

QUEEN & DUKE TOUR FIJI

20

Gothic was ^{only} ~~crossing~~ the Equator, with Her Majesty putting on private record all the fun that traditionally goes with Crossing The Line. Father Neptune, subservient to Her Majesty, was no respecter of other persons.

Lady Pamela Mountbatten gladly paid her respects to the monarch of the equatorial deep.

The Queen's husband is no stranger to these jollifications. He was soon as wet as the Pacific itself.

(3 out)

The time was now coming for the privilege of escort to be relinquished by the Cruiser Sheffield. Her Majesty went aboard to bid the ship's company farewell. At this stage Gothic appropriately came under the escort of Her Majesty's New Zealand ship, the Cruiser Black Prince. Here again the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh went aboard and met the crew. It was a kind of advance meeting with the Dominion of New Zealand. Soon afterwards the Royal Liner lay at anchor in Suva Bay. Her Majesty had arrived ~~in~~ at Fiji.

40

In This Southern Pacific Paradise it is midsummer.

60

The Queen was 11,000 miles from the gloomy December of Britain. ^{give} Chieftains boarded the Liner to bid the Queen welcome to the Islands. Her Majesty was presented with a whale's tooth, a tribute Fiji pays only to the very great. The tooth hung from a cord of sennit, a fine plaited straw. The initial ceremony of welcome over Her Majesty went ashore, accompanied by the Governor of Fiji, His Excellency Sir Ronald Garvey. She was presented with a bouquet, and surely never, ~~of all the hundreds of presentations made to her,~~ ^{had to Zulu} ~~has~~ Her Majesty ever seen this mark of welcome ^{atto} ~~and presented~~ so gracefully carried out as by Adi Met Kainena .

Her Majesty and the Duke next went to Albert Park, a large open space in the middle of Suva. Here there were more presentations of whales' teeth. The Fijians are a race of warriors. Only in times comparatively recent have they been able to live peacefully. Their forefathers often had to repel invaders. When they make war nowadays it is in Her Majesty's service. In the past two years Fiji has raised 2,000 men to fight in Malaya. The Chieftains now commanded their followers to prepare the ceremonial drink called Kava. It's made from the Yaqona root. Some now present remembered Kava being served to the Queen's father and mother 26 years ago. It is strained through hibiscus fibre and drunk from a coconut shell. The preparation and serving are performed with great solemnity; in fact, 30 chiefs supervised it.

It was now the Duke's turn to drink Kava, which concluded the first part of the day's ceremonial. The programme in Albert Park was wound up by warriors performing the Club and Spear Dances, almost ~~intimidating~~ fearsome reminders of their warlike past.

Fijians bearing torchlights escorted the Royal car when, ~~after the presentation of the Kava~~, Her Majesty went to dine at Government House. The evening's programme included a State Ball at the Grand Pacific Hotel, before which the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh appeared on the balcony. Her Majesty was looking her radiant best.

(next) Next day the Queen went to address the Legislative Council and to receive from its members a loyal address. Her Majesty in her speech paid tribute to the 1st Battalion Fiji Infantry Regiment, serving in Malaya. Afterwards Her Majesty held an investiture, bestowing decorations on several Fijian soldiers who have distinguished themselves in the Malayan campaign. Time is the tyrant of Royal Tours and Her Majesty now had to leave the Fiji Islands, ~~after~~ as during the interlude in the West Indies, the stay at Fiji was very brief but memorable indeed. By ~~the~~ Flyingboat the Queen and Duke were flown 500 miles to Tonga for the keenly anticipated meeting with Queen Salote.