

My Friend the Prince

Tracy Mathewson, Yankee Photographer, Tells How His Highness of Wales Broke All the Rules to Get Him Past the Flunkies, the Cameras and All.



The Yankee camera man had to pass this giant sentry to get inside the yard.

BY TRACY MATHEWSON.

SOME years ago I was shipmate with a half-cast Guatemalan on a tramp steamer plying between Rio de Janeiro and Charleston, S. C. He was the unsightliest human being I ever saw outside of one blue-gummed negro from Mineral Wells, Tex. He was covered from head to foot with grime and clinkers and his nose had been mashed in with a marlinpike. They called him the prince, because, I presume, that's the last thing you'd ever mistake him for.

But such as he was, he was the only prince I had ever met, before I was brought in contact, professionally, with the prince of Wales when he was on his Canadian tour year before last. I may be excused therefore, if in my latest meeting with the prince in London, I showed an ignorance of what princes were supposed to do and say. I am quite sure that nothing I had ever read and nothing I had learned from my friend, Prince Luis de Perez, the Guatemalan deckhand, prepared me for the sort of person the prince of Wales turned out to be.

As I have already stated, my relations with the prince on his Canadian trip were strictly professional. He asked me once if it would be possible to show him the motion pictures I was making of him before I shipped them to New York. I made arrangements to do this. We rigged up a projecting room on the prince's private car and while the pictures were being shown the prince asked me to sit by him. He asked me lots of questions about the technical phases of moving picture work and seemed very much interested.

However, I had no reason to believe that I had caught his imagination or fixed myself in his memory.

Real Yankee Flippancy.

A few weeks ago I went to London to make some commercial pictures. I was strolling along Piccadilly a couple of days following my arrival when I met Mr. Gilbert Nigel, a government official who had been one of the prince's squires on his Canadian trip. After we had talked for a few minutes he asked me:

"Does the prince know you're in town?"

I thought that this was merely an eruption of British humor.

"No," I answered. "The prince has been remarkably unenthusiastic about my presence in London."

I thought no more about it until the next day at noon, when I found a note at the Piccadilly hotel, where I was staying, directing me to call Regent 1414. I'll never forget that number. I had the girl "put me through," as we London bloods say, and was surprised to get my number in less than five minutes. It usually takes 15 in London.

"What place is this?" I asked.

"St. James' palace," came the answer.

The name had a familiar ring, but I was pre-occupied with the idea that some roughneck friend of mine had learned I was in town and was trying to get me. I guess I must have thought that St. James' palace was a moving picture theater or some two-bit hotel with a kiffatin' name.

"Well, is there anybody there wants to talk to Tracy Mathewson?"

There was a long silence. After a while a man's voice was heard.

It was Sir Godfrey Thomas, the prince of Wales' private secretary.

"The prince," he said, "would like to see you tomorrow afternoon at 5 o'clock, if it's convenient. But don't bring your camera. No cinema man has ever been inside the palace."

At 5 o'clock the next day I was outside the walls of the palace wondering where the front gate was. There were two soldiers wearing fur hats—shakes. I think you call them—

who stood around with their legs apart and looked at me coldly. I was wondering what to do next when a grocery wagon came along and the gates swung open. I followed it in. One of the porters, soldiers, guards, gendarmes or whatever they were called, stepped up and wanted to know my business.



Tracy Mathewson, the American photographer who made moving pictures in St. James palace for the first time in history.

"With this chewing wax in my mouth," said the prince, "I feel like a regular guy."

"That's all right, buddy," I said. "I've got a date with the prince."

He immediately stepped back and I walked up a flight of steps and rang the nearest bell. The door flew open and there stood my old friend—I forget what his name is—who was the prince's chief attendant and cocktail shaker in Canada. He was all dressed up like a taxi starter at the Hotel Biltmore, but I recognized him and held out my hand. He looked all around nervously, but not seeing anybody grabbed my hand and shook it heartily.

"They're expecting you," he said. He led me into a big room to the right of the entrance hall, where I found Sir Godfrey Thomas. In the adjoining room I saw Admiral Halsey, the head of the prince's household, and we swapped a few stories before Sir Godfrey told me the prince was ready to see me.

I walked up a long flight of stairs and turning to the left entered a spacious room with a very high ceiling. The prince was seated at a desk at the far end, but as soon as I came in he got up and walked toward me with his hand outstretched.

"I am certainly glad to see you," he said. "How long have you been in London?"

I told him.

"I'm sorry you couldn't have been here a few weeks ago for the steeplechase. We had a jolly time. Let me show you some of the pictures."

The pictures were of the guards' race in which the prince came out the winner, the others falling by the way. "These pictures are not very good," he said. "I'm sure if you had been here, you would have got better ones."

I tried to express my professional appreciation, but didn't say anything of interest.

"I want you to make a picture of my sister, the Princess Mary," said the prince, and the photograph shown above, which was taken at Epsom Downs on Derby day, was the result. From left to right the figures shown in the picture are: Admiral Halsey, the head of the prince's household; the prince of Wales, the Princess Mary, the duke of York and Prince Albert.

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The king of England just after hearing an American joke.

The prince then started asking me about the United States. He inquired if I had ever seen again that pretty girl that had ridden with the party a short distance through Ontario. He wanted to know how my dog, Boots, was getting on and how George Doran, my assistant, was. He regretted very much, he said, that he had been unable to "do the States" properly.

"You should come back, your highness," I said, "and go through the west and the south."

"I plan to do so," answered the prince.

"Well, if you do," I said, "I've got a little house down in Atlanta, Ga., and I'd certainly be glad for you to pay me a visit."

"Why, I wouldn't think of going to the States without calling on you," he replied. At that moment I happened to think of Luis de Perez, not to mention Willie Elias, Cal Rountree and a few other friends of mine back in Hawley's gulley, Most street and a few other places. I wondered what they would think of that.

A Coveted Privilege Granted.

Seeing the prince was in such a good humor I asked him if it wouldn't be possible for me to make some motion pictures of him inside the palace.

"Sure," he answered. "Any time you're passing here drop in and make them."

As I didn't quite feel up to dropping in on the prince as I would drop in on Romy Marie, I asked for a special engagement. He told me to see Sir Godfrey and fix it up for two days later. As I was about to go he suggested that if I would bring one of those volumes of photographs, "The Prince of Wales' Own Book," with me when I returned he would autograph it. All in all we talked for about 25 minutes and he had planned on seeing me only five. By this I don't mean that I displayed such brilliant mental qualities and such persuasive charm of manner that he couldn't bear to have me go. As a matter of fact he did most of the talking and the conversation was largely about America. I think he was too careful of my feelings to rush me off abruptly.

I spoke to Sir Godfrey as I went out. He was greatly surprised that the prince had consented to allow pictures to be made in the palace.

"It will be the first time a cinema man was ever in this palace," he said.

The next morning I went to Southampton and after completing some work I sent my equipment back to London and started to ride through the country to Epsom Downs to see the Derby, or as we blooming British folks would say, the "Derby." I had no idea of making pictures of any sort. It was the merest accident that I happened to have a small still camera containing one plate.

When I got to Epsom Downs the air was thick with mist and the skies were dark. I pushed my way out on the track to take a look around and some track guards, seeing my camera, started to push me back. Just about that time someone stepped through the crowd and grabbed me by the arm. It was the prince.

"How are you this time?" he said. "I'm a bit rushed," I said.

He laughed. By that time the gang had fallen back and left me alone. "Come over here," he said. "I'd like you to make a picture of my sister, the Princess Mary."

I had only one plate. It was a dark day—but there was nothing else for me to do. I saw him go over and speak to the princess, who was standing with Admiral Halsey and her other two brothers, the duke of York and prince Albert. The next moment he had led them up and told me to go ahead.

I tried to time the picture, but my hand was shaking and I snapped it out of focus. I never admitted this to him though. After I snapped this one plate, he came over and started talking about the races. I was still thinking about the bum picture I had just made and nervously pulled a stick of chewing gum out of my pocket. When I realized what I was doing I tried to stuff it back, but the prince had seen it.

"Give it to me if you don't want it," he said, laughing. He took the stick, unwrapped it and stuck it in his mouth.

"With this chewing wax in my mouth," said the prince, "I feel like a 'regular guy.'"

The next day when I was ushered into his office with my camera the first thing the prince asked me was whether I had got a good picture.

"Fine!" I said. "Wonderful!"

It was one of the worst I had ever taken in my life.

"My sister didn't want to pose at first," he continued, "but when I explained to her that you were a friend of mine, it was all right."

After we had made some pictures both inside and out in the yard, the prince put me through a long series of questions about photography, the United States, race horses, cattle and the pretty girls in America which he discussed with intelligence and good taste.

I would like to repeat some of the things he said about several American girls, but perhaps it wouldn't be advisable. But the American girls needn't be fearful. He's strongly prejudiced in their favor.

All in all the prince has as much personality and as fine an intelligence as any man I ever met. I say that without regard to his position. If he were Bill Smith's son, or anybody else, would say the same thing. They say he gets his character from his mother. As I was talking to him, I noticed her picture hung on the wall just over his shoulder. The likeness was striking.

"When are you coming back to England?" he asked when I had made everything I could see that looked like a picture.

"I expect to get back next year some time," I told him.

"Well, drop in and see me whenever you're in London."

That Settled It.

We were on our honeymoon, a trip to Florida, and had gone into the diner for breakfast. I was a bashful bridegroom, and my bride no less bashful than I. Both of us had been endeavoring ever since leaving home to appear like a couple married several years.

As the waiter placed our breakfast on the table and stood waiting for any further orders, the train slowed down and suddenly stopped. My bride's voice rose sweet and clear in the sudden silence.

"Do you take cream and sugar in your coffee, Honey?"

The waiter's face took on a grin that gradually spread from ear to ear, the other diners tittered like a chorus of giggles.

"I don't mind another cup of tea. The Lady Superior, by the way, drinks China. Not quite so much sugar. And let me advise you never to go in for a photograph or have purple blinds to your window. Presently I'll tell you a story that will make that last old yarn of yours read like—like 'Little Elsie's School Days.'"

Farrant, staring, puzzled, poured out and passed the tea.

"I shall be married," concluded Barracough, "this day two years—time enough, with perseverance, to kick myself into decent shape. Before the event I shall unquestionably say my prayers! By the way, I hope shortly to introduce her to Margaret—they should know each other. Which is as high a compliment as could be paid to either. The date, it happens, will also be her 21st birthday."

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THE HOUSE THAT STOOD BACK

(Continued From Page 3.)

to say that he regarded me as a son. May I know who I shall present to her? Your name—"

"It is Yvonne Dugarre, monsieur."

"I think Mademoiselle Yvonne, that we are neither of us fit to talk any more," said Barracough.

So there had been silence when, as the sun rose, they reached a large gray house standing in staid old gardens among the Surrey orchards. Into the room where they waited there presently came hurrying a stately, black-robed lady whose hands, some benign face was crowned by a nun's white cowl and veil, to whom, with all formality, he presented Mademoiselle Yvonne Dugarre. Then there followed a colloquy apart in a great window, from which the lady, turning agitated and tearful, took the girl in her arms and kissed her before she went out. Barracough met the question in the violet green eyes.

"This is a convent, a school," he explained. "There are 20 pupils, young girls like yourself. It is arranged that you are supplied with all that you wish for or need, as they are—that you share their studies and their lives as one of them; are made, I hope, as happy. You accept—and will remain, my child?"

"Yes? Last night?" She waited.

"I was ready to fling it away, or do worse, as last night, when we met—"

"Today?" she cried. "Oh, but how strange! It is also—"

"Not at all," said Barracough, smiling. "I am without that justification of my folly, mademoiselle. You

"Accept? To live here? To learn? To be safe? Oh, she cried, flushing, pining, trembling! For me, who am alone, have only my hands to work! How shall I thank you? But—but I fear—"

"You are, perhaps, very rich, monsieur?" she hazarded timidly.

"Very rich?" He read the meaning that was so plain in her lifted eyes. "No; but if I were very much poorer I should still ask leave to do so small a service—the debt, the gratitude are mine. With your courage, your marvelous courage, you have saved my life, which this morning I find as precious as a sane man should. Though last night, when we met—"

He stopped.

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will hear? Briefly, then. You ask, am I rich? Compared with some, yes. Compared with many more, contemptibly poor. She chose to flit me for one of them. Why not? With the money and all that it means he has also given her a coronet, brand new. And in I believe, barely three years older than her father!"

"Oh!" she cried again. "And you loved her?"

"As I was so much a fool, it would seem so. But there was at least the excuse that she is beautiful. You see."

She took the offered photograph. The photograph of a superb figure of royal curves, a face that suggested a sumptuous beauty of glowing blondness, well. But Barracough looked only at the small face bent over it, with the pearly-like purity of color, the finished fineness of lip and cheek and chin, the length of black lashes hiding the violet-green eyes. She glanced up with a flash of them.

"She is beautiful—yes." She gave a little gasp, fiercely. "And I hate her!" she cried.

"You hate her—"

"Should I not? She is selfish and false and a fool and a liar! She sells herself—"

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has betrayed you, robbed you, made you suffer, and I hate her—"

"Ah, now you will not forgive me, monsieur!"

The photograph, impetuously torn in two, dropped down. Barracough stooped and picked up the pieces. He tore them in two again.

"You do but forestall me," he said quietly. "Therefore there is no question of forgiveness." He tossed the fragments into the grate. "She is gone! And now—you will be happy here, my child?"

"O, most happy!" she hesitated, doubtfully, wistfully. "And sometimes, perhaps, I shall see you?" she faltered.

"Very often. Whenever my good friend allows it I will come. I spoke of my sister. She, too, shall come. You will like to know her?"

"O, if she permits, yes. But I am so stupid! If she does not speak French, like you—"

"I hope, for the credit of her teachers, that she speaks it much better."

"It will not matter. I shall so soon speak your English. O, I will work very hard, monsieur!"

"You must also dance and play. And I, too, will work very hard."

said Barracough gravely. "A period of probation, apprenticeship, is clearly called for. But one would prefer to know its necessary duration. It is a question. His smile as he met her eyes was touched with whimsicality,

"I fear, Mademoiselle Yvonne, that you are younger than I wish you."

"Wish me?" She shook her head with a puzzled laugh. "I do not understand. But, no—I am not so young. It is because I am so little—so little—that you think it. Today it is strange—you think so, too?"

is also my birthday. I am 19."