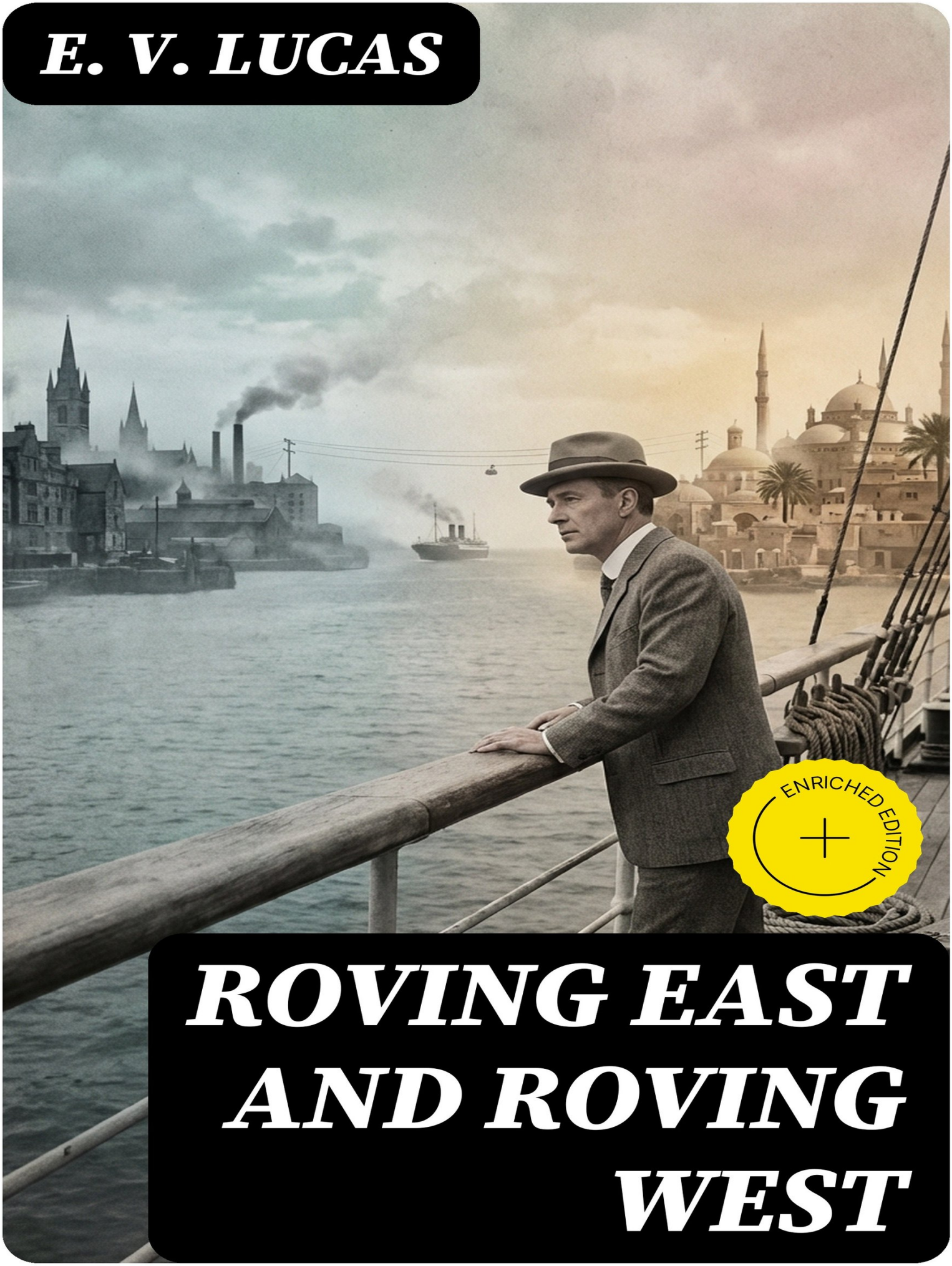
E. V. LUCAS
ENRICHED EDITION
ROVING EAST AND ROVING WEST

E. V. Lucas

Roving East and Roving West

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Wren Farnsworth

EAN 8596547364573

Edited and published by DigiCat, 2022

Table of Contents

Introduction

Table of Contents

Roving East and Roving West gathers E. V. Lucas’s travel writing into a single, coherent itinerary across three regions—India, Japan, and America—followed by an index. The volume is not a novel, nor a miscellany of fiction, but a sustained collection of observations arranged as a sequence of essays and sketches. Its purpose is to present Lucas’s record of movement and encounter, piece by piece, as he first ordered it: from the subcontinent’s cities and ceremonies to Japan’s landscapes and manners, and onward to the United States’ modern energies. In these pages, the traveller’s eye is the primary instrument; the essay, his chosen form.

The genres represented are predominantly short essays and travel sketches, with interludes of social observation, anecdotal portraiture, and occasional literary appreciation. Titles such as The Passing Show, The Play, The Press, and General Reflections signal a flexible method that ranges from street-level impressions to wider cultural notes. Some chapters are miniature studies of natural history or architecture; others survey amusements, public institutions, or habits of speech. While unified by a single authorial voice, the pieces vary in scale: a brief vignette may stand beside a city sketch, a headline beside a meditation, each retaining the distinctiveness of its form.

The India section sets Lucas among cities and customs that compel both description and tact. From Noiseless Feet

and The Sahib to India’s Birds and The Towers of Silence, the essays move between street life, social roles, natural observation, and ritual practice. The sequence passes through Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur-Sikri, Lucknow, and Calcutta, notes the emergence of New, or Imperial, Delhi, and pauses for episodes such as A Day’s Hawking and A Tiger. Titles like Rose Aylmer and The Garlands show how literary memory intersects with place. The emphasis remains on what can be seen and inferred, never pressing the fragment into a grand design.

In Japan, Lucas’s attention turns to scale and delicacy. Introductory and The Little Land establish a field of vision that alternates between the Rice Fields and urban amusements. Surface Materialism and First Glimpse of Fuji note the interplay of craft, commerce, and scenery; Two Funerals and The Little Geisha consider ceremony and performance; Manners and The Play gather observations into social portraiture. A sojourn in Myanoshita offers a change of altitude and tempo. The result is a suite of essays where restraint and precision govern the line of sight, and where small particulars carry the weight of the traveller’s understanding.

The American chapters examine a nation in motion. Democracy at Home introduces domestic customs; San Francisco and Chicago become tests of topography and growth; Roads Good and Bad and The Cars register movement itself. Universities, Love and Pronunciation treats language and learning; First Signs of Prohibition and Prohibition Again track civic experiment; R.L.S. and Stories and Humourists read a literary climate; The Movies, The Ball

Game, and Sky-Signs and Coney Island study popular spectacle. Skyscrapers, Domestic Architecture, and Treasures of Art frame the built environment; The Press records media influence; Boston, Philadelphia, Mount Vernon, and episodes of revolutionary memory locate history in the contemporary city.

Across these regions, Lucas writes in the English essay tradition: lucid, poised, and attentive to inconspicuous detail. His signature is a humane irony that keeps judgment provisional, an ear for cadence, and a preference for concrete instances over system. The pieces often begin with an object, a gesture, or a notice, then widen into reflection without forfeiting immediacy. He is neither ethnographer nor polemicist, but a traveller who trusts the modest revelation of the everyday. The chapter titles themselves are part of his method, setting the scale of inquiry and inviting the reader to share the tempo of observation.

The continuing value of Roving East and Roving West lies in its measured record of encounters at a moment of rapid change. Written from a British traveller’s perspective, it reflects its time even as it strives for fairness and clarity. Readers interested in travel writing, urban and cultural history, and the essay as an art will find here a mosaic of scenes rather than a thesis, a cadence rather than a conclusion. This edition presents the sequence under India, Japan, and America as given, with an index, and invites a patient reading in which curiosity and context illuminate one another.

Historical Context

Table of Contents

Roving East and Roving West gathered E. V. Lucas's travel journalism from the early 1910s, when British readers looked outward across an empire and an increasingly connected world. Steamship routes, the Suez Canal, and global telegraphy enabled quick passages and quicker impressions, while the Edwardian press rewarded urbane, lightly ironic observation. Lucas, a Punch essayist, wrote on the eve of the First World War, when modernity's allure - electric signs, cinema, motorcars - coexisted with colonial hierarchies and inherited myths. His itinerary through India, Japan, and the United States reflects the era's dominant circuits of Anglo-world travel and the comparative gaze that shaped metropolitan opinions of distant cultures.

In India, Lucas wrote amid the late British Raj, shaped by the 1857 Uprising's memory and renewed administrative reorganization. The 1911 Delhi Durbar announced the transfer of the imperial capital from Calcutta to Delhi, and plans for "New, or Imperial, Delhi" would soon be steered by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker. Essays on Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, and Lucknow move within the Raj's ceremonial geography, where Mughal sites and mutiny memorials underwrote British authority. Calcutta appears as both commercial engine and relinquished capital. Such settings formed the backdrop for reflections on governance, urban transformation, and the public pageantry sustaining imperial legitimacy.

Lucas's Indian sketches also intersect with social and religious diversity then confounding imperial taxonomies. The Parsi "Towers of Silence" in Bombay exemplified encounters with Zoroastrian funerary practice; street divers and the notorious "rope trick" evoked a long Western appetite for marvels circulating since the 1890s. Essays on "the Sahib," hunting a tiger, and hawking mirror sporting and domestic rituals of Anglo-India. Simultaneously, nationalist ferment - ignited by the 1905 partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement - reshaped public life and the press, even as official pageants projected stability. Literary allusions, such as Walter Savage Landor's "Rose Aylmer," link British remembrance to colonial mortality along the Hooghly.

Lucas arrived in Japan at the hinge of eras: the Meiji period's modernization (1868-1912) had transformed transport, industry, and education, while Taisho rule began in 1912. Railways to resorts like Miyanoshita, electric tramways, and bustling Tokyo streets made Western comparisons irresistible. Theatre and the "little geisha" were observed alongside kabuki and popular playhouses; funeral rites and precise manners illustrated coexistence of Shinto-Buddhist tradition with imported institutions. The iconic first glimpse of Fuji threaded art-history associations, from Hokusai to tourist prints. His essays weigh a small archipelago's scale - the "little land" - against outsized cultural poise, asking how modernization might preserve grace without succumbing to spectacle.

Japan's ascent as a great power framed British curiosity and unease that color Lucas's tone. The Anglo-Japanese

Alliance (1902) and victory over Russia (1905) positioned Tokyo within an Asian balance of power that Europeans could no longer patronize. Western travel writing of the period, from Lafcadio Hearn to Basil Hall Chamberlain, blended admiration with stereotype; Lucas inherits and moderates that tradition. Observations on "surface materialism" and urban play critique consumer display without denying discipline beneath it. Funerals, theatre manners, and rural rice fields counterpoint factory whistles and city lights, situating Japan as both partner and mirror in debates over civility, progress, and national character.

In the United States, Lucas encountered the Progressive Era's reforms and exuberance. San Francisco stood rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake and fire, exemplifying civic renewal. The Model T (1908) accelerated mass motoring, making "roads good and bad" a social question as much as an engineering one. Skyscrapers remade skylines - New York's Woolworth Building opened in 2013 - while Chicago showcased steel-frame ambition and planning ideals after Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan. The temperance crusade, driven by the Anti-Saloon League, foreshadowed national Prohibition (1919-1920), and nickelodeons and feature films confirmed the "movies" as a democratic art. Baseball, department stores, and advertising marked everyday modernity.

Lucas's American chapters survey media, taste, and identity circulating across the Atlantic. Sensational headlines - he repeats one verbatim - typified fiercely competitive newspapers cultivated since the heyday of Hearst and Pulitzer. Electric "sky-signs," Coney Island

amusements, and early mass transit turned leisure into a spectacle economy. Universities and museums, from Harvard and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to Philadelphia's collections and Mount Vernon's preservation, articulated republican pedigree. Essays on "vers libre" and "revolt" register modernist experiment around 1912, when Imagists promoted free verse and new rhythms. Discussions of pronunciation, humourists, and R. L. Stevenson locate kinship and friction in a shared Anglophone culture.

As a cultivated Edwardian familiar to Punch readers, Lucas balanced wit with tact, filtering novelty through a conservative humane lens. His book entered a lively market for travel miscellanies powered by Thomas Cook itineraries, imperial curiosity, and cheap print. Because his journeys preceded 1914, readers later saw the collection as a snapshot of a connected world before wartime rupture. The essays' comparative method - testing India, Japan, and America against English norms - both broadened horizons and preserved hierarchies typical of the period. Their contemporary reception valued poise, clarity, and gentle skepticism, while today they register how global modernity and empire mutually shaped observation and taste.

Synopsis (Selection)

Table of Contents

INDIA

Sketches of colonial India move from street-level impressions and social encounters to city portraits of Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, and Calcutta, with set-pieces on rituals, spectacles, and wildlife.

The tone is curious and gently ironic, balancing wonder with skepticism as it contrasts imperial change with long continuities and attends to small textures—noiseless feet, garlands, and birds.

JAPAN

First impressions of Japan dwell on landscape and scale—the rice fields, a first glimpse of Fuji, and spa-country—set against exacting social codes in manners, funerals, theatre, and geisha life.

Lucas’s style turns light, precise, and aesthetic, exploring surface charm, miniaturization, and restraint while hinting at deeper economies of feeling and craft.

AMERICA

A brisk American tour spans cities and transport, skyscrapers and domestic architecture, universities and language, history sites and amusements from the movies to the ball game and Coney Island.

The essays adopt a comparative, headline-pricked energy to weigh democracy, prohibition, publicity, and scale, noting a tension between civic idealism and commercial display.

INDEX

The index serves as a navigational coda, underlining the book’s range from place-portrait and character sketch to topical vignette.

Its cross-references echo the collection’s mosaic method and the author’s collectorly eye for particulars.

Roving East and Roving West

Main Table of Contents

INDIA

Table of Contents

NOISELESS FEET

Table of Contents

Although India is a land of walkers, there is no sound of footfalls**[1q]**. Most of the feet are bare and all are silent: dark strangers overtake one like ghosts.

Both in the cities and the country some one is always walking. There are carts and motorcars, and on the roads about Delhi a curious service of camel omnibuses, but most of the people walk, and they walk ever. In the bazaars they walk in their thousands; on the long, dusty roads, miles from anywhere, there are always a few, approaching or receding.

It is odd that the only occasion on which Indians break from their walk into a run or a trot is when they are bearers at a funeral, or have an unusually heavy head-load, or carry a piano. Why there is so much piano-carrying in Calcutta I cannot say, but the streets (as I feel now) have no commoner spectacle than six or eight merry, half-naked

fellows, trotting along, laughing and jesting under their burden, all with an odd, swinging movement of the arms.

One of one's earliest impressions of the Indians is that their hands are inadequate. They suggest no power.

Not only is there always some one walking, but there is always some one resting. They repose at full length wherever the need for sleep takes them; or they sit with pointed knees. Coming from England one is struck by so much inertness; for though the English labourer can be lazy enough he usually rests on his feet, leaning against walls: if he is a land labourer, leaning with his back to the support; if he follows the sea, leaning on his stomach.

It was interesting to pass on from India and its prostrate philosophers with their infinite capacity for taking naps, to Japan, where there seems to be neither time nor space for idlers. Whereas in India one has continually to turn aside in order not to step upon a sleeping figure—the footpath being a favourite dormitory—in Japan no one is ever doing nothing, and no one appears to be weary or poor.

India, save for a few native politicians and agitators, strikes one as a land destitute of ambition. In the cities there are infrequent signs of progress; in the country none. The peasants support life on as little as they can, they rest as much as possible and their carts and implements are prehistoric. They may believe in their gods, but fatalism is their true religion**[2q]**. How little they can be affected by civilisation I learned from a tiny settlement of bush-dwellers not twenty miles from Bombay, close to that beautiful lake which has been transformed into a reservoir, where bows and arrows are still the only weapons and rats are a staple