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SECOND PRIZE

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A Trip to London

In the year 1949 A.D. I received the greatest thrill of my life. My father, who was appointed one of the delegates from New Zealand to sit on the Dairy Commission in London, informed me that he intended taking my mother and me to with him. These were the conditions, that the Headmaster of our school, would allow me to commence my Christmas holidays as soon as examinations were over at the end of November, and that I produced a very good report on my year's work.

good
As this trip was to be considered part of my education, it was decided that I meet my father after school hours, while our travelling arrangements were being made. What a busy time we had! First to the Government offices for our passports, then to the photographer's for photographs for the passports, then over to the Bank to arrange about money with which to travel, and "Letters of Credit", for money to spend, and to pay our expenses while in London. We were all very

disappointed at the very small amount we were allowed to take out of the country, and knew that our spending would have to be very carefully planned.

We were very pleased when we visited the "Pan American World Airways" office to learn that our return reservations could be made at the same time as we booked our passages to London. Also that we could have a one day "Stop Over" in beautiful Hawaii with all our expenses paid on the way to London, and on our return, another day in any of the large cities of America. As we had relatives in Boston we chose New York, and arranged for our relatives to meet us there.

m / It was only necessary for us to purchase one ticket each, and this included all transportation to and from the airports, meals, hotel accommodations and all incidental services.

The last week before our departure seemed to drag endlessly and I began to worry in case something turned up to prevent our going.

Everything was ready the evening before our departure; the taxi ordered to take us to Whenuapai, the New Zealand Air Terminal, and the telephone exchange clerk instructed to phone us at 5 a.m.. But I am sure we were all awake most of the night, and we were waiting at the door, when the taxi arrived, feeling that our journey was really about to begin.

At the Air Terminal we were 'weighed in', along with our baggage, our passports and tickets examined, and we were told to sit down and wait until our flight number was called. At last the call came, and tingling with excitement we walked across the tarmac in a drizzle of rain. A smart air-hostess was waiting at the top of



TWO TYPES OF PLANES WE
TRAVELLED IN



the landing steps to greet us and show us to our seats inside the plane. I was struck by the smallness of the cabin inside, compared with the size of the monster machine outside, as we went well forward up the steeply sloping gangway. We were then shown how to fasten our safety belts for the 'take-off'.

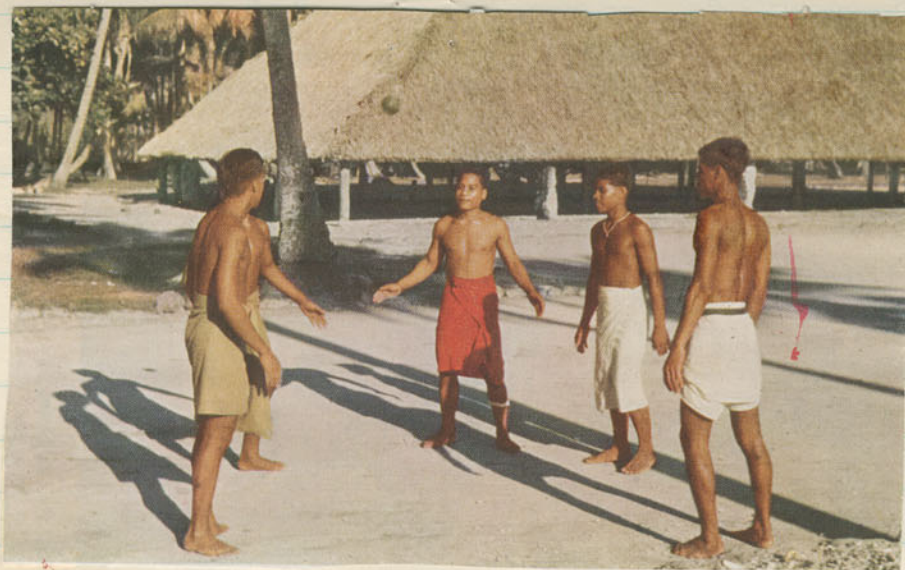
The engines started up, at first quietly, and then increased to a deafening roar. We were off! But no, we were only turning round again. The engines burst into terrific sound, ~~they were~~ ^{the airplane was} gathering speed. I gripped the arms of my seat, and quite suddenly we were airborne. I looked down and saw a gap of about twenty feet between us and the ground and my heart gave a strange thrill, we were flying! We were climbing now, still climbing.

A movement at my side and the hostess was coming round with breakfast. She placed a tray on my knee with cups and plates fitting into special grooves. The plane suddenly dropped and the hot coffee went up in the air and came down all over the tray.

I did hope it was not going to be a rough trip and hoped I wouldn't be sick. The machine gave one more dive and then shot up and down. I closed my eyes but now it was quite calm. When I looked again we had climbed above the clouds, the sky was blue and the sun was shining. The clouds lay below us like clean soap-suds, like cotton wool softer and whiter than you could ever imagine.

This was good, I felt quite excited. Especially when the hostess came in with a fresh breakfast tray, and I realised how hungry I was.

Magazines were now brought round, but in spite of all the interesting things around me I



NATIVES AT FIJI



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felt drowsy, my eyes closed and I slept for hours, it seemed. When I awoke one of pilots came from his cabin and asked my father if ~~he~~^{we} would like to go up with him to the cabin, and we had a very interesting hour while he explained all the different instruments. I learned that we were flying at a height of sixteen thousand feet and that we were travelling at three hundred miles an hour. Our "bite" as the pilot called the plane was a DC.6.

Our first stop was at Tiji and I did not like the descent at all, nor did I appreciate the beauty of the tiny islands that seemed like green emeralds set in a golden cloth which was the sea in the light of the sunset. The plane banked at a horrible angle, and it made me giddy to look out of the window. The ~~actual~~ actual landing was perfect, but we had to circle round for some time before coming in, in order that another large plane might land first.

We did not see much of Tiji because we were whisked away in cars to the hotel for the night, and dawn was just breaking when we were back at the drone ready to start off on our next long hop to Hawaii and Honolulu. The time passed very quickly with playing games, reading, sleeping and two more visits to the cabin at the pilot's invitation.

Honolulu, the millionaires' holiday resort, was more than up to our expectations. Imagine a little sun-drenched island in the tropics, tall palm trees swaying in the lazy trade wind with beaches of golden sand.

We received a cordial welcome at the hotel and were informed that we had chosen the right time to arrive, for a "pukha" hula-hula show was being staged that evening, and would be starting in a few minutes' time. For two hours we were entertained by

There seems to be some appreciation of the beauty in spite of the denial

the clever natives, beautiful singing, dancing and acting, but how weary we were as we made our way to the Hotel with the splash of the breakers on Waikiki beach ringing in our ears.

The next day passed all too quickly, and so did the night, when we were awakened before daylight to have a flying start for the long hop to San Francisco - and America!

At San Francisco we changed planes, and we were on our way again to fly across the face of Canada, to experience the thrill of the Rocky Mountains, the discomfort of the air pockets, and also to find we were now becoming seasoned travellers.

When we arrived at Montreal we were very weary and glad of the comforts of the Hotel Central and the lovely dinner served. We went for a walk in the city and were struck by the beautiful window displays and profusion of goods in the shops.

Before leaving Montreal for Moncton we were advised to have our warmest clothing ready, and we knew why when we arrived to find ten inches of snow on the ground, and I amused myself breaking huge icicles, more than three feet long, off the roof of one of the buildings.

Soon we were airborne again and heading for St. John's, Newfoundland. What a place! All we could see were ice-fields and the aerodrome. We just had time to post a couple of postcards and "scoff" a few cakes and hot coffee while our bags were opened again for Customs inspection, and the "kite" was being refuelled.

Now we were off again, this time with St. John's to be our next stop. I was only half awake when my father buttoned up my overcoat and wrapped a scarf around my neck. As I stepped out of the warm, comfortable cabin, and clambered down the steps

see
P. 2
you were to
visit New York
what happened
to New York?

into typical Icelandic weather, I knew the reason why we had to be wrapped up.

It was only a short trip to and from the airport's cosy lounge, but we were buffeted by the wind and chilled to the marrow by the intense cold. We were served a delightful meal by Iceland waitresses and were told by the "skipper" of our plane, that we were making this detour, via Iceland, because of bad weather.

And now we were ready for our Atlantic hop with the next stop Shannon, Ireland. Such a thrill of excitement seemed to be experienced by passengers and crew alike in this last stage of our journey.

The time passed very quickly ^{for} we were studying our splendid maps of London and planning how much we could see in the short time which would be at our disposal while in that great city.

But in four hours we were peering through the thick perspex windows to get our first glimpse beneath the clouds of the Emerald island of Ireland.

Driving rain beat in our faces as we ran for the shelter of the airways building. Here we sampled real Irish hospitality, loving the Irish brogue of all the attendants who served us.

As we enjoyed the excellent meal, where food was in abundance we thought of the rationed food we must now look forward to as we drew nearer to England.

"Next stop London!" we said as we entered our plane for the last hop of our wonderful trip, and in one and three quarter hours we were circling Heathrow airport on the western outskirts of London.

Having landed and taxied in towards the reception buildings, and the plane being "cleared" by the airport doctors, we proceeded to disembark. After our party had passed through the Customs authorities, we were



PICCADILLY CIRCUS

ushered into one of the large waiting rooms where we were met and welcomed by an official from the High Commissioner's Office.

Transport was all arranged and after an hour of driving through streets of heavy traffic we arrived at our hotel - the Dorchester, near Hyde Park - where lunch was awaiting us. During the lunch there were discussions of an informal nature and a time table drawn up for the important official discussions with the British Government authorities. To my delight there were three other boys travelling with their parents and together we planned out our trips around London.

It would take another essay to tell of all my impressions, so I am going to relate those which remain in my mind, the clearest, nearly twelve months later.

We were all agreed that we would like to unravel the mystery of the Underground Railways, so a close examination of a Tube map, showing all the routes, was made.

We made our start from the hub of the system and proceeded to the Piccadilly Circus tube station. We could easily have passed the entrance to the tube station, just on the edge of the pavement. We walked down about four steps and then along a passage expecting to reach a train platform at the end, but this opened out on to a large circus known as the Booking Hall. The clerk was most helpful and suggested a ticket to Waterloo Station and told us we would be travelling under the River Thames. We walked forward to the gate where our tickets were checked and had our first thrill of a ride on the Escalator. Fortunately we saw the notice to step on with the left foot first and managed quite well.

While our mothers waited at the top we tried walking down faster than the stairway as we saw



ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL & LUDGATE HILL



BIG BEN, HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT



A LONDON POLICEMAN THE
STARS LOOK UP AND CALL HIM
WONDERFUL

others doing, and in a few moments become experts. We followed green signs for Waterloo, made two more turns and met another Escalator which took us further down to our train, which was just pulling out. This did not matter for almost immediately another train pulled in, the doors opened as if by magic and a voice said, "Hurry on, please!"

Of course the trains are Electric and very comfortable with their basket-chairs, but it was only a few minutes and we were through Charing Cross, under the River, and then Waterloo.

After walking along passages we came to the lifts which took us to the level of the great Waterloo Station. We were fascinated with the train departure indicator, electrically operated, showing the platforms from which the different trains depart.

An obliging policeman suggested that we return to the Dorchester by another tube route and that we re-cross the Thames by the Westminster bridge. It was only a few minutes walk to this historic bridge and as we crossed it we had our first glimpse of Big Ben on the Houses of Parliament.

The bridge led us to Westminster Square and ~~at~~ had time permitted we would ^{have} liked to turn up Whitehall, along which we could have walked to Buckingham Palace, but that was for another day.

We left ground level at the Westminster Tube Station, descending in a lift to the train which took us to Piccadilly Circus. Here we had to change trains for the Piccadilly Line and after travelling along several passages we had to take an Escalator to a higher level to catch our train at Hyde Park corner.

During our visit we often stood on street corners, especially Hyde Park corner, just watching ^{the} policeman control the dense traffic, often with four lanes on



THE PALM HOUSE, KEW GARDENS



BUCKINGHAM PALACE



A LONDON FLOWER-GIRL

9.

each side of the road.

How I would love to write at length of our trips round London from the top of a bus; of our thrill at watching the changing of the guards at Buckingham Palace at 11 a.m. on so many days of our brief stay in London, especially the day when the King and Queen came out on to the balcony to watch the ceremony; of our visit to the House of Commons, a wonderful privilege arranged for our party while the House was in session; to write of our first White Christmas; of the pantomime on Boxing Day; of our visit to the waxworks of Madame Tussaud; of our trip to Her Gardens where we met one of the Head Gardeners who had been to New Zealand and wanted to talk about our Rangitoto Island; of the London fog, thick as pea-soup and black as Egypt's night, and how scared we were as the policemen, with their amber glass torches, directed us to our hotel from the tube at Hyde Park corner.

So many wonderful, beautiful and historic places we visited, many of them scarred as the result of the bombing in the recent war, but still London, the centre of our wonderful British Empire of which we are so justly proud.

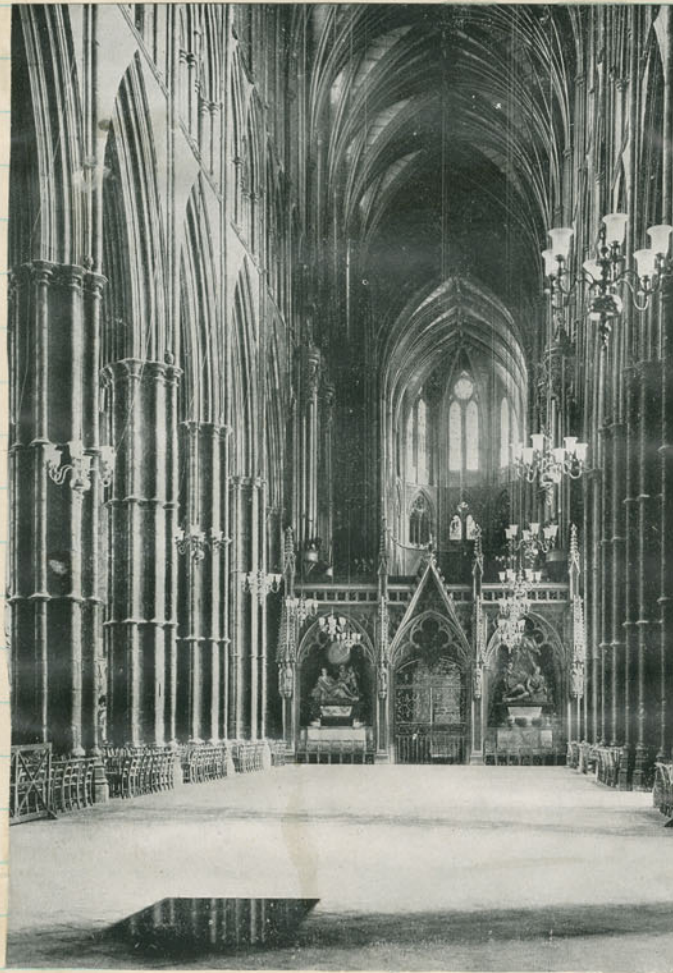
But I will conclude my essay with our visit to Westminster Abbey, which is a beautiful building, and it is so tragic that it should have been damaged by War Bombs.

As we stood in the dim light I tried to grasp the fact that the foundations of this building were laid over nine hundred years ago, and to realize that where I stood was the traditional setting of historical ceremonies, such as coronations, and royal marriages. That here were the tombs of many Sovereigns, the Unknown Warrior, and many other famous men. Here we could see the famous Coronation Chair, the Ancient Stone of Scone, and the more recent addition of the R.A.F. Memorial

sentence

Chapel.

The Dean of Westminster preached the morning we attended and I noticed he took no part in the preliminaries of the service. The atmosphere of that service will ever remain with me and it made a beautiful ending to our ^{wonderful} "never-to-be-forgotten" trip to London," for after the service and lunch we made our way to Heathrow Aerodrome, where at 2 p.m. we were to 'take off' on the "North Star" air-liner for our long flight home.



THE NAVE OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

A+

Very good.

A First-class essay. Very well written
with a good knowledge of his subject
& an ability to describe what he has seen.
It lacks imagination & originality,
however, its value being in its detailed reporting
of sights and experiences. This study appears
to be more a report of first-hand
experience, rather than an imaginary trip.
Also it takes a long time to arrive at
its destination - London.