

GOLDEN DAYS IN MANY LANDS.



SUNSET ON THE HUGHLI RIVER.

BEING STRAY NOTES OF FIVE YEARS OF TRAVEL.

By WINIFRED H. LEYS, AUCKLAND.

CALCUTTA AND DARJEELING: THE BUSY CAPITAL AND THE BEAUTIFUL RETREAT AMONG THE HILLS.

AS Christmas approached the tourists in India turned their footsteps towards Calcutta, and, wherever duty permitted it, the residents from the up country stations joined in the procession towards the capital. For months ahead all the rooms in the principal hotels had been engaged by those eager to witness the Viceroy's Cup, and the big horse show at Tollygunj, which are as brilliant functions as may be seen outside of the great

European capitals. Besides these annual functions Calcutta during the Christmas of 1905 was to have unusual splendours in honour of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Thus it was that throughout December the trains came rambling into Howrah laden with the black and white population of the vast continent, all bent on participating in the festivities and having a thoroughly enjoyable holiday.

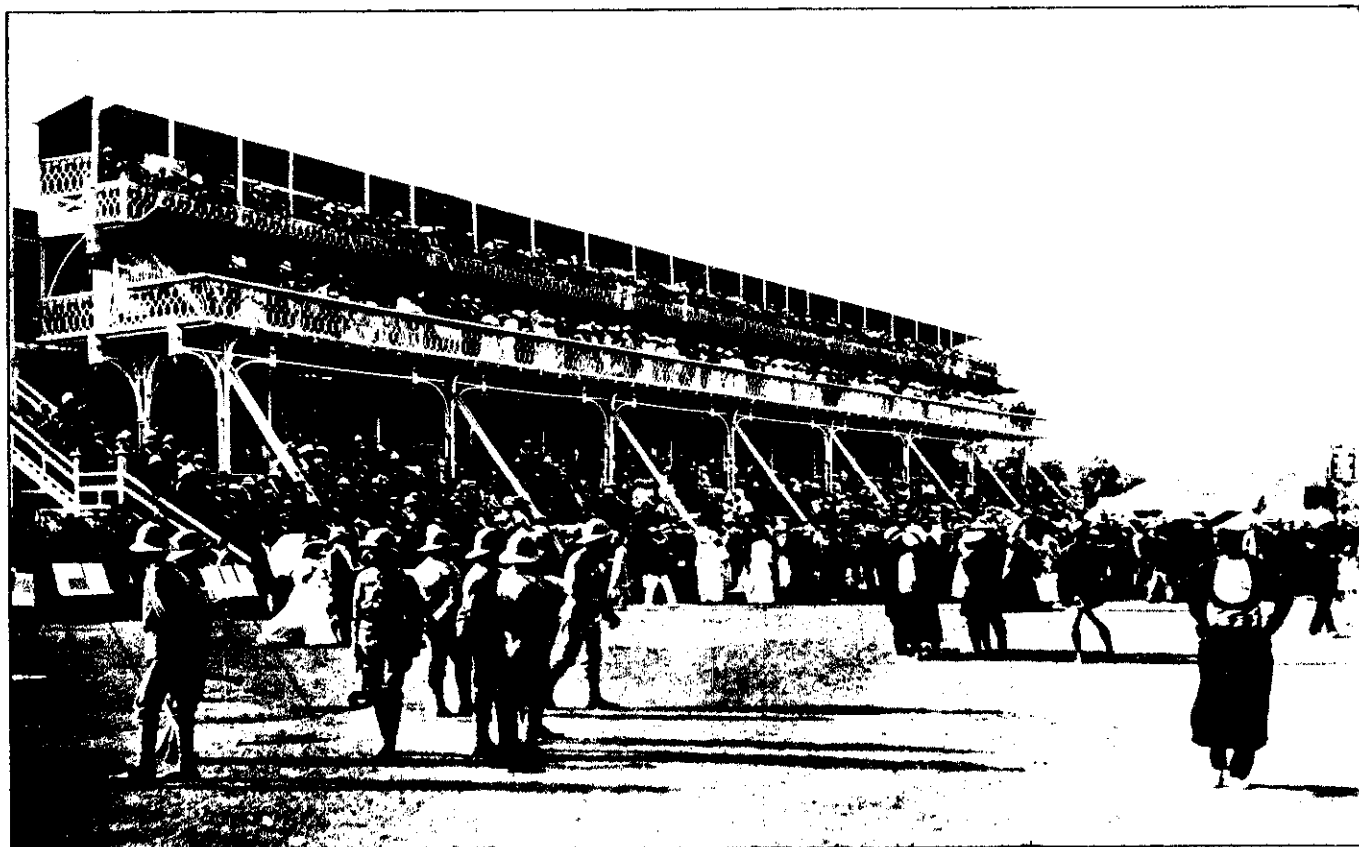
Coming down from Benares we felt it

delightful to pass into the fresh green surroundings once more. During the early hours of the morning as we approached Calcutta, the train ran through country of a somewhat swampy character, but densely vegetated. I was told that some of the best tiger shooting in India is within close proximity to the capital, but the land is too swampy and too closely covered with jungle to be safely negotiated, so is not favourite hunting ground.

Our first glimpse of Calcutta on driving from Howrah through the filthy streets of the native city is far from prepossessing; but once we get beyond this to the business quarters, to the Chowringhee, to Dalhousie Square, and Chit street, and their immediate surroundings, the massive solidity of Calcutta is impressive. The European element, too, is very pronounced, and this city of the eastern shores of India has little resemblance to its great rival on the western coast. The brown stone used in the principal buildings of Bombay and the blues and reds used by the natives in their clothes, make Bombay a city of rich colouring, bright and oriental in appearance. Calcutta, on the other hand, is colourless. Truly this is to a large extent due to drabs and whites used almost universally by the natives of Bengal in their clothing, but this to a certain extent is in harmony with the grey or dazzling white of the buildings. In Bombay white faces are so much in the minority that they attract one's attention. In Calcutta their numbers are surprising, and the busy, go-ahead atmosphere of this great commercial city has little of orientalism about it.

The homes of the Anglo-Indians in Calcutta, with their creeper clad windows, shady gardens, and brilliant flowers, have lost the bungalow aspect, and evolved into a semblance of the English villa, the whole appearance of the English quarter differing very much from that of an up-country station. Of course, Calcutta is the heart of the administration of the vast Indian Empire, and though the social and political world emanates from stately Government House, which nestles in its lovely garden at the north-west extremity of the Maidan, and from the Legislative Council Chambers near by, none the less the tall mills and factories on the river front, and the massive banks and huge shops, give to Calcutta the aspect of a prosperous commercial city.

The principal part of the city is built in a semi-circle round a huge open space known as the Maidan. This beautiful tract of land is large enough to accommodate a race-course in one corner, the Eden Gardens in another corner, to be crossed and re-crossed by roads, and to still leave a large open, airy space as a breathing place for the teeming population that lives and works in the busy city. The Hughli river



THE GRAND STAND, CALCUTTA RACECOURSE.