

## CHAPTER III

### The Exterior

When the architect handed over the completed mansion to Lord Wellesley in 1803 it was in main essentials the same outside as it is now with one conspicuous difference.

Engravings and photographs prior to the year 1870 show that until about that year there was scarcely a tree or a plant in the compound. The house stood up stark in the centre of a railed enclosure and the great masonry gateways, which now fit so well into their framework of tall trees loomed gaunt and incongruous in comparison with the low railings on either side of them.

These four great external gateways consisting of masonry arches surmounted by sculptured lions and sphinxes (the lions on the main, or central, arch and the sphinxes on the lower side arches) are a part of the original fabric and are frequently mentioned in the official announcements of Lord Wellesley's time. When the house was illuminated in honor of the numerous Peaces that were concluded at that period, they were decorated with lamps and transparencies. When the gates were first erected the lions and sphinxes were not placed upon them but were added shortly afterwards by a local carver and decorator named Wollaston who was a sort of handy-man for all such jobs. The first sphinxes were made of clay and the lions of wood but there seems to have been difficulty in arriving at animals of suitable appearance and proportions for the accounts in the first ten years after the completion of the house testify to frequent experiments. Eventually, in 1814, they were all made of teak wood but these have since disappeared and the images that adorn the summits of the gateways now are made of brick covered with cement and paint. A contemporary skit by Sir Charles D'Oyly (*Tom Raw the Griffin: "A burlesque poem describing the adventures of a cadet in the East India Company's Service."* By a civilian officer of the East India Establishment, London, 1828), to which and to the notes appended to it, is owed knowledge of many amusing details about Government House in its first twenty-five years of existence, says that originally the sphinxes had plaster breasts which were cut off by order of an A.D.C. who thought that Lord Wellesley might be shocked by their exuberance. This, however, probably refers to the two sphinxes at the bottom of the Grand Staircase which, together with the iron railing running up either side of it, are also original features of the house.

It can only be conjectured that the omission to plant trees was deliberate with the idea that Government House should stand out as a prominent landmark no matter how much of seclusion and privacy its occupants might lose as a result. It was a deliberate policy, it was just as deliberately reversed by Lords Mayo (1869), Northbrook (1872) and Lytton (1876) to whom is largely owed the delightfully private and well-timbered grounds which exist to-day.

The area of the grounds is large. Sir William Hunter writing in the *Imperial Gazetteer* in 1885 gave it as eight acres, but this figure was very wide of the mark. Before Lord Wellesley commenced operations, the ground occupied by the old Government House and Council House together--both of which were taken for the purpose--amounted to over 20 bighas (7 acres). Considerable purchases were made of surrounding land and in Simm's survey of 1850 the area of Government House and compound are given as more than 75 bighas (25 acres). Later surveys return the area as over 81 bighas or 27 acres and upon this area the present municipal assessment for taxes is based. Government House and the North compound aggregate an area of 39 bighas, the South compound being 42 bighas in area.

The chief differences which Lord Wellesley would notice in the house itself, were he to come to life again now, would be due to changes for which Lord Curzon was largely responsible. He broke the monotonous level of the parapet, unrelieved by a single ornament, by placing upon it urns at regular intervals. These are a familiar feature of houses of similar classical design in England and he procured a number of drawings from Chatsworth and other places, experimenting with different shapes and sizes in plaster. It would scarcely be believed by anyone looking at them from below that these vases are over six feet in height.

Another change made during the past century has been the number of projecting green wooden sunshades fixed to many of the windows looking towards the sun.

Some mystery attaches to the gigantic coats-of-arms standing up against the sky on the parapets of the four wings. It was always intended that there should be four of these, two bearing the Royal Arms and two the Arms of the East India Company, and an illustration in Mrs. Graham's journal of 1810 represents all four in position but Lord Curzon says that he doubts whether the two on the Northern front existed before his time. The Bengal Gazetteer of 1841 said: - "The wings on the southern side are surmounted by the Royal Arms. Those on the northern side are ornamented by the Hon'ble Company's but none are at present visible. Early engravings of a reliable character clearly show all four in position while photographs show only the Arms on the Southern wings. A possible explanation is that the East India Company's Arms were removed in 1858 when the Crown took over the Government of India.

When Lord Curzon came he found Arms only on the South side, but these were of so portentous a description, both the lion and the unicorn transcending all bounds even of oriental imagination, that he decided to erect new ones on each wing. These, which are the ones in existence to-day, were constructed in cast iron by Messrs. Macfarlane of Glasgow. At the same time Lord Curzon filled the empty tympanum of the pediment on the North front, which had remained unadorned for a century, with a cast-iron representation of the Royal Arms, the cost of the five being 1,300 (Pound) and the weight 100 tons according to Lord Curzon, but he seems to have taken the shipping tonnage of the packing cases in which they were sent out which is calculated on their cubic content and not on weight. Their actual weight is about 40 tons.

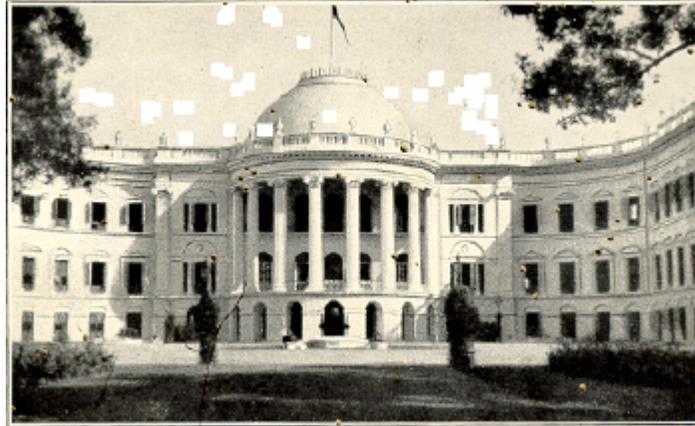
One feature of the exterior has been the subject of many vicissitudes and of infinite jest. This is the dome erected over the projecting curved portico on the Southern side from which a very fine view can be obtained by anybody who dares the climb over the sloping surface by means of the wooden rungs on its North side. When the house was first built, the dome was not there but it was added shortly afterwards, certainly before 1805, to increase the apparent elevation at a cost (and it was made of wood) of sicca rupees 30,000 or £3,750! From an early date the dome seems to have been the butt of the local wits and the facetious Tom Raw (Sir Charles D'Oyly, a civil servant of the East India Company) in 1834 thus reflected popular opinion while, incidentally, revealing the very practical purposes to which the dome was turned :

One word about the dome-'tis so superior. In every way to domes of brick or stone. It covers naught below! But ripens sherry or Madeira-a wood box, perched up alone, to aid proportion and for dumpiness to atone.

Later, in Lord Curzon's time the inside, was used for storing empty trunks but now it is not used for anything.

In 1824 the original dome, on the grounds that it was too heavy as well as being hideous, was taken down and replaced by another at a cost of Rs. 36,700!

On the top of this second dome was placed a statue of a mighty female holding a spear and shield--nobody knew whether she was Minerva or Britannia--but almost immediately, Government House was struck by lightning so the spear was altered in case it was the cause of the calamity. In the old prints which hang in the North-East corridor on the first floor illustrations of both these domes may be seen.



**Government House, South Front, 1935**

In 1829--after 5 years only--both the dome and the figure erected at so huge a cost were in such bad condition that a Committee was appointed to examine and report on them as a result of which they were patched up but were again struck by lightning in 1838 and considerably damaged. In 1852 Lord Dalhousie had both the dome and the figure removed and the iron dome of to-day substituted at a cost of Rs. 13,420 or £1,340. At the same time the pedestal of the dome was raised in order to give it a less squat appearance and its exterior was painted a golden bronze.

When Lord Curzon was in India there were persons still living in Calcutta who declared that they remembered Government House without a dome at all? The explanation as above was forthcoming some years later when Lord Dalhousie's correspondence was published. In a letter, dated 18th September 1852, he said: "There was a great dome on this house which was taken down last year to prevent it tumbling down. They now propose to put up the new one ; it will take three months and the house will not be habitable while the work is going on." From this it is clear that there was an interval of about a year in which the building was dome less. The flagstaff was first put up in 1862 and in 1863 Lord Elgin added a coronal and gallery to finish off the summit. As an architectural feature the dome redeems the monotony of a skyline too aggressively horizontal but it has not structural justification since it is not visible from within being merely laid down like a dish-cover on the flat roof. It is now painted a silver color and is undoubtedly both decorative and imposing and excites neither the ridicule of man nor the wrath of heaven.

The compound on the North side of Government House remains much as it was in 1803. There were however white posts and chains on either side of the carriage drive which runs East and West in front of the Grand Staircase. A few of these still remain on the south side of the drive. Lord Ellenborough (1842-1844) set up on a plinth in front of the Grand Staircase the huge iron gun mounted on a winged dragon with red glass eyes and tremendous scaled convolutions of the tail ending in a forked point. Around the plinth are ten iron guns with embossed Chinese inscription planted upright in the ground. The inscription on the plinth is:- "Edward Lord Ellenborough, Governor General of India in Council, erected this trophy of guns taken from the Chinese, in commemoration of the peace dictated under the walls of Nan kin by the Naval and Military forces of England and India under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir William Parker and of Lieutenant-General Sir Hugh Gough (1842)."

The war which ended in the Treaty of Nan kin consisted of two phases. Since the middle of the 17th century European traders had established themselves somewhat precariously in China and the East India Company had the monopoly of British trade. The Chinese disliked foreigners and imposed vexatious regulations and restrictions on them. In particular, and with reason, the mandarins objected to the introduction by the British of opium from India to China where it was seized upon avidly. The British were determined to trade as equals and not as vassals, which was the relationship insisted upon by the Emperor and the mandarins, and as a matter of diplomacy to remove a cause of friction, they agreed to stop the import of opium and destroyed all the stocks they held. This seemed to be regarded as a sign that the British were afraid of the Chinese and

was followed by impossible demands which the British Government considered to amount to a casus belli. War was declared in 1840 and resulted in the signing of a treaty of peace in 1841 by which an indemnity of six million dollars was agreed to be paid to the British and there was ceded a jungle-covered island called Hong-Kong at the mouth of the bay at the head of which the port of Canton stood at the South-East corner of China. When this treaty reached the Imperial Government at Peking they refused to ratify it and so hostilities were resumed. Gough was sent from Madras by Ellenborough to assume command of the troops at Canton and in May 1841 the forts defending that port were carried. Admiral William Parker arrived in July and Gough commanded the troops in the combined operations which then took place. The British Naval and Military forces swept up the coast of China from Canton capturing every big port as they went. Amoy, Foo-Chow, Ning-Po and Shanghai- and then went up the Yang-tze-Kiang River and captured the fortified city of Chin-Kiang which guarded the approach to Nan kin, the Southern Imperial Capital. Nan kin would then have fallen but the Chinese, to avert such a disaster, sued for peace the terms of which, as is related in the inscription on the gun, were dictated under the walls of Nan kin and included an indemnity of twenty-one million dollars, the ratification of the cession of Hong-Kong and the declaring open to foreign trade of the ports of Amoy, Foo-Chow, Ning-Po and Shanghai, which are known to this day as the Treaty Ports.

Lord Ellenborough also placed in position the two brass cannon in front of the North-East and North-West wings, respectively. The one outside the A.D.C.'s room in the North-East wing is embossed with a Moghul pattern and has two pairs of heavy brass carrying rings attached to the barrel. The inscription on its base is: "Meeanee, 17th February, Hyderabad 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1843 " and it was set up in honor of the victories of Sir Charles Napier and the annexation of Sind. Sind was annexed at a time when the Court of Directors were objecting strongly to any further increase of territory and consequent responsibility and dispatches announcing fresh conquests were more likely to be replied to by censure rather than praise. In view of this attitude, Sir Charles Napier is said to have announced the conquest of Sind by the single word "Peccavi" - "I have sinned."

The gun outside the Military Secretary's room in the North-West wing is heavily embossed and the handles on the top of the barrel are in the shape of two dogs. The inscription on the base is "Ghuznee 6<sup>th</sup> September, Kabul 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1842 "and it commemorates the successes of Generals Nott and Pollock in the First Afghan War waged to avenge the catastrophe of the previous year when a British Army of 4,500 men with 12,000 camp followers under General Elphinstone evacuated Kabul in the depths of winter of whom only one, Dr. Bryden, reached Jalalabad.

On the West side of the house there are two German naval guns Captured from the Turks in Mesopotamia in the Great War, 1914-1918.

On the South side there are eleven guns in all, of which three have been in position since the house was first occupied. Two of these are the two brass cannon on the grass plots right and left of the curved portico which were placed there by Lord Wellesley, the builder of the house. The Muzzles and the hubs of the wheels are shaped in the form of a tiger's head and at the ends of the spokes of each wheel are brass tiger's paws. The inscription on them is: "Serengapatam, 4th May, 1799" the action in which Tippu Sultan, whose seat is in the Throne room, was slain. Serengapatam had been stormed in 1792 by Lord Cornwallis after which, Tippu ceded half his dominions. After Lord Wellesley's storming seven years later the remainder was annexed.

Immediately in front of the Private Entrance is a large plain brass cannon captured at Aliwal and known as Fattah Jung placed there by Viscount Hardinge in commemoration of the first Sikh War. Round the plinth are the names and dates: -"Moodke, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1845;" "Ferozeshur, December 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 1845;" and "Subraon, February 10<sup>th</sup> 1846." The historical significance of these entries briefly is that General Sir Hugh Gough (afterwards Viscount Gough of whom mention has already been made in describing the Chinese guns on the North side) fought an indecisive action at Moodke on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1845, the Sikh entrenchments at Ferozeshur were stormed four days later, Sir Harry

Smith defeated the Sikhs at Aliwal on 21st January, 1846, and Sir Hugh Gough fought a desperate battle at Subraon on the 10th February, 1846, which resulted in the rout of the Sikh Army.

On the same central plot and in front of Futteh Jung are two small brass mortars with the inscription "Mandalay, Burma, 1885-1886." These were captured from King Theebaw during the Third Burmese War in the time of Lord Dufferin and cut on the barrels are the words:- "Compagnie des Indes De France. Fait par Gor a Paris 1751" which indicate that they had a varied career before they were captured by The British some hundred and thirty years after they were cast.

Southwards from Futteh Jung on the edge of the main lawn are four brass guns in a semi circle, the two outside ones being large and the inner ones small. The two outside ones were also captured in the Third Burmese War along with the mortars described above and the inscriptions on their plinths are the same--"Mandalay, Burma, 1885-1886." The one on the East (or left side looking from the house) is a large plain brass gun with Burmese writing cut on the barrel while its opposite number on the West has on the barrel finely chased handles in the shape of dolphins and a coat-of-arms in relief under which are the initials "A. G. F."

Between these guns are two most interesting trophies. The one to the East is a small brass gun captured at Seringapatam in the time of Lord Wellesley's predecessor, Lord Cornwallis of permanent Settlement fame. This is the earliest prize gun in the grounds and was probably transferred to the present Government House by Lord Wellesley when he first occupied it. It is of French make with dolphins as handles and a heavily embossed coat-of-arms together with the inscription "A DOUAY PAR BERENGER 4-7-77." The inscription on the plinth is merely "French gun at Seringapatam, 1789." The gun on the West edge of the drive is particularly interesting because not only is it the oldest gun in the grounds, having been cast in 1630 when Charles I was on the Throne of England but also because it provides a link with Lord Roberts. It is a small brass gun with handles in the shape of dolphins and a man-of-war in full sail embossed on the barrel and a cut inscription. "ASSUERUS KOSTER ME FECIT AMSTELREDAMI 1630" (A. Koster made me at Amsterdam in 1630) and also the monogram of the Dutch East India Company-V. G. C. The inscription on the plinth is "Dutch gun at Cabul, 1879."

This gun was captured at the beginning of the Second Afghan War During the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton (1876-1880) which started with the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari, The British Envoy at Kabul, on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1879, upon which a British Force under General Sir Frederick Roberts, as he then was, advanced on Kabul which was entered on the 9<sup>th</sup> October the Amir Yakub Khan then abdicating. Hostilities, however, broke out again in the following year, made memorable by names such as Maiwand and Kandahar (to the relief of which Roberts marched 10,000 men, 313 miles in 22 days), and the war was only brought to a conclusion in the Autumn of 1880. This gun must have had an even more varied career than the two brass mortars during the two hundred and fifty years which elapsed before it was captured by the British.

The remaining two pieces of ordnance, which are some distance in front, on either side of the carriage drive, are two long iron guns, with four big carrying rings on each, both of which are trophies of the Third Burmese War of 1885-1886 so that no fewer than six of the eleven pieces of ordnance to the South of the house are relics of this campaign. As there are so many, it may be of interest to recall the main features of this war which resulted in the annexation of Upper Burma. The First Burmese War in 1824 in the time of Lord Amherst (whose picture hangs in the small dining room) had been fought because the Burmese continually encroached on British India and it resulted in the cession of Assam (then an independent kingdom overrun by the Burmese) and the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim -that is to say all the seaboard of Burma except the mouth of the Irrawaddy. The second Burmese War in 1852, in the time of Lord Dalhousie, arose out of the ill-treatment of some European merchants at Rangoon and the insults offered to the Captain of a British frigate who had been sent to remonstrate and resulted in the annexation of the province of Pegu which cut off all remaining access to the sea, the kingdom of Burma being reduced to what is to-day known as Upper Burma.

The Third Burmese War in 1885 was the result of a long period of strained relations between the Burmese and British Governments brought to a culmination by the cruelty and arrogance of King Theebaw. War was declared and a mixed Naval and Military force moved rapidly up the Irrawaddy in a flotilla and took the Burmese completely by surprise. Within a fortnight King Theebaw was taken prisoner in Mandalay, his capital, his army surrendered and the remainder of Burma was annexed. Operations, however, continued into 1886 in order to subdue bands of soldiery who formed themselves into gangs of dacoits and ravaged the country.

The Garden to the South of the house, now so pretty with its great awns and beds of flowers backed by leafy walks and curving ponds only began to assume its present form under the fostering care of Lady Mayo (1869-1872) and Lady Lytton (1876-1880). Before then it was much like the compound of any mufassal house-- and expanse of rough grass with cows grazing. There had been sporadic attempts from time to time to plant a few flowers near the house as may be gathered from the following passage in one of the letters of Miss Emily Eden, sister of Lord Auckland (1835-1842), after whom the Eden Gardens are named, dated 14th April 1841:- "Lady Amherst (1823-1828) made a magnificent garden round the house, which stands in the centre of what we call a huge compound. Lady William Bentinck (1828-1835) said flowers were very unwholesome and had everything rooted out in the first week. I never thought of restoring it till last year, and now it is all done very economically, and only one side of the house and at considerable distance. I am just finishing two little fish ponds."

Lady Mayo started planning on a bigger scale and began the planting of the trees, while in Lord Lytton's time the ornamental water and arched masonry bridge as well as the raised mound at the southern extremity of the garden were constructed at a cost of Rs. 11,000.

It would be difficult to give an account of the trees in the compound without introducing a large number of botanical terms conveying almost nothing to the layman. It is proposed therefore to mention only those which are of especial interest or beauty singling out one specimen of each which can be easily indicated and leaving it to those who are interested to identify others of the same species wherever they may occur. For this purpose the following description takes the form of a walk round the grounds starting from the Grand Staircase on the North of the house. On either side of the Grand Staircase is a tall palm tree covered with creeper. These are Royal Palms (*Oreodoxa regia*) and they are over seventy years old. The creeper which covers them is of the fig category, called *Ficus repens*. The creeper which covers the railings of the Grand Staircase is *Bignonia purpurea*. On the grass plots just in front of the curving wings of the house are groups of Ceylon Palm (*Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*) and growing up the wall under the pediment of the Grand Staircase are creepers called *Adenocalymna nitido*.

Near the corners of the lawns on either side of the Chinese gate are two trees planted in 1935 called *Caesalpinia crista* one of the most beautiful of Calcutta's cold-weather flowering trees which in five years' time will be a striking sight. The creepers on the lampposts bordering the drive are mainly *Bougainvillea*. The large tree on the left or West side of the North Gate is the Rain Tree (*Pithecolobium saman*) a very handsome tree with a pretty pink flower and leaves that are sensitive to moisture, closing as soon as rain starts to fall. On the other side of the gate is the Ashoka Tree (*Saraca indica*) whose foliage is faintly like that of a *Brownea*. From the North Gate to the North-West corner of the grounds the trees in the fringe are *Debdars*; *Sterculia alata*; *Peepul* (*Ficus religiosa*) and an Alexandrian Laurel (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) right in the North-West corner in front of a tall and rather ragged *Casuarina*. This laurel is a bushy tree with dark-green glossy leaves which in the monsoon and at the end of the cold weather puts out small very sweet scented white flowers.

The line of tall trees running south from the North-West corner of the grounds and screening the kitchen are Indian Cork trees (*Millingtonia hortensis*). Immediately on the south side of the North-West Gate is a clump of Giant Bomboos (*Dendrocalamus giganteus*). Walking along the drive past the West side of the house the two groups of palms that are seen on the left hand close to the house are Chinese Palms (*Livistona chinensis*) while the clump of trees on the right in the

centre of the lawn between the two German guns is composed of Debdar, Jamun and Palm trees. Immediately to the West of this clump in the marginal fringe two very tall trees stand up these are *Sterculia alata* and have fine buttressed stems. Directly to the south of them is a small bushy tree with tiny light-green foliage called the candle Tree (*Parmentiera cerifera*) which is very interesting because the flowers grow straight out of the trunk instead of at the ends of the branches and its fruit hangs down like bunches of tallow candles.

The flowering shrubs which line the North edge of the drive from the south-West corner of the house to the South-West gate are Oleanders and the large tree overhanging the drive in front of the south-West Gate is the Mahua (*Bassia latifolia*) which has a very sweet smelling flower. Turning left by the South-West gate and going down the footpath on the west of the Garden Party Lawn the first tree at the North-West corner of the lawn is the Debdar (*Polyalthia longifolia*) and between it and the bold clump of Chinese Palms ahead is a singularly beautiful tree—at present three years old-- the *Gliricidia maculata*, this produces a pale pink blossom all along its leafless branches in March. immediately to the West of the *Gliricidia*, in the fringe, the only tall tree is the White Silk-Cotton tree (*Eriodendron anfractuosum*). About twenty yards before reaching the avenue which runs East and West there is, in the fringe, an interesting tree called the Looking Glass Tree (*Heritiera littoralis*). Its large leaves, silvery underneath, allow shadows to strike clearly on them in bright sunshine and give a dazzling effect when looked at from underneath. Turning left up the avenue which is lined on either side with handsome spreading fig trees of various kinds, the tall tree near the corner with grey bark and a buttressed stem is the Arjun (*Terminalia Arjuna*), a smaller specimen standing opposite it. The third tree on the South side of the avenue is a fine specimen of the Talipot Palm (*Corypha umbraculifera*) with colossal leaves. Half way to the main central drive, a small winding path leads north. There are two trees on the garden Party Lawn to the West of this path. The one nearest the Burmese gun is the Dhak or Flame of the Forest (*Butea frondosa*) and the round small tree between the Dhak and the avenue is a *Brownea* (*Brownea grandiceps*). Going along the avenue till the main south drive is reached a number of water lilies (*Nymphaea*) with red, white and yellow flowers are to be seen in the lakes as well as the giant water-lily of South America (*Victoria regia*). This has immense circular leaves from five to seven feet in diameter with three or four inches of upturned edge and it was first introduced in 1933. It reproduced itself spontaneously for the first time in 1935. In the South-West corner of the East lake is a group of aquatic palms (*Nipa fruticans*). Turning right down the South drive and then right again long the winding footpath which skirts the south side of the West lake there is, close to the south drive, an uncommon palm called *Areca madagascarensis*. Turning left before reaching the bamboo tunnel leading to the bridge there is, immediately in front, an African oil palm (*Elaeis quineensis*) standing up in the centre of a clump of Chinese Palms. This palm now reproduces itself spontaneously. Going on down the path towards the South gate there is on the left, on the South side of the triangular patch of grass, a small round-headed tree with thick leathery leaves called *Clusia rosea* and standing above the West side of the South gate is a Jamun Tree (*Eugenia jambolana*) which bears a juicy black fruit like a damson but with a peculiar flavor of its own.

Going back to the house up the South drive the main feature consists of two huge and magnificent India Rubber Trees (*Ficus elastica*) on either side of the drive close to the circle of guns. The creepers growing on the lamp posts in front of the Private Entrance are all *Jacquemontia violacea*, bearing a pretty blue flower except for the lamp posts which stand at the corners of the two wings. The left hand, or westerly, one is covered with *Bignonia venusta* while the right hand one is covered with *Bignonia Unguis-Cati*. Turning now to the right and going to the South-East gate there is a Frangipani on Temple-flower Tree (*Plumeria acutifolia*) at the corner of the shrubbery south of the gate and in the fringe to the South of the gate is a long line of tall Debdar trees. Another specimen Debdar mounts guard on the North-East corner of the lawn matching the one at the West end of the drive. A few yards south of this Debdar, on the lawn, is a *Cassia javanica* which bears lovely sweet-scented pink flowers in April and May. Halfway between the specimen Debdar and the *Cassia* is a Ceylon Palm between which and the Debdar in the forefront of the shrubbery is a goods specimen of *Milettia ovalifolia* which is a fine sight in March when leafless and in full flower. Going now to the swimming bath, where there are two groups of

Ceylon Palms known to be over 30 years old, there are several creepers on the pergolas round the pool. On the South pergola there is a creeper called *Adenocalymna nitida* with an orange-colored flower, on the East front of the pool there is a sweet scented white creeper called *Stephanotis Floribunda*, while on the North pergola there is first *Jacquemontia*, then in the centre *Clematis flammula*, while to the West of this there is *Congea tomentosa* and at the West end *Petrea volubilis* which bears beautiful blue flowers in March. Going on to the North-East gate there is a line of very tall upright trees stretching from the gate northwards. The first tree in this line is *Putranjiva Roxburghii* and near it are one or two Bead trees (*Adenantha pavonina*) in whose seed pods are bright scarlet shiny seeds used as beads and counters. The rest of the trees are *Debdars*. The large tree in the section of the fringe running from the North-East corner of the grounds to the North Gate is a Banyan (*Ficus bengalensis*), a magnificent specimen of which is at Barrackpore. The smaller and more bushy trees in this section are Ashoka trees. Overhanging the room where the Visitors' Book is kept is a Neem Tree (*Melia Azadirachta*) whose leaves and twigs have so many uses in India.

To turn now to a general description of the remainder of the grounds, the drive running East and West past the Private Entrance connecting up the two big masonry gateways was from the earliest days of the house until Lord Minto's time (1905-1910) like its counterpart on the North side of the house bordered by white posts and chains. As early as 1808 it was recorded that the chains were so loosely fixed that they were stolen and had to be replaced. The original wooden posts were replaced by stone one in 1823 and in the same year the wooden paling with which the South compound was originally enclosed was replaced by the plastered balustrade which exists to-day. It was not till 1844 that the South gates leading on to the Maidan were made. Though they were different from the ones which are now there which as will be seen later, date from 1911. The gates of 1844 were hung on two large stone pillars and were the same pattern as the gates in the four big gateways. There was a curved iron rail connecting the two pillars from which a lamp hung over the centre of the gateway, and there were two smaller stone pillars connected with the main gate posts by iron railings.

To the East of the house there is now a lawn on which tennis is played and in the enclosure between the two wings of the house there is a swimming pool constructed by Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal (1922-1927). Before the swimming pool came into existence its site was occupied by a hard tennis court which had originally been made by Lord Dufferin in 1881 with an asphalt floor and wooden walls. Before that there was a platform there on which the Viceroy's Band used to play during entertainments. The grounds are enclosed on the North side and as far as the two big gates South-East and South-West of the house by the original iron railings put up by Lord Wellesley (though the railings on the West side were not completed till 1825) and the iron gates, the tops of whose bars are arranged in a semi-circular curve to reflect the masonry arch above, are also the original gates. Lord Curzon refers contemptuously to them as being mean and thought that they would have discredited a workhouse, but in many people's eyes the unusual curved contour of their tops and their unpretentious simplicity fit well with the proportions and rather severe design of the massive and lofty arches in which they are set. Lord Curzon, however, obtained sanction for an entire new set and procured designs from the best iron-workers in England. But he left India before matters got any further and his successor, Lord Minto, left things as they were. In preparation for the visit of the King and Queen, though, in 1911 Lord Hardinge put up new large wrought-iron gates with the Royal Cipher in the centre at the South and North entrances with fresh pillars of Surajpur stone at a cost of 2,000 pounds. Before that, the exit into Wellesley Place was by means of curved iron gates similar to those set in the four big gateways but which hung on iron railings which at this point were slightly higher than the rest. Over the top of the gates was a curved iron rail ornamented with wrought-iron scroll work and a rod or chain in the centre from which to hang a lamp. Photographs of this gate and the old South gate are in the office of the Superintendent, Governor's Estates. Until the new North gate was put up in 1911, this was not a public entrance and was only used for domestic purposes.

At this point it would be convenient to mention some of the domestic arrangements which used to obtain in Government House. Large as was the building and extensive the compound, both

were unequal to accommodating the enormous number of persons, menial and otherwise, who were required for its service as the years passed and the conditions which ruled when the house was built became more complex. Calcutta society had, in the course of the 19th century, swollen to such dimensions, the crowd of cold weather visitors had become so great and the volume of work of every description so overwhelming that the necessary instruments for coping with the triple burden could not be compressed within the available space. Premises for offices and servants' quarters were acquired from time to time as need dictated in a haphazard way mainly in the network of old-fashioned streets which existed at the beginning of the 20th century between Government Place and Dalhousie Square. Here were the residences of the Private Secretary and Military Secretary, constructed by the second Lord Elgin (1894-1899) (in days of old both these officials had been quartered in the wings of Government House); the Viceroy's stables and coach-houses; the quarters of the steward, chef and native servants; the stables and quarters of the Body Guard; the Private Secretary's Office and Press; the dispensary and the kitchen. All the food that was eaten in Government House had to be carried nearly two hundred yards in dhoolies or boxes carried on poles on the shoulders of men. The Viceroy's Band had to be accommodated half a mile away in the Fort in constant danger of eviction by the Military authorities who wanted the quarters, while the space in the stable-yard of those days was so limited that every time the big carriages were used they had to be dragged out by coolies into the compound of Government House and the horses harnessed to them in front of the main entrance. These and other anomalies led Lord Curzon in 1905 to take steps to acquire a large area outside the compound to the North of Government House as a result of which there now confront the house on that side a range of buildings which house all of the staff who do not actually live in the house. Some explanation is required, as to why the Private Secretary's house is not built in the same style as the rest of the Government House premises in Wellesley Place. The Private Secretary's house was built in 1895 and when, in 1907-1908 the rebuilding of Wellesley Place was proceeding according to Lord Curzon's plan the Viceroy's Military Secretary moved into the Private Secretary's house while his own was being rebuilt. Possibly the Private Secretary at that time was a bachelor or his wife was not in India and so he did not need the house and went to live in Government House. The delay, however, was fatal and probably the fact that Lord Hardinge knew of the impending transfer of the Capital to Delhi caused the Government of India to decide to spend no more money on vice regal staff quarters in Calcutta. The final building operations were the construction of new kitchens by Lord Minto (1905-1910) in the North-West corner of the compound between the railings and the screen of trees, displacing cow-sheds which used to be there.

No description of the exterior of Government House would be complete without some mention, however brief, of objects of interest immediately outside its gates. Much of what is to-day pleasant and dignified in the immediate surroundings of Government House is due to Lord Curzon.

When he came he found that the growth of the city right up to the gates of Government House, accompanied by much of the squalor and a good deal of the careless irregularity of an oriental town, had resulted in a setting which was neither appropriate nor even orderly. He therefore drew a parallelogram bounded on the North by Dalhousie Square, on the South by the Esplanade, on the East by Old Court House Street and on the West by Council House Street and within that area he provided for the proper paving and lighting of the principal streets at the cost of Government.

As has already been narrated, he acquired the land immediately to the North of Government House and planned the handsome buildings in Wellesley Place in which the senior members of the staff and garages and stables and various offices are now accommodated.

Lord Curzon's full plan was to turn Wellesley Place into an entirely official quarter with suitable and dignified architecture and thus to link Government House up intimately with the historic Dalhousie Square which has been so closely and continuously associated with British Rule in Bengal from its inception. For Dalhousie Square was the Tank Square and Park of the old Calcutta and was the centre and hub of the early British settlement. The first Fort William, which was begun in 1696 in the reign of William and Mary, formed part of the western boundary of the Square and

within the fort were the first Government House and the original Writers' Buildings. St. Anne's Church (razed by Siraj-ud-Dowlah in 1756) stood about where the Holwell Monument stands now and the Old Court House which was demolished in 1792 stood on the site now occupied by St. Andrew's Church.

Although this plan did not come to fruition, Lord Curzon did a good deal for the improvement of Dalhousie Square. He laid out the ground afresh, squared the famous Lal Dighi, surrounded it with a pillared balustrade and a garden and swept away a mass of unsightly sheds and huts, converting it into an open-air resort for the public and what he calls a Valhalla for the Bengal Government. He also put up, largely at his own expense, the present Holwell Monument, and improved reproduction in marble of the original erected by Governor Holwell which had fallen into disrepair and had been demolished, and in addition demarcated by marble tablets and brass lines let into the pavement the boundaries of the old Fort and in particular the actual site of the Black Hole.

To the South-East of Government House there was a plot of open ground seamed by untidy paths and scattered with rubbish extending from the Esplanade to the Ochterlony Monument and containing the Dharamtola Tank. Lord Curzon filled up the tank and converted the entire area into a public garden which bears his name.

At the end of Chowringhee and just to the North-East of the Curzon Gardens is a handsome mosque which is deserving of mention here, because it was built and endowed in 1842 by Prince Ghulam Muhammad, son of Tippu Sultan of whom there are relics both inside Government House and in the grounds.

The area to the South of Government House was never in any danger of encroachment. The principal reason why the old Fort William fell in 1756 was that the fire of its guns was masked by the surrounding buildings rendering it practically indefensible. With part of the compensation exacted after Clive and Admiral Watson had recaptured Calcutta early in 1757 and after Clive's victory at Plessey in June of the same year, a hamlet called Gobindapur was cleared of its inhabitants and the construction of the present Fort William started late in 1757. It was not finished till 1781 and is said to have cost £2,000,000, half a million of which was spent on works to protect the West face from the erosion of the river Hooghly. A large space all round it on the land side was cleared of jungle and no permanent buildings were, or are, allowed to be built on it which could afford cover to an enemy and so render the disaster of 1756 possible again. This, and not poverty, is the reason why athletic clubs on the Maidan have to put up pavilions of lath and canvas instead of permanent structures.

There are three statues just outside Government House grounds. Lord Lawrence, viceroy 1864-1869 (by T. Woolner, R.A.), faces the South gate, while on his right hand to the East is an equestrian statue of Lord Hardinge (1844-1848) by J. H. Foley, R.A., and on his left hand to the West is a statue, also equestrian, by J. H. Foley, R.A., and T. Brock, R.A., of Lord Canning (1856-1862).

To the South-West of Government House are the delightful Eden Gardens named after the Misses Eden (sisters of Lord Auckland, 1835-1842) to whose liberality Calcutta owes them. The pagoda in them was taken from Prome and is another of the spoils of the Third Burmese War of 1885-1886.

To The North of the Eden Gardens is the Bengal Legislative Council building, very handsome inside and cooled by a refrigerating plant which was opened in 1931. To the North of this again is the western continuation of the Esplanade which gives frontage to three buildings. The one nearest to Government House is the old Government of India Secretariat. To the west of this is the Town Hall, very nearly contemporaneous with Government House having been built by public lottery in 1814 at a cost of Rs. 7,00,000 and west of this is the High Court built in some what florid Gothic in 1872 on the site of the old Supreme Court. The design is said to have been suggested

by the Town Hall at Pyres, but it is a very poor imitation. At the West end of the Esplanade is the historic Chandpal Ghat where in olden days Governors General, including Lord Wellesley, first set foot in India.

Opposite the North-West corner of the Government house compound is St. John's Church built in 1787 chiefly by voluntary subscriptions to replace St. Anne's Church which was destroyed by Siraj-ud-Dowlah in 1756. A good deal of the stone and marble used in its construction was brought from the ruins of Gaur in Malda District which was the flourishing capital of Bengal for four hundred years from 1170 A.D. to 1570 A.D.

St. John's was the Cathedral of Calcutta until the present Cathedral was opened in 1847 and in the North-West corner of the churchyard is a large octagonal mausoleum under which lies the body of Job Charnock, the founder of Calcutta, who died in 1692.

There are many other graves, tablets and memorials within the Precincts which are of great historical interest including one to Admiral Watson who, with Clive, recaptured Calcutta in 1757 and died here not long after, and a picture by Zoffany of the Last Supper, all the faces in which are those of European residents in Calcutta in his time.

This completes the circle round Government House and with it the chapter. In the next will be told the story of how the house came to be built.