

BRISBANE

THIS WEEK

- Descend Among Bicycles
- Many Strikes and Worries
- Two Flags That Clash
- Two National Hymns

This column, like others to follow, written in Europe, traveling about by automobile, will represent an effort to see things clearly, and describe them simply, according to the old formula.

You descend from the ship at Havre into a world on wheels, bicycle wheels, a change from the world on automobile wheels left on the other side of the Atlantic.

Arthur Brisbane

Here working men and women, thousands of them, ride to and from work, ten to thirty abreast, depending on the width of the street.

They have the right of way, properly, in a democracy.

So it used to be in America, when automobiles were new, small boys shouted "Get a horse," and New York state law compelled the automobile driver to stop his car and engine, while a farm wagon passed, if the farmer raised his hand, or even lead the farm team past his machine if the farmer requested it. Here the car stops, while bicycles circulate around it on both sides. Similarly, you stop, later, meeting flocks of sheep, on roads across the salt marshes of the Vendee.

France is a land of bicycles, of many political parties, and, at the moment, a land of strikes. Like all other European countries, it is a land of permanent war scares. America looks upon war as a distant, improbable possibility, and when it comes spends billions on airships that do not fly, ships that never go to sea, and similar evidences of patriotic dollar-a-year efficiency. Europe's nations live in a state of fear, as an American family might live if it knew that, at any moment, well-equipped gangsters from next door might enter, "shoot up" the household and set fire to the house.

American travelers leaving the boat by railroad, descending in Paris at the Saint Lazare station, were surprised to find crowds fighting each other, not waiting for Germany, crowds made up entirely of Frenchmen of different political opinions.

Some wore ribbons with the red, white and blue colors of the French flag; others, more numerous, wore the plain color red. One side sang the "Marseillaise," national hymn of France since the revolution. Others wearing small red flags sang the "Internationale," official song of the Communists the world over, from Moscow to Harlem. Crowds grew bigger, the Frenchmen sang the two hymns at each other, more and more violently, with excellent voices, not one out of tune, all knowing the words of their respective hymns. The "Marseillaise" says, "Let us go, children of the fatherland, the day of glory has arrived"; the other says, "Arise ye prisoners of starvation; arise, ye wretched of the earth."

It was a scene never to be described, now that Dooley is dead, and Artemus Ward. Nobody bothered the descending foreigners from across the water. A few Frenchmen hit other Frenchmen, not hard, then agents of the Surete, whom we should call policemen, gradually dispersed the crowds, that met and sang at each other again the next day. They live in the suburbs and work in Paris, or vice versa, and, meeting in the railroad station, it enrages them to encounter those that sing the wrong hymn and wear the wrong colors.

Those singers have chests like drums, complexions that reveal countless billions of red corpuscles and voices that could be heard, almost, from Los Angeles to Santa Monica.

One of them broke off at the sad word "starvation" and said to your narrator, who had politely congratulated him on his vigor: "Tenez, tenez mon bras, et j'ai soixante sept ans"—meaning, "Here, feel my muscle, and I am sixty-seven years old."

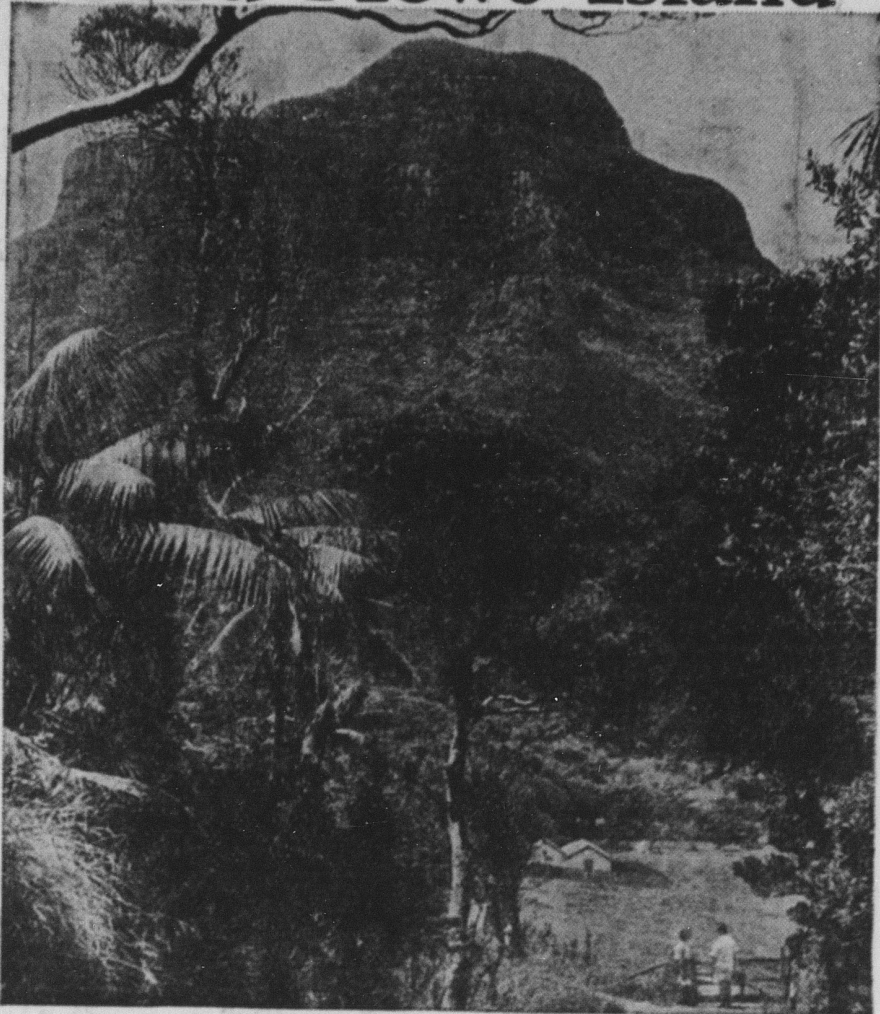
The muscle rose in a biceps like a small melon.

The duty of a visiting foreigner is to observe, describe and not comment; but this writer, had he accepted the invitation to speak at the American club in Paris recently, would have suggested that the French, whose only earthly possession is France, should be careful not to tear that property apart, especially with Germany ready to gather up the pieces.

This crosses the water by mail, is not new, and not news, when you see it. Only heaven knows what might happen in a week.

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Lord Howe Island



Mount Lidgbird on Lord Howe Island.

Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

"DECORATED with palms"—how often the phrase occurs in descriptions of social events! Wherever florists ply their trade and have a hand in beautifying public occasions, palms play an important part. Without them hotel lobbies, steamship salons, dance halls, and churches would lack their refreshing greenness.

Often referred to as just "florists' palms," they are taken for granted, like many of our common blessings. In reality, they belong to a small group usually called Kentia palms, found only in remote islands of the Coral sea, and their present widespread use throughout the civilized world is one of the romantic tales of horticulture. A little more than half a century ago they became an important article of commerce, and few people even today realize from what a tiny bit of the earth's surface that particular commerce originates.

In 1788 Lieut. Henry Lidgbird Ball, en route from Sydney, New South Wales, to Norfolk Island, discovered a remarkable pyramid of volcanic rock rising straight out of the Tasman sea to a height of 1,818 feet. He described land to the northwest, which further investigation revealed as an island of unusual conformation and striking beauty.

In honor of Richard Howe, the British admiral who played an important part in the war with the American colonies, Ball called his contribution to the British Empire Lord Howe island. His own name was given later to the massive rock which first attracted his attention, and Balls Pyramid is his enduring monument.

Lord Howe island lies 360 miles east of Australia and 480 northeast of Sydney. It has the form of a boomerang, with its length extending nearly north and south, the concave side facing Australia and the precipitous eastern coast arched against the surging Pacific. In an air line the northernmost part of the island is only seven miles from its southern tip and the greatest breadth is but a mile and a half.

Formation of the Island.

The northern half is hilly, but the highest point is only 700 feet above the sea. The southern half is mountainous, rugged, and wild. Two peaks occupy most of this area, the southernmost, Mount Gower, rising directly from the sea to 2,840 feet, while its fellow, Mount Lidgbird, is but 300 feet lower. The mountains are thickly wooded, so far as their precipitous sides permit, and are separated from each other by a lush valley into which man rarely penetrates. Between the northern hills and Mount Lidgbird is rolling country with fertile soil and a plentiful water supply.

Extending from the northwestern tip of the island straight south to below Mount Lidgbird is a broad coral reef, notable as the southernmost coral reef in the world. Between this reef and the island itself lies the lagoon which it protects, its eastern side bounded by a bathing beach of clean white sand some two miles long. The reefs prevent vessels from approaching close; they must anchor about a mile offshore, and passengers and freight are then landed, by means of motor-towed barges, at the jetties near the northern end of the lagoon.

When Ball first landed on the island there were no signs of the genus Homo; he and his men were probably the first human beings who ever set eyes on its beauties. The richness of the vegetation, the abundance of birds, and the numerous rivulets of clear, cold water indicated plainly, however, that here was a little paradise awaiting settlers. Nevertheless, for many years the island lay neglected.

About 1833 or 1834 a small company from New Zealand, including several Maoris, were brought to

Lord Howe, but in two years they were so discontented that they were taken back to their old homes in New Zealand, and Nature once more was left in untroubled possession.

But not for long! American whaling vessels, scouring the southern seas, found that Lord Howe island was an excellent place to replenish their water supply. There were no government officials to deal with, no distractions to tempt desertion, and no natives with whom the sailors could get into trouble. By 1840 reports of these numerous visiting whalers reached Sydney, and two families established themselves on Lord Howe to grow fruit and vegetables for the crews. So well did the settlers prosper that others followed, and by 1850 a small community was well rooted on the island.

Excellent Climate, and Soil.

The climate is delightful, with much bright sunshine, yet a plentiful supply of rain; abundant breezes, but no cyclones; never a trace of frost, but very little excessive heat. The soil is fertile, and nearly everything which grows in warm, temperate or subtropical countries can be grown on Lord Howe. The island has such a tropical appearance and there are so many palms that the entire absence of coconuts is striking. The explanation is that the mean annual temperature is not high enough for that heat-loving palm.

With the discovery of petroleum the decline of the whaling fleet began and hard times came to Lord Howe. Without the whalers, there was no market for the produce, both Australia and New Zealand being too far away.

But necessity often leads to discoveries which prove epoch-making, and so it proved in this case.

There is no record of who first noticed the unusual hardness of the palms growing so abundantly or who was first to offer them for sale. But a demand for the palms from Lord Howe gradually developed, and long before the Twentieth century dawned they were in use all over the world wherever there were florists.

Four Kinds of Residents.

Governmental machinery is simple. Local affairs are handled by a local committee of three, chosen by the islanders themselves. The marketing of the palm seeds and relations with the Australian government are handled by the Lord Howe Island board of control, composed of three New South Wales officials in Sydney, the island being politically a dependency of that state.

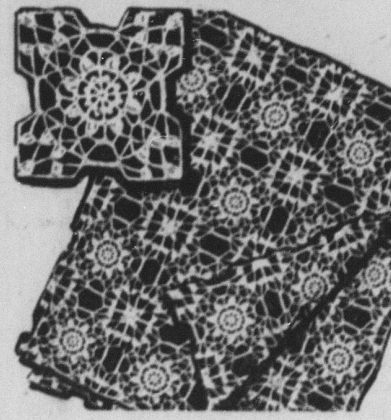
The residents on the island are divided by two lines of cleavage into four natural groups; one line separates those born on Lord Howe, and hence known as "islanders," from those born elsewhere, and so known as "non-islanders." This cleavage is not the basis of a social distinction; if the islanders look down on the non-islanders they conceal their feelings perfectly.

The second line of cleavage separates "participants" from "non-participants," an economic division of the island's income from the sale of the palm seeds. To be a participant one must be an islander, or else married to an islander, and a resident for ten years or more.

The degree of participation depends on age and sex. All males twenty-one years of age, or more have 25 shares in the allotment. Women of like age have 10 shares, but on marriage their holding is increased to 25 shares. A married couple will thus have 50 shares when starting their home. For each child born to them 20 additional shares come to them, with a maximum of 35 shares for children.

At the present time the population of the island is less than 150 and the number of participants scarcely half that. The non-participant group consists partly of non-islanders employed in various occupations,

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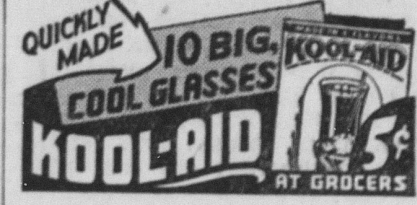
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