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CRUISING ROUND THE WORLD

Walter Bachmann, Swiss-born Freeman of the City of London, is no stranger to our readers. Internationally acknowledged expert in every branch of the art of catering, top-ranking member of a large number of professional societies and holder of many medals and distinctions, he has also blossomed out as a writer and publisher. Several of his works, it will be remembered, have received notice in these pages.

In 1958 Mr. Bachmann travelled to the Far East, a voyage he recorded in a book we reviewed at the time. Last year he embarked upon an even more ambitious tour: a cruise round the world in the P. & O. luxury liner SS "Chusan". A full account of this voyage has now appeared in Mr. Bachmann's latest book "ROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS", privately published as were his previous travel books. Handsomely illustrated, it describes the various places visited and the attractions they offer to a tourist who, like Mr. Bachmann, possesses the means and the leisure to enjoy them.

The book clearly reveals the man himself, his unflagging energy, his unfeigned, almost boyish delight in all he saw and experienced, an eye for beauty and a keen interest in the historical and ethnographical background of the peoples and countries he encountered. He is a good mixer and is gifted with a capacity for friendship. There is certainly nothing blasé in his make-up.

Mr. Bachmann's professional reputation and his connection with the R.A.F. placed him in a category somewhat higher than that of the ordinary tourist. This explains why he enjoyed preferential treatment on board ship and in the hotels at which he put up. It also explains the reason why in many of the ports of call he received a welcome usually reserved for the select few or film stars. He also attracted notice in the Press, was interviewed by local reporters and made front-page news in Hong Kong, Singapore and Honolulu papers. In the latter his photograph appeared with the headline "Gourmet finds Hula girls food for the eyes here". In point of fact our traveller took great delight in the native dances performed for his benefit by the Hawaiian girls as he did also in the more reserved and formal company of the Geisha girls in Tokyo earlier on.

As could be expected, gastronomy plays an important part in Mr. Bachmann's account. He reproduces some of the sumptuous menus that came his way, formidable lists of rich and often exotic fare which seemed to have held no terrors to a good trencherman such as he. In a restaurant in Tokyo, renowned for its sea food, Mr. Bachmann absorbed some twenty varieties of raw fish including a helping of octopus, all with much enjoyment and no ill-effects.

Not the least interesting part of the book is a description of the American naval base of Pearl Harbour, scene of the Japanese surprise attack in December 1941. The account of the disaster is exceedingly well done and the description of to-day's remaining traces holds one's attention.

The book (220 pages) is one of the best Mr. Bachmann has produced. As a mild criticism we venture to suggest that the many quotations, ranging from Aristotle to modern thinkers, with which the

text is interspersed might have been omitted or placed at the head of each chapter. Apposite though they are, they interrupt the smooth flow of the narrative. The author is at his best when he gives a straightforward account of his own experiences and impressions, without trimmings.

Mr. Bachmann concludes his book with an appeal for international friendship and understanding. He advances the opinion that those who control our destinies ought to travel round the world before taking office. There is nothing like travel, he writes, to broaden one's horizon, to teach toleration and to help avoiding the folly of war.

We are grateful to Mr. Bachmann for having written such an interesting and thoughtful book.

J.J.F.S.

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