OUDEYPORE, THE CITY OF THE SUNRISE.

BY EDWIN LORD WEEKS.

I.

THE little station at Chitor, asleep in the noonday glare, seemed more akin to a caravansary in the desert than to the noisy and bustling railway centres further up the line. Only the station-master, whom it is correct to address as baboo, whether he may have any right to that title or not, and whose brown, spectacled visage was surmounted by a black velvet cap, the telegraph clerk, clad in a long white cotton garment, and the sepoy on guard at the freight-house, were present at our arrival. Across the railway track, which still rang with the reverberation of the departed train, arose, some distance away, a long wooded and bushy ridge, crowned with the level line of gray walls and towers of Chitor, the ancient capital of Meywar. The slender silhouettes of the two Towers of Victory, which alone rose above the level sky-line, were so far off that one could only divine their exquisite sculpture by the irregularity of their outlines.

From the platform of the station only three other buildings were visible in all the vast and undulating half-desert landscape which stretches away westward to the line of purple hills in the direction of Oudeypore, seventy-two miles away. I had expected to find a letter or telegram from that city, with some information as to means of conveyance, not having then learned that telegrams or other messages had to be sent by "dâk post," or by special runners, in the absence of either telegraph or railway connecting the Rajpootana-Malwa line with the remote capital. The baboo in charge of the station said that nothing had been received; and having directed Motee to find some coolies and follow on with the luggage convoy, I wandered off along the sandy track in the direction of the dâk bungalow, the last of the three buildings seen from the platform. Although it was the middle of January, the noonday sun, slightly veiled by haze, and with the addition of the reflected glare from the sandy and weedy waste about us, already began to be somewhat oppressive. The question of transport was speedily solved by meeting half-way to the bungalow an old and battered victoria, with a pair of brisk horses, a turbaned driver, and "syce." Upon the arrival of Motee with the coolies they deposited the luggage by the road-side, and we plunged at once into an animated discussion with the driver as to price and other preliminaries, for, as I had supposed, the conveyance belonged to the Maharana of Oudeypore. Just as we had come to an understanding about the price, the opportune arrival of the postmaster with a telegram (brought by a runner), to the effect that the carriage had been sent for us, and that there was nothing to pay, settled the matter at once. An elaborate "tiffin" is not to be had in a dâk bungalow at short notice, and we were only too glad to find the usual bill of fare, "sudden death" (which title refers to the untimely end of the chicken which had been alive when we reached the house), bread, potatoes, and jam, with whiskey and tepid soda. When the horses had been fed, and the baggage piled into the vehicle and corded together, leaving barely space on the back seat to accommodate the writer and the tiffin-basket, we drove briskly off in the teeth of a strong south wind and in the glare of the afternoon sun, over rolling uplands, toward the hazy line of far-off hills. There were spots of rich cultivation at intervals, with clumps of wild date-palms, and dense, wide-spreading banyans, sheltering the rare villages and way-side shrines; either a tank or a pool of water at these oases invariably reflected a patch of amber-tinted western sky beyond the dark trees. At each village we changed horses, which gave one an opportunity of walking on in advance—always a relief after the cramped confinement of the carriage.

Groups of camels which were browsing among the sparse undergrowth by the road-side ambled clumsily away at our approach, and we often met whole families of villagers toiling along the dusty track in tented bullock carts.

Somewhere along the road the mail-carrier, that mediæval ancestor of the modern postman, met us on his way from Oudeypore. He carried his small letter-bag suspended from a lacquered stick, on the end of which hung a little cluster of bells, and he was preceded by his protector, a wiry youth, armed with a drawn

mutiny of 1857. When I made my last visit to the island in order to finish a sketch, my wish to see it as a spectacular background was realized, although the performance did not take place in the great inner court. On one side of the landing there is an extensive area of pavement, one corner of which is filled by a group of great trees and a tangled thicket of bananas, separated from the platform by a low stone lattice; a temple-

BOY DECORATING IDOL WITH FLOWERS.

like edifice, with sculptured columns supporting a low flat roof, stands on the extreme verge, and between the columns there is a view of the shining water and the wooded hills beyond. One of the great state barges, with high bow and poop, like the old Greek galleys, was anchored at the steps, surrounded by a fleet of smaller craft, and the passengers—a crowd of holiday-making women and children from the great palace across the water, accompanied by their male attendants and servants—were all seated on the pavement. A long shaft of sunlight streamed through the open gateway of a garden behind, falling upon the sitting groups, kindling into vivid scarlet the prevailing reds of their costumes, touching the flashing ornaments and the rare spots of white, until it resembled nothing so much as a glowing parterre of geraniums. When, by a common impulse, they all rose and moved towards the boats, there was an indescribable tumult of color, which seemed to culminate when the great barges floated slowly out, crowded with their scarlet and crimson freight, all in the shadow of the tall trees, into the long white reflections, shot across with azure and violet from the sky, and beyond rose the palace walls and hanging gardens of the white city.

V.

No better spot could be found than this city in which to observe the ways of high-caste native life. As I remember the resplendent personages who came to make brief visits of ceremony or to pay their respects to some passing notability of official or diplomatic rank, the glittering bravery of their attire, and the elaborate trappings of their horses, the inimitable twist of their blue black beards, and the deferential grace of their "salaams," carefully graded to the correct degree, the melancholy truth is borne in upon me that the "dude" of Western descent is, after all, but a crude and unfinished production. When arrayed in his court dress, and mounted on his horse caparisoned with corresponding splendor, the Rajpoot noble is decorative to a dazzling degree. One toilet which I had the opportunity of studying in detail might be termed a "symphony" in white, relieved by color sparingly used, and by the sparkle of gems. The wearer of this costume, who appeared thus attired on state occasions only, was a young man of twenty, and sat his horse like a white statue. A long-skirted tunic or frock of white muslin, close fitting white trousers, and a rose-colored turban with a broad band of gold lace and tall flashing plume of dark heron feathers and gold filigree were the salient points. Other accessories were the sword-belt, crossing his breast and encircling his waist, of dark green velvet, richly worked with unalloyed gold, and thickly studded with emeralds, rubies, and brilliants; a transparent yellow shield of rhinoceros hide, with knobs of black and gold enamel; a sash of stiff gold lace, with a crimson thread running

ON THE ISLAND OF JUG MUNDER—AT THE LANDING.

through the gold; bracelets of the dainty workmanship known as Jeypore enamel thickly jewelled, which he wore on his wrists and arms; and there were strings of dull, uncut stones about his neck. The skirts of his tunic were pleated with many folds, and stood stiffly out, like the skirts of a "première danseuse" in the ballet; and when he mounted his horse a servant on each side held them so that they might not be crushed. Four valets had charge of this costume, and it took them some little time to array their master. The trappings of the horse were scarcely less elaborate; his neck was covered on one side with silver plates, and his mane, which hung on the other side, was braided, and lengthened by black fringes relieved by silver ornaments. White yaks' tails hung from beneath the embroidered saddle cover on both sides; and his head, encased in a headstall of white enamelled leather and silver, topped with tall aigrettes, was tied down by an embroidered scarf in order to give his neck the requisite curve.

The every-day dress of this gentleman was far more quiet in tone; but he seldom appeared twice in the same turban, which was of quite a different shape from that worn with the state costume, being small and closely folded, and it constantly varied in color.

One of the most striking and characteristic faces belonged to an officer of high rank who called at the Residency in the company of the Maharana's brother, and it may be described as typifying, like a composite photograph, the higher Rajpoot race. This face, when seen in profile, closely resembled the type of the Assyrian warriors and courtiers on the bass reliefs of Nineveh; there was the same straight line of the forehead and nose, and the long narrow eye, with full projecting eyeball, which appears in the bass-reliefs to be

THE MAHARANA.