

At the Gateway of India

THE first glimpse one gets of India is at Colombo—although Ceylon is no more India than New Zealand is Australia. It is a marvellously beautiful city, although you are carefully and officially warned not to go near the native quarter or you may catch lots of things not on the bill-of-fare.

In many respects Colombo suggests Honolulu, only that it has in addition to the rare beauty of sea and sky and tumbling, white-crested surf and tropical foliage everywhere, the mysterious charm which Honolulu has not, and which is intangible and illusive, but an essential part of the magic of the old, old Orient.

Talk about the ancient castles and historic landmarks of old England! There is a venerable cowshed or temple or something of the sort within half a mile from the big hotel at Colombo that has been just as it is now for something more than a thousand years. And the people carry you back quite that far, unconsciously. The whole kaleidoscopic panorama makes one feel as if it were all a wonderful dream tinted with the bizarre, riotous colors of a gorgeous sunset: when you start in to analyze it it doesn't seem strange or foreign or surprising either! Perhaps it was because I had been Kipling-saturated and he has caught the local color and atmosphere of all India inimitably. Perhaps I lived there in some previous incarnation—you quite believe in all such theories when you are in the land. But everything is just as one has imagined it would be without expecting anything in particular.

You don't land at a wharf in Colombo. The ship feels her way around a long breakwater on which the sea pounds white, with a boom to be heard for miles. Suddenly your craft stops out in the black velvet of the night and lets go her anchor chains with a running rattle while hundreds of fireflies, that prove upon closer acquaintance to be small boats, tumble and crowd around her. Then the spectacled, skirted and severe customs, medical and other officials come aboard, and the bronze, almost naked porters, with the usual throng of petty traders of all nations, swarm everywhere, and the Tower of Babel gets its second innings. You anxiously sort out your luggage as it comes up in the slings from the yawning hatchways, or as you see it go by daintily poised on the head of some chocolate-colored male or female statue. The hotel commissionaire takes it in his charge and shouts into the promiscuous darkness for the boat for the Galle Face (it isn't Gally-fasse as one would think it should be pronounced, but just the plain common or garden Gall and Face), and a boat shoots from somewhere out of the middle-distance, and everyone shouts and jabbars and squeals simultaneously.

You get in the boat and the rowers lift it grandly through the water, in and around and among the twinkling harbor stars, and finally with a great fuss and a melodramatic finishing spurt, they land you at the jetty. A dozen or so squabble for the honor of helping you step ashore and the rowers plead with iron lungs and camp-meeting earnestness for baksheish for their wild race of a mile or so. You give them largess to the equivalent of five cents to divide among the crew of six, and they forthwith decide that it is Rockefeller himself travelling incog. The coinage is Sinhalese and unlike any other in the Far East. One hundred cents make one rupee, and a rupee is thirty American cents at the current exchange.

At the jetty there are scores waiting for you to sell you anything they've got from lace to dancing girls, or to simply beg from you or to try and get a tip out of you by any old pretext. You have to shake them all off or lay a stick to them if they get too persistent, for if you gave anything to one of them all of the others would be down on you like a flock of starving crows.

Getting through the crowd—bronze, sweating bodies; white rolling eyes; pearly teeth; black hair, long and coarse and done up in a little bob behind; with usually just one little scrap of clothing, and that of the most vivid color—you first catch the inevitable customs official. I had become glibly-voiced in bluffing. So I rushed the Eurasian Night Inspector and told him how important it was for me to get our stuff through at once without examination, as most of it had to go up to Government House. He salaamed till I was afraid he would get shivers in his face from the jetty floor.

"If the honorable Sahib would condescend to say how many pieces and how marked, the slaves would forthwith get them if they had to throw everybody else and their things over the side."

It was something along this line that he handed me back, and so I gave him the descriptive marks, number of packages, etc., including a big bundle of bill-board paper on which I should have paid full duty. The little Government House oration had a pull like an old-style mustard plaster. Then as I saw a second-edition Sandow marching proudly up with about 300 lbs. of printing balanced neatly on his turban, and my work began to look awfully coarse in my own eyes, I got the customs man to one side and gave him a cigar while I told him confidentially how restless it was to strike a place where the officials knew their business from the ground up. He swelled himself like a wise toad and amiably cursed the porters for not breaking the running records with my 300-lb. packs on their heads.

Just outside the jetty gates squatted a row of greasy money-changers—the same tribe of Shylocks that Christ drove out of the Temple in the long ago. They are not allowed on the

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wharf either. They exchange any country's money for coin of Ceylon and only charge a penny for the accommodation, which isn't bad for Hebrew bankers.

Then you take a rickshaw, and twenty or more fellows spring from somewhere and run after you as you get in the over-grown baby carriage.

"May I not push behind, Master?—I am most strong, Master—We shall go like the west wind," etc.

They are all so very anxious.

But you shake them all off as the coolie you are honoring with your patronage gives a little grunt, settles himself in the shafts, and goes off at an easy lope. I don't suppose it is more than six miles an hour, but it seems eight or nine. As your bronze-skinned trotting man-horse springs nimbly around a mudhole and ambles up the street, with the electric lights spluttering under the great over-arching tropical trees, already dropping dew in great hot tears, a little lithe copper-colored boy with laughing eyes and teeth romps alongside.

"Penny for the pretty flowers," he cries, waving at you a handful of white and crimson and purple orchids. You pay no attention. He tries it three or four times. You sit stern, silent and sour.

"Take the pretty flowers anyway," he finally shouts, "take them just for luck"—and he goes laughing back into the witchery of the velvet night, while you wonder if you haven't been too careful for once.

The rickshaw man-horse trots on, edging in and out—now to escape a muddy place or the next minute to avoid a homeward-plodding corporal's guard of work elephants tired out from a hard day of shifting big timbers at the docks—every few minutes making a swinging half-circle to pass a lumbering, thatched-roof cart drawn by two patient, plodding little Indian oxen, scarcely bigger than Newfoundland dogs, a black or brown wild-eyed savage hunched up on the long tongue of the rude vehicle, poking persistently at first one and then the other of his team—past water buffaloes in harness, great clay-blue, wide-horned monsters, or an occasional dockery, the blooded stock of the Sinhalese roads—past vivid and animated bazaars, business and pleasure just beginning for the night, and everyone out of doors—past grey-bearded men of every shade of black or mahogany, garbed in every tone of pink, crimson, magenta, brilliant blues and greens, orange and purples, half-naked, skirted or quaintly uniformed—past innumerable recumbent forms in doorways or on the roadside—past an old, old Buddhist temple where the priests have watched and waited and studied and practiced their philosophies of life, the door never closed nor the shrine deserted since long, long before Columbus fitted out his little fleet to probe the mystery of the Western sea—past the great white clock tower and lighthouse, rising in the centre of the busiest street—through a short native alley where the potter and the carver of brass and the smith and the baker work primitively at their several trades as they and their fathers have for centuries unnumbered—out along the great Marine Parade with its close-shaven lawn of three hundred acres, on the one side sloping to the thundering sea—then with a showy sprint up under the porte-cochere of the "finest hotel in the East," where twenty or thirty jabbering servants fall over one another in welcoming you.

The rickshaw man works it out that he has teamed you six miles and it has taken him a few minutes less than an hour. So he calls it an even hour and taxes you 20 cents, a sum worth 12 cents of good American coin. When you give it to him in cash instead of suggesting a thirty-day note, he proceeds to do a little impromptu prayer stunt for the generous giver—which is you.

It's almost 9 o'clock and the dusky hotel clerk tells you dinner will be served almost at once—in your room if you wish or in the big dining hall until 11. It's the usual big dining hall with scores of fashionable women guests and their pied-raven companions, also with double scores of dark, silent waiters, each with his little kit-like flap about bare brown legs, his oily black hair topped with an almost circular tortoise-shell comb, for all the world like those mysterious little haloes wherewith the artists of other days facilitated the identification of the Saints.

Coffee and cigarettes are served on the Moorish verandahs, thirty feet wide. Then you go to bed if you're tired, and most travellers are. That is you start with no other intention than that of seeking the feathers. There is your nice big bed all ready for you, with its snowy sheets and two fat pillows, the bed all boxed in with netting like a little square tent. The legs of the bedstead have small inverted funnels on them,



THE ORIENT SEA, FROM THE GALLE FACE HOTEL.



COLOMBO'S CHARACTERISTIC CLOCK TOWER, FROM WHICH THE "LONG WHITE ARM OF LIGHT" SWINGS CEASELESSLY.

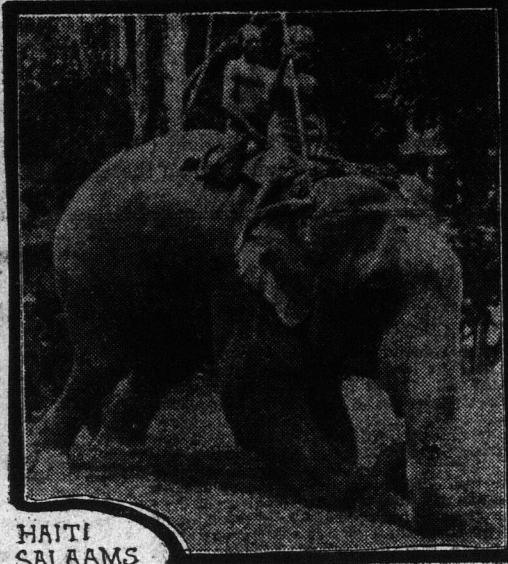
like anklets, a foot from the polished floor. That is so that no holidaying snake will get the chance of sharing the bed with a paying guest. You glance up at the wall and notice a nice little pink lizard some six inches long springing towards the ceiling after a bug or spider that looks good to him. They won't hurt you—the lizards—so it's all right and proper for them to have the run of the place and make your walls their hunting preserve. They are even encouraged and subsidized, for they keep bugdom from the dangers of congested population.

There is no bedclothing other than the sheets you sleep on. More is never needed, for Ceylon is much hotter than India even, being more neighborly with the equator. It was only 108 during the wintry day I was there—and that during a pouring equatorial rainstorm. But they say it does get really warm in the summer.

After you get into your pajamas you turn out the light and sit by the big open window and listen to the chatter of the monkeys and the flying foxes somewhere up in the quivering palm tops, and look lazily at the twinkling rickshaw lights as they come and go jiggling up the road and down. You listen to the dolorous sighs of a complaining camel out in the background of the damp, sticky night, and the hi-yi of the rickshaw-man and the creaking of an old ox-cart—while lights twinkle from shadowy, fantastic houses and gleam from roadside forges, and over the sleeping town the long white arm of the revolving searchlight swings ceaselessly.

And then the constant pounding of the surf sends you to sleep and you manage to snooze somehow through the stuffy, sticky, sweltering night. You must sleep, for you dream, and the dreams are all topsy-turvy and fantastic in their admixture of the grave old East and the young and frivolous West—the dim ages of the past and the chattering of today.

Then you begin half-consciously to wonder what makes it rain so tremendously hard and so steadily, until by and by you remember that it is the pounding of the sea just outside your window, and you get up and look out in the first light of the dawn.



HAITI SALAAMS

The line of waiting rickshaws is still there. And there is a little huddled heap under or close to each. That is the patient man-horse waiting to awaken upon the instant and run miles with you for his penny fare. There are hundreds of other little huddled heaps over on the great lawn—along the walls—in the doorways—everywhere.

Then comes a long procession of rush-hooped carts drawn by quaint, patient, little oxen with their funny hump just back of the neck, as though meant by nature for the fitting of the yoke—and their wild drivers squatting on the tongue. A philosophical camel comes ambling silently, its long neck swaying from side to side, chewing, chewing, chewing the cud of reflection—a few early work elephants lumbering along; the big white arm of light still swinging round and round over the silent city, completing its nightly vigil in the grey of the dawn—a cool, refreshing breeze; the twitter of early birds and the raucous protest of an ancient crow—and then, suddenly, it is full morning and the teeming world is wide awake!

You step out of your room. By almost every door the servant of some guest is still curled



IN THE NATIVE QUARTER, COLOMBO



THE OLD, TREE-SHADED CANAL, COLOMBO

upon his mat like a faithful dog. Other dusky, silent-footed shapes fit spectre-like along the dim corridor to take up their work in the distant kitchens. You cross to the bathrooms and take a plunge—for the bathrooms here open into a swimming pool sixty yards long and twenty in width, forming the central court of the servants' quarter. Then you dress and again look from the window while breakfast receives attention. No one breakfasts in the big room. The promenade of the day has begun. Little ox-carts of every kind pass to and fro—carriages with tiny ponies shining like satin—rickshaws—ayahs and babies—servants airing straining dogs in leash—more babies in rickshaws, their mothers beside them on bicycles—centering couples on horseback—a troop of native cavalry with their crimson turbans and lances, pennon-decked, clattering across the plain—and everywhere the bright mosaic of humanity taking closer pattern and yet more brilliant ever-changing colour.

In these hot countries it is in the early morning that all the world takes the air.

And that is Colombo—the gateway of India—as it looks in the first night and morning through travelers' spectacles.

AN INTERESTING RELIC

A whale's tooth, presented to President Grant in earnest for a treaty by a Fiji Island king is among the relics shown in the Smithsonian Institute exhibit at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition.

JEFFERSON'S DESK

One of the interesting exhibits in the Government Building at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition is the original desk upon which Thomas Jefferson wrote the first rough draft of the Declaration of Independence.

As in our daily expenses the little unconsidered items are what count, so in the expenditure of our time, the odd moments can be used to accomplish much.

Imperio

The Imperial Press Conference was a big success. Everywhere in the overseas lands have been received with enthusiasm, and, indeed, have their surprised and almost overwhelming heartiness of their welcome. If the fault to find with their hosts it is often happens, the very generosity of pity makes a great strain on and strength of the guests. I have and keep up with the delegates for of the many days of their visit, a pretty dead-beat at the end of the I should be if I had not been content to my own business on the of a memorable week I cannot say men from over the seas seem to race, and though now and then a little jaded, I think on the who enjoyed themselves so much that fairly fresh, mentally and physical of the strain upon them.

The New World Element

I have had the pleasure of my acquaintance of a considerable number of delegates, and my dominant impression these overseas journalists bring to the profession the sharp wit, the great freshness and clearness of mind, and the general go-aheadness of the of the New Worlds of which their children. I confidently tell any journalist that if he thought he particular to teach to these men young worlds he would soon find it is more likely that he would have to learn from them.

Festivities

The first of the festivities which was the lunch given by the men of journalists of the House of Parliament happy idea first found its home in Sir Gilbert Parker. Sir Gilbert is by birth; has been in his day a war correspondent, and served part of his life to life and letters in Australia, besides an ideal host and a man of personal popularity. He communicated of Mr. Rudolph Lehmann—still, in other occupations, one of the witty on Punch, and once, for a brief editor of the Daily News.

Incidentally Mr. Lehmann is called the standing counsel of the House every year, and in his present house at Bourne, End, keeps touch with those smooth waters of the Thames which have given him so many ant hours. Then Mr. P. W. Wilson, a fragmentary descriptive writer of News, came on, and then Mr. Speaker of the Socialistic party, and this nucleus the idea grew until it up enthusiastically, and by none by the universally respected Speaker of the House, and in a few days it had of the big events of the Conference luncheon took place in the Harcourt (the House of Commons—so called by the creation of Mr. Harcourt, active Commissioner of Public Works in charge of the internal economy of Parliament—one might say our colonial brethren of the Press them some of the greatest figures

In the House of Commons

The Prime Minister sat at one end of Edward Grey at another. One of me beamingly that he had sat at such notable Imperial figures as Lord Cromer. And, of course, of the principal table was the Speaker's speeches were few and brief; the lionies are so occupied during every day that they had to weigh in almost of their time. On such an one could make a happier speech. Speaker, with that sly humor which in his difficult position and so often blessed relief of laughter to tense the House of Commons. Mr. Balfour was the success of the gathering greeted at every sentence with a lighted laughter.

At Downing Street

The proceedings of the next pretty early for even a Colonial in his usually sunnier climate to its opening was a breakfast to a the visitors at 11 Downing street residence of Lloyd-George. I went to have the job, but I would like present residence of Lloyd-George, very heart of London, within a few of the House of Commons, with all of the busy thoroughfare of Parliament outside, No. 11 Downing street very oasis of perfect stillness in desert of noise.

Its apartments are plain, spacious; it looks out on the park and the little lake of St. James's, a fair-sized garden of its own, and a beautiful terrace outside, on which been many historic meetings of the You hear, for instance, from the l George himself the story of the checkered afternoon, when the Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone passed away on this very terrace waiting cision of the Geneva Arbitration the Alabama question.

A Place of Memory

There in the corner sat Lord Gladstone a game of chess, while Gladstone