

those of the Missouri and the Yang-tse. We saw neither crocodiles nor floating corpses, but the enemies of idolatry in considerable numbers—the ships of commerce hurrying to and fro upon the bosom of the sacred river.

Calcutta, India, Feb. 19 1877.

## LETTER XX.

## IN CALCUTTA, THE CITY OF PALACES.

THE most prominent object in approaching Calcutta from the sea is the King of Oude's palace, which has a frontage on the river of several hundred feet, but from the exterior is more imposing by its size than its elegance. Here, just before the Sepoy mutiny of 1857, the deposed King of Oude, whose province was the special seat of war, was assigned a home, with two laks of rupees, or twenty thousand pounds, a year. He is not allowed to return to his former kingdom, nor even to go beyond a very limited distance from his own residence. Here he lives with his many wives, and his yet more numerous retainers and relations, and, vast as is his income, he is constantly in debt. Like most of the wealthy natives of the East, he has collected a large number of animals, and prides himself upon his zoölogical garden. Visitors are admitted to his grounds, but only on tickets furnished by proper authorities.

Nearly opposite his gardens are the Botanical Gardens, first established by the East India Company nearly a century ago. We found, on visiting them, many objects of interest, in the way of an avenue of mahogany-trees, once yet more imposing, but greatly injured by a cyclone, which destroyed many of them; avenues of palmyras more than a mile in length; beautiful ribbon-beds, or different

flowers so arranged that when in bloom they resemble the colors of a ribbon; groves of evergreens of great height; but most interesting of all, several large banyan-trees, one of which, about one hundred years old, had sent down so many roots that a line drawn around them would measure over eight hundred feet. A congregation of five hundred people could be assembled in one small section of the space covered by the roots, which happens to be more open than the rest. Some of the one hundred and seventy roots which had thus originally dropped from the branches had in turn become such massive trunks that we supposed they were certainly separate trees, until inspection showed their connection with the original tree. Vast as is the area covered by the roots, the height of the tree is not over sixty feet.

We arrived too late for a place at the pier, and so we dropped anchor in the middle of the stream. Bishop Marvin and myself, going ashore in a native boat, were landed by being carried through the water by nearly naked coolies, who held between them a board upon which we sat. All along the bank of the river are landing-places with large gateways, called "ghats," often with a splendid flight of stone steps extending down into the water. Princess Ghat was our landing-place. There are also bathing ghats and burning ghats, where the people go to bathe, or where dead bodies are burned. It is said that when two judges appointed by the king came to Calcutta to inquire into the oppression of the natives by the East India Company, on landing at one of the ghats and seeing the throng of people almost wholly without clothes, one said, "See, brother, the wretched victims of tyranny. The Crown Court was not surely established before it was needed. I trust it will not have been in operation six months before we shall see all these

poor creatures comfortably clothed in shoes and stockings." Alas for the hopes of the chief-justice! that day will probably never be, because the people prefer to go without clothing, and especially without shoes and stockings. To go barefooted is the well-nigh universal rule with all save the wealthy and those who have adopted foreign ideas. Even well-to-do shop-keepers, as all the merchants are called, and others equally able to wear shoes, prefer not to do so. If they wear any thing at all it is usually a loose slipper or sandal, but without any stockings. The cotton-goods manufacturers of England estimate that if each of the inhabitants of India were to buy only thirty cents' worth of wearing-apparel a year they would have all the trade which could be desired. Many doubtless buy far more than that, but when it is remembered that nearly all the coolies wear a simple strip of cloth about the loins, and another as a turban about the head, it will be seen that the demand might be much greater. The turban-wearers are few compared to those who wear only loin-cloths.

We were advised before leaving the steamer to employ a servant, who would be valuable as a guide also, and would save us from imposition on the part of others. A high-caste Hindoo, named Cheady Lall, presented himself at our hotel with numerous testimonials from many distinguished travelers whom he had served with fidelity and honesty. The recommendations stated, however, that he could not wait on the table on account of his caste. All of his valuable services, high-caste included, were to be had for a rupee a day, and we engaged him. Cheady is low of stature, of high caste, not being over five feet and a half. He wears pantaloons, a coat, or gown, and a turban, and always takes his shoes off when he comes into the room. He is about thirty-two years of age, and has a family. His

wife, he says, is a heathen, but he, being educated in a missionary school, learned of the one God. He is quite intelligent, speaks English well, is very considerate of our interests, and while we are amused at his high regard for his caste, we prize him greatly, and shall regret to part with him as we go up the Valley of the Ganges. Many gentlemen, as his testimonials show, have taken him with them throughout India. Of course he does not belong to one of the highest castes, but is a *sudra*, or of the laboring class. But there are many subdivisions of this class, and he belongs at the top. He blacks shoes, but cannot wait on the table. I should prefer to *help* at the table any time (especially myself) to blacking my shoes. But the Hindoo must not even empty a wash-bowl if the Englishman using it rinsed his mouth and spit in it, but he may empty it if the water was only used to wash in. This was the formal decision given in a test case among the Hindoos many years ago, when the Marquis of Wellesley was Governor-general of India. His servant declined to clean the wash-bowl, when he threatened to discharge him and never to employ any of his caste again. Nearly all the waiters at the table are Mohammedans.

The idea of the Hindoo not touching any thing which a member of another caste, or of no caste at all, has touched with his mouth was forcibly and unexpectedly thrust upon us one day. The principal of a school which we were visiting spoke in very high terms of the water brought many miles for the use of the city, when, being at the fountain used by the scholars, Bishop Marvin took up the brass cup to taste the water, but instantly he was requested not to do so, as it would never be again used by the scholars.

But we were not going to allow Cheady's weakness to deprive us of his services, for he had

shrewdly kept in the background the testimonials which mention his unwillingness to wait on the table, until he had already impressed us with his value. A gharry was ordered, and we proceeded to see the city. Calcutta derives her name, the "City of Palaces," from her many large and imposing buildings. The palace of the viceroy is well located, in a plat of six acres, about the heart of the city. The grounds are attractive, and the building is massive and imposing, though hardly high enough in view of its great depth and length. The Indian Museum, an immense building, is quite new; so are the High Court and City Hall—the former of fine architectural proportions, and commanding from its roof a splendid view of the Hoogly, and of the whole city.

The post-office, another imposing building, stands on the site of the old Fort William, so historic as the "Black Hole of Calcutta," as it was in the narrow prison of the fort, only eighteen feet square, and designed for one or two prisoners, that on the night of the 20th of June, 1757, one hundred and forty-six English were thrust by order of the nawab, and before morning all but twenty-three had perished from the insufferable heat and from thirst, and from the foul air, made yet more intolerable by the rapid decomposition of the dead bodies of their comrades. A monument erected in memory of the sufferers was subsequently displaced. It was their sufferings which brought Clive from Madras, precipitated the battle of Plassey, and led the way to establish British rule in India. Near the same tank on which the post-office stands is the writers' building of the old East India Company. It was used for their large number of clerks in the palmy days of the company, and is still used for the offices of different railway *employés*. Many of the banks, stores, and private residences, are also on a

palatial scale, making Calcutta, originally named from *Kalighat*, or the temple of Kali, the goddess of hate, now the most beautiful city which we have seen in the East. It numbers some four hundred and twenty-five thousand souls; yet while more populous than Madras, does not cover so many square miles. As the capital of India, it will always be a place of much importance, although Bombay is becoming the commercial metropolis.

In many parts of the city we found blocks of fine buildings fronting on a square, in the center of which was a large tank, approached by descending steps. I suppose that these tanks are supplied with fresh water from the city water-works. From them, and from the river, water is brought in sheep-skins, which men carry by means of straps about the person, for sprinkling the streets. The skin of the sheep is removed without cutting it, save at one or two places. These are carefully sewed up, and the skin is made water-tight. The water is poured in and squirted out through what was the neck of the sheep. It seems a slow way of watering the street, especially as the skin has to be refilled every few minutes, but there are many men employed, and they do it more speedily than one would think. The ravens hop about the streets in as large numbers almost as in Ceylon and Japan.

In striking contrast with the elegant turn-outs of the English are the palankeens of the natives. A palankeen is a sort of sedan-chair, borne by four coolies, only there is no seat save the floor, and the person riding has to stretch his feet out at full length in a very uncomfortable posture, yet it is used by many Europeans. In place of two poles to rest upon the shoulders there is only one extending from each side of the top of the palankeen, with two coolies at each end, one directly behind the other, bearing it on the shoulder in a very awkward

manner. It is the least comfortable way of riding which we have seen, judging by appearances, for we have not been tempted to try it. A gharry, such as is used at Singapore, a four-wheeled vehicle drawn by two horses, was our usual pleasant mode of conveyance. It takes two men at least to run it, one to drive and the other to ride behind and be ready to open the door.

The morning we started to the Botanical Gardens we found ourselves unable to cross the Hoogly on account of the bridge being open for an hour or two for shipping to pass. Chedy instantly proposed to show us the Hindoo mode of cremation, which was taking place near by. We stopped at the Burning Ghat on the bank of the Hoogly, and from external indications we should not have known, save by the name, but that we were at one of the many bathing ghats which line the river. It is simply a huge gateway, with steps leading down to the sacred river. Behind a stone-wall or screen we found the funeral-fires. Several bodies had already been burned that morning. One was already more than half consumed, with the knees and face plainly visible amid the embers. Another had just been placed upon the pile. He was from a province where it is customary to be burned with the face downward and the corpse in a kneeling posture, so that his body was placed in that attitude. The wood was built around the body in such a way as to afford ample draught, and the whole was quickly fired by means of burning reeds. We were present while it was being fired, and we were surprised to see that no more wood was required. Perhaps fifteen or more natives looked on indifferently, more interested in the presence of foreigners than in the funeral-rites. It is hard to say whether solemnity or disgust was the prevailing feeling in our minds. With them, however, it was recognized as the cus-