

Australia's Great Barrier Reef

The Barrier Reef of Australia is one of the world's miracles—a 1,200 mile long barrier between the coast and the open ocean—a wall as strong as it is made of reinforced concrete, which has been made by tiny lumps of animated jelly, bearing the fantastic name of polyps.

The polyp is barely visible to the naked eye; he resembles a sea anemone, and he follows the human custom of preying on creatures even smaller than himself. These he waylays with well poisoned darts, and completes the job by swallowing the whole. The time from its victims accumulating around the polyp and so forming the little builders being linked together in a sort of marine builders' union whose bonds are even tighter than those of a modern labor organization.

As time speeds on the structure rises, shells, seaweed, foraminifera attach themselves, sand accumulates, and thus the reef is built.

To the scientist the Great Barrier offers a unique field of research, for the marine fauna have not been studied to any great extent, and the hidden possibilities are tremendous.

The structure and foundations of the reef itself should form an irresistible lure to the geologist, and the wide variety of plant life which has managed to secure a footing here and there throughout the whole length

should send the botanist into raptures.

There are already some industries established along the reef and the natural facilities exist for the creation of many more. In the past pearl shell has been a great source of revenue to adventurous souls, who, equipped with small luggers, have employed native divers to scour the reef for shells.

Again, there is the beche-de-mer. He is nothing but a sea slug, shaped like a cucumber, and usually about 12 inches long and 2 inches wide. Imagine such creatures in a suburban cabbage patch. What consternation they would cause!

But, unlike his land brother, the beche-de-mer is a friendly little chap.

Acquire Liking For It.

White men shy clear of beche-de-mer soup at first; later on they acquire a liking for it. The genial Chinaman, however, has a natural taste for the sea slug, and the bulk of Queensland's output is shipped to the Orient.

Side by side with the docile beche-de-mer is the pyramidal sea slug or trochus, who cheerfully yields his beautiful shell, striped with white and crimson bands outside, and a rich nacreous hue within, to the Barrier Reef profiteer, who ships it away to Japan. The Japs promptly turn the shells into pearl-shell buttons, which they send back as a sort of object lesson in progressive industry.

The giant turtle could also be made to do his bit towards enriching Australia if he were properly handled.

His shell is of considerable value, and his flesh provides a tasty dish for epicures.

Sponge abounds along the reef, and although no high-grade varieties have yet been found in large quantities, still coarse types, suitable for cleaning cars and machinery, and scrubbing out baths are plentiful. Here then is another potential industry.

And when meat and fish are scarce and dear in Melbourne, why should not an expedition be sent to the Barrier Reef to catch some of the multitudinous varieties of edible fish which are found there? Or why should not the dugong, or sea cow, be yarded and slaughtered to provide meat for the city markets? The dugongs, like all other inhabitants of the Barrier Reef region, is a friend of man.

He not only supplies meat, but his oil is supposed to be very efficacious in the treatment of lumb complaints—it certainly is useful in softening green hide and leather.



Rupert Hues says that American laws are the laughing stock of Europe. Well, let them laugh, they have little enough to laugh about in Europe.—Nashville Southern Lumberman.

The Plain Citizen and His Newspaper

Mr. St. John Ervine has an interesting article on newspapers in the World To-Day (formerly World's Work) for February. He gives his views on the newspaper readers of today, and the general tendencies of the newspaper which are likely in the near future.

"The truth is that nine out of ten of the readers of widely-circulated newspapers rarely read the political articles contained in them," boldly asserts Mr. St. John Ervine. "These people are not passionately attached to any cause, and their chief desire is to get on with the business of existence as easily and agreeably as possible."

"They are good-natured and imperturbable, and their lives are lightened by that toleration which is to be found in people who are slightly cynical about everything, rather than in people of idealistic temperament. They are not deeply instructed, nor are they consumed by a craving for knowledge; but their instincts are sound."

"This great multitude, more commonly found in England than in any other country, is, in fact, guided by its instinct more than by its intellect; and perhaps the most notable part of that instinct is a deep distrust of extremity."

"The plain citizen in England, even when he is not aware of it, is dominated by the belief that the greatest amount of truth is to be found about midway between two extreme and opposite opinions; and out of that belief has been evolved the great doctrine on which the whole policy of England is based, the doctrine of Compromise. It is a common sneer against the Englishman that he is a compromiser, but the sneer does not make him change his character."

"Unwillingness to compromise denotes an arrogance of mind which no human being should possess, for those who refuse to conduct their lives on the principle of 'give and take' assume that they are absolutely right, and that those to whom they are opposed are absolutely wrong. The sanity of the English mind lies in its recognition of the fact that absolute rightness is not an attribute of human beings at all, and that the hard and discouraging job of keeping a civilised community together can only be accomplished by compromise between diverse beliefs."

"The young plain citizen begins his study of the paper at the page where the sporting news is given, and probably by the time he has reached his destination he has just managed to read that page. The young citizeness (who may not be called plain) begins her study of the paper at the page where the serial story is printed—and probably ends it there."

"Hardly any of them, male or female, old or young, start their studies on the 'leader' page. When they wish to know what play they should see, they do not turn avidly to the work of the dramatic critic: they ask each other for advice, and the person who says, 'I saw a jolly good play last

night—you ought to go and see it!' has far more authority with the plain citizen than the wisest and most erudite dramatic critic in the world."

"It is facts such as these which explain the singular discrepancy between a circulation of a million and three quarters a day and a ridiculous turnover of 20,000 votes at a General Election."

"A man does not necessarily agree with the opinions of the paper he buys; he may, on the contrary, profoundly disagree with them. The most widely circulated paper in Liverpool, the ably conducted Daily Post, is a Liberal journal, but the overwhelming majority of its readers are Conservatives. As many Conservatives as Liberals read the Manchester Guardian."

The Morning Post has readers who are not Diehards, nor even Tories; and it is generally believed that the Daily Herald has a wider circulation in Belgravia than it has in Bermondsey."

"It is likely, I think, that the daily newspaper will become less and less concerned with opinions, and more and more concerned with information."

Leading articles in daily papers show a tendency to shrink rather than a tendency to expand."

"The habit of buying several papers is spreading; it will spread still more when the cost of production decreases. Journals of opinion are becoming commoner as the cost of publishing journals of information grows; and the end of this period of transition in newspapers may be seen on the day when a man buys a daily statement of events and a weekly statement of opinion on them."

"But in the matter of opinion and the making of opinion authority will rest in the future, as it has in the past, with those who have proved their right to be consulted by their countrymen."

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