest of the world put together, but how inadequate they yet are is bare to the eye of the most casual traveller. Trailing thousands of miles through this uninviting prospect in trains from which the most strenuous efforts can only very partially exclude the insidious dust, the Prince and Princess have ever and anon broken their journey to listen to addresses from which the novelty (if ever they possessed any) has long since been worn disgustfully threadbare, and to go through a round of functions that with a few bright exceptions cannot be other than boring. While, as I say, they are surrounded by every comfort and luxury that is possible they work infinitely harder than the most hardy wire made and nasal voiced American tourist ever dreamed of in a country to which hard work is an unwellcome and religiously excluded alien. Let me give you an example of what I mean. The Royal train made a twenty hours' run from Lucknow to Calcutta. No sooner were its Royal passengers on the platform than the reception to the country's capital commenced—the trip down the river, the presentations at Princes' Club, and interchange of speeches, and the formal drive to Government House. In the evening there was a small dinner, followed by a levee at which the thousand of local presentations were made, and not till midnight was long past did retirement become a possibility. Any inclination to over-sleep was checked by the presentation of callers to the Royal Lancaster Regiment at 8.30. Compulsively cast

functions followed in a polo tournament and the races in the afternoon, but in the evening was a formal dinner with the Lieut. Governor of Bengal. Then fortunately Sunday intervened, its only obligation attendance at the cathedral service at 10.30. This is but a fair sample of what the Royal pair go through with its necessary dressing of the part for each separate function.

It were absurd for me to weary you with a recital of the programme that gave little leisure during a week in Calcutta. The goings and comings interested me chiefly by reason of the presence of the Imperial Cadet Corps, which invariably formed part of the escort. I have a recollection of mentioning them before, but made no apology for doing so again. In their white and blue uniforms, and bejewelled turbans, what a sensation these sons of the noblest families in India would make dashing through Hyde Park on their magnificent black steeds, each man sitting and controlling his mount in a way that only a devotion to equestrianism from early youth can command. As I heard a Yankee girl say, "Guess those young men look good enough to eat; appear to be made of chocolate cream. I suspicion they outsome ice in this country." If the Tashi Lama and his remarkable court and the Tongsa Penlop of Bhutan could occasionally have been thrown in to the processions as a sort of make-weight, I should have been better pleased. The Tashi Lama was a gorgeous sight in his official robes and many-paked hat when he made his official visit at Government House the day after the dawning of the new year. He arrived in a Government carriage, but departed in his Sedan chair, which was carried by no less than fourteen of his retainers. But the Tongsa Penlop, the head man of Bhutan, interested me if anything even more. I encountered him first when coming down on the Darjeeling Hill railway with his following of big-headed innocent-eyed be-troussed but bare-legged retainers, most of whom had never previously been beyond the confines of remote Bhutan. On the boat crossing the Ganges, seated up in the bow with his immediate officials, and the British officer who acted as bear leader, he attracted the attention of one of the most pushing of amateur snaphottists that I have encountered. This persevering individual went up close, and steadily pointed his cheap kodak at the old man all the way across. Evidently not thoroughly satisfied with the light, he persuaded the guileless old gentleman, through the British officer, to stand out in the sun and "get his picture took." It was amusing to see the old chap smoothing his robes and preening himself. (Here I took a hasty and surreptitious snap-shot.) When we had safely made the passage, and were comfortably seated awaiting the starting of our train on the farther bank Calcutta wards, the egregious Englishman had an inspiration. "By Jove!" he said, "I must take the Penlop and his suite," and forthwith he made his exit and had that unfortunate ruler dragged from the serenity of his carriage, and with his attendants placed up against the carriage like so many verminals about to be snaphotted. I have often wondered since whether, after his week in Calcutta with the pomp of Government carriages and lancer escorts, that kindly old Penlop would have been quite so glibly snaphotted. Perhaps not.

The native crowds who witnessed the functions in Calcutta were singularly undemonstrative. When anything was afoot their knowledge of where it was going to happen was unimpeachable, and they could be seen in their tens and thousands wending their way afoot and in garris to points of vantage. There they would stay for hours waiting patiently to catch even so much as a glimpse of the passage of the royal personages. As the equipages drew near a hum of expectancy would pass through the crowd, and the actual passage was marked by a certain amount of hand clapping. How far were they moved or even interested it is difficult to say. A native will go and take up his abode on a railway station heedless of the hour of departure of the particular train he required, and there wait apparently with equal patience and indifference whether it be one hour or a dozen. He shows a tendency to come together on little provocations in great numbers, but possibly the clapping on the occasion of the Prince's visit was as much outward demonstration as could be expected from a people who, while self-contained, may yet feel deeply. For one thing the Indian has never achieved the British cheer. When he attempts it he emits a howl or dismal shriek that would rival a banshee. Still it was pleasant to hear a good round English cheer when at the review on New Year's morning, and again at the races, there were congregated sufficient Englishmen to give it effect.

Under the stress of functions that could not be avoided it was not surprising to find that the Prince and Princess dropped a portion of their programme that could readily be deleted. They were to have gone to Darjeeling after a week in Calcutta, and without a trip to the hills these saviours of the youthful Anglo-Indian and the delicate woman in the moon-sown sash on the plains, no tour of India can be considered complete. But the Prince and Princess elected to be satisfied with the view that they had had of the Himalayas from Jammu, at the entrance to the pass, through to Cashmere, and spent three quiet days at the Viceroy's summer residence and park at Barrackpore, some twelve miles out of Calcutta on the Hooghly. Probably their selection was a wise one, for the railway journey is lengthy and the little mountain railway as it ascends by the road crossing and re-crossing it in the climb presents a fine example of what state of disrepair a railway or tramway is usually allowed to lapse into when the end of its concession draws near. But the scenery on the hills as one catches glimpses through the trees of wooded range upon range with an occasional tea plantation clinging to the mountain side, is picturesque. And the hill station of Darjeeling is unique with its heights and depths. Its great expanse of tea gardens extending for thousands of feet below the town proper along the course of every steep valley, and its crowning glory of the snow clad Kinchinjung, a range eighty miles distant, but, such is the rarity of the atmosphere, appearing as a veritable background to this collection of white dotted houses nestling into the bosom of the olive-green hills. More often than not, however, great banks of clouds settle down on and completely wipe out Darjeeling's wonderful background, and then this hill station descends near to the commonplace. Just at this season

the great mountains are almost steadily enveloped in clouds, and it was this fact and unfavourable reports from the hills that eventually decided the Prince and Princess.

So after three pleasant days far from official troubles, though but 12 miles from Calcutta, the Royal tourists boarded the Renown, and the guns which had belched forth a noisy welcome on their State arrival speeded not the couple on their way to Rangoon as they made their private exit.

### THE "OLD GENERAL."

"One of the best-known old identities of the Barrier," says the "Barrier Miner," Broken Hill, "is Mr. B. Hawthorne, popularly designated the "Old General." He has been for sixteen years caretaker of the courthouse at Broken Hill, and to-day he celebrates his 65th birthday. A day or two ago the "Old General" received the following letter from Mr. Maybury, the Sheriff:

"In view of the satisfactory state of your health and favourable reports received of the manner in which your duties have been performed during the past year, I am recommending your retention for a further period not exceeding twelve months."

Commenting on this Mr. Hawthorne says: "It is to Bill Beans all the praise is due for my present excellent health. Although I am now past my 65th year, I feel as lively as a youngster, and am in better health now than I was forty years ago. Unfortunately I was not always blessed with such robust health. A few years ago I suffered greatly with Biliousness, and was a cripple with Sciatica, but Bill Beans were the means of restoring me to health, and a subsequent dose or two taken from time to time has kept me in the pink of condition, and enabled me to pass muster and retain my position for a further term, as chronicled in the "Miner," instead of being retired, as my age warranted." Bill Beans are obtainable everywhere. Avoid all substitutes.

### The New Zealander and Clothes for Clerks.

A novel and urgently-needed form of charity has been instituted by the Rev. Henry Pitt, vicar of St. Mary's, South-wark. Mr Pitt numbers among his parishioners many city clerks who have come down in the world, and are not even able to apply for a situation owing to the dilapidated condition of their clothing.

To remedy this impediment the rev. gentleman has been distributing silk hats, black coats, white shirts, and boots, which, though second-hand, are in good enough condition to give the men a neat and respectable appearance. "One recipient of Mr Pitt's practical charity is a clerk from New Zealand, says the "Daily Mail," who came to London with the hope of finding a good situation. He was unsuccessful, his small savings dwindled, and he was compelled to take the post of "lift boy" at a large hotel. Fitted out with a new suit of clothes by Mr Pitt he hopes soon to get back to a clerkship.