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I

Empire Essay.

"Description Of an Air Journey From Auckland To London"

The Gnomkins began it all. As I lay in bed reading about them, I tried to forget the preparation of my Empire Essay, but somehow it just would not be forgotten. Exclaiming "Oh dear, history and geography are so dull to write about!" I switched off the light and decided to tackle the wretched thing in the morning. After this noble resolution, I fell asleep.

I was awakened by dozens of angry little Gnomkins who were

endeavouring to push a large dictionary into my mouth. They demanded that I should swallow the words I had shaken about the dullness of history and geography. When I begged for mercy they whisked me into a small plane saying "We'll show you, my man!" and in no time we were circling the city. Waving a hasty farewell to Rangitoto we set out in a westerly direction bound for Australia. I soon overcame my fear of the Enemlins' wrath and they became very pleasant travelling companions.

During the journey across the Tasman they told me stories of the gallant aviators who had made a daily air service possible.

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and that a film is being made about Kingsford Smith who did so much of the pioneer work.

Very soon we were approaching Sydney with its magnificent harbour bridge. It was hard to believe that such a great city had grown in such a short time from a mere penal settlement. We could not linger there but before leaving for Darwin we flew over Canberra, the capital of Australia, a well-planned and beautifully laid-out city. Fortunately, jetliners fly at a very low altitude and we had no clouds beneath us to hinder our view as we travelled.

Soon we were winging

our way over the great pastoral regions of New South Wales, with its immense rivers and wonderful grazing lands. The temperature grew warmer and the beautiful pastures were replaced by poorer land and then by desert. Houses were many miles apart and I was told that the lonely settlers depend on planes and radios for contact with the outside world and I heard of the flying doctors who serve these lonely outposts. Darwin was soon reached - a small northern port which played a great part in the defense of Australia and suffered many Japanese bombing raids.

On we flew across Tropical Seas until we flew over the Dutch East Indies where our

troops are still helping to keep law and order after the Japanese invasion. How beautiful Java and Sumatra were with their dense tropical vegetation, bright flowers, gaily plumaged birds and strange insects and reptiles. Flying low, we plucked luscious pineapples, bunches of bananas and other tropical fruits. We passed huge plantations of coffee, rubber, kapok, cocoa, and rice and we watched the natives making beautiful things from the precious metals which abound in these regions. I could have spent months exploring these wonderful volcanic islands, but we could not tarry until Singapore was reached.

The town was a queer mixture of native and

European building and people of every race and tongue were there. It is an island city joined to the Malayan peninsula by a great causeway. It was a heavily defended port with a graving dock and a cable station. Although we had hoped it was invincible the Japanese captured it during the war and inflicted many hardships.

Leaving the town we flew over thousands of acres of rubber plantations and over fields of young rice looking like soft green carpets. The Germans told me of the tin mines worked by Chinese coolies which produce one-third of the world's output.

As we headed across the Bay of Bengal, I listened to

tales of the early explorers of these regions: Marco Polo, Vasco de Gama, Columbus and Drake who all sailed these seas looking for trade routes to the east. Still more fascinating were the tales of modern heroes such as Mountbatten and Wingate who, during the war, did such magnificent work for Britain in Burma which lay to our north as we flew.

At length we were over India, land of problems. For the first time I realized how many tribes of people of different races, religions and customs it held and from the Gwerner's conversation I understood how interesting and important had been the work of such men as Blive and Watter

Hastings who had saved India from becoming a French possession. India at present is trying to settle her internal disputes so that she may be given self government. We saw many tea and cotton plantations, fields of flax to supply our rope and linseed oil and teams of oxen and elephants laboriously doing the work which can so quickly be done by machinery in more modern countries.

We wended our way over the jungles with their teak, mahogany and other valuable woods, where lurk fierce tigers and other savage beasts and in whose depths are were swamps infested with crocodiles. The land rose towards

the Himalayas in the north and we caught a glimpse of snow clad Everest, the world's highest peak which has been flown over but never climbed.

Then down we came to Karachi and I saw the natives at close range. There were palaces belonging to princes of untold wealth. There were also lepers and beggars with not a possession in the world. We watched the manufacture of beautiful carpets and materials and cotton and silk. Bullocks & elephants slowly bearing heavy burdens mingled with the fast-running motor traffic of the town. Snake-charmers, street musicians and magicians all practised their arts on the pavement side while here and there a sacked

cow wandered unmolested,
through the town

How hard it was to
leave with only a small
glimpse of such an interesting
country, but on to Lydda
we must go. We crossed
Persia and Arabia, those
countries which have given
us such glorious tales of
Aladdin, Ali Baba, and
Sinbad and which we
associate with deserts, camels,
and date palms and
crowded colourful cities, such
as Baghdad

"And oil" muttered a
gremlin, who seemed to read
my thoughts. He went on to
tell me of the great deposits of
petroleum found there, which
are the cause of many inter-
national disputes.

Deserts and (interrations) oases were passed with occasional ally a fertile river valley and a flat roofed town. I actually saw the Dead Sea before passing over the great modern cities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv so different to-day from the illustrations in our Bibles. We came to refuel at Lydda but did not linger long as the country is at present in an unhappy state of interest over the Jewish question.

Reluctantly passing many interesting places on the shores of the Mediterranean we set our course over war-scattered Europe for London. The more those Gremfins told me of the beauties of Italy, the music of Austria and Germany and the lovely old cities of all European countries the more I

began to descend, but the Glemmlins were firm. Soon I discerned a narrow strip of water which proved to be (a) the wonderful English Channel our chief means of defense throughout the history of our land. Then came London, through which the River Thames meandered unhurriedly. With the aid of the Glemmlins, I picked out the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey and many other places of which I had read. I could have stayed in that plane for ever, but suddenly the Glemmlins became fierce again.

"Now will you swallow those words?" they shouted once more bringing forth the dictionary.

"Yes," I wailed as I awoke and found myself feverishly

ribbling the corner of my Glem
lin book which had slipped
from under my pillow some-
how, I think that (you) to
keep my part of the bargain
I must swallow as many
travel books as possible and
through them perhaps I shall
meet the Glemmins again and
once more continue my
journeying