

**THE
VICEREGAL VISIT
TO
BARODA
1926.**

BY

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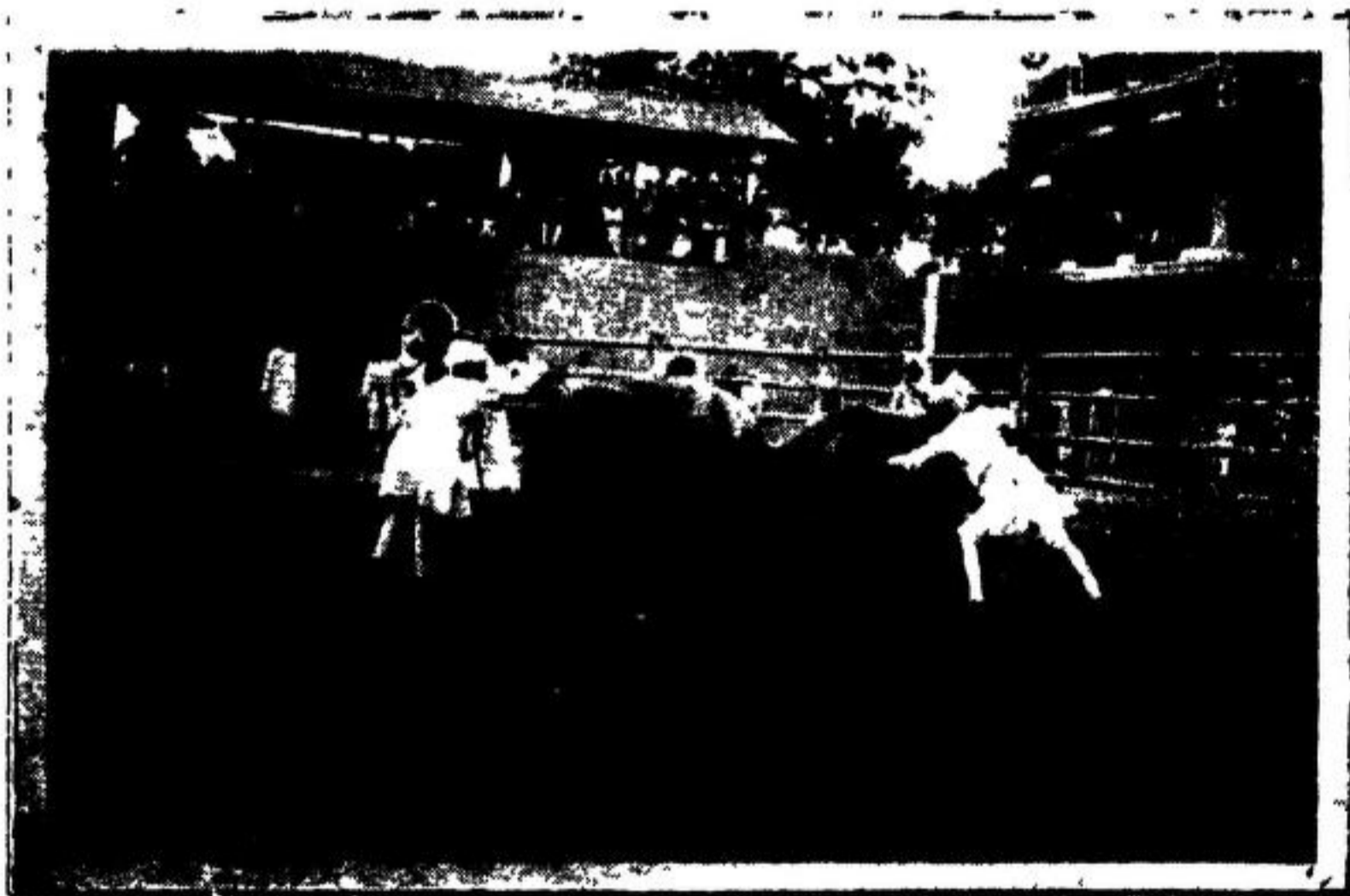
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BARODA

become popular and to the horrors of the arena, we may attribute in part the brutal treatment of the slaves, though at the same time, we must remember that there were several of them who were in every other department of life irreproachable. Cicero thought that these games were the best discipline against the fear of death; but the first Christian Emperor issued an edict abolishing these gladiatorial games.

Animal Fights.

The element of cruelty is absent in the Baroda arena sports, and the animals are separated, of the least injury is noticed, for it is not unusual that the buffaloes or the rams in the heat of excitement injure themselves and very often bleed. Sometimes it is amusing to watch the pair being dragged apart by ropes tied to their hind legs; when an



Buffalo Fight

attempt is made to separate them. And so, after the wrestling, came buffalo fighting and the thud of the impact between the two animals when the dividing sheet of white cloth was taken away was terrific. "Bichu" and "Chotachandra," black fat brutes as they were held on

for some time and the fight became something in the nature of a prolonged manoeuvre for a better position, each animal straining against the other with magnificent strength, while the attendants filled the atmosphere with a deafening noise, each party coaxing his animal and for some time it appeared as if the buffaloes kept themselves absolutely "steady" to become the victims of the camera. So evenly balanced were they against each other, while the spectators were getting anxious but they had not long to wait, as the scales turned and "Chotachandra" bolted for his life to the great dismay of the crowd, most of them running after him. "Kala" and "Pawgadhia" now appeared from the other side of the arena and displayed more a "running away" exhibition than one of strength and it was interesting to see these fellows making towards the exits.

In the meantime, Pearl and Buby, the rams were breaking each other's heads, as if they were two cocoanuts being struck against each other with all imaginable force but unlike the cocoanuts, the heads did not break and their further progress was stopped and the small temporary enclosure was quickly laid bare, by removing the barriers posted temporarily to enable the elephants to reign supreme in the huge arena.

The entertainment given by the elephant "Rupkali" drawing water from a well and handing it round to her thirsty friends attracted the attention of everybody. She is so docile a pet that she will put a garland round the neck of the Mahout with uncommon grace and will walk so to speak, hand in hand with another elephant or holding the other's ear with her trunk would appear as if they were heraldic supporters of the coat of arms of His Highness the Gaekwar. Another held the fan and waved it to and fro and gave some demonstration of music, natural with the mouth wide open and supernatural, with the "harmony" in the mouth while somersaulting on elephants formed the next interesting item.

The elephant fight that followed was less ferocious than the buffalo fight and seemingly no more cruel than some ordinary games. It had more the appearance than the actuality of ferocity but the attendants made a great show of being terribly afraid of their charges, as if something dreadful was going to happen. But perhaps they were right

as we have heard many stories of mad or furious elephants trampling on men and killing them and even flinging them high in the air but here, all necessary precautions are taken and nobody need have any fear for while the tame elephant has ornament of gold in the Gaekwar's stables, the bad tempered had spikey clamps for their legs very much like the cruel instruments of torture of the olden times and fireworks were kept ready to frighten them, if they got uncontrollable The clamps or "Chimtas" as they are called weigh about 15 seers each has about thirty to forty iron spikes and the moment this chimta is thrown on the foot of the elephant so as to catch it the animal however fierce he becomes totally helpless and collapses; while the "Ponchee" or the rope with six wooden rolls with thorns is tied round the feet.



Elephant Fight.

It would have been interesting to watch an elephant fighting with a Rhinoceros but unfortunately, for an affair of this kind, we have to go back to the days of Baber. This huge dreadnought has retreated so rapidly before the advance of Western civilisation that it is almost extinct

in India. In his famous Memoirs, says the Emperor, " I have often wondered how an elephant and rhinoceros would behave, if brought face to face. On one occasion, the keepers brought the elephants and one of them fell in right with the rhinoceros but the latter would not come up but immediately bolted." As it is not possible to see a show of this kind in the present days, it would be a fit subject for the modern film companies, if they wished to make money.

Both " Mangal Gaj " and " Albela " fought for some time, trunk to trunk, tusk to tusk and this particular moment was most exciting, as this is one of the rare sights which you do not see often. It was a terrific sight to see the two monsters with reised trunks swaying backwards and forwards and exerting their utmost.

If they had been in proper form or " mastti," the battle would



Separating Elephants

have been more exciting but evidently the special " masala " the formula of which is a great secret, known only to the Mahout was not properly

administered and peace was readily declared. The elephant "Ganga Prased" was then let loose in the arena to chase but not to catch the riders Narhari and Mohomad Khan. The huge beast ran with full speed from one end of the arena to the other and was subsequently teased or baited by a number of Mahouts who ran after the mad elephant, with long pieces of cloth of different colours, the elephant in some cases managing to catch these pieces and destroy them and before one could notice what had really happened, one of these Mahouts made a straight rush towards the place whence the Royal host and guests were witnessing the performance, crying "Babjee, Babjee, I am saved" and he fell flat on the earth and salaamed a hundred times. Evidently he thought he had a most narrow escape, poor fellow : But I don't believe it.

It is not easy to understand why the baiting of elephants has survived in Baroda—why there should be this relic of mediævalism still, in a State famed for its steady progress but evidently like all ancient customs, this manly sport has been tightly preserved.

The sports were over and after partaking of some light refreshments, the party dispersed. Their Excellencies were delighted at all they had seen and took leave of His Highness the Maharaja Saheb and in another minute, the Viceregal car passed through Mandvi towards Goya Gate while the Maharaja Saheb returned to the Laxmi Vilas. Goya Gate while less than five years ago was a series of cotton fields is today a large industrial city and is an important Station on His Highness' narrow Gauge Railway. The Railway workshop the foundation stone of which was laid by H. E. Lord Chelmsford are thoroughly equipped and employ about a thousand men. The largest Railway centre on this line is Dabhoi which has extensive commercial dealings all over India. It has a romantic history. Some ascribing its foundation to Sidhraj, King of Patan who built it on a spot where his son was born, others, to Dubhowey, the architect who is responsible for the fine architecture and elegant sculpture of the city. His Excellency could notice the sudden change of temperature and the sweet fragrance of flowers as the car entered the Makkarpura garden and the clock struck seven, as Their Excellencies alighted at the porch.