Youth is omnipotent

By CALVIN TINNEY

DESTROY the evidence, if ever you make a round-the-world trip. Otherwise you will be in for some untimely longings. Untimely, I say, because hardly is it possible to give year after year and all our life to wanderings. And travel is a drug, as habit-forming as opium.

It is a joke among my friends that I have only to talk an hour about Chicago, or New York, or Paris, or Shanghai, and I am ready to return to the place of which I babble. Until I am started to recalling I am more or less content with Tulsa, or Oklahoma City, or—as it will be—Washington, D. C. But I cannot blind myself to the fact that I was happy in Chicago, in New York, in Paris, and Shanghai. I cannot forget that adventure, and ecstasy, are really to be had on a vagabond journey to other corners of the earth.

If I won nothing else from my two years' wanderfahr, I have this to cheer me: one can live, and live richly, by going to places where things are different.

Different—that is the word. There is no boredom in things that are different. There is only life, and interest, and stimulus. A moment ago I was staring at the fragments of a letter, never mailed—written somewhere on the other side of the globe; I think it was at Singapore... packed with sailing craft from the wide world over. We saw the joke. We had asked for a ship—'Ship!' ordered we.

And our coolies, when we reached the sea-wall, had given us the harbor with a sweep of their arms. Later we reached the Saarbrücken. It was not possible for us to become lost in that town, the planning of which, dictated by nature, was very simple. What sea-town is there that is not so constructed? Yes, we came in time to our ship, to our bunks, and to sleep. But it had been a night—a night of enjoyment, the peculiar ecstasy of which might never again be known to us... We are moving upon Manila, passed the Fortress of Corregidor, at daybreak tomorrow?"

Always it was so, tomorrow with a beckon! And now it is yesterday. I write of yesterday for Joseph Brandt and the readers of his magazine. I write of yesterday to the accompaniment of longings... untimely.

I went around the world because there was nothing else to do. That is to say, I was due to return to Tulsa, and a trip home would be too much like a retreat. I had gone forth to do things, had I not? Well, I felt that I had not done them—enough of them, anyway. Ellis Chadbourne, to whom I talked before he left New York, was taking a group of young people to Germany to attend the World Youth Conference.

So I went to Europe, on fifty dollars, and worked my way on a German steamer which followed Chadbourne's ship by a day or two. I left New York in a dapple-gray mist, let the moon spill beauty to me down a pathway of silver, and saw the Leviathan glide past us as we found the English channel. It was at Plymouth that England came down in a green sward to meet us, and I talked through the port-hole to a stevedore about Esperanto.

I did not like Cherbourg, with its rain and its bleakness. Nor were the wiry little Frenchmen, on the tug, the least bit talkative like my stevedore. But then, they spoke another language!... I saw the cliffs of England that looked like tidal waves, and in the morning I hailed wind-mills, waving at me from Holland.

We came to Bremerhaven with arms of land outstretched to greet us, and shipped into a berth with the ship's band playing. "What you do, Charley?"

"I go to Lübeck," I told the baker, whose wörterbuch I had used in learning German on the trip. Had not a telegram from Ellis arrived an hour or two before? "Go immediately to Lübeck Karl Halaski braunstrasse twenty-seven," read the message.

German soil under my feet, with my ship-companions about me, was something to make me burst, if pleasure could do that to me. I was there! there! in the native-land of Jean Christophe! And when I met my party at Lübeck, and
found that Sam, the only boy in the party beside Ellis and myself, had read Jean-Christophe, I stopped him on our walk and pressed his hand firmly.

In the "youth-home" at Lübeck I was a little surprised to find that German girls were not opposed to invading the quarters of the boys, especially when breakfast was to be eaten before the day's travelling started. I dressed, nevertheless, from my knapsack, and my Boston bag, which held all the belongings I had brought with me to Europe.

I was more taken aback than ever when some of the boys swam naked with girls in the river near Luneburg. Since I had no suit I had also to plunge in garments. But coming out was different and when I confessed to some shyness, a German youth who wore trunks, unlike most of his companions, threw me his pair as he strode toward the bank.

I fell in love that afternoon, with Anita, of Hamburg, but she left at six o'clock and I went to a party. I fell in love again in the middle of the evening. My little friend in the pig-tails was a source of distress, however, when I walked with her to what I thought was the part of town in which she lived. I found that she had taken me to the place where I was to stay. "Sleep well," she cried, running unafraid into the darkness.

High over Luneburg, I slept that night with Sam, and Ellis, and two German boys, in the tower of a castle. Next morning I had a breakfast of ham and eggs and muffins before our party took the train across Germany to Frankfort. I learned on the way to like Ellis and Tanya and I sang with the young Germans who crowded into our coach.

Frankfort, with the mayor meeting us, and dinners at the clubs, was more and more memorable, as we came to the evening when I met a cousin of H. L. Mencken. We supped with a professor and took him to a Quaker meeting, where, to German ears, I gave Gunga Din as a song without words. I was feeling pretty good from the wine I had at dinner, but I was sober the next day when my party left for Heidelberg.

Castles, and cathedrals, were enough to take our time, but I sipped a little beer and made speeches to the Germans in a youth-home at Heidelberg. On a trip into the country I had a talk with Tanya, who told me, when I questioned her, that she was a school-teacher in her country. This talk is worth remembering, as I wrote of it in "The World Must Have Peace!"

We hitch-hiked to Tangerilen, and walked the next day to Konstanz, where we caught a boat to carry us across the Bodensee to Friedrichshafen. The Zeppelin works were shown to us, and we saw the Graf being built. Stuttgart by train, that night, put us within a day's travel of Freusburg, where the world youth congress was to start on the morrow.

I threw my knapsack on a bunk in Freusburg castle in time to turn and meet Carney, Philadelphia newspaper man.

"What's the low-down on this thing?" he asked me at once. I handed him my copy of the program; I went with him the next day to hear the opening speech from Dr. Paul Hoinigheim.

"The world must have peace!" cried the professor, and I wanted to argue. But except for the speech making Freusburg was quiet, and I liked to talk with youths from all over the world. I argued literature with Olivier, a Belgian, and quarreled with two Englishmen about my country's laws on immigration.

In two weeks I went to Köln, and wanted to head for Paris, but—"Hike with us," they said, and I borrowed twenty dollars of them. After we reached Bonn I found the birth-place of Beethoven which was also that of Jean Christophe, and when the rain fell I could almost hear the sobbings of his mother in the dark.

I had breakfast with Tanya, and was the one to catch her when she fainted at the spring a while later. Kissing her as she lay abed in the hotel to which we took her, was enough to buy a smile as she swam slowly, and lazily, back to where we were. But it was a kiss of good-bye; I left for Paris the next day and never saw her afterwards.

"ZIG-ZAG!" cried the poilu, as he pointed to the lightning, through the rain-curtained window, and flopped again into his side of the compartment. Belonging as he did to the army of occupation, he was taking his yearly leave and going to see his people.

"Décidément," he told me, objecting to it apparently. He handed me his own which he held wine, and I agreed that it was better.

When we were halted at the border I submitted my vise, which had been given me without charge; I had told the consul at Coblenz that I wanted to attend a youth-conference in his country. After that I studied French, with my poilu as mentor, and it was sun up at Rheims before he called "Adieu!" to me.

Paris, on an empty stomach, was like the middle ages come to life. Only, instead of horses, there were cabs to right and left, and almost upon one. Care had to be given that I hugged a side of the narrow streets.

Two, four, six boiled eggs I ate in a cafe near the Place de la Republique. I strode then along Boulevard Voltaire, until I turned my steps toward what seemed to be the heart of town. Asking directions of policemen I tried to speak French, but more success was had when I used my German on them.

I brought giggles from young women who stood in shop doors to stare at me. I learned after a while that it was the knapsack, perchek askew my back, and the handbag, perhaps, which turned me into a figure to attract their notice. But I could laugh with them, and did, for was I not in Paris, with three dollars in my pocket?

NEW FRATERNITY SITES

Although both the Pi Beta Pi and Kappa Sigma fraternities have their own houses, they contemplate building new ones. Pi Beta Phi has purchased a building site on Elm avenue near Lindsay street, facing what will be the south campus if the state legislature ever gets started catching up with the university's building program. Kappa Sigma, which has one of the oldest fraternity houses on the campus, on Asp avenue, has purchased a site also on Elm, near the Pi Phi site.