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My Friend the Prince

Tracy Mathewson, Yankee Photographer, Tells How His Highness of Wales Broke All the Rules to Get Him Past the Flunkies, the Camera and All.

"With This Chewing Wax in My Mouth," Said the Prince, "I Feel Like a Regular Guy."

The King of England Just After Hearing an American Joke.



The Yankee Camera Man Had to Pass This Giant Sentry to Get Inside the Yard.

By Tracy Mathewson

SOME years ago I was shipmates with a half-caste Guatemalan on a tramp steamer plying between Rio de Janeiro and Charleston, S. C. He was the unsightliest human being I ever saw outside of one blue-gummed negro from Mineral Wells, Texas. He was covered from head to foot with grime and clinkers and his nose had been mashed in with a marlinpike. They called him The Prince, because, I presume, that's the last thing you'd ever mistake him for.

But such as he was, he was the only Prince I had ever met, before I was brought in contact, professionally, with the Prince of Wales when he was on his Canadian tour year before last. I may be excused, therefore, if in my latest meeting with the Prince in London, I showed an ignorance of what princes were supposed to do and say. I am quite sure that nothing I had ever read and nothing I had learned from my friend, Prince Luis de Perez, the Guatemalan deckhand, prepared me for the sort of person the Prince of Wales turned out to be.

As I have already stated, my relations with the Prince on his Canadian trip were strictly professional. He asked me once if it would be possible to show him the motion pictures I was making of him before I shipped them to New York. I made arrangements to do this. We rigged up a projecting room on the Prince's private car and while the pictures were being shown the Prince asked me to sit by him. He asked me lots of questions about the technical phases of moving picture work and seemed very much interested.

However, I had no reason to believe that I had caught his imagination or fixed myself in his memory.

Real Yankee Flippancy

A few weeks ago I went to London to make some commercial pictures. I was strolling along Piccadilly a couple of days following my arrival when I met Mr. Gilbert Nigel, a government official who had been one of the Prince's equerries on his Canadian trip. After we had talked for a few minutes he asked me:

"Does the Prince know you're in town?"

I thought that this was merely an eruption of British humor.

"No," I answered. "The Prince has been remarkably unenthusiastic about my presence in London."

I thought no more about it until the next day at noon, when I found a note at the Piccadilly Hotel, where I was staying, directing me to call Regent 1414. I'll never forget that number. I and the girl, put me through, as we London lads say, and was surprised to get my number in less than five minutes. It usually takes fifteen in London.

"What place is this?" I asked.

"St. James Palace," came the answer.

The name had a familiar ring, but I was preoccupied with the idea that some roughneck friend of mine had learned I was in town and was trying to get me. I guess I must have thought that St. James Palace was a moving picture theatre or some two-bit hotel with a flutrin' name.

"Well, is there anybody there wants to talk to Tracy Mathewson?"

There was a long silence. After a while a man's voice was heard.

"It was Sir Godfrey Thomas, the Prince of Wales's private secretary."

"The Prince," he said, "would like to see you tomorrow afternoon at 5 o'clock, if it's convenient."



The door flew open and there stood my old friend—I forget what his name is—who was the Prince's chief attendant and cocktail shaker in Canada. He was all dressed up like a taxi starter at the Hotel Biltmore, but I recognized him and held out my hand. He looked all around nervously, but not seeing anybody grabbed my hand and shook it heartily.

"They're expecting you," he said. He led me into a big room to the right of the entrance hall, where I found Sir Godfrey Thomas. In the adjoining room I saw Admiral Halsey, the head of the Prince's household, and we swapped a few stories before Sir Godfrey told me the Prince was ready to see me.

I walked up a long flight of stairs and turning to the left entered a spacious room with a very high ceiling. The Prince was seated at a desk at the far end, but as soon as I came in he got up and walked toward me with his hand outstretched.

"I am certainly glad to see you," he said. "How long have you been in London?"

I told him.

"I'm sorry you couldn't have been here a few weeks ago for the steppelchase. We had a jolly time. Let me show you some of the pictures."

The pictures were of the Guards' race in which the Prince came out the winner, the others falling by the way.



"I Want You to Make a Picture of My Sister, the Princess Mary," Said the Prince, and the Photograph Shown Above, Which Was Taken at Epsom Downs on Derby Day, Was the Result. From Left to Right the Figures Shown in the Picture Are: Admiral Halsey, the Head of the Prince's Household; the Prince of Wales, the Princess Mary, the Duke of York, and Prince Albert.

venient. But don't bring your camera. No cinema man has ever been inside the palace."

At 5 o'clock the next day I was outside the walls of the palace wondering where the front gate was. There were two soldiers wearing fur hats—shakos, I think you call them—who stood around with their legs apart and looked at me coldly. I was wondering what to do next when a grocery wagon came along and the gates swung open. I followed it in. One of the porters, soldiers, guards, gendarmes or whatever they were called, stepped up and wanted to know my business.

"That's all right, buddy," I said. "I've got a date with the Prince."

He immediately stepped back and I walked on a flight of steps and rang the nearest bell.

"Those pictures are not very good," he said. "I'm sure if you had been here, you would have got better ones." I tried to express my professional appreciation, but didn't say anything of interest.

The Prince then started asking me about the United States. He inquired if I had ever seen again that pretty girl that had ridden with the party a short distance through Ontario. He wanted to know how my dog Boots was getting on and how George Doran, my assistant, was. He regretted very much, he said, that he had been unable to "do the States" properly.

"You should come back, Your Highness," I said. "and go through the West and the South."

"I plan to do so," answered the Prince.

"Well, if you do," I said, "I've got a little house down in Atlanta, Ga., and I'd certainly be glad for you to pay me a visit."

"Why, I wouldn't think of going to the States without calling on you," he replied. At that moment I happened to think of Luis de Perez, not to mention Willie Elias, Cal Rountree and a few other friends of mine back in Hawk's Gulley, Mott street and a few other places. I wondered what they would think of that.

A Coveted Privilege Granted

Seeing the Prince was in such a good humor I asked him if it wouldn't be possible for me to make some motion pictures of him inside the palace.

"Sure," he answered. "Any time you're passing here drop in and make them."

As I didn't quite feel up to dropping in on the Prince as I would drop in on Romany Marie, I asked for a special engagement. He told me to see Sir Godfrey and fix it up for two days later. As I was about to go he suggested that if I would bring one of those volumes of photographs, "The Prince of Wales's Own Book," with me when I returned he would autograph it. All in all we talked for about twenty-five minutes and he had planned on seeing me only five. By this I don't mean that I displayed such brilliant mental qualities and such persuasive charm of manner that he couldn't bear to have me go. As a matter of fact he did most of the talking and the conversation was largely about America. I think he was too careful of my feelings to rush me off abruptly.

I spoke to Sir Godfrey as I went out. He was greatly surprised that the Prince had consented to allow pictures to be made in the palace.

"It will be the first time a cinema man was ever in this palace," he said.

The next morning I went to Southampton and after completing some work I sent my equipment back to London and started to ride through the country to Epsom Downs to see the Derby, or as we bloomin' British toffs would say, the "Derby."

I had the idea of making pictures of any sort. It was the merest accident that I happened to have a small still camera containing one plate.

When I got to Epsom Downs the air was



At Left—Tracy Mathewson, the American Photographer Who Made Moving Pictures in St. James Palace for the First Time in History.

thick with mist and the skies were dark. I pushed my way out on the track to take a look around and some track guards, seeing my camera, started to push me back. Just about that time someone stepped through the crowd and grabbed me by the arm. It was the Prince.

"How are you this time?" he said.

"I'm a bit rushed," I said.

He laughed. By that time the gang had fallen back and left me alone.

"Come over here," he said. "I'd like you to make a picture of my sister, the Princess Mary."

I had only one plate. It was a dark day—but there was nothing else for me to do. I saw him go over and speak to the Princess, who was standing with Admiral Halsey and her other two brothers, the Duke of York and Prince Albert. The next moment he had lined them up and told me to go ahead.

I tried to time the picture, but my hand was shaking and I snapped it out of focus. I never admitted this to him though. After I snapped this one plate, he came over and started talking about the races. I was still thinking about the bum picture I had just made and nervously pulled a stick of chewing gum out of my pocket. When I realized what I was doing I tried to stuff back, but the Prince had seen it.

"Give it to me if you don't want it," he said, laughing. He took the stick, unwrapped it and stuck it in his mouth.

"With this chewing wax in my mouth," said the Prince, "I feel like a regular guy."

The next day when I was ushered into his office with my camera the first thing the Prince asked me was whether I had got a good picture.

"Fine!" I said. "Wonderful!"

It was one of the worst I had ever taken in my life.

"My sister didn't want to pose at first," he continued, "but when I explained to her that you were a friend of mine, it was all right."

After we had made some pictures both inside and out in the yard, the Prince put me through a long series of questions about photography, the United States, race horses, cattle, and the pretty girls in America which he discussed with intelligence and good taste.

I would like to repeat some of the things he said about several American girls, but perhaps it wouldn't be advisable. But the American girls needn't be fearful. He's strongly prejudiced in their favor.

All in all the Prince has as much personality and as fine an intelligence as any man I ever met. I say that without regard to his position. If he were Bill Smith's son I, or anybody else, would say the same thing. They say he gets his character from his mother. As I was talking to him, I noticed her picture hung on the wall just over his shoulder. The likeness was striking.

"When are you coming back to England?" he asked when I had made everything I could see that looked like a picture.

"I expect to get back next year some time," I told him.

"Well, drop in and see me whenever you're in London."

How Automobile Racing "Poisons" a Man

WHEN Gaston Chevrolet climbed from his little green racing car after winning the 500-mile international sweepstakes automobile race at Indianapolis recently, after having driven steadily for nearly six hours at the average speed of 88.16 miles per hour, his eyes were almost lifeless. In medical phraseology they were "dead."

His face was haggard and drawn. The muscles of his legs and forearms were cramped and knotted. His head dropped and his steps faltered.

In fact he looked like a man who had just taken a dose of poison. And that is exactly what happened, as a writer of the Scientific American explains.

The strain of clutching the wheel of his car for more than 5 hours and 40 minutes, never once relaxing his hold or taking his eyes off the dizzy white stretch of brick pavement always ahead of his speeding machine, had caused physical fatigue equivalent to poison, for fatigue is defined as poison by prominent medical authorities. And fatigue poison is just as effective in its action as arsenic or carbolic acid. An overdose of either would be fatal.

Two photographs of Chevrolet, one taken before and the other immediately after the race, tell the story of the racer's complete exhaustion. One shows him, fresh, alert, smiling and full of energy, ready for the gruelling 500-mile race. The other shows him, gaunt, and haggard of face, with colorless eye, drooping head, sagging body and cramped muscles, as attendants helped him from his car after the race.

"The extreme exhaustion suffered by Chevrolet from physical exertion and severe strain of driving 500 miles without a stop at the terrific speed he maintained," declares Dr. Clyde Leeper, a medical expert of Akron, O., "caused certain chemical changes to create poisonous decomposition in the muscles of his body—in other words the production and accumulation of waste substances such as carbon dioxide and lactic acid. In large quantities these are typical fatigue poisons."

"Chevrolet after the race had the 'dead' eye which we found so often among wounded men overseas, among men who had endured long suffering from wounds and exhaustion and men who had become shell-shock victims. Chevrolet's extreme fatigue was equivalent to a severe shock the complete nervous system—almost the same as if he had been hurled 40 or 50 feet in an explosion, and severely stunned. Bicycle riders, marathon runners and long-distance swimmers suffer similar fatigue. They all have that 'dead' eye after the acid test of endurance."