

Lord Howe Island



Mount Lidgbird on Lord Howe Island.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

"DECORATED with palms"—how often the phrase occurs in descriptions of social events. Wherever florists ply their trade and have a hand in beautifying public occasions, palms play an important part. Without them hotel lobbies, steamship salons, dance halls, and churches would lack their refreshing greenness.

Often referred to as just "florists' palms," they are taken for granted, like many of our common blessings. In reality, they belong to a small group usually called *Kentia* palms, found only in remote islands of the Coral sea, and their present widespread use throughout the civilized world is one of the romantic tales of horticulture. A little more than half a century ago they became an important article of commerce, and few people even today realize from what a tiny bit of the earth's surface that particular commerce originates.

In 1788 Lieut. Henry Lidgbird Ball, en route from Sydney, New South Wales, to Norfolk Island, discovered a remarkable pyramid of volcanic rock rising straight out of the Tasman sea to a height of 1,816 feet. He decried land to the northwest, which further investigation revealed as an island of unusual conformation and striking beauty.

In honor of Richard Howe, the British admiral who played an important part in the war with the American colonies, Ball called his contribution to the British Empire Lord Howe Island. His own name was given later to the massive rock which first attracted his attention, and Ball's Pyramid is his enduring monument.

Lord Howe Island lies 360 miles east of Australia and 480 north-east of Sydney. It has the form of a boomerang, with its length extending nearly north and south, the concave side facing Australia and the precipitous eastern coast arched against the surging Pacific. In an air line the northernmost part of the island is only seven miles from its southern tip and the greatest breadth is but a mile and a half.

Formation of the Island.
The northern half is hilly, but the highest point is only 700 feet above the sea. The southern half is mountainous, rugged, and wild. Two peaks occupy most of this area, the southernmost, Mount Gower, rising directly from the sea to 2,840 feet, while its fellow, Mount

Lidgbird, is but 300 feet lower. The mountains are thickly wooded, so far as their precipitous sides permit, and are separated from each other by a lush valley into which man rarely penetrates. Between the northern hills and Mount Lidgbird is rolling country with fertile soil and a plentiful water supply.

Extending from the northwestern tip of the island straight south to below Mount Lidgbird is a broad coral reef, notable as the southernmost coral reef in the world. Between this reef and the island itself lies the lagoon which it protects, its eastern side bounded by a bathing beach of clean white sand some two miles long. The reefs prevent vessels from approaching close; they must anchor about a mile off-shore, and passengers and freight are then landed, by means of motor-towed barges, at the jetty near the northern end of the lagoon.

When Ball first landed on the island there were no signs of the genus *Homo*; he and his men were probably the first human beings who ever set eyes on its beauties. The richness of the vegetation, the abundance of birds, and the numerous rivulets of clear, cold water indicated plainly, however, that here was a little paradise awaiting settlers. Nevertheless, for many years the island lay neglected.

About 1833 or 1834 a small company from New Zealand, including several Maoris, were brought to Lord Howe, but in two years they were so discontented that they were taken back to their old homes in New Zealand, and Nature once more was left in untroubled possession.

But not for long! American whaling vessels, scouring the southern seas, found that Lord Howe island was an excellent place to replenish their water supply. There were no government officials to deal with, no distractions to tempt desertion, and no natives with whom the sailors could get into trouble. By 1840 reports of these numerous visiting whalers reached Sydney, and two families established themselves on Lord Howe to grow fruit and vegetables for the crews. So well did the settlers prosper that others followed, and by 1850 a small community was well rooted on the island.

Excellent Climate and Soil.

The climate is delightful, with much bright sunshine, yet a plentiful supply of rain; abundant breezes, but no cyclones; never a

trace of frost, but very little excessive heat. The soil is fertile, and nearly everything which grows in warm, temperate or subtropical countries can be grown on Lord Howe. The island has such a tropical appearance and there are so many palms that the entire absence of coconuts is striking. The explanation is that the mean annual temperature is not high enough for that heat-loving palm.

With the discovery of petroleum the decline of the whaling fleet began and hard times came to Lord Howe. Without the whalers, there was no market for the produce, both Australia and New Zealand being too far away.

But necessity often leads to discoveries which prove epoch-making, and so it proved in this case.

There is no record of who first noticed the unusual hardness of the palms growing so abundantly or who was first to offer them for sale. But a demand for the palms from Lord Howe gradually developed, and long before the Twentieth century dawned they were in use all over the world wherever there were florists.

A few of these palms have begun to fruit in the coast belt of California. But still the world looks to Lord Howe island for its most popular and universally used palm, and the demand for the seed is so great that the income derived from its sale maintains the entire population.

This dependence on a natural monopoly has led to an interesting social organization and a community life of unusual charm. The fundamentally important basis of the community is good, clean, human stock—homogeneous, healthy, and harmonious. About 150 permanent residents make their homes on Lord Howe, and for their income are dependent, directly or indirectly, on the sale of the palm seeds.

Four Kinds of Residents.

Governmental machinery is simple. Local affairs are handled by a local committee of three, chosen by the islanders themselves. The marketing of the palm seeds and relations with the Australian government are handled by the Lord Howe Island board of control, composed of three New South Wales officials in Sydney, the island being politically a dependency of that state.

The residents on the island are divided by two lines of cleavage into four natural groups; one line separates those born on Lord Howe, and hence known as "islanders," from those born elsewhere, and so known as "non-islanders." This cleavage is not the basis of a social distinction; if the islanders look down on the non-islanders they conceal their feelings perfectly.

The second line of cleavage separates "participants" from "non-participants," an economic division of the island's income from the sale of the palm seeds. To be a participant one must be an islander, or else married to an islander, and a resident for 10 years or more.

The degree of participation depends on age and sex. All males twenty-one years of age, or more have 25 shares in the allotment. Women of like age have 10 shares, but on marriage their holding is increased to 25 shares. A married couple will thus have 50 shares when starting their home. For each child born to them 10 additional shares come to them, with a maximum of 35 shares for children.

At the present time the population of the island is less than 150 and the number of participants scarcely half that. The non-participant group consists partly of non-islanders employed in various occupations, partly of islanders who have been away and are not yet restored to sharing, and partly of more or less permanent "guests" who are attracted to the island as a delightful place to live.

Early Bridal Bouquets

Bridal bouquets go back to the three wheat-ears held in the right hand of Roman brides, as a symbol of plenty.

Through A WOMAN'S EYES

by
JEAN NEWTON

ON EDUCATING PARENTS

EDUCATORS at a "Child Helping Conference" recently voiced a plea for parental education as a means of helping backward children.

Huge figures were cited as the cost in one state of reteaching pupils who failed of promotion in school because of conditions arising through parents' ignorance and carelessness. And it was suggested that a small fraction of the amount allotted to training parents in the proper viewpoint toward their children would be a solution to the whole problem.

"With the passing of czars and kaisers has passed the tyranny of autocratic parental government," one educator said. "Today we train the child through obedience, and not for obedience."

One is impelled to the thought that a few enlightened parents do that. Many are still trying to maintain the home as an unlimited monarchy—and when the forces of modern life lead to revolt, they call upon God to witness their martyrdom. When there is no revolt they are unconscious of the evil they have done.

And trying to force the lives of their children into the courses they themselves wish them to take is not the only known parental crime. Lack of appreciation of childhood as a period of life important in itself, not merely as a means to an end which they regard as worthwhile, is one. Another is failure to respect the child as an individual. Perhaps the greatest is lack of effort to understand, to the very limits of their mental capacity, what the individual child has to contend with—from within and without—and striving to the utmost of their ability to provide the opportunity for his fullest expression as an individual. "I got along that way and I guess he'll manage" is the most obvious label to that crime.

If educating parents is necessary to help backward children, it is no less important to give bright children "a break." The more gifted a child is, the more he is in need of wise guidance. The most tragic waste is that of fine energies on the wrong track for the lack of this guidance because of the ignorance or, what is worse, the indifference of parents.

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BEDTIME STORY

By THORNTON W. BURGESS

JERRY MUSKRAT'S TROUBLES BEGIN

JERRY Muskrat watched Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter start on their journeys. Billy was going to a distant brook. Little Joe was going to the Big River. Both intended to stay away until they were sure the trapper, who had just begun to make trouble along the Laughing Brook, would be so discouraged that he would take up his traps.

When Jerry had said good-by to Billy Mink and Joe Otter there



"I Suppose," He Muttered, "My Troubles Are Just Beginning."

had been something of wistfulness in his squeaky voice. The fact is, Jerry would have loved to go visiting also. But he knew that it was quite out of the question. In the first place, he is a slow traveler on land, and he felt that on land he would be in even more danger than if he stayed at home, despite those dreadful traps. Then, again, winter would soon come and he must be prepared for it if he would live through it. Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter do not have to prepare for winter, but Jerry does.

So Jerry sat on the top of his house and watched Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter out of sight. Then he sighed. Then sighed again. "I suppose," he muttered, "my troubles are just beginning. These traps Billy Mink told about were set for him, but I know trappers well enough to know that sooner or later there will be some traps set especially for me."

Jerry was quiet right. Early the next morning as he was making his breakfast on a lily root he caught sight of some one coming down the Laughing Brook. It wasn't Farmer Brown's Boy. It was a stranger. This stranger kept stopping and examining every old log in the water and every hole along the bank. He stopper at three of Jerry's favorite eating places and studied them. Jerry knew just what that meant.

"That's that dreadful trapper," thought Jerry. "He's trying to find out where I am in the habit of going so that he may set traps there. It's clear to me that from now on I shall have to watch my step every time I move."

After the stranger had left, Jerry swam to the places where the stranger had stopped. At each one of them his nose was tickled with a delicious smell. At one place he smelled a carrot, and Jerry is very fond of carrot. At another place he smelled apple, and if there is any one thing that Jerry Muskrat likes it is apple. He was greatly tempted, was Jerry Muskrat. It seemed to him that he must go ashore and get those good things to eat. But he didn't. He just plunged his head under water so that he could no longer smell those things and then swam over to his house to think things over.

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Strange Beliefs

Although most people do not realize it, there are more than 200 religions in Britain. Some of them bear unusual names—Holy Rollers, Shakers, Four Square Gospellers, Glasites, The Peculiar People, The Cocklers, Anthroposophites, and Mazdaznans. Many of them are offshoots of some form of Christianity, though some are so extraordinary as to be divorced from all orthodox religion. In London, there is even a member of the Followers of Shaitan—the Devil—a sect from Arabia. These people believe that as God is good, there is no need to concentrate on Him. The devil is out to try and harm them, so they insinuate themselves into his good looks by much flattery, hoping that in the hereafter they will have an easy time.