WITH THE PRINCE IN THE EAST

SIR HERBERT RUSSELL
WITH THE PRINCE IN THE EAST
A RECORD OF THE ROYAL VISIT TO INDIA AND JAPAN

BY
SIR HERBERT RUSSELL, K.B.E.
REUTER'S CORRESPONDENT THROUGHOUT THE TOUR, 1921-2

WITH 23 ILLUSTRATIONS

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WITH THE PRINCE IN THE EAST

CHAPTER I

THE VOYAGE OUT

The departure of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales from England upon his great Oriental tour was just about as modest in the way of formal ceremonial as it was possible to make it. Indeed, there was almost a touch of incongruity between the spacious splendour which fancy instinctively associated with this imperial mission and the manner of embarking upon it. Portsmouth Harbour looked more than usually bare in the light silvery haze of a typical autumn afternoon when the royal train which had brought the Prince and his suite down from Victoria rumbled slowly to a standstill upon the North Railway Jetty. The Victory cradled herself in the softly lapping tide ripple, her spars ruling the flush shed by the rayless sun. The Admiralty yacht Enchantress lay in graceful raking contour of black and yellow, straining lightly at her moorings higher up the harbour. Off the old Hard floated a deserted gaunt-looking warship whose lustreless grey side seemed like a garb of half-mourning for her approaching fate at the shipbreakers' hands. The Gosport Ferry clanked laboriously to and fro from time to time, otherwise the premier home of the British Navy stirred only with midges in the shape of picket boats and pleasure craft.

It was the Renown herself which conferred the one
touch of real impressiveness upon the otherwise homely picture of Pompey port. Her splendid proportions, painted in hue that was neither white nor grey, and somehow defied exact definition in the category of colour, overshadowed a long length of the railway jetty to which she was leashed. At two o'clock, the exact moment when the Prince's train was due to leave London, the great battle-cruiser had flashed into a rainbow of bunting from stem to truck, from truck to taffrail. Victory and Enchantress had simultaneously burst forth into flickering traceries. But dressing ship is such a comparatively familiar affair in the all-the-year-round life of a naval port that it really need not symbolize anything of current moment.

True, there was a more definitely distinctive air about the dockyard waterside on this afternoon of October 26, 1921. A big enclosure had been barricaded in abreast of the Renown and an acre of red felt distributed over it. The gangway brows sloping between the ship and the wall were garlanded red, white, and blue. One guessed that the Admiral-Superintendent had made a beat-up amongst all available flag lockers, and the result was a riotous jargon of flag language, expressed in an indiscriminate generosity of decoration. There was a lot of coming and going; gold-laced officers jostled dockyard "mates," camera-men roamed restlessly, baggage and barrels, crates and bales were hauled and mauled with the maximum of ruthlessness. The band of the Forton Division Royal Marines seemed suddenly to spring into a symphony of scarlet and brass in the midst of this kaleidoscopic medley, and when they crashed forth into martial measure one somehow felt that they were valiantly striving to coax order out of commotion.

But the unseen hand was at work behind all this seeming chaos, and when the royal train rolled in the wide enclosure was a clear blank, fringed by a guard of honour of statuesque figures. The Prince, in the uniform of a post captain, with aiguillettes, emerged into a little patch
of pale sunshine, the last approving smile of the drooping orb, and simultaneously the first saluting gun winked forth from the Victory. Then the green carriages shed their distinguished freight, suddenly stricken to rigidity as the band played “God Save the King.” Like a bright little cinema show the ceremonial picture moved quickly: the Prince was on board the Renown with his standard rippling gorgeous at the main truck; Prince George, Admiral Gough-Calthorpe, General Seeley, the ever-cheery Mr. Hansell who tutored His Royal Highness, Mr. Walter Peacock, who looks after his Cornwall Duchy, and the rest of the little group who had come upon the quarter-deck to say good-bye, were filing ashore again; the gangways slid quaywards, breaking the last link of communication with the homeland; tugs snorted and trembled on the bow and quarter of the battle-cruiser; rending hawsers splashed into the eddying water, and just as the Renown began lightly to pulsate to the first movement of the turbines her band broke into “Auld Lang Syne,” which rolled plaintive down the dull roar from thousands of throats ashore.

The farewell refrain changed suddenly into the lilting air of “Nancy Lee” as the vast hull of yacht-like lines gathered way and swam past the Blockhouse Fort. Standing on the upper bridge, His Royal Highness frequently waved acknowledgments to the cheers of God-speed which reverberated along the packed sea-front. As the ship drew a frothing arc towards Clarence Pier the sun vanished past the low spur of Gillkicker, and with a deepening haze closing in from seaward Southsea beach had faded into shadow before the Nab Light tower came abreast, off which hovered the light cruiser Dunedin waiting to assume the rôle of escort. And so through the calm dusk into the night the Renown worked up to her sea-going stride, until by the time the brave blare of St. Catherine’s was abeam she was measuring her wake at the rate of eighteen knots.

The Prince came on deck after dinner to see whether
any glimpse was to be had of the lights of England. The Casquets' beacon, however, was the only sentinel star visible. Whilst the great warship thus churns her way through the darkness the occasion is opportune to take a glance into the after-quarters of her, already dubbed by the wardroom as the "cuddy," wherein will be grouped the little band of distinguished men forming the staff of His Royal Highness. The Earl of Cromer is Chief-of-Staff, an office, on this tour, of very definite political as well as personal responsibilities. He has a liberal heritage of those fine qualities which shone so conspicuously in his famous father during his memorable regime in Egypt. Vice-Admiral Halsey is back again in the ship which he commanded during former Royal Empire missions, but this time as Comptroller of the Prince's Household. Sir Godfrey Thomas, Bart., sails again with His Highness as Private Secretary, and Captain Dudley North, R.N., and Captain the Hon. Piers Legh, Grenadier Guards, are once more attached as Equerries. Lieutenant the Hon. B. A. A. Ogilvy, Life Guards, is making his first voyage with the Prince in similar rôle. Lieutenant Lord Louis Mountbatten, R.N., as Aide-de-Camp, continues the post which he held during the Australian tour of the Prince. A brilliant member of the Indian Civil Service, Mr. (now Sir) G. F. de Montmorency, is going out as Chief Secretary, and Surgeon-Commander A. C. W. Newport has recommissioned in his old ship as Personal Medical Officer to His Royal Highness.

The Renown's company of some 1,250 officers and men is commanded by Captain the Hon. Herbert Meade, son of that famous sailor, Admiral-of-the-Fleet Earl Clanwilliam. The wardroom officers, presided over by Commander the Hon. E. R. Drummond, are of the typical naval stamp—than which no higher tribute to all that is best in the British race, moulded by culture and developed by calling, is conceivable. It is characteristic of the Prince that he should have specially desired the Renown
to be commissioned by officers and men on the roster for foreign service in the ordinary course, without any question of selection. The solitary exception was the addition of Midshipman Prince Charles of Belgium to the gunroom mess at the wish of his royal father.

Across the Bay the Renown foamed with long easy curtseying grace upon a lumpish swell raised by a quartering wind. Every vessel sighted seemed to recognize the splendid ship and her mission, and would alter course so as to close in, passing for the sole purpose of hoisting her ensign and dipping—a salutation always promptly returned. Foreign craft were as punctilious in observing this courtesy as those sailing under the Red Ensign. The Prince settled down to sea routine on board his old ship with natural ease. During the forenoon he usually worked in his cabin, and the incessant crackle of the wireless was practical testimony that active touch was being maintained with the world beyond the rolling horizon. Recreation took the form of squash racquets in a little court upon the boat-deck, of energetic promenading of the splendid sweep of quarter-deck, of hockey around the after turret, and of rifle potting at clay disks sent spinning astern. During dinner the smart naval band under Lieut. S. Fairfield would alternate Wagner and Verdi with ragtime and twosteps in some lee-corner of the half-deck: after dinner the few musicians forming the jazz orchestra would be bidden into the “cuddy,” when the Prince would occasionally take the drumsticks and produce some meteoric rataplan.

As the Renown tramped betwixt the grey humps of the Barlangas and the mouth of the Tagus, with the white fringe of Lisbon tremulously visible down the gleaming vista, the Portuguese President wirelessly a message of greeting. Down the lofty coast, waxing and waning between violet shadow and golden-brown headlands, the Renown churned her yeasty path. Then, with St. Vincent light flashing fiercely across the indigo waters,
the turbines suddenly lowered their subdued rhythmic burr to a slow monotonous chant, the cascading bubble along the bends sank into a soft musical tinkling of foam-bells, and the gigantic ship, her pallid outline vaguely traced by points of electric light, eased down to very leisurely progress that she might not finish her first lap ahead of programmed time.

Dawn of October 29 unveiled Tarifa abeam, with four white-sided destroyers curtsying upon the olive-hued Atlantic billows as they smote the crests into foam, spreading fanwise into an escorting screen. Presently Gibraltar loomed in a violet shadow right ahead, emerging anon into a shimmer of grey and gold as the soaring sun flung its windy radiance athwart the grand old Rock. Nine o'clock found the Renown moored within the detached mole, with the Calypso and the United States battleship Utah vicing with the shore battery in blazing off the noisiest salute, whilst a military band waxed and waned upon the shrill song of the Levantener with the strains of the inevitable "Colonel Bogey."

A brave scene sentient with the kaleidoscopic movement of colour, the familiar picture of the harbour, with Algeciras Bay trembling in sapphire and white beyond the breakwaters and the Rock soaring clear of its clinging clusters of wide-fringed foliage and alabaster-like houses to the barren contour of its ridge. The Prince, in the ever-becoming uniform of a captain of the Royal Navy, dwelt with absorbed relish upon the spacious beauty of it all as he stood upon the quarter-deck a trifle apart from his glittering staff, waiting to receive the little procession of distinguished visitors coming off to pay their homage. The bugles kept the ship's company lining the side pretty rigid with their rapid repetition of the general salute as pinnace followed pinnace alongside, bringing the port admiral, the governor, Admiral Niblack of the U.S. Navy, and the Governor of Algeciras. There was a quiet touch of humour in the fact that His Excellency, the last-named, received no salute as he steamed