

The Editor Writes Home From—

SOUTH AMERICA

(Number Thirteen)

Rio de Janeiro (written March 21, 1939, at sea)

"I presume that it is quite an event in Lawrence for one to go to South America," said someone on the boat. "On the contrary," I answered, "it is rather commonplace, for the people of Lawrence travel widely. I think it true that there is more foreign travel from Lawrence than from any other city in the state despite the disparity in size."

This thought comes to me at this time when I attempt to give a pen picture of Rio de Janeiro, a city known thruout the world for its beauty and charm. What can one write that will do justice to this great city? What scene might a great painter select for his canvas that would give anyone more than a fragmentary idea of the blue waters of the Atlantic as they surge upon the beaches of white sand, or dash into white foam upon the great rocks of reddish brown? What song would the musician catch, or what rhythm would he attempt to put into notes?

One may see and feel the charm that is here. The glorious mountains, crowned with mist, the green and greedy jungles pushing aside the works of man; the freedom and joy of youth sporting in the tropic sun, or in the cool waters of the beach, but how is it possible to give to others what you have seen, with your eyes, or to impart to them the sweet and seductive whole—that is Rio.

A magnificent setting for a city, with a foreground of beautiful waters and a background of majestic hills and mountains. Well paved streets and boulevards, lined with trees and flowers. Great buildings bringing you a bit of France, Portugal and of the bustling energy of the New World. Stately and graceful monuments amid royal palms, and luxurious flowering trees and shrubs. Streets thronged with unhurried people; tramways with every available inch of toe space or handhold occupied; stores, markets, casinos, cinemas, hotels and lovely homes, that in part is Rio.

A cosmopolitan city of a million and a half souls. People about the same in height and build as we, but of darker complexion, due in part to the tropical sun, and in part to the not too far distant past when races began to cross in populating a new world. A people courteous, kindly, good looking, and evincing promise for the future—that, too, in part, is Rio.

Arriving about noon, we took lunch on the boat, and then walked thru the attractive building and offices of the Touring Club of Brazil to our waiting autos. Our drive took us over Avenue Rio Branco, one of the most prominent thoroughfares of the city, and upon other great avenues, past wonderful beaches to the station of the cable car which ascends to the top of Sugar Loaf. This peculiar rock formation is twelve hundred feet high, and is one of the best known rocks in the world.

Seen from a little distance the car swinging below the cables from which it hangs, gives the impression of a spider crawling upon a single strand of its web. The ride is taken in two parts, and at the first stop there is a station surrounded by a garden, in which there is a pool where there are two crocodiles. These lazy saurians lie almost entirely submerged with the exception of their eyes, which stand out like the headlights of an old-fashioned auto.

Why do we take such a ride? Perhaps there is no sensible answer, but others have done so and we are willing to take the chance. Mrs. Simons has never taken a ride in an airplane, altho she went up once in a dirigible, but she took this trip without being urged.

At the first stop one gentleman, a member of our cruise party, decided he had gone far enough and went no further, but the longest part of the ride was ahead. Someone remarked that he had been a little unnerved by the statement that the cable was renewed every four years, and the time would be up tonight. We went to the top where there is an excellent view of the city and bay. It would be like the view from an airplane. It reminded me of the time I rode in a similar car over the whirlpool at Niagara Falls.

On our way back we drove around by the office of the Power & Light company, where I left my letter from Benny Carman, to his cousin, F. C. Scoville. That night after dinner we accepted an invitation to be guests at "Urca," a night club and casino. After watching the games

of roulette until time for the program, we sat at our table and watched the show. One feature was new to me in which thru the action of a mirror, the orchestra continues to play upside down until it disappears and another orchestra emerges from the rear and takes up the music.

Instead of a group of Brazilian entertainers the company was composed of fair skinned, good looking girls from England. One of the singers, this one a Brazilian, had fallen in love with a chap who, altho married and with two children, gave up his home for her. She had been divorced from someone who had been paying good alimony, but the alimony faded with the new love. However, the girl was said to be drawing \$75 a week, or seventy-five dollars a month more than President Vargas, who receives \$3,000 a year.

The next day we drove to the Tijuca mountains and had for our guide a fine Brazilian youth, 16 years old, who spoke English fluently and was every inch a man. He is a freshman in the university and is studying to be a chemical engineer. We were sorry that he had been engaged by others for the afternoon, as we liked him.

After luncheon in the Casino Copacabana, we took the cog wheel railway for a ride up Corcovada mountain upon which is the colossal figure of Christ, which overlooks the city by day, and at night is illuminated so that it may be seen for miles. After leaving the train we entered the elevator which is pulled up the last 100 feet or more, to the platform upon which the statue rests. It was this elevator which made the cable railway to Sugar Loaf seem as safe as an armchair on the back porch. It really was the scariest thing I have ever ridden upon, and is doubtless quite safe. But if the car had broken loose there wouldn't have been more left of any of us than could have been sent home under an airmail stamp.

Corcovada mountain is about 2,500 feet high, or twice as high as Sugar Loaf. Words cannot give any idea of the wondrous view that was before us. We looked down on the city, on its many beaches, on the harbor, on Sugar Loaf, and saw the little mark at the dock which was our 750-foot long ship. We took a cold drink to steady our nerves and walked down to the train. Once was enough for the elevator.

The evening of the second day we spent with Mr. Scoville at Joa, and we shall never forget the beauty of the night, the brilliance of the stars, the ocean beach nearby, the choice Brazilian food, our interesting host, and the ride to and from the delightful spot.

The third day was given over to another ride thru the city and the fourth day to shopping. On the last day we had the pleasure of having Mr. Scoville with us at lunch on the Nieuw Amsterdam. We thoroly enjoyed his company.

We were a little surprised to learn from our guide, on one of our rides, how great a part little charms and amulets play in the lives of people one would hardly believe to be the victims of superstition. One lady said that as it was unlucky to have the living room of your home facing the ocean, she had remodeled the home she had recently purchased so that the dining room had the ocean view, which avoided the bad luck.

We had learned that black magic, or voodooism, had a great part in the lives of the black population, and that white magic was equally prevalent with the whites. But we remember some of our university friends at home, would drive 10 miles or give up a trip altogether, rather than continue after a black cat had crossed the path. A black cat ran in front of my automobile once and it was bad luck for the cat, for I could neither turn out nor stop.

Just one more thing. Anyone who comes to Lawrence by railway sees little of the beauties of Lawrence from the stations. Usually docks and piers are dismal places, but at Rio the ship docks within 50 feet of growing trees, flowers, and fine buildings. Perhaps this

added attraction cannot be duplicated in any other city in the world.

Lest you might think we are concealing something from you we must add that it is hot in this tropical capital, especially in the sun, but at night, and during some hours of the day there are cooling winds which help a lot. W.C.S.