SOME SIDE LINES IN THE TROPICS.*

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No one who lives so near the borderland of exotic countries can help getting hungry now and then for a vista of the lands beyond the sea and with the sentimental glamour which the folk lore stories cast over these, the interest grows as the years go by.

We have had our travelers to bring home the accounts of the countries to the south of us for many years. Most of these were tales of hardship; now with the growth of a twentieth century progress, things are different.

Fifteen years ago Havana was a proverbial pest hole, Panama the mausoleum of French industry and the whole Central American coast and even as far north as Brownsville, Texas, was shunned during certain seasons as if a death warrant was a part of a passage contract.

The air of a modern salvation has blown over these lands until today the dangers are minimized and the prospect so changed that tourists are actually making excursions for pleasure and recreation to parts which formerly were visited under necessitous circumstances alone.

The commerce of the world carries with it the safeguards of its enterprises and much credit is due to some of our own people for their creation at the ports of call of the shipping from this port. We are soon to see the avenue of passage to the Western worlds opened for our benefit, and with such progress there must be the disappearance of attending evils.

Havana stands exemplar of what sanitation means, and most of our American cities can take lessons in municipal cleanliness from this Antillean metropolis, now the much appreciated pleasure mart of the southern seas, with her broad *Malecon* stretching for miles

along the great blue Gulf of Mexico, a driveway with no superior; her *Prado*, a glorious promenade, all environed by a Latinic people, loving the things of life which are set in a minor key. An entrepot as well, and cosmopolitan in its population first and in its customs also, so different in her richness of gentle courtesies from her older Continental prototypes.

And our Central American peoples carry, too, the instincts of the same original peoples, but, more remote from the avenues of travel, they have yet to grow into places of attraction for the traveler.

Panama in 1904 was hardly attractive. The solemn cathedral in the Central Square, the roosting vultures on almost every housetop and well nigh every tree, with every third shop a drug store dispensing quinine at a cent a grain, and doing large business at that, cast a burden of depression which was hard to lose. Then, the water carrier called at the house entrance and you were safer if you took bottled water, without ice, usually.

Culebra in those days resisted the little nibbles of the two or three steam ploughs at the sides of those great hills. The dinky little French cars would still run off the track, now and then, and Uncle Sam had not grown serious at the task of the Panama Canal. Our sanitarians had, however, and already water-works were under way for Panama; Ancon had been revolutionized, and at Empire, Las Flores and Gatun the soldier boys slept safe behind screened windows and doors; yellow fever was still occasional and malaria a desperate enemy to the project in hand.

I am hungry for another vision soon, to pay tribute to the master geniuses who have conquered all, and more than anything else, have demonstrated that the pest holes may

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become pleasure resorts if only a proper use of intelligent application of sound principles prevails.

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There was a small colony of lepers under government supervision in 1904. I understand more cases have since occurred and have been segregated; not surprising when you consider that the people who have come to Panama have all parts of the globe as their homes.

Thirty years ago none of the English colonies in the Gulf and Caribbean was free of yaws, the frambesiform disease, and hospitals or lazarets prevailed for the care of this condition. Syphilis, leprosy and yaws were housed together in most places. Now this disease is rare, but every now and then some observant medico comes back from a few months' sojourn in the tropical countries to the south of us, describing some new disease. We have yet to know the life story of some of the exotic types, where names are even strange and with the various problems in fevers, malarial types and others, insect-borne diseases and those of local types, there is a field for our medical men as large as it is interesting.

Pinta, which is dismissed by the casual observer as a "sort of ringworm," still is a curious sort in its various colors; carate, too, a disease of the French African colonies, but which is sometimes seen in our hemisphere. But the medical phases of the tropics have been touched on already and by better hands than mine. We are not yet awake, however, to the possibilities of all sorts of research, and the field grows more and more large.

What a world of endeavor opens when you think that from our own borders to the Andes there are landmarks of a civilization as old as history—emblems discovered, particularly in Guatemala and in Yucatan, which have led some imaginations to locate the Garden of Eden not far from Merida on the Yucatan peninsula, and the ruined temples with their Phallic and Phenician suggestions open up

a speculation which lets the mind grow wild in anticipation of a field which has not yet given up all its treasures.

When Voltaire laid his *El Dorado* in this new country to the south of us, he only borrowed a phase of local legend for his own imaginative tale. The mysterious longing for the lost Atlantis has built about the stories of these peoples a thin fabric of history which is in its traditions three thousand and more years older than Moses and yet the story is untold.

If I have injected too much of froth into this evening of scientific discussion, you will pardon it, for I am so constituted that even if my every day work is only skin deep, I can yet dream that the labors of our coming children lie to the south and in more fields than ours, and if the borderland of science lies near the art of life, then we may be privileged to stop and pluck a few of the fragrant themes which mark the path of strenuous endeavor.

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Perhaps I may be forgiven for my excursion if I end this paper with a few more side lines related to practical suggestions.

The bath is growing to be a world fashion, but in the desire for cleanliness and comfort often the result is over-reached by too much washing in the tropics. The natives have suggested the remedy by anointing themselves, so the custom has come about to use fresh coconut oil after the bath to relieve the dryness of the skin. Incidentally, this procedure prevents and relieves the prickly heat, which because of its prevalence in hot lands is also called lichen tropicus. The heat of the feet is avoided by slipping in a piece of banana leaf, and this is even practiced here in New Orleans, in the summer months. Perhaps as much might be done by the simple procedure of keeping the feet dry with dusting powders.

The personal hygiene in the tropics is always a concomitant of a successful and pleasurable visit, and perhaps this may be best presented in aphoristic form.

FOR THE INTENDING TRAVELER TO THE TROPICS.

Be sure you are in good health.

See your dentist; diseases of the gums prevail in the tropics. Likewise visit the ophthalmologist; the tropical glare is trying on good eyes, obviously on bad ones.

Keep early hours for rising and retiring. Experience has proven that work is not best in the middle of the day. Exercise can, therefore, be better borne.

Fall and winter are the best seasons.

Scarlet underwear is suggested as serviceable against the chemical rays of the sun, and such is now made. Khaki cloth for clothes, or a similar color, helps to foil the heat. Hats may be worn a la mode, of cork with green lining, or the plantain or banana leaf may be used inside the ordinary summer straw.

Woolens of light weight are recommended both for underwear and footgear, as superior to linens or cotton, but this is yet debatable from the point of general comfort. The advantage in longer wear and less laundry may make woolen preferable.

Water must all be taken on suspicion. When bottled waters are not to be had, water should be boiled for drinking purposes, and, when possible, even for baths and other toilet uses.

Food should be regulated by the conditions found. The natives live on light diet and usually make the heavy meal the last of the day. It is a good rule that the diet should be regulated by the day's work or effort. Meat is scarce and therefore seldom eaten. Canned

foods are a last resort and to be avoided when not necessitous.

Green vegetables are a frequent source of dysentery and should either be sterilized or well cooked before being eaten.

The advice is often given to avoid excess of iced drinks in the tropics; the advice is easy to follow, as ice is at a premium in most places and the habit of doing without it is easily acquired. The local means of cooling drinks in earthen vessels exposed to the circulating air is a welcome device and should be learned early.

The milk wagon in the tropics is frequently either the goat or the cow in *propria persona* and you draw your milk on the instant. The fertility of the goat in the tropics (especially in Cuba) makes this form of milk popular and the richness of the milk makes it desirable.

Alcohol and bad livers are mentioned in the same breath in the tropics and the practice of drinking stimulating beverages is limited to those too foolish to know or learn better and to those who have acquired a temperate habit in the matter.

The prevalence of mosquitoes always threatens malaria and a precautionary morning dose of quinine with another for a nightcap may prevent the full profit of the pernicious anophelines.

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Much besides might be said of what may or might be done in the tropics, but the anticipation of other new fields may lead some of my hearers to a like endeavor and we shall leave them here.

A PROGRAM FOR LOCAL AND STATE ORGANIZATION FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF TUBERCULOSIS.

Dr. J. W. Petit, of Ottawa, Ill., read before the A. M. A. Conference at Chicago, February, 1912, a thoughtful article embodying a scheme for organization by communities, towns and states for the suppression of tuberculosis. It considers the nature of infection, character of organizations needed, the

style of buildings most suitable, the influence of climate, the length of time required for a cure, the kinds of cases most benefited, and many other plain, practical features of great interest to all engaged in fighting tuberculosis. It is worth while to all such to write to the author for a reprint.

The Journal regrets that circumstances prevent the presentation of a full synopsis of this timely and valuable paper.