

THE LITTLE CRITIC

Stay-at-Home

EVERYONE is going away! But I am left behind. Left to glean disturbing glimpses from the meagre news and pictures that wander back. No one dreams of sending back satisfactory accounts. No! They wait until their return, so they can have the satisfaction of beholding my envy in my demeanour. Peitaiho, I am informed, offers wonderful swimming accommodations. Also, one can ride donkeys there. I am sorry for the donkeys. Poor things, it is often impossible to find them in the pictures for the largeness of the person obscuring them. Tsingtao has swimming facilities, I know. But apparently the social life is far more attractive. The gaiety, if I am to believe all I am told, exceeds that of Shanghai at its best. No wonder it is crowded. Weihaiwei and Chefoo are quieter. But delightful, the yearly pilgrims assure me. Mokanshan devotees rave about the hills and their quiet charm. Kuling is larger, and therefore gayer. Apparently, Hongkong is synonymous with Repulse Bay. And Repulse Bay means swimming—in the daytime, and of course in the moonlight. The scenic beauty, I am assured, is marvellous. Not forgetting the winking stars set on the hill, even to the tip of the Peak, and reflected in the myriad waves that lap the bay.

Far South, in Australia, it is nearing the middle of winter. But it is never very cold, excepting high on the mountains, where the visitors and people who live there indulge an acquired taste for winter sports amongst the snows. Down from the heights, there is honey all the year around. Drained from golden combs, it has the tang of the gum trees and the winter sunshine within it. Sports of all sorts are in season the year around. Boating, fishing, riding, racing, driving and hunting. A wild glamour enhances every charm.

From the South Seas, infrequent notes or postcards hint at tropic splendors. The depths of Siam are mentioned by hardier travellers. Angkor Vat visited. A tiger hunt. Elephants at work. Temples in Bangkok. Bali claims its share of attention, particularly from the men, who incline to linger over sightseeing there. A scroll of Batik arrives, with quaint figures rather reminiscent of ancient Egypt painted on it. Pictures of strange ceremonial dances in weird costumes accompany it. There is a grave little god, fashioned from some hard wood. He squats sombrely, a wooden knife thrust into a sheath across his back. Although a miniature, it is fascinatingly real. I am more than eager to replace it.

From Europe, my brother and his wife scratch gay hieroglyphics on postcards, postmarked Genoa, Aden, Port Said, Paris, London, Fontainebleau—*ad infinitum*. Dozens of friends appear in the minute snapshots they

deign to send at long intervals. At the pyramids—by the Sphinx—Naples Bay—Garden at Versailles—Devonshire country lane. I should not mind all that so much, but Gordon goes into rhapsodies about Devon cream. And he knows I adore clotted cream. And there is none to be had in Shanghai. I can imagine vividly the succulent richness poured lavishly over fruit, cake, toast and jam. In my brother's case, I am sure he needs no excuse whatsoever but the cream. He will dispense with the accessories, and do full justice to its delights.

Whilst he is filling himself on cream, his wife deems herself justified in leaving him to his gluttony, and enjoying the sights of Paris. She has encountered many good friends there, who immediately show her around the shops, the operas, the beautiful woods outside Paris, and ancient castles. The shops appeal to her greatly. Wait until she come home, she writes, and she will have oceans of news to tell me. Meanwhile, she sends scrawls about six to eight lines long, leaving me in long suspense.

I hear of someone revelling in the delights of Hawaii, and its far-famed beaches. Famed at least in songs, although the best beaches have yet to be discovered by the song writers. I suspect the natives keep them carefully covered or camouflaged when any of the species is around. The moon must not be forgotten. No one who has visited the islands ever had the chance to forget it. It is thrust under one's notice whether it shines or not. It often declines to oblige its followers, whereon the visitor is assured of its reality, not once, but many times. But the people are delightful. I forgive them the moon.

Someone else is busy viewing sky-scrapers in New York. I doubt I shall ever have the courage to do as they do, and look down on the city from the top of one of them. The prospect of falling umpteen stories to the ground appalls me. And most certainly I should fall if I were ever so misguided. Others bask in the Californian sunshine. Some day, I must match a Californian against an Hawaiian, and see who will win a debate on climate. Probably the Californian would win, because the Hawaiian would have the beaches and the moonlight also in his mind, thus distracting it from the main issue. But the debate would be worth hearing.

Visitors to California must gorge themselves in the most disgusting way on fruit. Pictures of them perched up ladders, beaming broadly amidst hundreds of luscious oranges or grapefruit stir me to greenest envy. Not that I am too fond of either fruit—it is the principle of the thing I object to. Why should they be able to wallow like that, and then send their pictures back to gloat over me, left at home?

And when they write happily about strawberry short-cake—thin layers of cake, buried beneath fresh strawberries, smothered in whipped cream, and topped with powdered sugar.....I dissolve in tears and unfulfilled longing.

But.....Chinese food, I am reliably informed, falls short of my standards. Szechuen, Foochow, and other kinds of cooking other than pseudo-Cantonese cook-

WEEKLY INTERVIEWS

Mr. G. Findlay Andrew, O.B.E., F.R.G.S.

Interviewed by P. H. MA

THE story of the China International Famine Relief Commission is largely the story of one steadfast worker, a noble soul—G. Findlay Andrew. Fifteen years ago, he answered a call from China to help to stem the invasion of famine. Today he is still actively working for its cause and engaged in social service. He was extremely modest when I interviewed him, but there was something lofty and inspiring in his cheerful expression as I fancied him indulging in a fleeting panoramic review of the eventful years in which millions of dollars had been expended and colossal work of lasting value accomplished not only in the restricted sphere of actual famine relief but also in improving relief methods and devising preventive measures, developing rural credit, undertaking highway and irrigation projects, and initiating the co-operative movement in China. Mr. Andrew's face shone as that of a man who had done a great piece of work and done it well.

"On December 16, 1920," he began reminiscently, "the most tremendous earthquake ever to have been seismologically recorded took place in Kansu. Without warning, the first terrible shock came on that fateful evening of a cold winter's day, between 7 and 7.30 o'clock, and for ten minutes the Court of Death held high revel to which over one million lives paid tribute. The shaken mountains, flowing from their lofty eminences like sand sweeping from a desert hill, poured down their thousands upon thousands of tons of earth in an avalanche of death, burying whole villages and thousands of prosperous farmsteads, under hundreds of feet of earth. Homes and cities collapsed like packs of cards, crushing the inmates to death or burning them alive in the fires that resulted. Streams and rivers were dammed in their courses, inundating large tracts of cultivated land, or bringing down houses which had escaped the avalanche of earth from the flowing mountains. Well do I remember, on October 12, 1921, just at sunrise, coming out on the top of a range of mountains at the foot of which lay the once prosperous village of Ma Chien Ko. That village had had a population of 700, but not one soul had escaped to tell the tale of disaster. Ten minutes had sufficed to transform that fair vale into a veritable valley of death.

"I was home in London at the time when the C.I.F.R.C. sent for me to become director of relief. It was practically

ing are unavailable. My favorite black eggs are unknown, excepting in a few sea-ports. And everything is frightfully expensive.

If I must stay at home, it is with the happy consolation that, even if my mind starves, my stomach will be filled as I desire it. And I can always see the pictures of these places. I would rather stay at home.

LIN YIN-FENG

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