

Holiday

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PREVIEW

In April: Carl L. Biemiller looks at Northern New Jersey, John Horne Burns sails Ireland's River Shannon, and Arthur Bartlett roams about Concord and Lexington. While Budd Schulberg gobbles Dave Chasen's food in Hollywood, Debs Myers enjoys the warmth of Will Rogers' Oklahoma home town. Bemelmans tells how to be a prince, and Joseph Wechsberg takes a box at the Paris Opera. There are also: a Natchez Pilgrimage and cocktail party Fashions.



MARCH COVER

"I'd become an antiquarian by the time I finished the anniversary cover," writes Artist Robert Geissman. "I browsed through piles of handbills and posters for samples of old lettering. An arms collector was persuaded to lend me his prize, a Kentucky long rifle, complete with brass patch box. The rare Zachary Taylor whisky bottle, circa 1830, came from the safe of an antique shop. For my final touch of authenticity: the stables of Kentucky's famous Calumet Farms."

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SEEING THE WORLD

A famous traveler tells of the rewards to be found in journeys to new places

by LORD DUNSANY

I THINK that travel comes from some deep urge to see the world, like the urge that brings up a worm in an Irish bog to see the moon when it is full. Personally, I have a fondness for London and its clubs and the talk therein; but contrast, which is the essence of all the arts, is also a considerable ingredient of life. And so, there are times when the charm of London suddenly palls. Once I thought that some walls in my house would look better with trophies on them, and so I went to Africa to bring back various heads. But below that practical and obvious motive lay deeper motives not so easily explained, a longing to hear again songs sung by men living a long way from here, to listen to tunes made by instruments strange to us, in valleys less fertile than ours, but romantic with a wild strangeness.

There are innumerable by-products of travel, so that even if a big-game hunter got no heads at all, his time would not have been wasted. One of these by-products is thought. One does not think about a thing that he sees day after day; but travel shows him continually new things, and he wonders at them as he goes by. Nobody thinks about a lamppost or a paving stone, but let him find a cut stone half buried in the Sahara desert, and he begins at once to think.

Also, travel gives one leisure for thought. It may not be conscious thought, but, surrounded with eternal things like stars and mountains and storms, and in close touch with elemental needs like those for food and water and shelter, one cannot fail to be touched by the grandeur around him and the simplicity of those needs. As ingredients for thought it would be hard to find any that are better than grandeur and simplicity.

Touchstone of Comparison

If one were asked to write about the manners and customs of the English people he would, I suppose, first have to take a good look at England. But, when he had done that, how would he evaluate the manners and customs he had noticed? Take the custom of chopping off the tails of spaniels and terriers. If one never left England it would be impossible for him, unless he were a philosopher, to see anything unnecessary or inhuman in that custom. And probably not until he had traveled to lands in which people do not cut off their dogs' tails, would he be able to see the senselessness and cruelty of this horrible mutilation. That is only one thing, taken at random. By the mere laws of chance, one is bound to find customs abroad that are not so good as ours. These, also, give us the touchstone of comparison without which our customs are likely to appear eternal and unalterable things. So that travel is



CAPRI. One of the blessings of travel is that we come, sometimes, to lands whose scheme is the old, untroubled scheme that existed before the fuss and clatter of modern machines.

not so much the pursuit of knowledge, as a way of enabling us to pursue it.

To understand anything, some comparison is essential. Yet it is not to examine our own customs, or to search for ones with which to compare them, that anyone travels. These things merely come to one on the journey. Looking back on old journeys, I see all kinds of things that I did not expect to find: seas bluer than I thought the color could be; stars of another hemisphere over the veld, where little winds whisper uneasily; stars of our own hemisphere, shining as they shine on the Sahara, large and close and blue; and stars that preserve an astonishing calm at times when the earth is troubled—and a curious contrast they make.

Then there are sounds that ring unexpectedly through strange lands, suddenly enchanting a forest or mountain; organ-voiced birds of the equator, or music played on reed pipes by shepherds in rocky valleys where the sheep of the Arabs manage to find some sustenance even at the edge of the Sahara; and the mighty voice of the lion, tearing through the African night; and the song of men at work along the African coasts; and the Indian jungle waking with its great chorus of peacocks; and an Arab drum, or an Arab song, alone in the night. And there is the glory and brilliance of clouds seen from above, where a cloudy day is more gleamingly bright than any other weather can make it; they, too, should go in my inventory.

Then there are the great wonders of the world, Abu Simbel, the Pyramids, the Sphinx, the Taj Mahal and the Parthenon. At the Parthenon or the Sphinx one may sit and gaze for any length of time, without feeling the least trace of monotony. Another thing at which one can gaze interminably is mountains. St. Mark's in Venice or the Mosque of Santa Sophia have something eternal in them, and mountains seem to be made of nothing else. One can never say of any range of mountains that one knows it sufficiently; for mountains are never the same, but change hour by hour.

I have not been a mountaineer, yet I think that merely to look at mountains might be a sufficient motive for any man to travel. For, one comes back from any sojourn among them as from having opened a great book on whose pages is written an unknown language. To pore over the strange and lovely writing seems to bring one near to some ancient wisdom. I remember the solemn slopes of the Alpes Maritimes with the twilight on their faces, seated there like a company of royal prophets, talking with the stars. And in the same lovely land of Provence I remember the Estrellas, totally different from the grave Alps, a bright purple under the evening star.

Southward lies Africa with its Atlas Mountains, many ranges of rough brown rock that slant across the north and form a garden wall for the desert, which the imagination of the Arabs has named the Garden of God, though it grows no flowers for man. From the

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peaks of any of those mountains one may see a good segment of the enormous blue circle of our planet, for, strangely, the Sahara is always blue. Sunset among those mountains is a glory of color hardly to be imagined. Travelers wishing to see that wonderful sight should remember to turn east at sunset, just as in a cinema you look away from the lantern and at the screen. Then the glory of the sunset will be seen on the mountains and, as the sun sinks lower and the light goes higher, the blue robe of the Sahara creeps up the sides of the mountains, till only their heads are ruby and all the rest of their bulk is robed in sapphire. At dawn look westwards, and see the mountains turn to great bouquets of roses, before the sun shines full on them and shows them to be only brown rock.

For what else does one travel, besides the memory of having communed with mountains? It doesn't really matter, because, whatever the reason of one's going, travel is so full of the unexpected things that set one thinking, and thus teach so much. One may pick up a flint in the Sahara and, comparing it with old flint knives on our Downs, notice that it was not so much Man that designed the shape of that flint, as the flint itself. Or, near the Sahara, one may see more august stones, for remnants of the Roman empire lie between the sea and the desert, and fragments of their sentences lie carved on marble.

Of course one may travel so quickly, encased with his own customs and prejudices and points of view, that he may see little of other ways of life. Even to travel in wild lands with another white man is to miss some of the splendor of the wild. When a person has a friend from his own country with him, he looks at the people of the land he has come to, and the things that they do, with interest, but from outside, and agrees they are queer. But when he is alone with people of different language and color, then he is within their way of life, and it is he that is queer.

Blessings of Travel

Nothing is more destructive to inquiry and the knowledge inquiry brings, than to carry about with one a standard way of how everything should be done. A man new to travel will note with surprise that there are certain groups of letters that certain peoples are unable to pronounce. Some of the peoples of India, for instance, cannot pronounce "st" at the beginning of a word, and pronounce "straight," "estraight." But the traveler who learns to reflect soon notices that English-speaking peoples cannot pronounce *ts*, and that when Lake Tsana got into the news a few years before the war it lost its *s*, for no other reason I know of than that we could not pronounce it.

Indeed, the more I travel, the more I see that there is no foreign custom, however absurd it may seem to us, that cannot be paralleled by a custom of our own. How often in England I have heard people deriding the old Chinese

custom of deforming their women's feet, and not one of the deriders had a straight big toe. The Chinese used to deform their women's feet, I believe, with linen bandages: we do it with leather. I do not see any important difference.

Crafts are alluring motives for travel, because, when one sees how a people works, he knows something of how it lives, and even the crudest pan or basket, when made by human hands, shows something of how human beings thought or felt, as the work of our machines can never do. Indeed one of the blessings of travel is that we often escape from the jurisdiction of our machines. We come, sometimes, to lands whose scheme is the old untroubled scheme that existed before the fuss and clatter of machines came to so derange our wits that, as a result of a thousand labor-saving devices, we say there is no longer so much time as there used to be.

Dawns in Egypt

Talking of time, I shall never forget, though it happened nearly forty years ago, leaving a railway station, fussed by collecting my luggage and all the cares that go with traveling by train. As I rode into the desert I looked at my watch, and realized that time mattered to me no longer. The sun was low, and the light mattered, but time was nothing to bother about. And for the next month or so dawn and noon and sunset mattered, but no longer minutes or hours. Jackals cried at night, dogs barked from distant encampments, sometimes one of our camels grunted, a wind ran about and whispered, Arabs prayed, and all the rest was silence—and I was free of the system whose slaves say there is not enough time.

Cities are full of interest and the desert is full of loneliness, and yet, looking back on my memories, I seem to have got as much pleasure from one as the other, and from forests, too, and from rivers flowing from the Back of Beyond into the White Nile through marshes full of blue lilies, and African lakes turning opal at evening, and saffron dawns in Egypt, and plains where the oryx are.

In travel, to sum up, one sees life and how it is lived by our fellow-travelers passing across this planet. In a zoo one sees many animals, but of how they live one sees nothing. Even if the elephants had their tusks there, they would not flash in the African sun; the lion's roar is of interest heard in North London, but the whole of the traffic does not stop when he roars, nor is every voice hushed, as the forest is hushed in Africa when his mighty voice arises. And the poor hippopotamus, with his little bath in the zoo, gives a man no idea of his rollicking herds that bathe where the Nile is narrow. And as for men, one may watch their customs in London, but it is not so easy there to distinguish between them and their customs. I return to what I wrote in my first few lines—contrast is needed so as to see what are merely fashions and which is the spirit of man. And travel provides such contrasts with generous hand.

THE END