

A LETTER FROM IDYL-EASE

Idyl-Ease—perhaps you never heard of it? It is not really a place so much as a condition attendant upon the Mount Ecclesia vacationists wherever they go. Both Mrs. H. and the Editor have the happy ability of leaving our cares behind whenever we go away from Headquarters. We stop “talking shop,” as we do every waking hour in the ordinary course of things, as soon as we leave on our business trips to Los Angeles or San Diego, save insofar as necessary, and this practice gives us a most beneficent mental rest, which compensates in part for the physical fatigue entailed in the transaction of the actual business.

But that is not Idyl-Ease. You never come across that place—or condition—on a business trip. That would be an impossibility in the nature of things. To reach it you must go through the river Lethe and wash your mind of responsibility—a dangerous process, unless you have set your house in order against all contingencies which may occur during your absence, and secured a return ticket with a time limit to take you back to “Busy-Land.” This we have never before been able to do during the seven years since Headquarters were first established at Ocean Park. What wonder then that for weeks we were on tiptoes of anticipation, just like two school children, at the thought of going on a vacation. Every now and then we found a few minutes to talk about it, even though we were twice as busy as usual, with moving the office and printshop to our new Administration Building and doing the necessary extra work to keep things running during our absence. Mrs. H.’s letters must be answered, the copy for the September magazine must be prepared, so must the lessons and letters to Students and Probationers; no part of the work must suffer for our pleasure. It was hard work, and we were both very tired on the night of the 14th of July, but we knew that if we had left anything undone, we should be unable to get to Idyl-Ease, and that we had set our hearts upon.

Then came the morning of the 15th, the day set for our departure from Mt. Ecclesia, a wonderfully bright Sunday morning. After our usual simple service in the Pro-Ecclesia to nourish our spiritual natures and an equally frugal breakfast to fortify our physical being, we proceeded to the garage and took our seats in “Carita,” as we call our sturdy “Overland” car. A step on the starter, a pull on the lever, a chorus of hearty wishes for “a happy trip” from our assembled workers, a waving of hands and handkerchiefs as Carita leaped forward through the gates of Mount Ecclesia to carry us from Busy-Land to the Land of Idyl-Ease.

And then, presto! We were there; but the funniest part of it is we do not know just when we arrived. We were gliding over roads that we had been over before, through the beautiful San Luis Rey valley, by the old Franciscan Mission, over Red Mountain, by Lake Elsinore, but they were not the same; there was a peace and joy in the air, a calm and a quiet, a balm to our tired bodies and minds, a soothing influence we had never before felt, and Carita purring softly under us seemed to chime in with our surroundings in a grand sweet song of welcome to Idyl-Ease, the land of rest and peace; for today we were not “making time” to get somewhere and do business quick, that we might get back to work as soon as possible, but we were driving leisurely along, admiring hitherto unnoticed views and vistas. We had caught the spirit of Idyl-Ease; we were living only in the present moment and enjoying it to the full, forgetful of past and future, and in a little while our whole being seemed to change and become rejuvenated; we laughed and we smiled and we sang like little children.

From Elsinore the State highway, smooth as a polished floor, led through Colton, California’s chief source of cement—we saw great mountains of it—to Riverside, the great

orange orchard, where the air was heavy with the scent of the orange blossoms which hung side by side with the golden fruit.

This is surely a country that requires superlatives ad libitum to describe, and even then the picture will be entirely inadequate to convey a conception of the reality. It is not the buildings, though as a whole they are beautifully artistic, but it is Nature, for this whole vast section of Southern California is surely a veritable Garden of Eden, with its magnificent palms, its sweet magnolias, its golden oranges and its profusion of variegated flowers which dazzle the eyes wherever we turn. The reader is, of course, familiar with the biblical prophesy about making the desert bloom like a rose. The Editor has at times endeavored to visualize such a transformation, but has never dreamt of anything quite as luxuriant as this, and the wonder grows at the knowledge that 50 years ago there was not a tree on the whole section. The country between Los Angeles and San Bernardino was then called "The Sixty Mile Desert," a happy hunting ground for the few scattered settlers—Mrs. H.'s parents among them.

From Riverside it is only a short drive to Redlands, the most picturesque of the small towns in this section. Here we drove through the famous "Smiley Heights," and as words fail to describe the view, suffice it to say that Smiley Heights is located upon a narrow ridge about five hundred feet high, which divides the great bottomland, upon which it stands, into two vast valleys, which are surrounded by mountains on all sides. As one drives along Smiley Heights one finds a number of places where the ridge is only about twenty feet wide, so that without leaving the car one has from each of these narrow places a most magnificent view of the twin valleys, with their orange groves and orchards stretching towards the distant mountains. It is a sight which must be seen to be appreciated, but once seen it will never be forgotten.

We also visited San Bernardino, the oldest town in this section, and a mining center, but were rather disappointed; so we turned our faces toward the coast again, for we longed for the cooler weather prevalent there.

Speaking of temperature and climate, California is unique. If you know where to go, you may find any temperature you wish on any day, summer or winter, and you will not have far to go either. For instance, it is usually nice and cool on Mount Ecclesia. Did anyone desire to find a nice warm place, Lake Elsinore, forty-four miles away, would be found ideal, and San Bernardino, ninety miles from Mount Ecclesia, is a real hot spot. Or from Los Angeles one may take the electric car on a cool winter's morning ride up to Mount Lowe, six thousand feet above sea-level, enjoy a game of snowball and board the car for a return trip through Pasadena, where straw hats and shirt waists are necessary to comfort, to Venice-by-the-Sea, where the blue Pacific Ocean rolls in upon the sandy beach, inviting one to take a plunge in its invigorating waters.

Our way to the coast led through Los Angeles and one of its many beautiful suburbs, Hollywood. Then came the climb over the "Cuhenga Pass" and soon we were speeding through the fertile "San Fernando Valley" towards the mountains that separated us from the coast. Universal City was the first point of interest. There we saw how the film folks make pictures—imitations of old castles studded the neighboring hills to give color to tales of the time "When Knighthood was in Flower"; cowboys in chaps, corralling cattle, furnishing a striking contrast between the old world and the new, the East and the West. The roving knight and the rollicking cowboy are here identical and it is all in the days work.

Onward we sped, with the thriving towns of Lankershim, Van Nuys and Owensmouth on our right, basking in the sunshine among fruit-laden groves. Gold first drew the attention of

the world to California. But although there is a vast mineral wealth in this wonderful state, that sinks into insignificance in comparison with the wealth contained in the golden grain, harvested on our broad fields; or the golden fruit—oranges, lemons, and grapefruit—hanging in our orchards; or even the black oil, pumped from beneath the fertile soil, and which is furnishing power to turn the wheels of industry. Each of these is of vastly greater worth and industrial importance than any amount of gold could ever be, and even if the writer were competent, it would be impossible to mention all the other sources of wealth that abound here.

Bound for “Santa Barbara,” we next glided down a long, steep, curving incline, called “Canejo grade,” toward the coast, and in time reached “Ventura,” an important oil town, thence for twenty-four miles the highway skirted the ocean. What interested us most on this part of the trip, was “Summerland,” so called for the spiritualistic heaven. This was at one time a very popular camping ground for the Spiritualists; it was, in fact, to the Pacific coast what “Lilly-Dale” is to New York and the East. Now, however, oil has been discovered there, and instead of reaching upwards to the pure ethereal region of the Angels, men with grimy faces and blackened hands are delving into the realms of Pluto, greedily extracting the slimy substance which keeps the factory fires hot, that they may make money, money, money—their God.

It was very curious to see most of the oil wells there, driven in the sea, some four or five hundred feet from shore, and we learned later that one of the Los Angeles oil-magnates has leased a strip of ocean-front tidelands, several miles long, where he intends to drive wells for oil—they are actually pumping oil out of the sea!

Arriving at Santa Barbara, we secured quarters and made up our minds to stay a while, for we had heard much about the beauties of the surrounding country. We also began to make use of our niece, Olga, who accompanied us and was ambitious to become a chauffeuse, having already had some lessons on the “Maxwell” we use to take our mail to Oceanside. She was easily initiated into the mysteries of driving Carita, and the Editor began to take things easier than ever—Idyl-Ease was becoming more and more of a reality.

Between short trips and long rests, the days are passing away, leaving us each evening more fit to go back to Mt. Ecclesia in Busy-Land and take up the work we love, with renewed vim and vigor.