

Travel.

JOTTINGS FROM A DIARY.

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL C. R. L. RONAYNE (Retired Pay).

(Continued from p. 222.)

AT 9.30 a.m. we berthed at the manganese ore berth, where we took in 1,200 tons of the ore, and this morning left it at 7 a.m. and went to No. 4 berth to complete our loading with tea and jute.

There is a large export of manganese ore from Calcutta for the blast furnaces of Middlesbrough, and it is a very useful form of cargo for ships like the "Novara," because not only is good freightage paid on it, but, as it is very heavy stuff, it acts as ballast or "stiffening" for the comparatively light cargoes of tea and jute. We nearly always take a thousand tons or so of the ore, but occasionally when we do not get any, we have to fill our water ballast tanks, which means dragging 800 tons of water along with us, thereby increasing the coal consumption of the ship, but at the same time there is, of course, no freightage charge for the 800 tons of water.

Going to sea as a ship surgeon has many attractions, but it is not quite all honey and locusts, and loading manganese ore is one of the trying times. How we loathe going alongside the berth for it! Imagine a dust more dirty, more penetrating, and more grimy than the finest coal dust, and you have the dust of manganese ore. It comes on board much like coal, that is, in the form of "slack" and lumps; in colour also it is a good deal like coal, only it is more of a brownish black, but in weight it is much heavier. The men who load and unload it get paid a special rate, owing to the irritating effect of the dust on the lungs.

It is pleasant to turn from ore to tea and jute. These are so clean and so easy to stow. The "Novara" has five hatches, and these are usually loaded from both sides of the ship, that is, the electric cranes on the quay put on board jute and tea from the large sheds on the quay, whilst the ship's cranes and derricks load from barges which come at the other side. In this way there are altogether ten gangs of stevedores loading at once, each gang sticking to its own crane or derrick. Sometimes at the two larger hatches (Nos. 2 and 4) three gangs work, making a total of 12 gangs. Working at full pressure about 1,000 to 1,200 tons can be dealt with in twenty-four hours, but half this amount would be a good average day's work.

Minor cuts and contusions are common enough, but serious accidents are fortunately few—even when the stevedores are handling unwieldy steel girders, machinery, and such like awkward and heavy cargo.

It is always fascinating and interesting to watch the loading and unloading of cargo, and see the way the shore-gangs, the winch-men, and the hold-gangs work together. It looks simple enough to the uninitiated, but there is much organization, method and experience required; and going from port to port one has plenty of opportunities to compare methods adopted, and the "team work" of the stevedores at the different ports. As may be expected, the stevedores of Calcutta are experts at loading jute, whilst those at Dundee are experts at unloading it.

But the handling of jute is almost child's play compared with that of steel girders and machinery. The Middlesbrough stevedores are said to be the most expert in the world at this job; how difficult it is may be judged from the experience at Immingham. When the Immingham Dock was first opened a few years back, local labour was used for stevedore work, but it was found they could make no "fist" of girders and machinery. I dare say, if allowed plenty of time, they could do it fairly well, but this sort of work has to be done "against time," as big ships have to "clear" quickly as they have to keep their appointed times, and besides, there are heavy dock dues for every hour spent in dock. So it was soon evident the locals could not rise to the occasion, and imported labour was necessary. Picked men were sent from Middlesbrough to instruct and assist, and now the local men are nearly as good as the Middlesbrough stevedores.

I have always been one of those who regard betting as a "mug's game," if I may be allowed a familiarism. Though I have not always lived up to this high ideal in my youth, still I think I can claim that in recent years I have atoned for my youthful indiscretions. But alas! this afternoon I fell once again, and, in a weak moment, allowed a friend to take me to the races. The first three races I tried left me about R. 50 "down"; so I decided to have a real "flutter." The race coming off was the fifth, and a good field of fourteen horses was turning out for it. My "system" for the flutter was to assiduously eschew all "tips"; take my stand in front of the Totalizer, and back for a "place" the horse with the least number of tickets on him. I duly took my stand but had some difficulty in deciding, as two horses were running one another very closely for bottom place. But as the time was nearing for closing the Totalizer I had to decide quickly, and as Major Conder's "Pomfret" had one less ticket on it than the other I backed it. The finish was a perfect beauty, with the whole fourteen horses up in a bunch—all except "Pomfret," and he was about two lengths in front of the bunch. I had a sort of double luck in backing him for a "place," because for a win he paid only Rs. 75·8 on Rs. 10, whereas for a place he paid Rs. 95·8! A rather unusual inversion of betting—but one with which I found no cause for complaint.

Sunday, February 10.—Went to the Zoo with P. There is really a very fine collection of birds and animals, and the lions and tigers and other indigenous animals are especially fine, as they live more or less in their native country, and besides, they are the pick of presents given by Rajahs

and other wealthy Indian Princes. For a long time we watched a most amusing and interesting little incident: A huge, powerful tiger with a beautiful sleek coat was gnawing at a bone; in his struggles to get meat off, he pushed it from one place to another, here and there little pieces of lean or fat being left along the track. Two tiny mice used to run out from a hole and shikar these crumbs from the great man's table. Whenever he "spotted" one of the mice, he clutched the bone between his great paws, stopped gnawing, showed his teeth and snarled. The mice would take not the slightest notice of his snarls, they simply kept at a respectful distance and "carried on." On one occasion a mouse ventured closer than usual, and the tiger snarled and hissed with increasing vigour; as he evidently realized the possibility of the mouse wresting the bone from him, he decided to take time by the forelock, and with a mighty roar he sprang at the mouse. The mouse bolted and shortly re-appeared as if nothing had happened; and the tiger went on with his gnawing, every now and again snarling. We were awfully amused and interested by a truly ludicrous entertainment.

Thursday, February 14.—The dining-room in the United Service Club is a very fine room, in fact, it may be called a "hall," it is so lofty and spacious, and, being surrounded by broad verandahs, is comparatively cool, even in the hottest months. Meals are served at large round tables capable of seating eight or nine. To-day I was having lunch there with a friend; several others, including an officer in khaki were at our table, but we did not know any of them personally. General conversation was going on amongst them, but my friend and I were chatting to ourselves, and in conversation I mentioned the town of Youghal. The officer in khaki, overheard this, and looking across the table said to me, "Do you know Youghal?" The following conversation then took place between us:—

"Yes, I know Youghal well, it is my native place. Why do you ask?"

"Do you know (so-and-so) who lives there?"

"Yes, he is an old friend of mine. Do you know him?"

"No, but I hope to soon, as I have just become engaged to his eldest daughter."

Another little proof of how small the world is!

Friday, February 15.—As I have had always rather a penchant for fossils, went to-day to the Museum, which is famous in this line. It is said the collection there of the fossil vertebrata of the Swaliks is the most complete and comprehensive in the world. Saw the huge shank-bone and breast-bone of the great wading bird, the *Megaloscelornis*. These are the only bones of this bird in the world.

In the fish section saw a good specimen of a stuffed porpoise—but no specimen of a dolphin. This, I think, is a mistake; as the two fish are of practical interest to travellers, specimens ought to be side by side for comparison. Everybody who has been to sea knows one of the "sights" of a voyage is to watch a school of porpoises or dolphins disporting them-

selves. Yet it is strange how few can tell one from the other. The word "porpoise" is used in a loose sort of way to describe both, and is used, even by "old sea dogs," many of whom do not know the difference between them.

The chief characteristics are as follows: porpoises seldom jump out of water; as a rule they only cut the surface, thereby showing only their backs and dorsal fins, and their motion suggests an air of business-like purpose and deep thought. On the other hand, it is the dolphins which give the pretty and fascinating display of gamboling along with their sportive leaps clean out of water, happy as larks, care-free and revelling in the joy of life. It makes one feel young to watch them. In addition to the above difference, they can be easily distinguished by the snout; that of the porpoise is bluntly rounded, whilst the dolphin has a tapered proboscis about six inches long. This difference in the snout is no mere academic or far-fetched one, it is so well marked that it can be distinguished easily, at 300 yards or more.

After the Museum, looked into the Victoria Memorial. It was designed by Sir William Emerson. Situated on the Maidan, in "splendid isolation," and built of polished marble brought from the State of Jodhpur, there can be little doubt that for elegance of design and execution it ranks as one of the world's masterpieces of architecture. It is truly a superb and fascinating pile. It stands as a permanent memorial to Lord Curzon, whose "push and go" saw the business through, though, I believe, in the face of much criticism. Yet he is represented only by a statue outside the ground's gate. I think he should be well inside it.

The Memorial is worth a visit if only to see the ornamental statuary over the entrance porches, which were designed and executed in Italy. Inside is a large collection of paintings, etchings, historical documents, relics, war-trophies, etc., the great bulk of which, are, in one way or another, connected with, and of interest in, India. Queen Victoria's private piano and writing-desk are there. In the lofty central hall, around the interior of the dome are beautiful mural paintings, but so high up are they, a proper view cannot be obtained, unless by climbing to the narrow gallery which runs round the dome.

In one hall lofty scaffolding had been rigged up, and men were at work at the top of it. I asked a man what was wrong, and he said one of the stones of the arch was loose or cracked (he did not know which). But the point rather interested me, because, if I remember rightly, at the time the foundations were being laid there was a controversy amongst experts as to the method of laying them. I trust that it is not going to be a case of "St. Paul's number two."

Monday, February 18.—Passed three or four large turtles in the water—the first time I recognized them, though they are said to be fairly common about the head of the Bay. As a matter of fact, I believe I have seen them often before, but did not know what they were. They look for

all the world like clumps of dark floating seaweed, and I would not have "spotted" what they were this time, only I chanced to put the glasses on them.

By the way, I bought these glasses in London, just before we started on the outward voyage; and the more I use them, the more I am pleased with them. They are + 16 Zeiss.

In the Army + 6 is officially recommended, and + 8 allowed if desired, but higher magnification than this is taboo—or rather, used to be before the war; it was only recently I saw a young officer with + 12 Zeiss binoculars.

If the Army recommends + 6 or + 8, it is only natural ordinary individuals would regard these as the best; and so there is a big demand for glasses of these powers. And undoubtedly these are the best for *Army* requirements—but the requirements of the individual are not, I think, those of the Army. In the latter case, glasses are recommended largely because of the panoramic field of view, which enables objects to be compared, and so distances judged, maps to be drawn, etc. But you and I, on the whole, want glasses, not for panoramic effect, but to enable us to see a definite object, such as a house, or person, clearly at a distance.

The foregoing were my views, when I decided to purchase binoculars some years before the war. But I had no experience of the higher power glasses, and as I knew they would cost a good bit more, I determined to keep an unbiased mind.

At that time I was staying at the Strand Palace Hotel, London, from the roof-garden of which a magnificent view of the city can be got. So I went to Ross of Bond Street and got him to send me down + 6, + 8, + 10, + 12 on approval, and armed with the four glasses I went to the roof, and after a thorough test, had no hesitation in selecting the + 12. And I have never since regretted the selection—except perhaps a feeling they were not quite powerful enough; and gradually a hankering after + 16 had been developing, which I have just gratified, having first disposed of my + 12 at quite a good price.

The difference between glasses of different powers, as regards weight and bulk, is curious, and I do not understand it. For instance, there is not much difference between + 18 and + 25, or between + 12 and + 16. But the difference between a + 16 and a + 18 is considerable; the latter being heavy and cumbersome, and for this reason I think the + 16 is much preferable, as the small increase in magnification of the 18 is more than outweighed by the lighter, and less bulky, 16.

By far the greater number of passengers who possess glasses have + 6's or + 8's; only very occasionally one sees a + 12, and I have never met a passenger with a higher power than this. So on board ship I have plenty of opportunities of comparing my 16 with lower power glasses, and I find the difference is very marked. For instance, I can read plainly the

name of an approaching ship for a long time before a man with a + 6 or + 8 can make even a sporting guess at a letter.

I know the arguments against the high powers; the chief are: (1) the cost; (2) bulkiness; (3) jumping, or shaking of the object looked at; (4) and they "draw the eyes."

First-class glasses I regard as "money invested," so I would not hesitate about an extra "fiver" or so. I have already referred to the question of bulk. As regards "jumping," they of course cause some increase of this as compared with the lower powers, but I think this idea is much exaggerated, and personally I do not find the "jump" is sufficient to cause inconvenience, or blur the object looked at—and after all, this is one of the "acid tests" of any glass.

As regards "drawing the eyes," whatever that may mean. Personally, when using mine, I have never experienced a sensation of my eyes being pulled out of my head, nor any straining or tiring effect whatever, and I feel sure the ordinary individual who uses glasses only occasionally need not worry on this score if he happens to have a high power.

I am not prepared to admit that strain would arise from a high power, any more than from a low power in the case of those who have to use glasses frequently, such as officers on manœuvres, or the navigating officers of a ship. With modern lens perfection, and the arrangement by which each glass can be adjusted so as to ensure bifocal vision for each individual, I cannot see how strain could arise—except in the case of long continued observation, then the "jumping," no doubt, would have an unpleasant and trying effect. But under such a test I should think the difference in effect between a + 6 and a 16 would be small, and the one as tiring as the other.

The only real disadvantage I find is that a haze is well marked. Then lower powers are undoubtedly the better, as the high ones magnify the haze too much.

Anyway, I have had now a fairly varied experience of glasses of different power, and as a result I say give me + 16's every time.

Friday, February 22.—Arrived last night at 10.15 at Colombo. Some passengers disembarked, and their places have been taken by others. Put out 280 tons of cargo.

Quite a number of ships in harbour, including no less than four P. and O. ships, that is, "Moldavia," "Kalyan," "Sardinia," and ourselves ("Novara"). The American ship, "President Harrison," looks very fine. Of course a fine German ship is here, looking spick and span, and laden with cargo. There is no getting away from them, they seem ubiquitous! and always down to the Plimsoll-mark with cargo! The number of British ships here easily predominates, but in addition to the above-mentioned foreign ships, Italian, French, and Greek ships are at present in the harbour. Though, indeed, it is not always easy to apply the words "at present" to Colombo, as, I dare say, there is no harbour in

the world with a quicker and more varied "turn-over" of ships than Colombo. Many ships remain here only a few hours, and very few more than twenty-four. The stream of ships entering and leaving may be said to be almost continuous.

Until recently there was only an open roadstead, so that communication with the shore was practically impossible during the south-west monsoon, which lasts about four months. But all this has been changed by the present fine harbour, which covers exactly a square mile in extent, and is formed by three moles, that is, two land ones and a "detached" mole, the three forming two entrances for ships.

On approaching Colombo from the sea I should describe the view as commonplace and uninteresting, but once inside the moles, the array of ships and life in general is pleasing and interesting, though the buildings in the background look square and lumpy. There is a good deal of green about, but quite impossible to say whether it is grass or palms until quite close, then the beautiful, graceful palms declare themselves. I have never noticed one that could be described as either "massive" or "grim."

Went ashore early in the morning and did some shopping, including buying a pair of cuff-links to replace those I recently lost. Gave a pound for an opal pair mounted in gold; I have just shown them to a passenger on board who is a jeweller, and he says they are well worth the money. After shopping had a row in one of the native boats; water in harbour quite bobbery owing to fresh north-east monsoon.

At dinner to-night I asked my railway conundrum. It is as follows: There is a continuous railway service between San Francisco and New York, and vice versa; that is, a train leaves New York daily at noon for San Francisco, and at the same time one leaves San Francisco for New York. From city to city takes exactly one week. How many trains will each train pass on the journey? It is quite a straight question—that is, there is no "catch" or "play" on the words, yet not one in a hundred gives a correct answer.

The answer is got by multiplying the—but perhaps you would like to have a go at it first, and I will give the answer later on.

Thursday, February 28.—Had a remarkable game of chess last night. The game developed without anything very special to note, until right at the end, when we found ourselves with the following pieces: my opponent had a knight and three pawns, and I had all; my *eight* pawns but no major piece. I was about to "queen" one of the pawns when my opponent resigned; when he did so he was not in a position to take any of the pawns.

Of course I did not make any special efforts to preserve the pawns, indeed, I did not know I had them all, until I went to count them up when I lost my last major piece. I should think such an ending must be unique.

After the game we went out on deck for a breath of fresh air before turning in for the night. As we leant on the rail, away down on the horizon we could see the twinkling lights of Aden.

We always call there on the outward voyage but never on the return.

Aden is rather a quaint spot. It has rather a good harbour, but generally speaking the place is a sort of back-wash leading to nowhere.

That it has "strategic possibilities" is shown by the struggles for possession from earliest times. The Turks tussled with the Arabs for it. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, on his return from China, put in there for a drink. The Portuguese set out from India to try and take it. Eventually England took it from the Arabs in 1839.

Have you ever noticed what a delightfully picturesque and pleasing landscape Aden presents when viewed from aboard ship in the harbour? The colour scheme and the picture in general is unique. Not a tree nor a shrub to be seen, no patch of green, no waving meadows or golden corn in the "sear and yellow," in fact, scarcely any of the usual colours characteristic of landscape scenery. But the rocks present every shade of black, brown, grey, sienna and slate colour blended in pleasing harmony, relief from any tendency to monotony being afforded by the many picturesque white bungalows with their rich red roofs. All this rock and bungalow effect contrasts so charmingly with the deep blue of the sky above, and the sea in the foreground flecked with wavelets, with here and there Swali boys bending to their paddles, and a marauding Arab dhow careening to the flowing breeze; a few stately steamers, with curling smoke and shining brass, lying at anchor and looking on approvingly.

The *tout ensemble* effect is really pleasing and delightful, and the finishing touch is afforded by the way the bold beetling rocks are massed one behind the other in "gay theatric pride," with jutting, jagged crags and peaks, toned to a pleasing softness by the blending of the colour scheme.

How I envy those officers whose good fortune it is to serve midst such truly delightful scenery!

However, from the following incident, it would appear the charms of Aden have not always been fully appreciated; several formidable batteries line the heights, and about sixty years ago when the change in big guns came in, it was decided to replace the old smooth-bored muzzle-loaders by the then newly invented "rifled," and breach-loading guns. A young officer with a party of men was detailed for the job of dismantling and bringing down the obsolete ones; so up he went one January morning. Perhaps his sense of duty was numbed by the frosty winter air, but whatever the cause, instead of carefully bringing them down, as he had been ordered, he coolly took it on himself to chuck them, one after another, over the parapets, and allowed gravity to do the rest. The result is, to this day the old guns can be seen here and there lying on the hill slopes, whilst some even reached the beach, where they can be seen rusted and embedded in the sand. Such gross disobedience, of course could not be overlooked, so the officer was duly court-martialled, and "found guilty." The punishment inflicted was that he should spend the rest of his service at Aden. Punishment indeed!

Sunday, March 2.—Had a strong following wind yesterday, and it was remarkably cool (eighty degrees) for the lower end of the Red Sea.

Last night the fancy-dress ball went with a swing. A sports tournament amongst the passengers is going strong.

Monday, March 3.—Fresh gale against us all day and weather cooling rapidly, so got orders to-night for “blue” to-morrow.

This afternoon when playing a game of “buckets” I threw into the bucket twenty-one consecutive rings. A record, I should think.

Thursday, March 6.—Arrived at Suez about 4.30 a.m. yesterday; it was then bitterly cold as the crew fell in for medical inspection by the Port Medical Officer. But there is no getting away from this inspection, as Suez is the medical sieve, decided by International agreement, between east and west. I once had a practical experience of this: when returning from India on a troopship, a good many years ago, we put a sick soldier ashore at Aden. Before we arrived at Suez information had been telegraphed through to say the case had been diagnosed plague. The result was we had a terrible time of it at Suez! Not only did the medical authorities there disinfect the ship from truck to keel, but they took every man, woman, and child, ashore to the well equipped disinfecting station, and there they gave us mercury baths, disinfected our clothes, and generally seemed to take a malicious delight in inconveniencing us to the maximum. We were like sheep in their hands.

We had three ties-up in the canal, and so did not get through until 1 a.m. this morning. After coaling left at 7.50 a.m. Light north-east breeze, and coldish.

The usual answer given to the railway conundrum is, six or seven trains are passed by each train on the journey. The correct answer is fourteen. It is curious, but nearly everybody fails to “spot” the fact that as a train arrives every day at noon, and as the whole journey takes one week, there must be seven trains already on the line when each train starts, and of course another seven start during the weeks’ journey.

Tuesday, March 18.—Had calm sea, and light variable breezes through the Mediterranean. Calm and light easterly wind through “the Bay.” Very cold north-east wind yesterday when we landed the passengers at Tilbury Dock at 11.30 a.m. Berthed in the Royal Albert Dock at 11.30 p.m.

The end of an excellent run, right through from Calcutta.