

THE FRED GAISBERG DIARIES

PART 2: GOING EAST (1902-1903)

Edited by Hugo Strötbaum

2010

Matrix Series prefixed "E" - wax process recordings.

(source: HMV Matrix Series (MAT 101) by Alan Kelly)

recording location	10" records	7" records	Recording dates		language
Calcutta, India	E100 - E316	E1000 - E1336	8-11-02	-11-02	
Tokyo, Japan	E317 - E428	E1337 - E1502	4-2-03	28-2-03	Japanese
Shanghai, China	E429 - E557	E1503 - E1702	18-3-03	27-3-03	Mandarin
Hong Kong	E558 - E618	E1703 - E1788	23-4-03	26-4-03	Cantonese
Singapore	E619 - E688	E1789 - E1932	-5-03	-5-03	Malay/Javanese/Dutch
Bangkok, Siam	E750 - E780	E2000 - E2065	-6-03	-6-03	Siamese
Rangoon, Burma	E800 - E868	E2100 - E2189	-6-03	-6-03	Burmese

Friday, 28 September 1902¹

I left Liverpool Street Station 12.30 o'clock. The Vaile boys [?], French and F [?] were down also. The Owens & Royals and Ed Footman and Will.

The latter 4 went down to Tilbury Dock to see us off.

Half an hour after we got on board [of the SS "*Coromandel*"] the word was given for all strangers to go ashore, and we² pulled out into the docks; but it was not until 6 o'clock that we got into the River.

The weather all the way to Marseilles was fine, but we were unable to see anything of Gibraltar, as we passed it early in the morning. I was just able to see it in the distance. The weather in the Bay of Biscay was good. The glimpses from time to time of the various points of the Spanish coast made this trip interesting. We had a fine view of Cape St. Vincent before Gibraltar also after going up the east Spanish coast fine views of the Sierra Nevada and the Balearic Islands.



SS "*Coromandel*"

Friday noon we reached Marseilles (Oct 3rd 1902). We had a jolly drive through the city and up to the Cathedral Notre Dame, situated on a high

¹ This cannot be correct: they either left on Friday **26** September 1902 or **Sunday** 28 September 1902.

² "We" is Fred Gaisberg, George Dillnutt (Fred's assistant) and Tom (the "business head") & Ethel Addis.

prominence overlooking the sea and city. We had dinner at the Hotel Continental in company with Mr. & Mrs. Peter & Miss Johnson & the Doctor [*de Majeon*], also the Addises. The dinner was a very jolly affair. After dinner all the ladies and Mr. Peter returned to the boat - and [*Thomas Dowle*] Addis, Doctor [*de Majeon*] & myself went to a Variety Show and saw a little café life - which is distinctly gay in this city - then returned to the boat. This city more or less is like other Mediterranean cities I have visited - Genoa and Naples. Hilly streets almost always in the shape of stairs & dirty.

Saturday, 4 October 1902

Saturday morning very rainy. Left dock 12 o'clock and immediately in the Gulf of Lyons ran into an awful storm. Everyone was down sea-sick. I was not exactly bad, but felt it. [George \[Dillnutt\]](#)³ & Mr. Addis pitiful.



[George Walter Dillnutt](#)

Sunday, [5 October 1902] bright and calm. Passed through the Bonifacio Straits between Corsica & Sardinia.

Monday, [6 October 1902] passed the volcanic island of Stromboli and Straits of Messina. Here we had a beautiful view of the shore Italy and Sicily, also Mt. Etna in the distance.

³ Young George Walter Dillnutt - 19 years old in 1902 - went along as Fred's assistant recorder.

Saturday, 11 October 1902

Arrived at [Port Said](#). We did a little shopping and strolling through the Port.



This is the gate to the Canal. This Canal was commenced in April 1859; ten years later it was finished. Some 7000 vessels pass through yearly. The time of passage is usually 24 hrs. Width between the banks is 90 ft., depth 24 ft. Total length is 102 miles. We passed a number of laden camels and Arabs, who helped to form very interesting pictures. At Suez we took on water & provisions, but did not go ashore. Weather very hot. Our passage through the Red Sea very very hot. We sleep on deck.

Wednesday, 15 October 1902

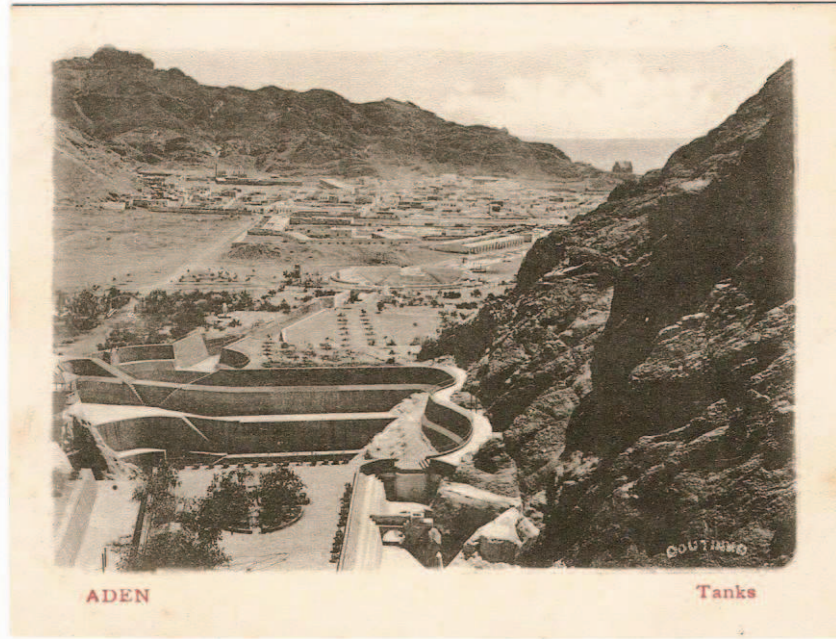
At 6 o'clock a.m. we arrived at Aden, Arabia. Supposed to be one of the hottest places in Creation and I believe it.

We went ashore before breakfast, and hired a carriage to drive us to the European town and the [water tanks](#), supposed to have been built by King Solomon.

They are a huge undertaking, and do the Ancients great credit.

[They are up in the hills](#), and catch enough rain water to supply the town 7 years.

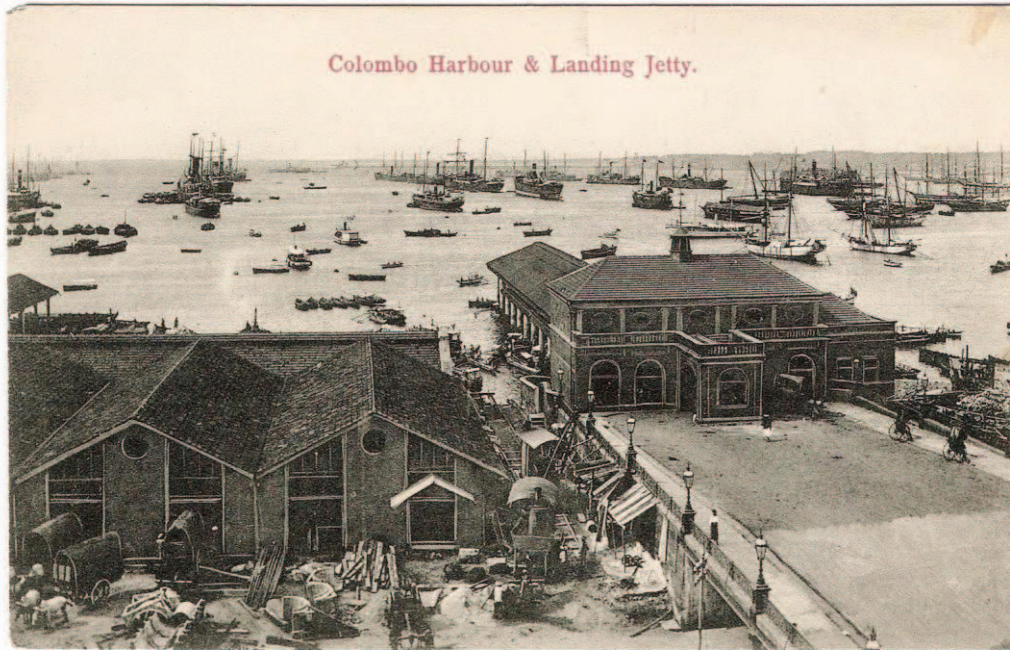
In the old days rainfalls were 7 years apart, but that time has lessened to 3 years.



The city was exceedingly interesting and picturesque.
All draft animals were camels, and dirty-looking camels at that.
The natives were dressed in gowns & children were naked.
The weather was burning hot and two hours ashore was enough to make us glad to return to the shade of our ship.
One sees a number of interesting types here - any number of Numidians, Abyssinians, Arabians and Egyptians, etc.
After leaving Aden, we were in plain view of Africa for some time.

Wednesday, 22 October 1902

About 4 o'clock we arrived at [Colombo](#) [on Ceylon, nowadays Sri Lanka].



We lose a number of good ship acquaintances here and take on a large number of new ones.

We remained in Colombo until 7 o'clock p.m. the following day. Immediately the boat struck anchor I went ashore with the Dr.

We hired a carriage and drove all over the town, then up the Marine Parade to the [Galle Face Hotel](#)⁴, then over the Cinnamon Gardens.



⁴ The Galle Face Hotel in Colombo, Ceylon (nowadays Sri Lanka), was founded in 1864. Originally a Dutch villa.

Ceylon is intensely interesting to me for the fact it is my first view of a tropical country with its novel vegetation. It brings back remembrances of books I read in my boy days - Robinson Crusoe, or Swiss Family Robinson. I saw the famous bread fruit trees both in bloom & in fruit. The fruit growing on the trees looks like an egg-plant, only green instead of purple. I saw the famous mango trees, with its complicated roots running down from the branches to the ground. [One tree covers nearly a quarter of an acre of ground](#)⁵. Next the coconut palms in fruit. Also the banana.

The great industries of Ceylon are raising of coconut and tea. The entire island is girded with a belt of yellow sand and thick band of coconut palms. Besides these we see the bamboo, talipot, and areca palms, rice, cinnamon, sugar cane. The natives are called Cingalese and are a brown, well-built people. The men all have long hair, and do it up in knots with a large tortoise-shell comb, just like a woman. They are fine built and (have) good, even features.



Here is also the home of the [catamaran](#) craft, and miles before you land you can see hundreds of the queer sailing craft. They are built of a huge, hollowed out log about 18 ins broad, and to this is attached a mast and large square sail. To balance this narrow boat, two arms are stretched out with a log attached, resting on the water. This makes it almost impossible to overturn it.

⁵ For a picture of the banyan tree see entry of Friday, 31 October 1902.

Thursday morning [23 October 1902] early, I rose and took a long ride in a ginricksha over the city, and made some good snapshots. I had breakfast at 9 o'clock, about 11 o'clock started for Mount Lavinia, about 7 miles distant. The ride going was enchanting. The railway is built along the coast, so on one side you have the ocean breaking on the shore, and on the other side the beautiful, graceful palm-nut groves.

We passed a fisherman village and had a chance to see the [catamarans](#) closely.

Mt. Lavinia is a regular paradise, and we spent a most entrancing three hours there. Had a good lunch with Mr. McClarren, Cooper & Doctor [*de Majeon*]. Saw a juggler perform, and among other things he did was to produce the growing mango trees. I took a number of photos here. The chaps all carry a cobra. We returned to the city about 4 o'clock and lounged around the Hotel Bristol, then went on the boat [*bound for Calcutta*].

Friday, 24 October 1902

Once again on my floating home. We have about 30 or 40 new faces, and it sort of disturbs our family. Saturday night we had a whist tournament in which I took part. Weather good.

Sunday, 26 October 1902

Passed off very quietly with a church service in the morning.

Monday, [27 October 1902] night.

We had a fancy dress ball that was a great success. The quarter deck was gaily trimmed with bunting. I went as a Japanese, George [*Dillnutt*] as a white-eyed Kaffir. The boat was perfectly still, so we were able to dance without any trouble. The reason of this was that we were anchored in the River Hugley [*Hugli/Hoogly*]. As this river is dangerous navigation on account of the swiftness of the ebb and sandbanks, boats can only proceed by day.

Tuesday [28 October 1902] morning we proceed at sunrise up the river. We passed great numbers of the jute factories that form the principal industry of this part of Bengal. We arrive at the jetty [*of Calcutta*] at 12 o'clock.

Hawd⁶ was down to meet us, and we bid goodbye sorrowfully to our inmates of a month, and took quarters in the [Great Eastern Hotel](#).

⁶ John Watson ("Jack") Hawd was the agent of The Gramophone Company in Calcutta.



Great Eastern Hotel, Calcutta

In the afternoon we visited our shop in Dalhousie Sq.⁷ and at night we had dinner in the Grand Hotel. We found the dinner very poor in this hotel as well as in the Great Eastern. In fact the meats are so smelly and everything so poor and cooked with that peculiar eastern flavour that for the first week we could hardly enjoy anything at all.

Wednesday, 29 October 1902

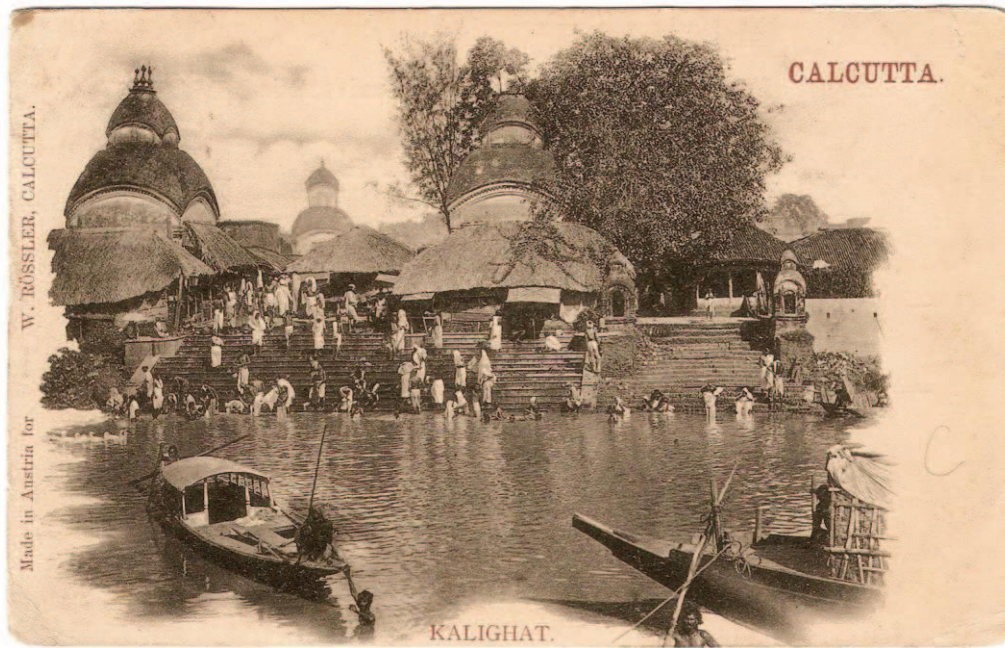
George [Dillnutt] & I arose early and took a walk through the Diadem Park⁸. We had breakfast at 9 o'clock. Then tries [= tried] to get our cargo out of Customs House, but were disappointed. That [= Then?] I dined aboard the 'Coromandel' with Dr. de Majeon, and enjoyed a fine dinner, as the cooking and victuals are far superior to the best hotels in the east.

Thursday, 30 October 1902

George and I took an early morning trip to the Kali Ghat, or sacred bathing place of the Hindus.

⁷ The shop at 8/2 Dalhousie Square opened May 1902.

⁸ "Diadem Park" is probably a misreading for "Maidan Park".



Kali Ghat, Calcutta

We took the electric trams and rode about 5 miles, passing through the native quarters, This was awfully interesting to see the semi-barbaric way in which the people live. Filth and smell. As we approached the temple there was a long line of filthy beggars and cripples. One fanatic was lying outstretched on a board of spikes. The whole sight was horribly repulsive.

Each worshipper carries with him what looks like a bag of grain, and as he passes the line of beggars he gives each a handful. We were not allowed to enter the temple, but we saw 3 young kids (goats) and the knives used to sacrifice them, and could hear the shouting and singing. As today we could do nothing, so after breakfast we visited the zoo, which is a very fine one of its kind.

That night we visited a native Parsee theatre. The play given was a version of a "*Comedy of Errors*", in which a railway train and a bridge catastrophe was introduced. There was also introduced a number of songs. The orchestra consisted of a small *portable organ*⁹, a kettledrum, and a sort of Japanese fiddle. The music was considerably better than I expected, and had a well-defined rhythm. This show lasts from 9 to 1.30. We only remained an hour. The acting was tame and child-like, and all the actors seemed anxious to make themselves as near white as possible as they were smeared with whiting.

Friday, 31 October 1902

Another holiday. In the morning before breakfast we took a walk through the New Market to see the most wonderful sight of all - the different merchants and native dealers offering all sorts of wares, trinkets, vegetables, meats, fruits, etc., etc. It is a wonderful sight. After *tiffin*¹⁰ we went by carriage to the Botanical Gardens, situated about 10 miles down the river. In going, we pass through those dirty, interesting villages. As the Gardens are on the other side of the river, we cross in a primitive native boat. The Gardens are very extensive, and among the most striking features are the beautiful avenues of great palm trees, and the great variety of all sorts of tropical trees and plants, including mahogany, teak, various palms, cactus plants. [Here is a marvellous banyan tree 133 years old, covering an acre of ground and having 343 aerial roots.](#) By aerial roots sunk down to earth by huge branches some 50 to 100 ft. in height. These roots come down to earth as straight as a plumb-line and make a grand support for the heavy branches.

⁹ Portable organ or *harmonium* (see the picture of Gauharjan on page 17).

¹⁰ *Tiffin* = lunch



Just one tree...

Saturday, 1 November 1902

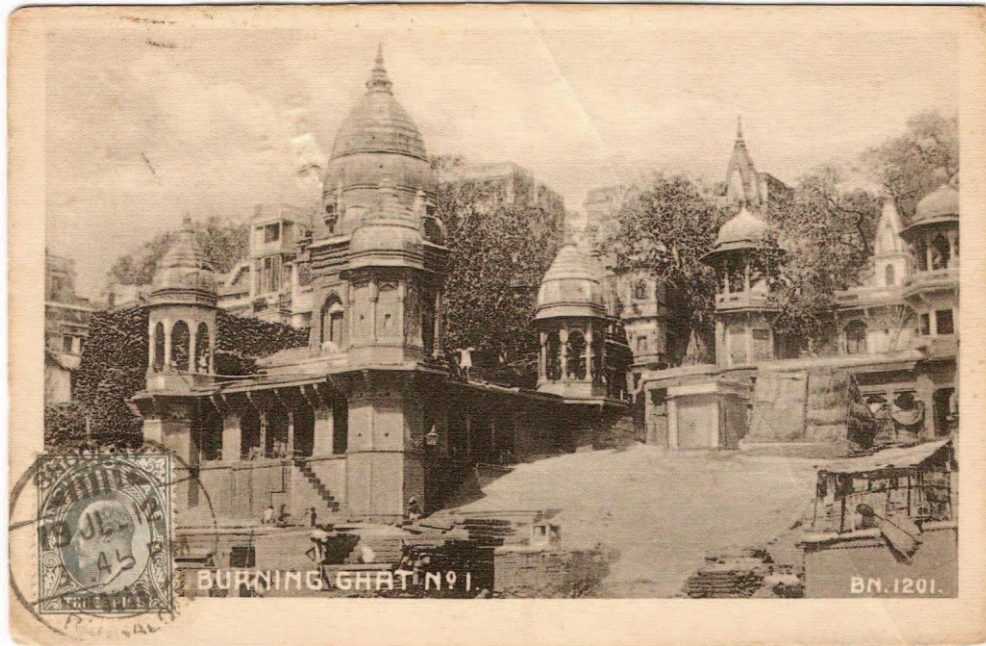
This morning an early morning walk through the busy native streets, and passed down Harrison Street where the native jobbing shops are. Here we saw great numbers of visiting merchants and peddlers from the country, and among them great numbers of Afghanistans. Fine large and intelligent men laying in stock.

Today we at last succeeded in getting our stuff out of the Custom House. My usual day's programme is to rise at 6.30 - tea - bath, my man always assists me to dress, and prepares my bath and tea (I have a native bearer or valet). Then a walk until 9 o'clock then breakfast. Tiffin or lunch at 1.30. At 7 o'clock I dress for dinner. Dinner at 8. Bed 11 o'clock.

Wednesday, 5 November 1902

Visited the [Burning Ghats](#), where the natives cremate their dead. There were about 10 fires burning, each containing a body doubled up.

The other morning, each morning I saw a funeral procession. A bier, or plain stretcher with a coolie at each corner carrying it. The body covered over with a plain white cloth was laid upon this. About two dozen coolies followed. They went at a dogtrot, chanting a most heart-rending dirge. This was evidently the funeral of a coolie, as there were only naked coolies in attendance.



Thursday, 6 November 1902

We visited a number of theatres to secure talent. The Classic Theatre was the most interesting. They had a novelty in the way of a brass orchestra of about 14 band instruments, including tambooras [*tablas?*] or drums.

Every instrument plays in unison, They also had a well-trained ballet of girls ranging from 12 to 16 years of age. All they wore was an almost transparent gauze gown.

We also attended a dinner and a Nautch dance in a wealthy baboo's [babu's]¹¹ home in Harrison Road.

There were about 40 Europeans present, and they ate by themselves. Not even would the host sit at our table. Nor were any native woman present except the Nautch dancers, as these have lost their caste.

After dinner we retired to a large salon over the dining room, and were entertained by the [Nautch girls](#).

¹¹ *Babu*: (1) Hindu gentleman (respectful), (2) Hindu merchant or clerk (derogatory)



Nautch girls

I include here a passage from Fred Gaisberg's autobiography *Music on Record* (p. 79-80) just to show what a certain part of the diaries looked like after Fred Gaisberg had re-written it. It covers the combined entries from 28 October to 6 November 1902.

After a six weeks' glorious but uneventful journey we anchored one morning in the muddy Hooghly River to take on board a pilot. While he carefully navigated us up to the crowded jetty at Calcutta, returning tea planters told stories of the fat fees earned and princely lives led by these pilots. They would have made even Huckleberry Finn envious.

After the quarantine the climax of our journey was reached when we were boarded by an inspector and a squad of policemen. They had warrants for the arrest and extradition of Mr. Norton, a banker from Philadelphia, on a charge of embezzlement. He had left his wife and children for the lady we knew as Mrs. Norton, a chorus girl!

It took three days to unload our thirty heavy cases and pass the customs officers. Our agent, Jack Hawd, had arranged a location and had assembled a collection of artists, who watched us curiously as we prepared our studio for recording.

It was the first time that the talking machine had come into their lives and they regarded it with awe and wonderment.

I soon discovered that the English, whom we contacted and who were acting as our agents and factors, might be living on another planet for all the interest they took in Indian music. They dwelt in an Anglo-Saxon compound of their own creation, isolated from India. They had their own cricket and tennis clubs, tea parties and bridge, 'sixteen annas to the rupee'. The native bazaars never saw them, and even the Eurasians aped them to the extent of tabooing all Indian society.

I met the Superintendent of the Calcutta police, who placed at my disposal an officer to accompany me to the various important entertainments and theatres in the Harrison Road. Our first visit was to the native 'Classic Theatre' where a performance of Romeo and Juliet in a most unconventional form was being given. Quite arbitrarily, there was introduced a chorus of young Nautch girls heavily bleached with rice powder and dressed in transparent gauze. They sang 'And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back', accompanied by fourteen brass instruments all playing in unison. . . .

We now proceeded to attend a dinner party and Nautch dance in the home of a wealthy babu. We elbowed our way through an unsavoury alley, jostled by fakirs and unwholesome sacred cows, to a pretentious entrance. The host and his native guests eagerly welcomed the brave band of pukka Anglo-Saxons who bestowed such honour on his house. No native women were present excepting the Nautch girls, who had lost caste. We Europeans ate at a separate table; not even our host sat with us. After a rigidly European dinner we retired to a large salon and were entertained by the Nautch girls.

(from: *Music on Record* by F. W. Gaisberg: pp. 54-55)

The room presented a most interesting sight. At one end were the native gentlemen in their white gowns; now and then one would ornament his person with a string of diamonds or valuable rings. At the other end of the room were the Europeans in evening dress.

The singing girl, followed by her musicians (amounting to two *esrag*¹² or Hindustani violins, one *tamboora*¹³ with a right and left *tamboora*¹⁴, and a pair of *mandieras*¹⁵ - or two half-round bells), advanced slowly, singing all the while, around the room. The music is very monotonous and every rhythm is repeated. A song consisting of 2 or 3 distinct phrases of music will be sung for perhaps an hour at a stretch, the only variation being in the drum traps or the introduction of some feat of vocalisation such as a run up and down the scale of seven notes. Many Eastern songs have no words, but are sung using the sol, fa, la, or solfeggio syllables.

At the particular dinner we heard two popular dancing girls, one by name Gauherjan¹⁶, a Mohammedan, rather fat and covered with masses of gold

¹² Or *esraj*.

¹³ A *tambura* is a stringed instrument.

¹⁴ I suspect Gaisberg meant "*tabla*" here.

¹⁵ *Manjira*: a pair of small metallic finger cymbals used for rhythmic purposes (Tu. zil; Gr. ζηλια).

¹⁶ Also spelled as *Gauhurjan*, *Gauharjan*, *Goura Jan* and *Gauhar Ja(a)n*. Her real name was Eileen Angelina Yeoward. Born in 1873 in Azamgarh to Robert William Yeoward, an Armenian Christian working as an engineer in dry ice factory at Azamgarh, near Benares, who married a Anglo-Indian lady, Allen Victoria Hemming around 1870. Gauhar Jaan was the first Indian "classical musician" to record and is credited with over 600 records in about 20 languages. She died in Mysore in 1930 (sources: internet and a recently published book on Gauharjan (see "Sources" at the back).

armlets, anklets, rings, pearl necklaces, masses of heavy earrings hanging about ten piercings in each ear. Her crowning adornment was a large diamond fastened on the side of her nose. Her teeth were quite red from **beatle-nut** [betel/beetle-nut] chewing. Her chewing habit necessitated the presence of a bearer following her about with a silver cuspidor into which she would empty her mouthful, much to the distraction of their charms. She terminated each song with a most cleverly executed muscle-dance. This lady gets around 300 rupees an evening, and can often be seen driving in the Miadern [= *Maidan*]¹⁷ in a fine carriage and pair. I met the lady at our Laboratory when she came to sing in our Gramophone, and was impressed by her sharpness and brightness. She sings in some twenty languages including Hindustani, Turkish, Persian, Bengali, Kachee [= *Katchi*], Medrasi = *Madras*], Burmese, Gujrati [= *Gujarati*], Tailungi [= *Telugu*]. Their interpretation of Western music is very original. A great favourite is Molly Garden, but you could hardly recognise the tune before hearing it ten times. One of the girls was an Armenian Jewess. Of this class there is a large colony in Calcutta.

Friday, 7 November 1902

I dined with Mrs. Henry, a passenger on the Coromandel. They live in a very nice house in Park Street.

Saturday, 8 November 1902

We made our first native records, Two little Nautch girls 14 and 16 with miserable voices. They persisted in covering their faces and never got over the embarrassment we inspired. That afternoon we had tea with Mrs. Bonerjee at her magnificent home in Park Street. Mr. Bonerjee is a barrister in the High Court, and stands high in Calcutta circles. He is a native, educated at Oxford. She is an English lady. We pass a very agreeable time.

Sunday, 9 November 1902

We paid a farewell visit to the “Coromandel”, lying off Gerden Reach. To get to it we had an hour’s drive, and then hired a dingy - native boat - and rowed to the ship. Capt. Bennett gave us a hearty welcome and invited us to tea in his cabin. We bade the officers and Dr. de Megian [*de Majeon?*] farewell. The Doctor and I had been very chummy during the voyage and his stay in port, always visiting different sights in each other’s company. He is a counterpart of my friend Ed Footman. He is a Canadian, educated in

¹⁷ The *Maidan* or *Midan* was a wide open space and park in the heart of Calcutta. “Miadern” and “Diadem Park” are misreadings by Bayly for “*Maidan (Park)*”. See the 29 October 1902 entry.

England, France and Germany.

Monday, 10 November 1902

Record-making, Had Mr. Pilgrim to dinner and a game of bridge whist. Mr. Pilgrim goes tomorrow to Burma for the Geologic Survey.



Gauharjan (photograph by Arthur Clarke ca. 1914-1916?)

Tuesday, 11 November 1902

Recording the voices of [Gauharjan](#) - a Mohammedan Nautch girl & a Hindustani, who wrote her name herself. This lady is an Armenian Jewess. Each brought 4 musicians - 2 *esrag*, 1 *tamboora*, 1 pair *mandieras*. Her other attendants were a bearer for her pipe, & to prepare her **beatle nut**¹⁸ [*beetle/betel*], one *ayer* [= *ayah*] or black girl attendant, one coolie to fan her, another girl to carry her cuspidor, and a coolie to carry the traps. Calvé¹⁹ came to our lab with far less cortège and required much less attendance. The Mohammedan girl could lay considerable claim to coloratura voice. She performance [= *performed*] with ease some very difficult vocalising such as scales and a sort of guttural trill which she drew our attention to herself, but at the end of the session when we reproduced Suzanne Adams' record of the

¹⁸ Not to be confused with a "*Beatles nut*".

¹⁹ Emma Calvé (born: Rosa Emma Calvet) was a French operatic soprano (1858–1942).

'Jewel Song' in Faust²⁰ the little lady and her attendants were very much astonished by the rapid execution and the trills.

Wednesday, 12 November 1902

Recorded Gauhurjan again. This lady came even more elaborately dressed & wore a whole mine of jewels. We had a guess at her age. I thought 22 - Addis 25 and Hawd 30. Her real age is 45 and wonderfully preserved and youthful-looking. She wore the Mohammedan dress. A long black gauze cloth embroidered with real gold lace, and so draped about that it left the arms, stomach, and legs bare, She is very eccentric and I heard a story today of how some years ago her cat had a little [= litter] of kittens, To celebrate the occasion Gauhurjan gave a fete at her home costing her 20,000 Re [Rupee]. I forgot to mention an acquaintance, Mr. Johnson, the superintendant of police, accompanied us through China-town. This is a dangerous part of the world & it is very unsafe to venture here without police escort. We had 7 policemen. We entered a number of gambling dens and bet on the figures. I won 10 Re [Rupee] once. The game I played on is this. A board divided into twelve sections, 6 figures in red above the line & 6 figures in black (or characters) below the line. You select a character and put your money on it to win. Previously the banker has drawn from a bag, containing 12 similar characters, one character & places it in a small lacquer box and closes the lid, and lays it down on the table in front everyone. When all who want to enter the game have selected their characters and put up their money, the little box is opened and the character it contains is laid on the table. Those who have selected that character win 12 times what they put up. Another game they have is a table divided into four parts, numbered 1-2-3-4. You select any one to put your money on, The banker has a pile of shells, from which he takes a small quantity at random. The remainder he counts in fours. The integral part of 4 left is the winning number. In every one of the half a dozen places we visited were crowds of Chinamen, and in some cases we saw watches & rings on the table. They are insane at gambling. We also visited a **Joah House** (?) or church and a number of opium joints, and saw how a Chinaman proceeds when he puts himself under the influence of the drug. In one bed we saw a European.

Thursday, 13 November 1902

Recording. Dined with Mr. Duncan, who resides in the **mint** [white?] compound.

²⁰ American soprano Suzanne Adams (1872-1954) in "*Ah! Je ris, de me voi si belle*" ("Jewel Song") from "*Faust*" (Gounod). (listen to this song on YOUTUBE)

Friday, 14 November 1902

Dined at the Hotel de Paris with Mr. Johnson.

Saturday, 15 November 1902

This morning we saw a sacred procession given by the **Jones (?Janis) Club**, the jewellers of Calcutta. It gave me a good idea of the gorgeousness of an Eastern pageant. They carried a number of costly idols, temples, and symbols. The different men wore strings of pearls and diamonds, emeralds, costly silks and plush. Mounted on beautifully caparisoned horses were young boys wearing bracelets and necklaces of small fortunes. The most incongruous part were the miserable alleys and lanes they passed down, and the vast mob of almost naked spectators.

Sunday, 16 November 1902

Today we made 30 records of the "*Classic Theatre Orchestra*" consisting of two baritone horns, one cornet, two clarinets, two drums (native tamboolas) [= *tablas*], and a set of triangles. They all play in unison.

Monday, 17 November 1902

I visited some of the palaces of a Rajah family, Driving through an endless number of narrow streets, we suddenly came upon a magnificent court-yard. Entering, we pass through an inner court of marble and mount a staircase to the Reception Saloon. There is nothing particularly striking or different from a European palace except they are mad on Crystal chandeliers.

I met Raja **Torje [?]**, a very polished gentleman a fine face and presence.

I inspected a joiner's shop. They work in very confined spaces - always on the floor, using most primitive tools, but turn out most exquisite work.

Tuesday, 18 November 1902

Made records of members of the Corinthian Theatre.

At night I attended a reception and the theatrical in the Palace of Bahadur, the wealthiest jeweller in Bengal.

This gentleman's home is built of glass mosaics inside and out. His gardens are laid off in paths of glass and stone mosaics, fountains and small lakes scattered all over. At one end of the garden is a temple built of stone mosaics and gold trimmings. Inside are some costly idols with eyes of priceless gems. Visitors took off their shoes and walked up the stairs to peep in the doors. The whole scene, lighted up with thousands of small fairy lamps reminded one of a page in the Arabian Nights tales. About 400 Europeans in evening dress and 3,000 local gentlemen in their flowing robes of linen, silks of various colours and sparkling with gems and jewelry, together representing a

hundred different nationalities.

Wednesday, 19 November to Thursday, 27 November 1902

Little of interesting except routine life. I attended one or two 'at homes', and so got an insight to Calcutta social life. At one musicale I assisted in the entertainment. Here were gathered a very cosmopolitan crowd - Armenians, Greeks, Americans, Scotsmen, English; our host was German, an Otto Ect - also Austrians, Spanish & Italians. No doubt other nations were represented.

[Thursday 27 November 1902] I went to the theatre (English) with a young American Mr. Lusk, to whom Harold Footman introduced me. This young man is a Yale graduate and represents the General Electric Co. of America in the east.

I have been in his company a great deal and have found him interesting and entertaining. I invited him today to a Thanksgiving dinner at the Hotel. I had ordered a turkey, cranberry sauce and mince pie, very good champagne, and also arranged the table prettily with American flags. After dinner we went to the Theatre and saw "*The Adventures of Lady Ursula*".

Saturday, 6 December 1902

Today (Saturday) the Viceroy²¹ entered Calcutta. He passed down Dalhousie by the hotel to the White House accompanied by his Indian Guards.

I got a snap of the show. Lord Curzon reminded in appearance of President Roosevelt. During the day I completed the packing and as we do not sail until the 10th. I occupied the four free days in taking a run up to Darjeeling, 350 miles from Calcutta.

I took the train at 4 o'clock by 9 o'clock we reach Damookdea on the right bank of the Ganges River. Crossing occupies about 30 minutes, and we sit down to dinner and eat comfortably until the ferry arrives at Sera Ghat.²² The river is about 1 miles wide and is one of the largest in the world.

We get on another train, and as I have brought my own bedding with me I make a very comfortable bed and have a good sleep until 6 o'clock a.m., when the plains end and we arrive at the bottom of the hills. To see the sun break over the snow-capped mountains was a glorious sight. This station is called Siliguri, and after breakfast we take the cutest little baby train in which to climb up the mountains 7000 feet. It is a two foot gauge steam train with open cars. We only go 7 miles per hour but climbing all the while.

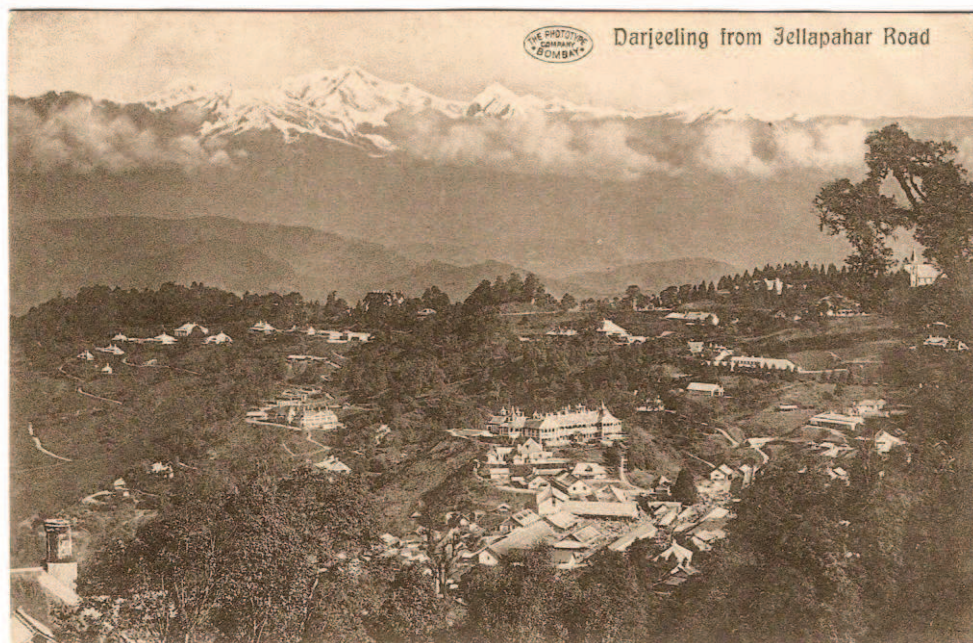
²¹ George Nathaniel "Lord" Curzon (1859-1925) was Governor General and Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905.

²² With steam ferry across the Ganges to Sera/Sara Ghat Railway Station. Then by North Bengal State Railway to Siliguri and from there with Narrow Gauge Himalayan Railway.

The scenery is grand. In places you pass through almost primeval forests, now along the cart-road or clinging to the edge of a ravine with a clear drop of a 1,000 feet below you. In places we have to switch frontwards, then backwards, along the mountain-side in order to climb it; then again we curl around the crest of the hill like a spiral curve, passing all the while through the famous Darjeeling plantations of tea.

Monday, 8 December 1902

I was called at 4 a.m. and started out with the Americans for Tiger Hill to see the sun rise on Mt. Everest. We rode ponies, and I was very heavily wrapped up as it was freezing cold. I never experienced a grander sight in all my life as that ride and the sight of the snow-capped Everest with its neighbouring peaks turned red and pink by the early sun's rays. The whole sight is beyond the power of words to describe. We saw Mt. Everest 29,002 feet high, Kinchinjanga 28,156, Janu 25,304, Kabru 24,015, Ghumalari 23,186, Pauhauri 23,176 feet.



We arrived at the hotel as hungry as bears. Before *tiffin* I did some shopping in the bazaar and in the afternoon we took a walk to a small Tibian [= Tibetan] village where we saw a Tibian [= Tibetan] temple. Attached to these temples they have a system of rotating cylinders of wood, upon which prayers are inscribed. A penitent will rotate one of these by hand a hundred or a thousand times, chanting a prayer at each rotation.

Tuesday, 9 December 1902

Tuesday at 12 o'clock. I left the beautiful mountains and started to descend to Silliguri, where I arrived at 7 o'clock. The descent was even grander than the ascent, and to watch the looping and twists and turns of our little railway was very interesting. Travelling all night, we arrived at Sarra [or Sera] Ghat just at sunrise, and had *chotahazery* [= *chota hazri* = *early morning tea/ breakfast*] crossing the river. Our train arrived in Calcutta at 12 o'clock, where I learned to my annoyance that our ship would not sail until Thursday at 5 o'clock p.m.

Thursday, 11 December 1902

At 5 o'clock we embarked the S. S. "**Japan**". At 10 p.m. we got out of the docks and anchored in the stream. At 6 a.m. 12th. December, we proceeded down the [Hooghley](#) but the tide was not high enough, so we had to anchor for 24 hours to wait for the tide.

Saturday, 13 December 1902

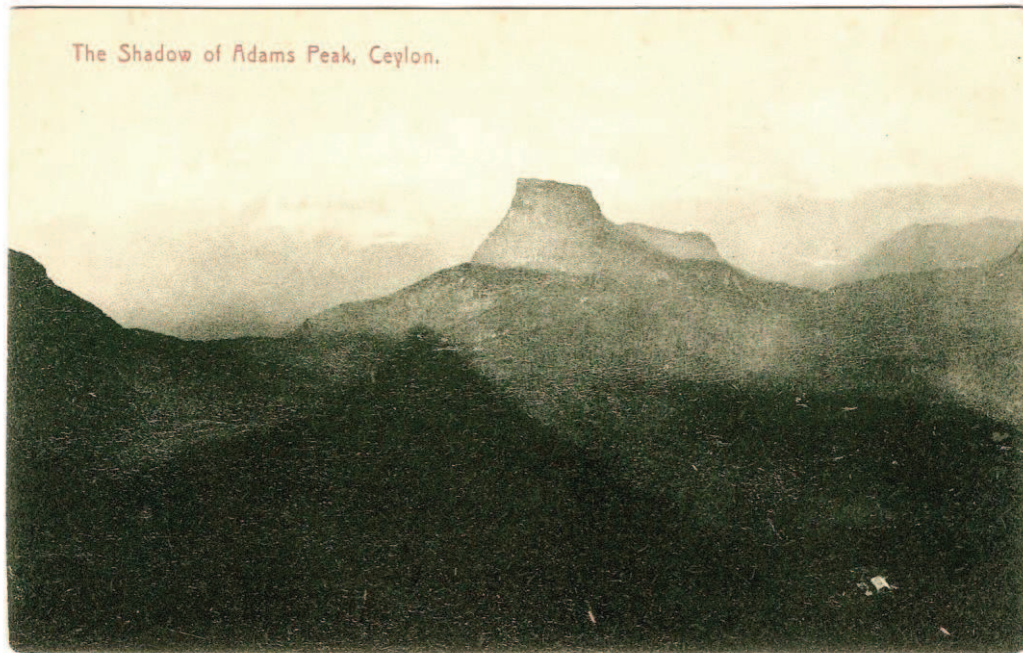
We got off all right, and by 14th. Dec. (Sunday) we got into the Bay of Bengal.

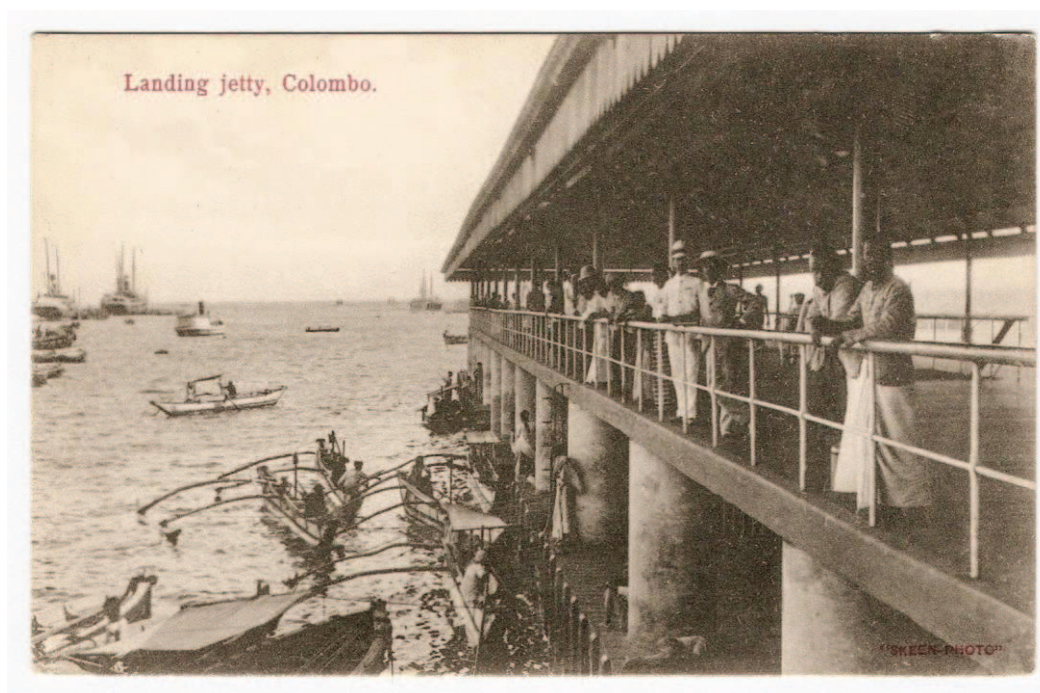
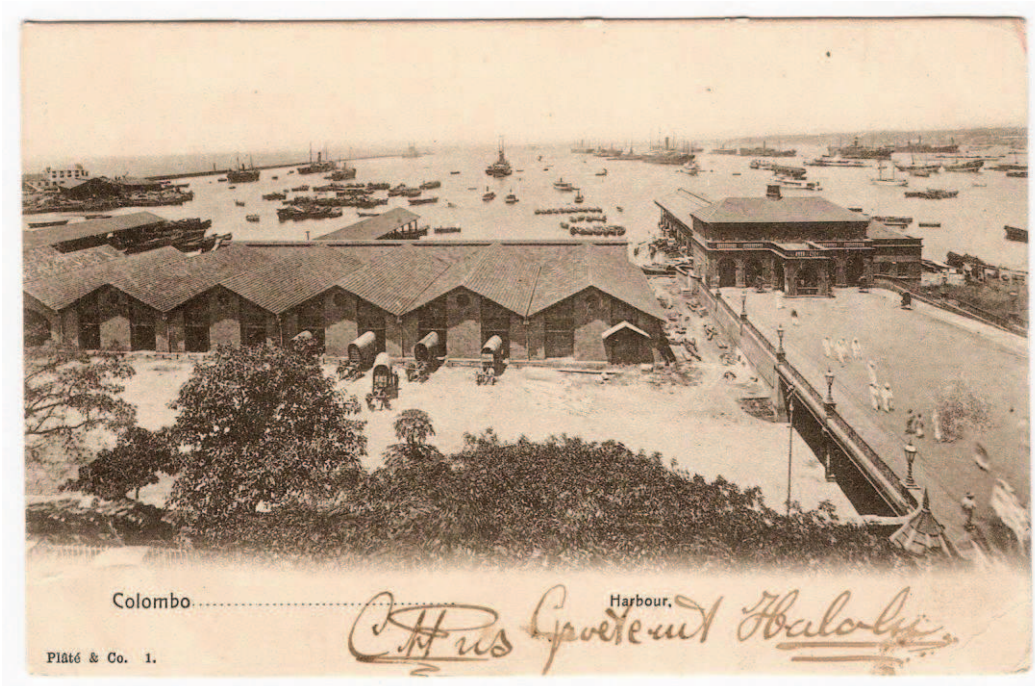
Tuesday, 16 December 1902

Good weather. We do a lot of bridge.

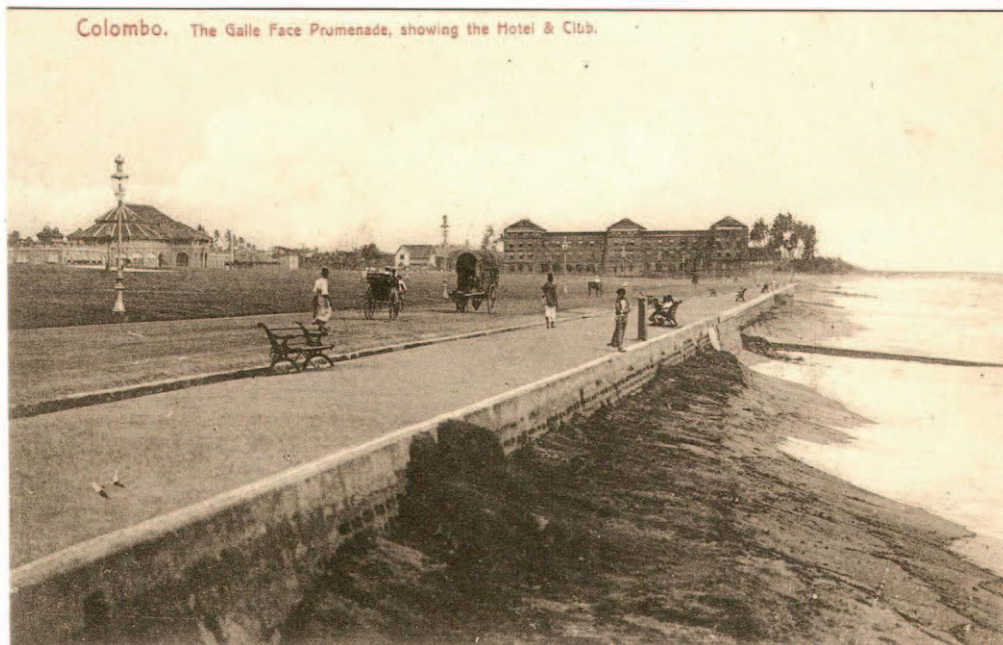
Wednesday, 17 December 1902

Early in the morning we sighted the coast of Ceylon [= *Sri Lanka*], and followed the southern shore from Galle the old port of Ceylon to Colombo the new port. We could plainly smell the spices in the wind and we could make out [Adam's Peak](#) (7500 feet high) and other points of the hills.





We got in port about 2 o'clock and by four we were on the shore. We stopped at the [Galle Face Hotel](#), one of the best in the East.



Thursday, 18 December 1902

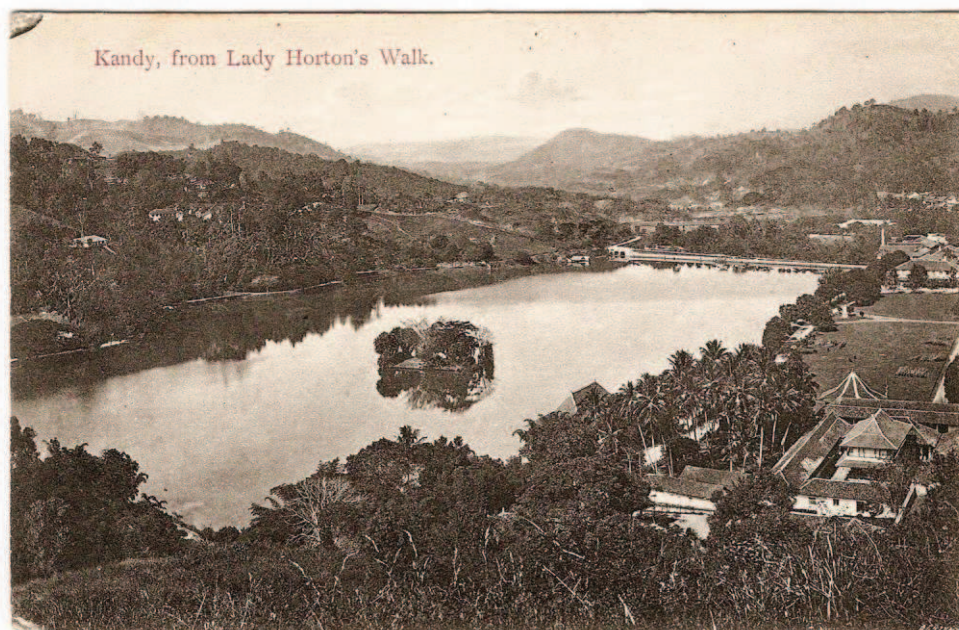
In the morning I took a rickshaw ride with George to a fishing village nearby.



The natives here were all Roman Catholic, and it was strange sight to see them enter a Christian church and perform rights one is familiar to, after all the pagan idol-worshipping about this part of the world.

Mutural²³ is the name of the village.

In the afternoon I went to Mt. Lavinia again and saw the last of the Boer camp, because the 30 or 40 who were here were to sail the following day to South Africa. They were apparently comfortably fixed in well-made (temporary) bungalows. The camp was enclosed by a double wire fence about 6 feet **about** [= high]. We also visited a rather ordinary Buddhist temple. At one time there were about 5,000 Boer prisoners confined in Ceylon.



Friday, 19 December 1902

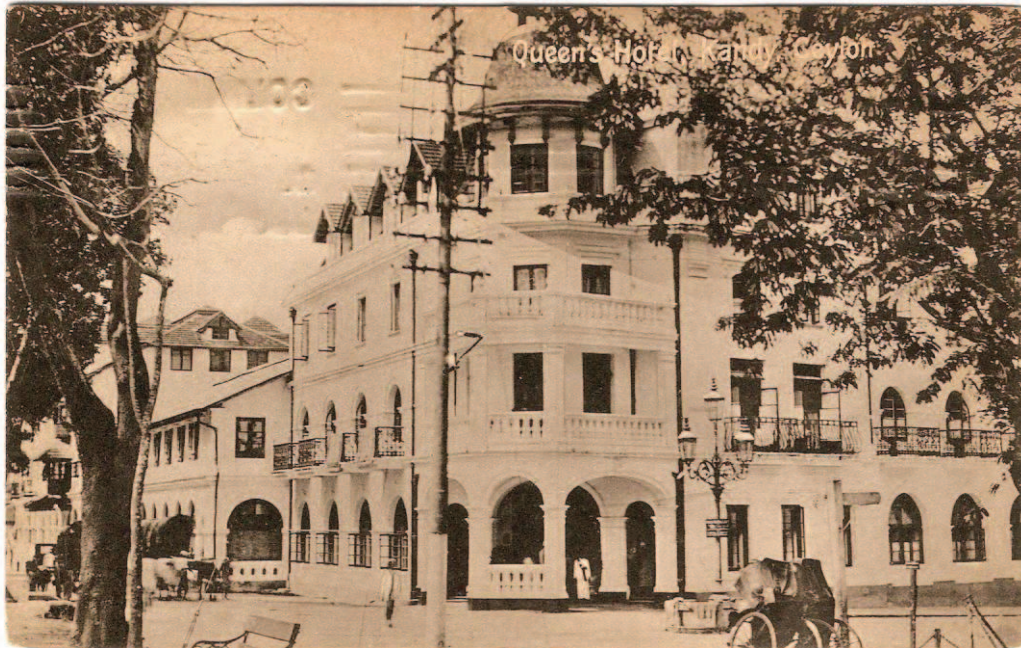
I took the 7.30 am train for **Kandy**. (On this train in the dining car was Sir Hector MacDonald going up to Neuraglia²⁴ on summons of the Governor of Ceylon to answer charges of moral delinquencies.).

A ride of 75 miles occupying 4 hours. During the last 25 miles we also climb 1500 feet. Before this the line is absolutely sea-level without rise or fall, and passing through a swampy country rank with tropical vegetation, a good

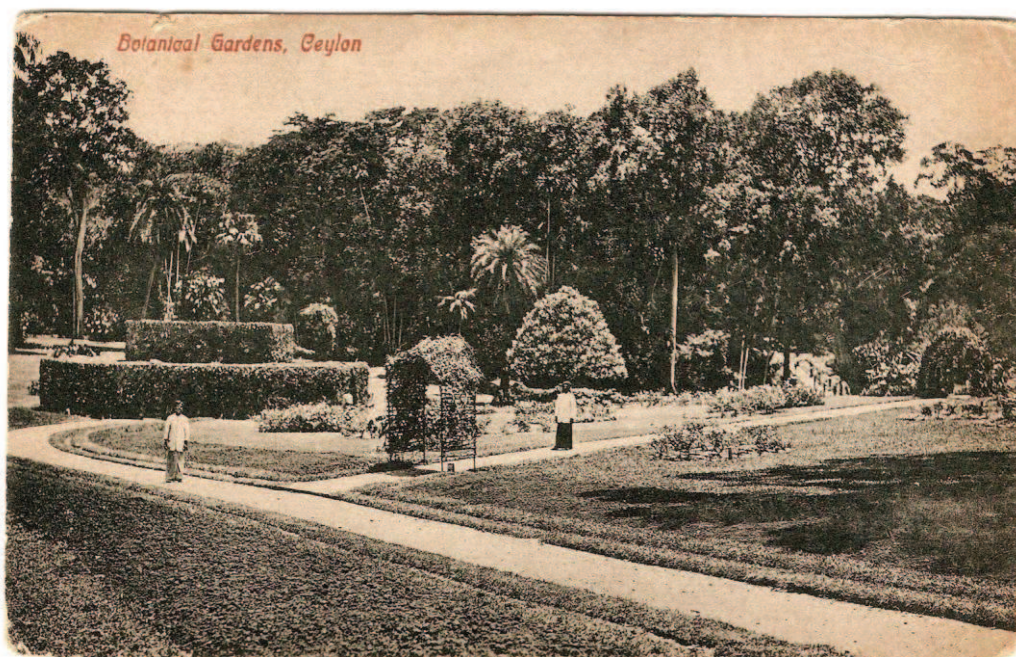
²³ Probably *Matara* on the southern coast of Sri Lanka.

²⁴ Gaisberg means "Nuwara ELLIYA" (pronounced "Nuralia"). See also "*The tireless traveler: twenty letters to the Liverpool Mercury*" by Anthony Trollope.

many rice fields, plenty of coconut palm, bananas and yaks. With the hills begin the tea estates; cocoa tree, spices such as cloves, nutmeg, etc.

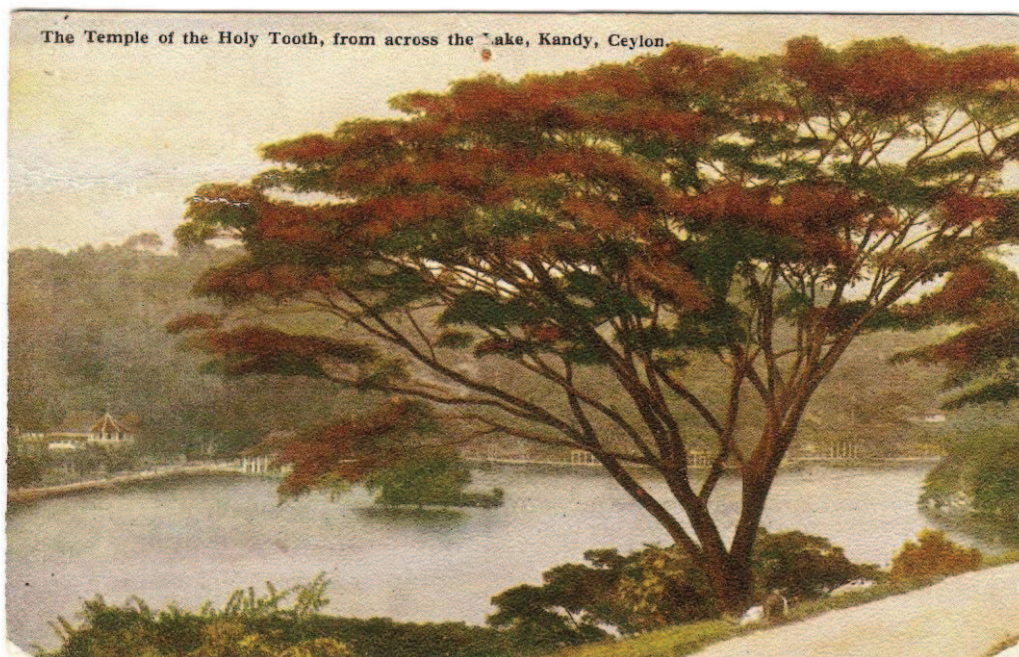


We stopped at the [Queen's Hotel](#). The hotel is well run by a fat Swiss, and we were very well fixed but had to pay rather high. In the afternoon we took a 5-mile ride to the [Government Botanical Gardens](#).



On the trip we pass a pretty rest-house such as abound in Ceylon for the convenience of travellers. These Gardens, established in 1825, are the richest in variety I ever saw. Here one can see every known tropical tree or plant, imported or domestic. Wonderful trees I had often read of and wondered about I now saw. The clove [= clove], nutmeg trees, the coffee, every variety of palm, the talipot blooming a huge flower after fifty years then dying, the Royal palm, the panama-hat palm, giant bamboos, India rubber trees, vanilla vines, the little cocaine trees, and above all the wonderful orchids and other parasitical plants, ferns of wonderful cloudy delicacy. [We then went over a nearby tea estate and examined the entire process of tea manufacturing from the picking to the packing and sealing for export.](#)

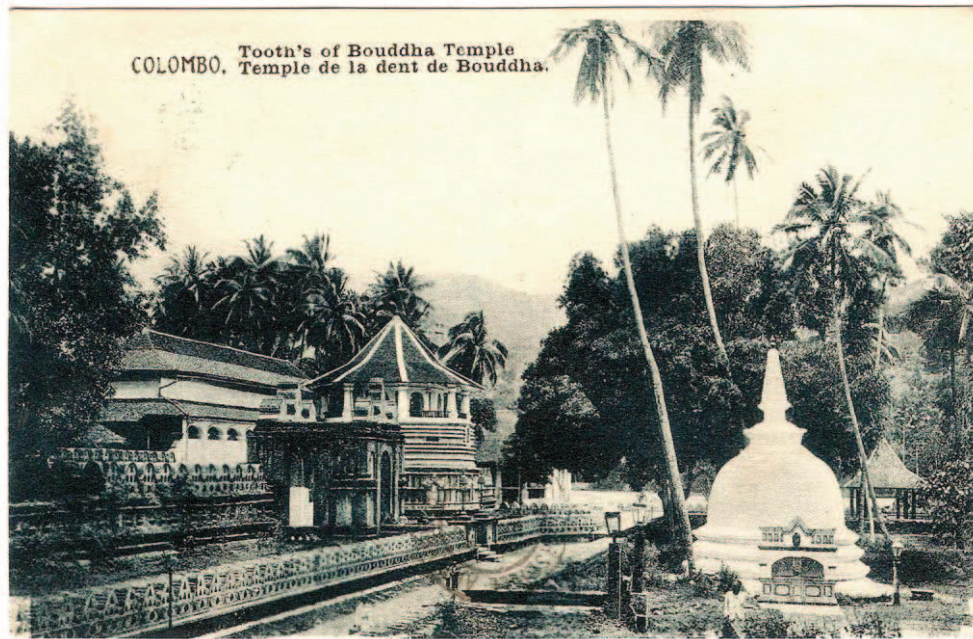




Saturday, 20 December 1902

I have visited the [Buddhist Temple of the "Holy Tooth"](#). Here they have what is supposed to be a tooth of Buddha. It is a very old temple, and very much more interesting than others I have seen. They have the usual squatting figure of Buddha in contemplation. Worshippers come with offerings of money and lotus flowers, so the place is always heavy with the

pungent perfume of that flower. We saw what they prize very much - a Buddha carved out of one piece of crystal. Also some interesting books of the palm leaf instead of paper. One priest showed us how he wrote on palm leaf. He takes it in his hand and scratches the letters or signs on it. Then he rubs in a black ink. The ink remains in the scratches only, when rubbed off. The Singalese writing characters are very graceful and looks similar to shorthand.



At 5 o'clock we took the train to return to Colombo, We got in a compartment with a tea planter and his wife who were going to Colombo to spend the Christmas holidays. He has been 30 years in Ceylon and of course regards it as home. He told us some interesting things about tea planting. All labour has to be imported from India as the native Cingalese are lazy and will not work. At one time all plantations grew coffee only, but some 20 years ago a fungus attacked the coffee and ruined every tree in the island²⁵. They all started to grow tea; [they] were so successful that it is the chief industry of the island.

²⁵ In 1875 a coffee rust fungus (*Hemileia Vastatrix*) reached Ceylon and had dramatic consequences: in less than 20 years Ceylon's coffee production was almost completely wiped out. The switch to **tea** proved a very successful move.

Sunday, 21 December 1902

We spent the day at the [Galle Face Hotel](#) packing and preparing to get on our steamer "**Chusan**" (P. & O. Co²⁶), which we did at 10 o'clock.



We were to sail at mid-night, but the mail-boat "**Rome**" did not arrive until late in the night, so we could not transfer the mail and cargo and passengers.

Monday, 22 December 1902

At 10 o'clock we got off. Day is perfect. During the whole day the southern coast of Ceylon is in full view. Our boat [the SS "**Chusan**"] is almost an exact copy of the "**Coromandel**", The 2nd cabin is full. In the 1st we have only about 20 passengers. However, we got up a game of bridge the first night out.

Tuesday, 23 December 1902

Bridge and music, Beautiful day.

Wednesday, 24 December 1902

Christmas Eve. A lovely balmy day. Carol singing at midnight.

²⁶ Peninsular and Oriental (Steam Navigation) Company.

Thursday, 25 December 1902 (Christmas)

Another summer day. We had a fine lunch and dinner - Christmas pudding and cake, and a merry company. At night a concert.

Friday, 26 December 1902

We stopped at Penang a few hours. During this short time we went ashore and drove over the town. It is a city of some 100,000 inhabitants, the majority being Chinamen. We saw some pretty bungalows.

Saturday, 27 December 1902

We passed through the Straits between Sumatra and Malay Peninsula. Reached **Singapore** on ...

Sunday, 28 December 1902

Singapore is an island approached on all sides by a good channel, deep enough for the largest vessels. It is a very busy, crowded port and there is no question of its commercial importance. As in Penang, the majority of its 300,000 inhabitants are Chinamen. We spent the night on shore. It was a very hot evening.

Monday, 29 December 1902

On our way to Hong Kong.

Wednesday, 31 December 1902

At midnight sang Old Lang Syne and drank to the new year.

Saturday, 3 January 1903

Reach **Hong Kong**, which is also an island, rising suddenly from the water to a height of 2,500 feet, and the city is built on the side of this hill. The P. & O. docks are on the mainland opposite Hong Kong - a small European town named **Kowloon**. Walking over this city one might imagine oneself in Europe by looks of the houses and streets. After dinner we visited the city and rode over it in rickshaws.

Sunday, 4 January 1903

We start for Shanghai. Weather growing colder and colder as we get farther north.

Monday, 5 January 1903

We are in Formosa channel and the NW Monsoon blows down it like a funnel. We are passing numerous Chinese fishing junks with square mat sails riding on the big swells like chips.

Wednesday, 7 January 1903

We enter the mouth of the greatest rivers of Asia, the Yang tse Kiang. A beautiful but cold day - thermometer registers 45° and got as low as 32° in the early morning. We should be in Shanghai by evening. Arrived **Shanghai**. Stopped at the Astor House. Very American. That evening we went out with some of our travelling companions and visited a Chinese tea house and then a Chinese theatre. The theatre was crowded with some 1500 Chinamen, all showing the keenest interest in child-like performance being enacted. It was making up the performers in full view of the audience.

Thursday, 8 January 1903

I visited the city and Chinese town. The European portion is beautifully built and streets well laid. The houses especially along the Bund²⁷ are large and grand, one might be in Paris and Berlin. The Chinese portion is very interesting and dirty. In the afternoon I hired a carriage for the afternoon and drove out to Nan Yang College to see a Mr. Latimore, to whom Ed Tracy gave me an introduction. Latimore met me very cordially, He is a teacher of English in the College. This is a large institution run on European lines by the Chinese government. Mr. Lites (?Sites) my old teacher in the High School is a professor here. I did not see him, but he will do so on my return.

Friday, 9 January 1903

Had dinner with Mr. Riches and his wife. He was formerly with Hayes - London and now has charge of Moutrie's Music House in Shanghai²⁸. His firm manufacture pianos in Shanghai. The action and everything is entirely made by hand by the Chinamen.

I played on one and must say they are wonderful for the price (£30) and beautifully made.

After dinner we went on board our ship, the **Kobe Maru** of the Nippon Kaisha Line, a Japanese vessel but under an American captain and chief officer and European engineer and chief. Cooking inclined to be American.

²⁷ The *Shanghai Bund* has dozens of historical buildings, lining the Huangpu River, that once housed numerous banks and trading houses from the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Italy, Russia, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and Belgium.

²⁸ S. Moutrie & Co.

Monday, 12 January 1903

Monday morning arrived at **Nagasaki**. To look at the waterfront one would think it a Russian on account of the character of the buildings and great numbers of Russians here. The great Japan coal mines are here. The great novelty is to watch the little Japanese girls coal the steamers. They hold the world's record of 7½ tons per minute. They form lines from the coal barge to the vessel's coal port and pass from one to another little baskets of coal with infinite rapidity. Each basket holds about one peck. Yet they look clean and tidy. Cost of coal put on board to this Company is only 3 yens (\$1.50) per ton.



I know, Port Said is not Nagasaki...
But these people are loading coal alright!

We visited a very quaint temple here known as Temple of the Bronze Horse, on account of a large bronze horse in the courtyard. At 4 o'clock we continued to Moji at the neck of the inland Sea of Japan.

Tuesday, 13 January 1903

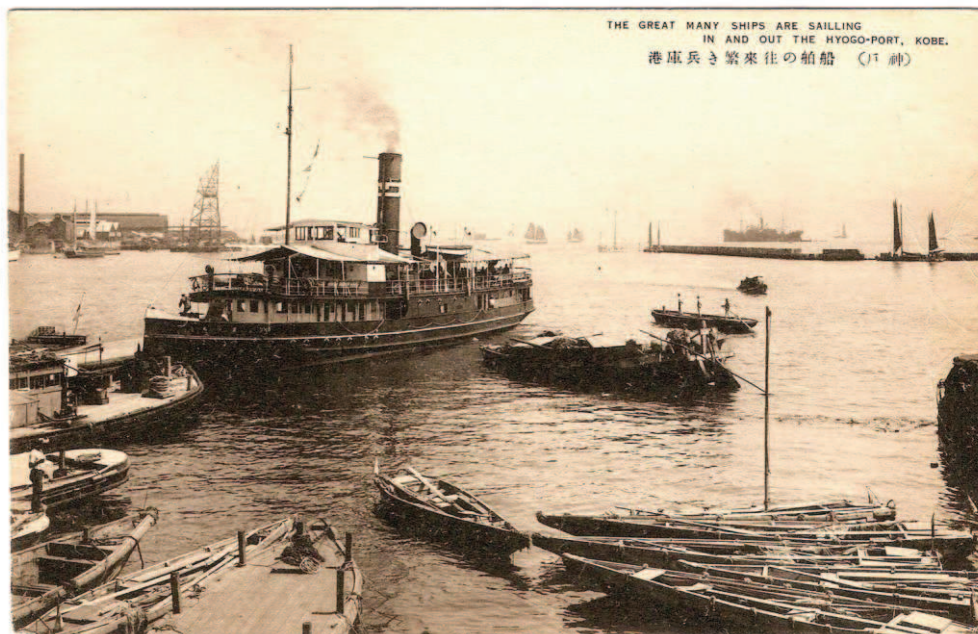
This morning arrived at **Moji** and remained a few hours. Now the very picturesque sail through the Inland Sea begins.



Moji

Wednesday, 14 January 1903

Arrived early in morning at **Kobe**.



Hyogo-port, Kobe

After breakfast George [Dillnutt] and I took train for **Osaka**, 20 miles distant, where we spent the day. First we went to the Government House and got a pass to the Castle. Going to the Castle carries us through a number of interesting streets (all very narrow). The interesting part of the Castle is the huge granite rocks of which it is built, some 40 by 10 by 7 ft. Also the great, wide moat filled with clear fresh water. Then the fine view from the highest rampart of the city, government arsenal and military barracks. We spent some time watching the training of recruits in the barracks grounds. A long rickshaw ride carries us to the Pagoda Temple and its extensive grounds. Before entering the gates we stopped at a sweet little Japanese rest house and

had some hot tea. Entering the Temple grounds (that look more on the order of Coney Island than a holy place) we pass by a huge copper bell. Then a stone chamber containing a well, the water to which is supplied by a little stream issuing from the mouth of a large stone tortoise. Names of the departed are written on a strip of bamboo thrown in the sacred well. This is supposed to act to the benefit of the departed spirits. The Pagoda is rich in dragon-carvings and is five stories high. Besides there are numerous other temples and shrines, but we got most fun buying little fishes and feeding them to a piggish stork. We then passed by the Exposition Grounds (to be opened in March) to Theatre Road. This street is entirely given up to theatres, side-shows, peep-shows, little circuses, waxworks, tea houses, fakirs, and in fact a regular Earl's Court Exhibition: of course all this life and fun and jabbering was great sport to us. We then rode down a long, narrow, straight street for some two or three miles to a Japanese hotel, where we enjoyed a good European dinner and took the 4.30 train for Kobe.

Thursday, 15 January 1903

10 o'clock today we sail for Yokohama. Weather good, but towards evening the sea kicked up a bit and gradually worse. I made a very short stay at dinner and retired immediately to my berth and remained there until the next morning. All through the night the ship strained and groaned. Now and then the propeller would lift out of the water and you felt as though you were being wrung by the neck.



Friday 16 January 1903

At 2 o'clock we arrived off the pier in **Yokohama**. We are staying at [the Grand Hotel](#).

Before dark we took a rickshaw ride through the city, going up theatre road and stopping at a tea house, where we squatted on the floor Japanese-fashion and were served green tea by a sweet little Japanese girl. There were Mr. and Mrs. Addis and myself. I should say they [= *the Japanese*] are unconventional. My rickshaw man turned round and shouted to us as he pointed to some large houses in a street, "H....r [= *Whore*] Shanties²⁹".

Mrs. Addis asked, "What did he say?" I answered: "The Post Office".³⁰

Sunday, 18 January 1903

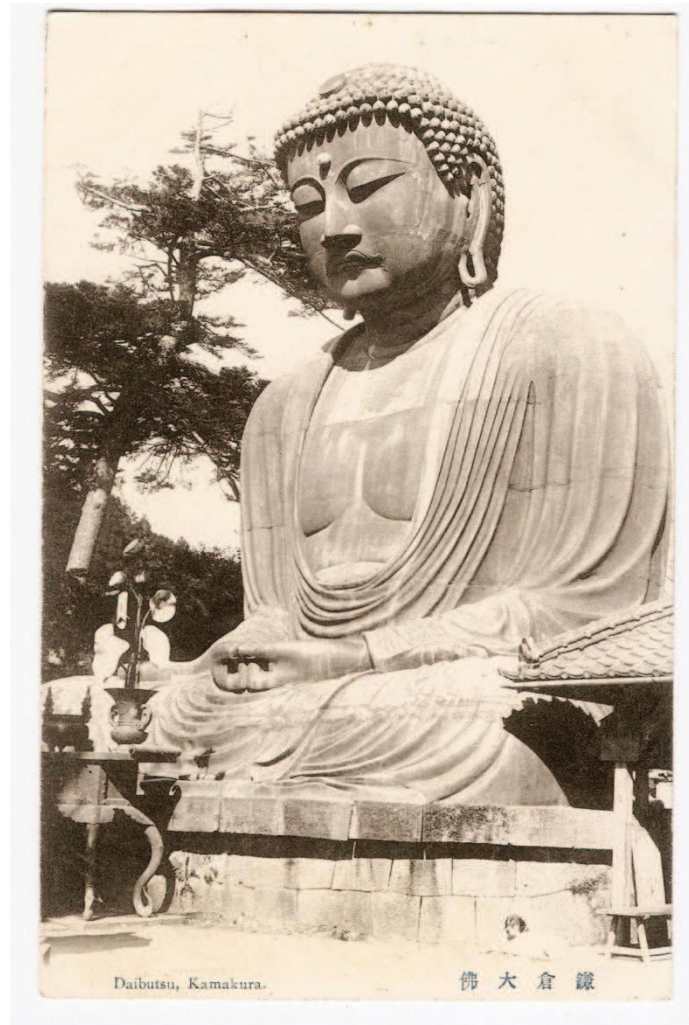
Turned out a lovely day, so I started early in the morning by train for **Kamakura**, about 18 miles distant. It is a small village, but the resort of great numbers of visitors and pilgrims on account of the great bronze Diabtsu [*Diabutsu* = *Big Buddha*] and the gorgeous temple of Hachiman in the vicinity. We visited both of these, taking a rickshaw for the city.



²⁹ In other words: *whorehouses* or *brothels*. The Dutch word for "whore" is "*hoer*" and would fit in perfectly here, but I guess Fred was not aware of that. He just did not want to be accused of using graphic language.

³⁰ Comment of an English friend: *I hope that Mrs. Addis did not return later to try to post a letter home ...*

The temple of Hachiman was the usual elaborate dragon wood carvings and overhanging roofs in red and black. Nearby is an old icho tree³¹ said to be 1000 years old. Two miles further on was the great bronze Diabutu [*Diabutsu* = *Big Buddha*], famous for both its tremendous size and the wonderful expression on the face. It is said to have been cast in 1252 A.D. and is 49½ feet in height and 97 feet in circumference. Inside there are a few small shrines. The different sections of the castings are welded together.



After a good lunch in a hotel nearby, we took a rickshaw ride of five miles around the edge of the bay and obtained a good view of Fujiyama.

³¹ Gingko Biloba



Monday, 19 January 1903

I received Will's cable telling me my father was dangerously ill and that Will was starting for Washington. The cable was dated 29th. Dec. [1902], so I immediately cabled for news.

At this point the series of 8 instalments in the The Talking Machine Review abruptly ended.

Thus a large part of the recording trip (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok and Rangoon) remained untold.

I was able to fill in some gaps because certain passages in “Music on Record” (by Fred Gaisberg) and in “A Voice in Time” (by Jerrold Northrop Moore) are verbatim transcripts of the original diaries.

For the coherence of the story I added a few excerpts, which are in fact later (by Gaisberg or Moore) re-written entries of the original diaries.

Wednesday, 21 January 1903

After passing two anxious days I received a reply that my father was dead³². I cannot put into words my feelings. Words are too cold to express my sorrow at losing my good, loving me and my family. The immense distance which separates me and my family places me in a trying position.

So far I have not received one letter giving details. The last letter received was forwarded from Calcutta and dated Wash. D.C. Nov. 29th 1902.

[from: *A Voice in Time*, p. 81]

With his death has gone one of the dearest wishes of my heart, I should have loved to lay my life and work at the feet of him who has sacrificed and struggled so much for my sake. To see him retired happy in our midst to spend his declining years was my cherished hope.

We had so often talked it over - our ideal: we both leaned towards the country, the cottage, the farm, the vines, and so, where we could live a simple, natural life.

My dear father, if we could only repay you for all you have suffered for us.

[from: *A Voice in Time*, p. 82]

It took a fortnight for the recording equipment to be released, then at last life began to creep forward. (A Voice in Time, p. 82)

Wednesday, 4 February 1903 [Tokyo]

We did our first work after a lapse of nearly 2 months. We made some 54 records. Japanese music is simply too horrible, but funny to relate, Europeans who have been long in the country profess to really enjoy it, and say that there is more in the music & acting than a casual observer would believe. . . .

³² According to the Health Office Record published in the Washington Post of 18 December 1902 **William (Wilhelm) Konrad Gaisberg** died on 17 December 1902 in Washington DC at the age of sixty-one. Apparently Will Gaisberg did not want to spring the bad news too abruptly on his brother Fred.

Thursday, 12 February 1903 [Tokyo]

Tokio: As to-day we had the afternoon free, we decided to go to the theatre, and from there to a Japanese eating-house. We paid 14 yen (\$7) for two boxes supposed to hold four each. This may be so when one squats down, Japanese fashion, but they can only accommodate two European chairs. If one wishes to visit the theatre here, one first goes to a neighbouring tea-house, in order to procure tickets and make arrangements for the supply of food during the long play, which usually lasts from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

During the long intervals between acts one can retire to the tea-house to rest. The stages are on a huge circular turret that revolves, so that while the front half is being used the back is being dressed. Then there is a long aisle, about 4 ft. wide, leading through the audience to the front of the house. This aisle is used for departures and returns from journeys. When using it the actor's footsteps are always accompanied by a wooden clapper to represent retiring or advancing footsteps. The costumes are all real and beautiful.

There are no women on the stage; all parts are taken by men and men made-up as women, who are in looks and action perfect counterparts of women. Until recently the men playing women's parts always dressed in women's clothes at home, only wearing men's clothes in the streets.

There is music all through the dialogue and three different bands are required, one for dancing, one for dialogues, and one for interpreting thoughts and emotions. The latter is done by a man chanting, accompanied by a *samisen*. The pathetic scenes are dragged out to fearful lengths in order to give the women in the audience plenty of chance to cry. The emotional acting is excellent. Where our stars saunter up and down the stage soliloquizing and wildly gesticulating, these actors calmly sit on their haunches and barely move even their jaws.

Often during a play, in order to fill in the entire day, they will interpose between the acts a one-act drama. We chanced to see one of these complete. The story was as follows: One powerful baron demanded of his ally the head of a certain prominent rebel. The ally was unwilling to do this as the rebel had at one time saved his life, and so to satisfy the angry baron a false head was sent. The rebel's son, a lad of twelve, happened to be held as a hostage by the baron when the head arrived. A touching scene had already been enacted where they tried to induce the son to commit suicide in order to escape a degrading death at the hands of the executioner.

The son, seeing the head and knowing that if the baron could be convinced that it was the head of his father the latter would be saved, rushed forward and cried, "*Since my father is dead I no longer care to live,*" and then fell upon

the point of his sword.

The Japanese use a posture dance to describe certain events, such as a battle. We next went to a fine restaurant for dinner. We had enormous appetites.

We took off our boots and went to a pretty little room and sat on the floor.

A little charcoal fire in a brazier was brought in. The first course was green tea and cake. Then a tray was brought, containing a bowl of fish and

vegetables and pieces of raw fish, little raw minnows, fish hash, seaweed and croquettes of game, as well as chestnuts and apple-sauce. Besides this there

was a small cup of red salty sauce, in which you are supposed to dip everything. The next course was a beautiful fried fish garnished with plums.

Then a sort of custard fish-chowder, *saki* and lager beer.

To fill up, a large bowl of rice. We could not eat three mouthfuls, and so after all this grand spread we had to order a few European sandwiches.

During the dinner four geisha girls sang and danced for us and amused us generally. A geisha is assigned to each guest, and she literally feeds him and

adds generally to the conviviality. Although these geishas are ladies after a fashion and cannot be approached too boldly, when I went to the toilet I was

followed by two of them, each with a small dipper full of water ready to pour over my hands to wash them.

[from: *Music on Record*, pp. 60-61]

Friday, 13 February 1903 [Tokyo]

I am beginning to like their music a little. Today we had a [geisha band](#)³³, and to see these little women with big European band instruments was the

funniest thing imaginable. This band played on both Japanese and European instruments. I made a photograph of them.

We also had some male singers who are favourites of the Emperor.

In fact, they are the interpreters of the only class of music he likes.

They do a kind of impassioned declaiming, using the full power of the voice and going from the lowest pitch of their voice to the highest. The volume

they produce is tremendous, and before starting they wrap with many turns a broad band tightly around the abdomen. They use no accompaniment. To

me it sounded like a donkey braying.

Over half of the artists we have had are blind men. The blind all seem to go in for singing and performing on musical instruments.

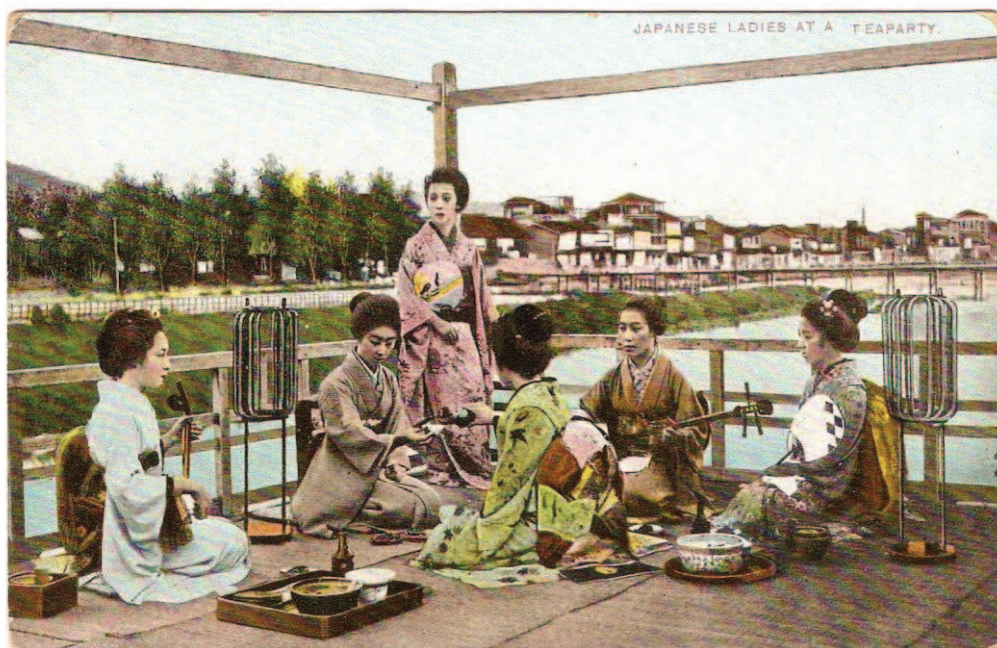
They play the *koto* - a large, flat, harp-sounding instrument - and the [samisen \(banjo played with a large piece of ivory\)](#) particularly well.

The fees we paid ranged from 10 yen (\$5) to 60 yen (\$30) a session, per artist. The last figure we only paid to one artist, 40 yen being our usual top price.

³³ Matrix numbers: E 1468-1476 (7'') and E 394-398 (10'').



13278 (matrix no. E1467)



Two samisen-playing Japanese ladies at a tea (or saki?) party

We always have tea and cakes in the afternoon, and even the most dignified artist, if he doesn't want to eat the cake at the time, will wrap it up in some of the crêpe paper they always carry and take it home. It is always the custom when giving a dinner to wrap up in a piece of paper or a box all the food your guest cannot eat and hand it to him. Or if your guest has accepted the

invitation to dine and at the last moment is prevented from coming, you wrap his portion up and send it to his home.

[from: *Music on Record*, p. 61]

Saturday, 28 February 1903 [Tokyo]

We made records of the Imperial Household Band. The orchestra was composed of 12 men and their music was weird & fascinating indeed. They had one *koto* (harp-like instrument), one *beiwa*³⁴ (guitar-like instrument), two instruments looking like a very miniature *church organ* (blown by the mouth continuously)³⁵, 2 reed instruments about 4 inches long sounding like an oboe, two flutes of bamboo wood, one large drum suspended on a standard, one small drum. . . , one cymbal or small gong. Though they played some 10 pieces it was impossible to distinguish one tune from another.

...

[March 1903, Shanghai]

A first visit to a Chinese city is so novel and the appearances so unlike any city one has ever before seen that one is amazed.

He cannot believe those narrow lanes - scarcely 5 ft wide - are main streets and thoroughfares and not alleys: roofs nearly touching each other and nearly excluding the daylight, artisans working right in the roadway, no means of transit except to walk or a palakin [= *palanquin*³⁶] carried by two coolies. . . dense crowds of busy men, crying coolies bumping into you with their long poles, sickening beggars holding before you horrible deformities, vile smells of every rottenness from refuse-heaps in the road or a filthy sewer.

...

We then went to the largest temple in the town. Arranged around the court were some 100 gods, one god for each year in 100 years. I bought an offering of some silvered paper & burnt it in front of God 31 (my age) and made a wish. . . .³⁷

[from: *A Voice in Time*, pp. 82-83]

Monday, 16 March 1903 [Shanghai]

We have made arrangements with a George Jailing (or his Chinese name Shing Chong, of Honan Road) a comprador ("go-between") to arrange with

³⁴ Beiwa or biwa

³⁵ A *sho* (a kind of mouth organ consisting of long bamboo pipes of different lengths).

³⁶ A palanquin is a covered litter for one person in India and the East, carried usually by two, four or six man.

³⁷ This refers to his 31st year (note in *A Voice in Time*). Fred was born on 1 January 1873.

artists.

Tuesday, 17 March 1903 [Shanghai]

We secure a room in a Chinese hotel run on the European plan (that is, only European *chow* is furnished). The Chinaman is very fond of Western eating and in Foochow Road are a great number of European restaurants. By accident I happened to wander into the kitchen and the dirt and smells which greeted me put me off ever attempting to have meals there.

Wednesday, 18 March 1903 [Shanghai]

We made our first records. About 15 Chinamen had come, including the band to accompany. As a Chinaman yells at the top of his power when he sings, he can only sing two songs an evening - then his throat is hoarse. Their idea of music is a tremendous clash and bang. With the assistance of a drum, three pairs of huge gongs, a pair of slappers, a sort of banjo³⁸, a squacky [= *squeaky*] fiddle of bamboo³⁹ & some bagpipe-sounding instruments⁴⁰, besides the yelling of the singer, their idea of music was recorded on the Gramophone.



Nanking Road, Shanghai

³⁸ *Yüch ch'in* or *yueqin*.

³⁹ *Hu ch'in* or a type of *hu ch'in* (*erh-hu* (*erhu*), *banhu*, *zhonghu*, *jinghu*, *zhuihu*, *gaohu* or *sanxian*)

⁴⁰ Possibly instruments like (1) the *sona* or *souna* (shawn, oboe-like) or (2) the *sheng* or *lushon* (mouth organ consisting of long bamboo pipes of different lengths).

On the first day, after making ten records we had to stop: the din had so paralysed my wits that I could not think.

[from: *Music on Record*, pp. 63]

Up to the 27th March we made 325 records, for which we paid \$4 each . . . and there was not sufficient difference between any two to describe.

[from: *Music on Record*, pp. 63]

Days were lost waiting for the **Chusan** to take them back to Hong Kong.

[from: *A Voice in Time*, pp 83]

Thursday, 23 April 1903 [Hong Kong]

We made some 35 records. The artists were of a lower grade & dirtier than those in Shanghai, and their songs not nearly so interesting.

Friday, 24 April 1903 [Hong Kong]

We made 45 records

Saturday, 25 April 1903 [Hong Kong]

We made 45 records.

Sunday, 26 April 1903 [Hong Kong]

We made 20 records before 12 o'clock and by 3 o'clock had packed our boxes and soldered the tins and were ready to decamp.

[from: *A Voice in Time*, pp. 83-84]

Subsequently they travelled from Hong Kong to **Singapore** where Malay, Javanese and Dutch repertoire was recorded. Over 200 recordings were made.

Afterwards George Dillnutt returned to England, while Fred Gaisberg travelled on to Siam (present-day Thailand).

Monday, 1 June 1903 [arrival Bangkok]

I unloaded my outfit off the [SS] **Korat**. I had literally to do it myself.

Set up plant.

[from: *A Voice in Time*, pp. 84]

Fred Gaisberg then went back to **Singapore** to find a ship that would take them to the

last city on the recording programme, Rangoon.

Thursday, 18 June 1903 [at sea]

We sailed at daylight. . . . We are catching the first of the Monsoon weather. We are the only cabin passengers. . . .

Saturday, 20 June 1903 [at sea]

Last night we ran into a particularly bad squall. One man was lost overboard. All day very rough.

[from: *A Voice in Time*, pp. 84]

From Singapore to **Rangoon**: four days of recording [June 1903].

To give the reader an idea of the Shanghai-Hong Kong-Singapore-Bangkok-Rangoon stage of this recording expedition I reproduce here an excerpt from Gaisberg's autobiography "*Music on Record*", which roughly covers the "unpublished diary" period of March-June 1903.

To me the differences between the tunes of any two records were too slight to detect. On one occasion a dirty beggar was singing a lamentation and a visitor (Captain Daniels of the S.S. Chusan) asked our comprador if it wasn't a love song. The reply was, "No, he is singing about his grandmother."

As with the Japanese, there is no romance or love sentiment. Their pathetic or sentimental songs would be about the death of a parent or grandparent or some other ancestor, or perhaps of a son.

*Our hotel in **Shanghai** was on a street generally used by funeral and wedding processions, and almost every day two or three would pass by, clashing cymbals and playing pipes. The two are very nearly similar, except that with a funeral white is the predominating colour for the mourners and the coffin, whereas in a wedding procession the gaudy palanquin containing the bride is the characteristic feature. The funeral procession of a mandarin which we saw one day was a grand affair. In line were Chinese mounted soldiers, banner- and umbrella-bearers, a long line of offerings comprising three or four pigs roasted whole, a number of roasted lambs, sheep and kids, as well as fruit. prepared dishes and flowers.*

The coffin was borne by ten stalwart porters followed by the son of the deceased behind a square white screen. As I watched from a window above I could look over and see the son dressed in common white cloth, walking barefoot. He was sobbing with violent grief, and supported on either side by two friends. The rest of the mourners followed in carriages, palanquins and rickshaws. Often professional mourners were employed whose business it was to cry and rave in a most pathetic way during the whole progress of the funeral.

*In **Hong Kong** I again set up my equipment in a Chinese hotel and recorded another 200 songs. This time the artists were principally tea-house girls. Their bound feet made it impossible for them to walk, so they were carried to our improvised studio on the shoulders of*

giant coolies. These girls were lacquered and painted and dressed in embroidered silks, and looked like expensive doll-babies. I have reason to remember their long, coloured finger-nails. Their voices have the sound of a small wailing cat, and while I was attempting to push one singer closer to the horn she turned on me like a viper. At the same time the big coolies also attacked me. Evidently I, as a foreigner, in touching the lady had committed a *faux pas*. After that I was more discreet in dealing with the tea-house girls.

Outside the Treaty Ports, the gramophone never achieved in China the vogue it enjoyed in Japan. Among the Chinese of America, the Malay States and Australia, however, there was a large sale of records, proving that it was largely a question of affluence and accessibility. No one doubts that the Chinese are a musical race. In my native city of Washington on a Sunday one could not pass any of the numerous Chinese laundries without hearing Wu Lee singing to his friends.

After a visit to **Canton** I continued my pilgrimage to **Bangkok, Singapore and Rangoon**, recording a large assortment of Siamese, Javanese, Malay and Burmese gramophone records for the first time in history. Only the recording I carried out in Burma lingers in my memory. There was a charm about the people, the country and its music that made a strong appeal to me. Compared to the anaemic music of India it had vigour and colour.

These bright people have an entertainment called a **zat**. The basis of the drama, which is interspersed with songs and ballet, is the age-old story of a prince and princess. About forty players, mostly young and pretty girls, take part, dressed in bright, costly gowns. The acting consists of exaggerated poses and postures.

Poe Sein was the most popular actor and he always took the role of an heroic prince. His opera company travelled up and down the Irrawaddy River in their own barge and paddle-steamer, something like the show-boat troupes of the Mississippi.

The boats are used for transport and living quarters only, however, as the performance takes place in the village theatre or in the open air. It starts at 9 p.m. and goes on all night. The band is composed of bells with mellow-sounding scales, and of percussion instruments consisting of pieces of bamboo struck with a hammer. Complete **zats** of forty records formed a very profitable part of my programme of Burmese recording.

Everywhere the invention aroused the greatest interest.

The native and European press interviewed us and printed many columns about this amazing expedition. In my spare time I gave dozens of gramophone recitals to audiences who heard recorded sound for the first time. My selection of European records was worn to the bone before I returned to London in the autumn of 1903.

On several occasions my path crossed those of the Bandmann and Brough travelling theatrical companies and I learned to appreciate the great boon and blessing these lifelines brought to England's exiled sons and daughters. I often wondered why a Minister of Fine Arts did not have a stroke of genius and acquire immortal fame by subsidizing these hard-put wandering minstrels who do so much to keep the home ties unbroken.

[from: *Music on Record*, pp. 63-64]

At **Aden** Gaisberg boarded the SS Oceana (Australian), which took him back to England.

He arrives at Victoria Station on 5 August 1903 . . .

CITY	COUNTRY	DATE	TRANSPORT		RECORDINGS
London (Liverpool Street Station)	ENGLAND	28 Sep 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Gibraltar			SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Marseilles	FRANCE	3 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Marseilles →	FRANCE	4 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Bonifacio Straits	ITALY	5 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Stromboli – Straits of Messina	ITALY	6 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Port Said	EGYPT	11 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Port Said – Suez – Red Sea	EGYPT	11-15 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Aden	ARABIA	15 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Colombo	CEYLON	22 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
		24 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
	INDIA	27 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Calcutta	INDIA	28 Oct 1902	SS 'COROMANDEL'		
Calcutta	INDIA	29 Oct 1902			
Calcutta → Kali Ghat	INDIA	30 Oct 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	31 Oct 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	1 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	5 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	6 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	7 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	8 Nov 1902		◆	
Calcutta	INDIA	9 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	10 Nov 1902		◆	
Calcutta	INDIA	11 Nov 1902		◆	
Calcutta	INDIA	12 Nov 1902		◆	
Calcutta	INDIA	13 Nov 1902		◆	
Calcutta	INDIA	14 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	15 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	16 Nov 1902		◆	
Calcutta	INDIA	17 Nov 1902			

Calcutta	INDIA	18 Nov 1902		◆	
Calcutta	INDIA	19 Nov 1902			
Calcutta	INDIA	27 Nov 1902			
Calcutta → Darjeeling	INDIA	6 Dec 1902			
Darjeeling	INDIA	8 Dec 1902			
Darjeeling → Calcutta	INDIA	9 Dec 1902			
Calcutta →		11 Dec 1902	SS 'JAPAN'		
		13 Dec 1902	SS 'JAPAN'		
→ Bay of Bengal →		14 Dec 1902	SS 'JAPAN'		
		16 Dec 1902	SS 'JAPAN'		
Colombo	CEYLON	17 Dec 1902	SS 'JAPAN'		
Colombo	CEYLON	18 Dec 1902			
→ Kandy	CEYLON	19 Dec 1902	train		
Kandy → Colombo	CEYLON	20 Dec 1902	train		
Colombo	CEYLON	21 Dec 1902	departure delayed		
Colombo →	CEYLON	22 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
		23 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
		24 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
		25 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
Penang →	STRAITS SETTLEMENTS	26 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
→ Passed through Straits between Sumatra and Malay Peninsula →		27 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
Singapore	STRAITS SETTLEMENTS	28 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
at sea → Hong Kong		29 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
at sea		31 Dec 1902	SS 'CHUSAN'		
Hong Kong → Kowloon → Hong Kong	CHINA	3 Jan 1903	SS 'CHUSAN'		
Hong Kong → Shanghai		4 Jan 1903			
→ Formosa channel →		5 Jan 1903			
Shanghai	CHINA	7 Jan 1903			
Shanghai	CHINA	8 Jan 1903			
Shanghai →	CHINA	9 Jan 1903	SS "KOBE MARU"		
Nagasaki → Moji	JAPAN	12 Jan 1903	SS "KOBE MARU"		
Moji → Kobe	JAPAN	13 Jan 1903	SS "KOBE MARU"		
Kobe → Osaka → Kobe	JAPAN	14 Jan 1903	train		

→ Yokohama	JAPAN	15 Jan 1903	SS "KOBE MARU"		
Yokohama	JAPAN	16 Jan 1903	SS "KOBE MARU"		
Yokohama → Kamakura	JAPAN	18 Jan 1903	train		
Tokyo	JAPAN	19 Jan 1903			
Tokyo	JAPAN	21 Jan 1903			
Tokyo	JAPAN	4 Feb 1903			
Tokyo	JAPAN	12 Feb 1903			
Tokyo	JAPAN	13 Feb 1903		◆	E1465-1476 (7") E394-398 (10")
Tokyo	JAPAN	28 Feb 1903			
→ Kobe	JAPAN		train		
	FORMOSA	2 Mar 1903			
Shanghai	CHINA	16 Mar 1903			
Shanghai	CHINA	17 Mar 1903			
Shanghai	CHINA	18 Mar 1903		◆	E1503-1504
Shanghai	CHINA	27 Mar 1903			
				
Hong Kong	CHINA	23 Apr 1903		◆	35 record(ing)s
Hong Kong	CHINA	24 Apr 1903		◆	45 record(ing)s
Hong Kong	CHINA	25 Apr 1903		◆	45 record(ing)s
Hong Kong	CHINA	26 Apr 1903		◆	20 record(ing)s
Canton	CHINA				
Singapore ⁴¹	STRAITS SETTLEMENTS	Mid-May – ca. 20 May 1903			
Singapore (a) → Bangkok	STRAITS SETTLEMENTS	May 1903	SS 'KORAT' (Fred Gaisberg)		
Singapore (b) → London	STRAITS SETTLEMENTS	30 May 1903	SS 'BENGAL' (George Dillnutt)		
Bangkok	SIAM	1 June 1903	SS 'KORAT'		
Bangkok	SIAM	June 1903			
Bangkok	SIAM	June 1903			
Bangkok	SIAM	June 1903			

⁴¹ After the Singapore recording session George Dillnutt was recalled back to England. On 30 May 1903 **G. Dillnot** (sic) boarded the SS 'BENGAL' bound for London (source: *The Straits Times* of 29 May 1903).

Singapore	STRAITS SETTLEMENTS	June 1903			
		18 June 1903			
		20 June 1903			
Rangoon	BIRMA	June 1903	SS '.....'		
Rangoon	BIRMA	June 1903			
Rangoon	BIRMA	June 1903			
Rangoon	BIRMA	June 1903			
Rangoon →	BIRMA	June 1903			
Calcutta	INDIA	June 1903	SS '.....'		
Delhi	INDIA	June 1903	SS '.....'		
Bombay	INDIA	June 1903	SS '.....'		
Aden		June 1903	SS 'OCEANA'		
Marseilles	FRANCE	1903	SS 'OCEANA'		
	ENGLAND	Aug 1903	SS 'OCEANA'		
→ London (Victoria Station)	ENGLAND	5 Aug 1903	train		

CITY	COUNTRY	DATE	TRANSPORT		RECORDINGS
Hong Kong	CHINA	23 Apr 1903		◆	35 record(ing)s
Bangkok	SIAM	June 1903		◆	4 days' work yielded a hundred record(ing)s
Tokyo	JAPAN	13 Feb 1903		◆	E1465-1476 (7") E394-398 (10")

- A coloured horizontal row indicates that recordings were made at that specific location. However, exact recording dates are not (yet) available.
- The symbol “◆” indicates that an exact recording session date is available.
- In a number of cases a recording date can even be linked to a total number unspecified recordings made that day, like so: *4 days' work yielded a hundred record(ing)s*.
- Sometimes we can link specific recording dates to specific recordings.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The following illustrations are from my private collection:

- Old postcards
- Record label of 7" Japanese record

Other illustrations were “kindly borrowed” from other sources.

- Picture of George Walter Dillnutt (from Richard Davies , archivist of Leeds Russian Archive, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, England).
- Picture of Nautch girls from an undated (ca. 1899/1900) Gramophone Company catalogue (“*Gramophone Record Catalogue*”; *His Master’s Voice*) in the British Library.
- Picture of SS “Coromandel” from website “Shipping Times”.
- Picture of Gauharjan from “A Voice in Time”.
- Picture of Kali Ghat (Calcutta) from
- Picture of Great Eastern Hotel (Calcutta) from www.craigcamera.com

For **further relevant information** on persons involved in the recording and reproducing sound see the website:

www.recordingpioneers.com

To get optimum & maximum results you are advised to use our newly-installed **SEARCH** function