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r George:

INDIA

The twelve days I spent in India have convinced me that it will not be possible to cover my impressions and comments in one letter and I shall therefore confine my remarks in this letter to a brief review of my experiences in the various cities I visited and give you in my next letter an overall picture of the chaotic conditions created in India's economic life as a result of the partition of the country at the time of its liberation, and the more recent action of the two governments in taking diametrically opposed positions in connection with the devaluation problem.

To enter India as I did at Calcutta does not give one the most pleasant introduction to this interesting but still quite backward sub-continent. Arriving from Bangkok at three thirty in the morning, Mr. Burnett, of the Pan American Airways, had his car and one of his assistants waiting for me and with gratifying dispatch got me to my hotel - the famous "Great Eastern". Here at breakfast time I got my first impressions of India's ample labor supply for I never saw anywhere as many waiters per square yard as they have in that hotel. It apparently took about four of these fancily dressed waiters - in spotless white suits and fancy turbans - to serve my simple meal and I experienced that same surplus of service all during my stay there, both in the dining room and my own suite. Naturally this made the tipping problem even more complicated than usual and only the favorable exchange rate between my dollars and the devalued rate of the Indian Rupee kept one from getting a little impatient over this excess of service. Perhaps you don't know that the Rupee has 16 annas and the anna has 12 pialsters, and since the Rupee is now worth only about 47 cents and each anna about 3 cents, you can see what a small fraction of a cent you come down to when you begin to figure in pialsters (which few people do bother about).

Among the mail waiting for me was a very cordial invitation from Mr. F. deC. Matthews, the Calcutta Manager of the National City Bank, to have luncheon with him at the Bengali Club. Meantime, I went out to do some sightseeing on my own and I cannot say that my first impressions of this enormous city were very favorable because I don't think I have ever been in any large city in which the streets and a large part of the population were as filthy as those in Calcutta. I tried to find out what the population of the city is but I never did get any satisfactory reply. Apparently nobody has taken the trouble to count it in many years and the estimates I got ran all the way from three to over five million, with the latter figure being probably the more nearly correct. Traffic is unbelievably confused between modern automobiles, ancient rickshaws, oxcarts, hand-pushed delivery carts, taxis (driven mostly by be-turbaned sikhs) and last but not least, by the gray sacred cows that seem to have the undisputed right-of-way and enjoy more privileges than most of the pitifully poorly clothed native man or woman in the street. This casual roaming about of the sacred cows in the busiest streets of a great metropolis is something that must be seen and cannot well be described. Whether one of these "sacred" (according to the Hindu religion) creatures lies in the middle of a busy sidewalk, or in groups in front of the Central Post Office, or on the main arteries of traffic, no one dares to disturb them but everybody concedes them the right-of-way and wends his way around them as best he can. One of my friends had told me that this was true even down in what they term their "Wall Street" and that superstitious traders when the market did not go to suit them, would edge alongside one of these sacred beasts and touch it just to change his luck. Although I saw many unusual and surprising things in the streets of Calcutta, this last story was just a little more than I could "swallow" until I made a special trip to the financial district and verified the story with my own eyes.

Incidentally, there was only one day during my stay of four days in Calcutta when all the business houses and banks were open, for it happened that I arrived there at the tail end of their Hindu religious festival called "Puja", which lasts for ten days and is observed quite generally by the "faithful". One of the interesting manifestations of this religious observance was the riding in rickshaws by Hindus dressed in their Sunday best, and carrying on their laps figures of various sizes resembling the Madonna, but actually representing one of the many Hindu Gods. A visit to a number of their temples - including the picturesque Jain Temple - gave me much evidence that the Hindu faith is not

one uniform religion but is split up into more different groups than our christian faith, with many different rituals and shades of belief, but with one common strong hatred for that other religion dominant in certain parts of India - namely, the Moslem faith, whose believers are now mostly concentrated in Pakistan. Just how large a percentage of the population of Calcutta is without house or home, I am unable to say but to walk in the city's streets after dark and to see the thousands upon thousands actually sleeping in the streets, on the sidewalks up against the business buildings and dwellings, and in the parks, would lead one to believe that these homeless ones must add up into the hundreds of thousands. But even in bright daylight walking along the principal business streets, I saw more misery and human wants than any place I have ever been. Beggars in rags, little children lying in the filthy streets, no better than dogs without any grown-ups around to even bother with them, and street vendors with unappetizing fruits or candies, all take away a lot of the pleasure one ordinarily enjoys walking about in exploration of a city one has never visited before! But do not let me lead you to believing that there is not another much more cheerful side to the City of Calcutta, for there are merchant princes here as well as the miserably poor and there are some very attractive private "homes" and public buildings.

The Government House - formerly the residence of the Viceroy and Governor General of India - is a most imposing building and attractive though of ancient architectural design, is surrounded by a beautifully landscaped park and faces the so-called "Maidan" - a wide open expanse of emerald green - around which the City of Calcutta is built, and which with many beautiful trees, attractive lakes and wide avenues, daily attracts large parts of the human population as well as herds of the sacred cows. One afternoon my host, Mr. Matthews, took me over the famous Howrah cantilever bridge - spanning the wide Hughli River in one span 1500 feet long - to have tea at the home of one of the Indian merchant princes - Mr. Jalan. There I saw one of the most modern houses imaginable but still furnished in typical Indian style. As we enjoyed the delicious tea with vegetarian sandwiches - as Hindus absolutely abstain from eating meat in any form - the lovely lawn overlooking the river, and talked for hours with this highly educated and refined business leader on world affairs in general and Indian problems in particular, I felt quite far removed from the pitiful scenes in the streets of a teeming metropolis only a few miles away.

At luncheon that same day I had met, through Mr. Matthews, two other leading merchants of Calcutta from whom I learned much about present day economic and political conditions in India generally and in Calcutta. They were Mr. J. R. Walker of McLeod & Company, who was particularly well informed on the Jute business, and Mr. Euthymopulo, the head of Rallis India, one of the great export and import houses in this part of the world. I will reserve a summary of these business views until my next letter to be written as soon as I finish my visit to the various cities both in India and in Pakistan. Mr. Robert Burnett, the Manager of the Pan American Airways, took me to something new in the way of an Indian entertainment called a "Military Tatoo." No, it had nothing whatever to do with having pictures of boats or women painted on your skin, but turned out to be a most elaborate display of military activity, sports, fireworks and music, all held in the spacious Maidan previously referred to, with the Governor and the Premier of West Bengal State officiating and making speeches to appeal to the Indian youth to join the territorial army. Afterwards we went to Firpo's, which is about as famous in Calcutta as Antoine's is in New Orleans; with really excellent food and drink.

And speaking of drink, let me tell you a little of the Indian type of partial prohibition. On Thursday Mr. Matthews took me to the Saturday Club, one of the exclusive social clubs of Calcutta, and very apologetically explained that we could only order a soft drink because Thursday was the one day in the week when no liquor could be served in Calcutta. Later I found that in Bombay there are four prohibition days each week and that you are not supposed to ever have more than four bottles of liquor in your home under severe penalty of the law. In Madras another Indian port prohibition is enforced seven days a week.

On the last day of my stay in Calcutta I had luncheon with Consul General Derry of the U. S. A., who had invited several other American guests and afterwards Mr. Matthews took me on a further sightseeing trip, admitting that my carefully mapped out program had caused him during the few days of my visit to see many things in Calcutta he had never before taken the trouble to see. Among these were the burning Ghato, where the Hindus disposed of all of their dead without any other form of burial. The Parsee tribes don't even go to that much trouble but bring their dead to a special place where the vultures dispose of the flesh and the bones are dropped into a lime pit to be dissolved. The Moslems, on the other hand, do bury their dead as we do except that they do not go to the expense of providing coffins but lower their dead into the grave wrapped in sheets.

Altogether my impressions of Calcutta were not very pleasant because I saw so much misery among the poor and so many depressing and even repulsive sights in the streets that it badly shook my belief in the concept that "all men are born free and equal" - for certainly there is an awfully large number of humans here that are starting with a terrible handicap.

I was glad to move on to Delhi which I found to be a far cleaner and much more cheerful sort of a place. There are in fact two Delhis - Old Delhi, which is said to have had its origin many centuries before Christ and contains many historical buildings and art treasures, and New Delhi, which after the visit of King George V in 1911 was made the capital and which has since developed into a beautiful city with magnificent government buildings, palaces of Indian Rajahs, and residences of the well-to-do European merchants. My hotel, the Cecil, was actually located in Old Delhi but proved to be modern in every way with a beautiful swimming pool, a small park surrounding it, and with most cheerful and attentive help.

It would make far too long a letter if I were to attempt to describe in detail either the architectural beauty of the New Delhi or the ancient and artistic relics of dead dynasties in the Old City. Suffice it to say that New Delhi had its origin much like Canberra, the new capital of Australia - because both were carefully planned out in advance by modern architects and engineers and both are thus able to avoid so many of the disadvantages resulting from the haphazard development of older cities. As a result New Delhi is a very modern and attractive city with beautiful parks and gardens. It was the seat of the British government until the new independent Indian Regime took over and has since remained the capital of India and the center of all its political activities.

In Old Delhi there are so many buildings and monuments of ancient civilization that one would have to spend many weeks there to see them all. It was the center of the great mutiny of 1857 when British rule finally took the place of the old Moghul reign. The old wall - four yards wide and nine yards high - is still preserved in a few spots and a few of the old gates are also still in existence. Within the old Red Fort are art treasures and architectural gems well worth spending days to see. Beautiful palaces studded with silver and jewels have survived the destruction incident to recurring wars, mutinies and the ravages of time. Perhaps the most beautiful of these architectural gems, and also the best preserved, is the famous "Dewan-I-Khas" - with its marble screens and golden spires, splendid paintings and elaborate decorations. It is a palatial building which contained the Chamber of Private Audiences of the Moghul rulers and in it was the fabulous Peacock Throne of gold and jewels, which has long since been looted and has disappeared. However, on the walls of this room still appears in gold letters the famous Persian saying:

"If there be a paradise on earth  
It is this! It is this! It is this!"

I will not attempt to give you any further description of the many other examples of fine Moghul architecture, artisans, workmanship and elaborate designs nor speak of the famous old ruins and elaborate tombs of ancient rulers, but I was really fascinated by all I saw and by the many stories my guide told me - partly true and partly just myths, logical but all very interesting. But I do want to go into some detail concerning my journey to Agra. One of the pleasant incidents of my visit to Delhi was my meeting up with a delightful group of Americans - all from Columbus (Ohio) who like myself were on a trip around the world. The party was headed by Mr. Robert H. Wolf - a banker and owner of two newspapers and a prince of a fellow. I found only one fault with him and that was that he is one of the most confirmed Isolationists I have ever talked to and I am afraid all the long arguments I had with him on the subject made no impression on his mid-western point of view, that we are still able to live all to ourselves and should not bother with any kind of foreign entanglements in spite of the fact that modern developments have made the world such a small place. With his colleagues, Mr. Don Casto, Mr. Walter Miles, and Colonel Richard Barker, we hired a car to make the trip to Agra, some 120 miles from Delhi, and thus had an excellent opportunity to see something of the country section and the primitive agricultural activities of India. We arrived at Agra about lunch time and after being comfortably installed at the delightful Lauries Hotel, drove out to see the main object of our visit, the famous Taj-Mahal.

Having heard of this famous structure since my boyhood days and having avidly read the history of the many descriptions of this architectural wonder ever since, I had built up such high expectations that I was frankly afraid that I would be somewhat dis-

appointed upon finally realizing my ambition to actually see it myself. But I was not disappointed in the least although I doubt that I can adequately describe its loveliness. My first glimpse of the beautiful structure was in the late afternoon, bathed in perfect sunshine, sparkling like a white jewel amid the green gardens and mirrorlike waterways. I stayed there until the sun went down and witnessed the interesting effect which the changing light had on the white marble mausoleum. After supper our group returned about 10:30 p.m. when the full moon stood over this incomparable structure and it is really

difficult to describe the spell which the soft moonlight cast over it. It was, as I said above, a beautiful sight in the day time but now the white marble seemed to glow and sparkle like a diamond, and the waterways in front turned to silver and reflected the magnificent structure. The effect of the moonlight on the surrounding gardens gave it all an eerie atmosphere heightened by the stillness of the night. It was a lovely fairy-like scene which I shall never forget.

More than likely you are familiar with the interesting history of this famous structure but just in case you have forgotten it, let me briefly review it. King Shajahan, one of the Mohammedan rulers, built it between 1631 and 1648 and it is said that over 20,000 men were employed daily on its construction for seventeen years. The name is derived from the name of the king's wife - Muntaz Mahal - to whom he was passionately devoted and who lies buried there. When construction began the king was at the zenith of his power and his royal coffers were filled with gold and jewels but before it was finished he had been dethroned and held prisoner by his own son, and when he died was buried there along side of his devoted wife.

On the following morning we drove another twenty-five miles into the interior to visit the famous abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri. Within its high red stone walls, six miles in circumference broken only by impressive gates - stand many palaces, temples and tombs erected in the 16th century and abandoned almost as soon as they were finished. Reports seem to differ over the reasons for the abandonment of such a luxurious city - some claiming that it was found that lack of water really made it uninhabitable while others say that the political fortunes of the king who built the city suddenly changed and he found it necessary to move elsewhere for safety's sake. Be that as it may, over four centuries have passed and left the vast city quite uninhabited and one wonders how the fine old buildings have so well withstood the ravages of time.

When I returned to Delhi I found a very cordial invitation from our American Consul General - Howard Donovan - to have luncheon with him and there met two interesting newspaper women, one of whom, Mrs. May Craig, I had previously met in New Orleans at the time of President Roosevelt's visit. She and Miss Doris Fleson, another American columnist, were also on a tour around the world largely to gather the latest information as to what really goes on in the world so they could write about it for their respective papers and columns. I also had the pleasure to meet at this luncheon Mrs. Henderson, the wife of our American Ambassador to India, who had been called to Washington for consultation and to be present there during Premier Nehru's visit. Mr. Donovan is a veteran of many years service in the east and he kindly filled in many gaps in my information on present day India, besides putting his car at my disposal to finish my sightseeing in Old and New Delhi before leaving for Bombay the next morning.

Traveling by "Air-India" I arrived at Bombay the next morning where to my pleasant surprise I found waiting for me Mr. W. L. Griffiths, the Sub-Manager of the National City Bank. Both he and Mr. Bulkeley, the Manager, and Mr. A. D. Calhoun, the Vice President for all the National City Bank Branches in the East, did much to make my short stay in Bombay very pleasant and enabled me to see far more than I could otherwise have seen in so short a time. And I must say Bombay was rather a pleasant surprise to me. To begin with, the Taj-Mahal Hotel is by all odds the best hotel in the Far East and appears to be the rendez-vous of Bombay society. I was fortunate enough to have one of the front rooms overlooking the harbor and the imposing "Gateway to India," as the graceful archway erected at the entrance of the harbor is called - and incidentally it is the biggest and most active seaport in India. The city, which now has a population of about 3,000,000, dates back into the dim past of history but the Portuguese, who controlled it when it was just a fishing village, thought so little of it that they gave it to Charles II of England as a wedding gift in 1661, and he in turn leased it to a private company for £10 a year. But today it is a really great and busy city with much shipping as well as industry - principally cotton mills, of which there are said to be sixty-five within the corporate limits. However, chemicals, rubber, steel and many other manufacturing plants also contribute much to Bombay's prosperity and help to give it the atmosphere of a modern metropolis with well laid out roads, clean streets, and attractive homes and public

buildings. The Marine Drive facing one side of the bay with its uniform row of modern apartment houses reminds me very definitely of the Copa Cabana section of Rio de Janeiro. In the good old days Bombay had quite a reputation as a wide open town but today is much more sedate, due to the general effects of the war, and the fact that they are taking prohibition quite seriously and prevent the sale of any kind of alcohol four days out of the week.

The night before I left I was entertained at dinner by Mr. and Mrs. A. D. Calhoun and Mr. and Mrs. W.L. Bulkeley, and as both gentlemen have represented the National City Bank in the Far East for many years, I not only had a pleasant evening but added a lot to my knowledge of economic and political conditions in India.

Early the next morning I left by plane for Karachi, the capital of what is now called Pakistan. The airport is quite large and very modern, which is not surprising since Karachi has become one of the most important aviation centers in the world and practically all air lines operating in the Far East, or around the world, use it as one of their stopping points. Karachi is also important as a port especially for wheat and cotton and much is being done at present to improve the handling facilities. It is a very old city and was known as a seaport centuries before Christ, but its more modern development dates to the period when the British captured it. Today it is a city of marked contrasts where the present seems to meet the past. The streets are crowded with modern American cars as well as with every other conceivable kind of conveyances, most of them driven by camels which are far more common than draft horses at home, or by little donkeys whose drivers and appearance give you a definite impression of biblical days. Since over 80% of the population is Moslem the customary dress is the Shalwar with a flowing shirt, and the headgear is predominantly the red Fez. Women also wear the Shalwars with long frocklike skirts and a silk shawl thrown over their heads and shoulders. However, European dress is becoming increasingly popular and western styles are well mixed with the oriental garments one sees in wandering through the interesting streets lined with merchants displaying their goods on the sidewalks instead of paying rent for store buildings.

Karachi's wide macadamized roads are clean, as are the buildings facing them, and even the great influx of refugees - Moslems driven out of India - has not greatly affected the cleanliness of this city located at the edge of the desert which, since the war, has grown from a population of 500,000 to well over a million. Climatically Karachi is far more attractive than any Indian seaport since the dry climate of its immediate hinterland tends to moderate the dampness and humidity one suffers in Bombay or Calcutta, and consequently the people of Karachi are far healthier and more active than in other seaports on that continent.

My sightseeing in Karachi was well organized for me by two local friends whom I met through letters of introduction I carried with me. One was Mr. P. B. Anderson, the local manager of the East Asiatic Company, and the other was Mr. Franklin W. Wolf, who was in charge of our American Embassy. Much of my economic information about Karachi and Pakistan was derived from these two gentlemen and from Mr. Zahid Husain, the remarkable head of the State Bank of Pakistan, who in face of almost insurmountable difficulties has done an excellent job in keeping the finances of the new country on an even keel.

The last evening in Karachi I was entertained at the Embassy by Mr. and Mrs. Wolf, together with some other very interesting people including Mr. Doolittle, who is a lifelong friend of Mr. Marrone and who also lived in New Orleans for several years quite a long time ago. The Charge d'Affaires of the French Embassy and several other diplomats were also present and as all of them, except myself, were experts on Eastern affairs, I had not only a very pleasant but also a very instructive evening. The next morning at 4:00 a.m. I left for Damascus.

My general comments about India and Pakistan and their present unhappy economic status will follow within the next few days.

Cordially yours,

R. S. Hecht