

southeasterly from Sumatra. As a matter of fact half of Timor is not under Dutch but Portuguese control. In the flight from Bandoeng the first 400 miles was over the lovely garden-land of Java. Then we looked down briefly upon Bali, much photographed island of quaint dancers, lovely costumes, lovelier natives, a well-publicized earthy heaven of *dulce far niente*. Thence we passed over Sujmbawa Island, skirted Flores, and cut across a broad arm of the Arafura Sea toward Timor.

As we left Java, the geographic characteristics began to change. From lush tropics, the countryside became progressively arid. The appearance of Timor itself is vastly different from that of Java. The climate is very dry, the trees and vegetation sparse. There was little or no cultivation in the open spaces around the airport, the surface of which was grass, long, dry and undulating in a strong wind when we arrived. The field, surrounded by a stout stone fence to keep out roaming wild pigs, we found to be a very good natural landing place. There were no facilities except a little shed for storing fuel. Consequently, we had to stake down our Electra and bundle it up for the night with engine and propeller covers. That is an all-important job carefully done; no pilot could sleep peacefully without knowing that his plane was well cared for. Our work much amused the natives from a near-by village. When we had to turn the craft's nose into the wind, all the men willingly and noisily helped us push it as desired.

Then we took time off to see something of Koepang, perched as it is on cliffs with winding paved roads. It has a large Chinese section from anywhere can be bought. Although the town is on the coast, surrounded by seas so lovely they should make attractive residences for fish, judging by the small size of the local market it appeared that fishing is not important in the Timor scheme of things. Just before supper at the Rest House, a native musician arrived on the front doorstep with a strange instrument made of bamboo and strung with copper and steel wires. It is called a "sesando." We tried to find out what had been the original stringing and whether it was not fibre from a tree. Despite our firm intentions to resist the weight of even extra ounces for the Electra, we were sorely tempted to bring one to Bing Crosby for a present.

We crossed the Timor Sea from Koepang, on Timor Island, in three hours and twenty-nine minutes against strong head winds. We flew over fleecy clouds at a height of 7,000 feet, and possibly this was one reason why we saw no harks, concerning which everyone had warned us. Great country, this, for "shark talk." Catching them is a business and warning visitors about them an avocation, Even Will Beebe, dean of the school of thought that holds sharks harmless, might wince at the tales told. The water around Port Darwin was a vivid green as seen from the air on the day of our arrival. Approaching land we saw a small boat in the distance, which I insisted, was a pearl-fishing luger. ("Once aboard the luger and the pearl is mine!" That outrageous observation Fred handed me on a scrap of paper.) Pearl fishing is the main industry - if such a romantic occupation can be so called - of Port Darwin, which is not an industrial town but mainly a government post.

The country of this northern coast of Australia is very different from that surrounding Koepang. There jagged mountains rose against the dawn, while here, as far as one could see, were endless trees on an endless plain. The airport is good and very easy to find. We were pounced upon by a doctor as we rolled to a stop, and thereupon were examined thoroughly for tropical diseases. No one could approach the airplane or us until we had passed muster. If this work is done at all it should be thorough, and I approved the methods, although the formalities delayed refuelling operations. The customs officials had to clear the Electra as if

she were an ocean-going vessel, but that was done with much dispatch. Inasmuch as we had little in the plane but spare parts, fuel and oil, the process was simplified. At Darwin, by the way, we left the parachutes we had carried that far, to be shipped home. A parachute would not help over the Pacific.

Two things in Australia I especially wanted to do were to meet Jean Batten, its famous woman flyer, and to see a Koala bear. I missed out on both. However, a cordial telegram of good wishes came from Miss Batten, then at Sydney. In the afternoon, Fred Noonan and I met C.L.A. Abbott, Administrator of the northern Territory. He issued cordial invitations for various pleasant functions but, alas, we could not be very social as at dawn we were to end our so-brief stay on the fringe of our fifth continent and shove off easterly, homeward bound.

Lae

Lae, New Guinea, June 30th. After a flight of seven hours and forty-three minutes from Port Darwin, Australia, against head winds as usual, my Electra now rests on the shores of the Pacific. Beyond the gulf of Huon, the waters stretch into the distance. Somewhere beyond the horizon lies California. Twenty-two thousand miles have been covered so far. There are 7,000 to go.

From Darwin we held a little north of east, cutting across the Wellington Hills on the northern coast of Arnhem Land, which is the topmost region of Australia's Northern Territory. The distance to Lae was about 1,200 miles. Perhaps two-thirds of it was over water, the Arafura Sea, Torres Strait and the Gulf of Papua.

Midway to New Guinea the sea is spotted with freakish islands, stony fingers pointing towards the sky sometimes for hundreds of feet. We had been told the clouds often hang low over this region and it was better to climb above its hazardous minarets than to run the risks of dodging them should we lay our course close to the surface. Then, too, a high mountain range stretches the length of New Guinea from northwest to southeast. Port Moresby was on the nearer side, but it was necessary to clamber over the divide to reach Lae situated on the low land of the western shore. As the journey progressed we gradually increased our altitude to more than 11,000 feet to surmount the lower clouds encountered. Even at that, above us towered cumulus turrets, mushrooming miraculously and cast into endless designs by the lights and shadows of the lowering sun. It was a fairy-story sky country, peopled with grotesque cloud creatures who eyed us with ancient wisdom as we threaded our way through its shining white valleys. But the mountains of cloud were only dank gray mist when we barged into them, that was healthier than playing hide-and-seek with unknown mountains of terra firma below. Finally, when dead reckoning indicated we had travelled far enough, we let down gingerly. The thinning clouds obligingly withdrew and we found ourselves where we should be, on the western flanks of the range with the coastline soon blow us. Working along it, we found Lae and sat down. We were thankful we had been able to make our way successfully over those remote regions of sea and jungle - strangers in a strange land.

Lae is situated in a corner of a great gulf by a winding river. It is the headquarters for the Guinea Airways Company, which has made an outstanding record for flying passengers, and mining equipment into the inaccessible goldfields. Their planes have transported tons upon tons of the heaviest machinery, used in the operations. In fact, no other means exists, and probably without aviation, much of the gold would have remained indefinitely in "them thar hills."