

FIJI TOUR.

Leaving Panama far behind in her wake, S.S. "Gothic" ploughs across the sunlit waters of the Pacific Ocean, bearing Her Majesty towards the Fiji Islands. This is perhaps the most leisurely part of the exhausting 50,000 mile royal tour, and for the Queen it is a precious moment when the cares of state may be forgotten. The cruiser Sheffield is in escort when the royal liner is boarded by King Neptune and his wife as the vessel crosses the equator. Wielding the barber's brush, the Duke of Edinburgh prepares Lady Pamela Mountbatten for the traditional ordeal. Assisting the Duke is his secretary, Lieutenant Commander Michael Parker.

King Neptune, played by the Duke's personal detective, joins in a brisk skirmish by the side of the pool, and to the whole crew's delight, in tumbles the watery monarch, his royal court - and the barber.

Soaked to the skin, the Duke scrambles to safety.

Many days later, a fleet of canoes comes out from the Fijian harbour of Suva to greet Her Majesty, who the islanders look upon a their highest chief. With her movie-camera, the Queen records her people's welcome.

Passing among the scores of craft, each packed with waving Fijians, Gothic moves towards Suva, the capital of the Fiji Islands. On board H.M.S. Sheffield, the crew stand by to give a farewell cheer to Her Majesty as she leaves Gothic by launch to enter the harbour.

Passing by the bows of Black Prince, (an escort cruiser of the New Zealand Navy) the royal launch approaches the quayside.

With the governor, Sir Ronald Garvey, the Queen moves forward to accept a bouquet of welcome from three year old Mei Kainona, the daughter of a Fijian chieftain now serving in Malaya.

With great solemnity, Mei makes the ancient Fijian curtsy - a sign of greeting for the lady Fijians call their "little white queen". Meanwhile, at Albert Park, thousands have come from all the 322 islands in the Fiji group to pay homage to Her Majesty. No cheering greets the royal couple, as this is the Fijians greatest indication of respect. Many of the island's richest produce await the Queen's acceptance, but first Kava, a Fijian drink, is prepared for the Queen. The roots of a Yaqona tree provide the basis of the drink which has social and ceremonial significance.

The Queen accepts the drink in a coconut shell, from which her father, grandfather and two of her uncles used to drink. Although the mixture tastes like strong liquerice, Kava must be drunk to the last drop to avoid giving offence, and the Duke, like the Queen, drains the shell.

Now the island's chieftains come to present gifts to the Queen. Fruits, turtles, toys for the royal children, and Fiji's greatest gift of honour, whale's teeth, are among tributes laid at Her Majesty's feet. The most colourful chief is Ratu Josefa Lalabalavu who wears an enormous skirt of tapa cloth with a fifteen foot train.

The climax of the gathering is a make a series of dances. This is the spear dance.

The day's celebrations end, when two hundreds runners, bearing lighted torches, escort their royal visitors to a State Ball held at the Grand Pacific Hotel in Suva.

From the hotel verandah, the royal couple wave to the thousands of Fijians and Europeans who have gathered below.

The Fiji Islanders who voluntarily gave their land to Queen Victoria receive a pledge from Queen Elizabeth that she will constantly watch over their welfare and pray for their prosperity in the years to come.

