



NEARING SIAM.

Dear W:  
Heat, heat, heat! This business of playing around upon the equator I suppose we can't expect to be a cooling one! Did I tell you about the ceremony of crossing it?

They had a tank rigged up in the bow of the boat and a platform for Neptune and his fair Queen. Each of these—Germans from the boats' German band—must have weighed three hundred pounds. A judge in grey whiskers decided, when the culprits were brought up, whether they should be tossed into the pool, go in head first down a long chute, or by means of several other variations. Things were going beautifully, people were docilely taking the most merciless duckings, when suddenly a mutiny occurred. Someone made a leap for Neptune who, trident and all, went into the tank. Mrs. Neptune went next and the water rose another two feet. Then in went the judge with his whiskers, to say nothing of his assistants, and pandemonium was let loose. It was terribly funny and we all got our diplomas.

There was a glorious sunset that night, something which, contrary to opinion, is rare in the tropics. This one was built up like a great city in the clouds. Even the bar was emptied as we all stood in awestruck silence around the rail.

What can I tell you about Singapore? It is a commonplace and rather nondescript city, disappointingly lacking in that element of wickedness with which rumor has always endowed it. There was a grand ball given for us at the famous Raffles Hotel, but when the orchestra packed up at midnight and went home we couldn't find any place else to go.

We have been steaming up along the Malay Peninsula on our way to Siam. Hard to realize that we are so close to, in fact in the scene of so many of Conrad's stories. This harbor of Siam is full of the strangest, sail-heavy craft, on which whole families live their entire lives. We can see them moving or lolling about in the most home-like fashion. There are miles of sand-bars in the harbor so we have to go in by small boat. Siam is so low and boggy and so intersected by canals that it is like a continuation of the harbor with a slightly larger mixture of land.

We are all terribly excited about Bangkok. We expect it to be one of the high spots of the trip. One Raymond and Whitcomb cruise was received formally by the King of Siam, but as he is now in mourning for his brother, we will have no such treat in store.

We are nearing the shore now, more of this long looked forward to land next time!

"BACK STREET"

By Fanny Hurst  
Cosmopolitan

What is the ingredient missing from that style of writing so admirably illustrated by Fanny Hurst in her new book, "Back Street"? There

is infinite observation, there is penetration, there is intelligence in the choice and planning of material. But the something—the yeast to make it all rise, is not there. One feels as one reads through page after painstaking page—so much effort, so much good material, it is too bad that the yeast was left out. Is that yeast humour, is it fancy, is it some pervading spirit which would give a wider vision and so a better sense of proportion to the whole? Whatever it is, it is lacking and its lack, unfortunately, makes unleavened bread.

"Back Street" is the story of a girl who had that fatal attraction to men which made her her own worst enemy. In St. Louis, where her father kept a small notions shop, Ray Schmidt never was at a loss for traveling salesman to take her across the river to a beer garden, Ray was the "toniest girl in town." Then comes a day when Ray falls in love. But she isn't the kind of a girl that an ambitious Jewish boy wants to marry, so he chooses a staid girl of his own race. Six years pass in which Ray finds life an unsavory business. Then she and the man meet again in New York and she becomes his mistress. Thus begins her pitiful journey through the "back streets" of his very successful life.

The story is touching and though unconvincing at times it is one of the best of Miss Hurst's novels.

Certain Income Forms  
Returnable Feb. 15th

Deputy collectors of internal revenue call attention to the fact that income tax blanks No. 1099 and No. 1096 must be forwarded with affidavits to reach the Commissioner of Internal Revenue Sorting Section, Washington, D. C., not later than Feb. 15. These are the forms in which employers report on salaries paid to employes, interest on notes, mortgages, etc., and rents, royalties and dividends. These blanks have to be filed a month earlier than the individual income tax returns.

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Zion Church Leader  
Killed in Accident

Apostle Frederick J. Rickert, 70, one of the pioneer members of the Christian Catholic Apostolic church of Zion, was instantly killed last week when he was struck by a truck driven by John Meyer, 22 year-old-son of another church official.

A coroner verdict after an inquest called the death accidental but announced that evidence indicated that Meyer had been driving recklessly.

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