



HONG KONG? You're mad!! That was the general consensus of opinion of my fellow medical students when I announced my intention of doing my elective clerkship on the Island. The average Newcastle medical student is notoriously unadventurous and the idea of going eight thousand miles with the prospect of no financial remuneration was, on the whole, beyond their comprehension.

The flight over was uneventful but my greatest memory was of the large sand-filled box in the Transit Lounge of Karachi Airport which bore the inscription — “Spit here” — Charming!!

Rescuing my luggage from the conveyer belt at Kai Tak Airport (I had been warned to paint my initials on it so that I avoided the embarrassing spectacle of running round and round trying to identify it as many of the passengers were forced to do) I was adopted by a very pleasant airport porter who spoke no English. He seemed intent on throwing my cases into the nearest taxi and looked most hurt when I prevented him from doing so. Luckily, at that moment, I was met by a very attractive girl, the sister of one of my fellow medical students, who was resident in Hong Kong and she took control of the whole situation and we were soon speeding towards Star Ferry.

My first sight of Hong Kong was in the pouring rain but this seemed to accentuate the colours of the lights and signs. I was surprised at the bustling activity in the streets as at eight o'clock in the evening in England the pavements are almost clear of people but even in rush-hour in London I have seldom seen so many people visible at one time. At first sight they seemed too numerous to fit onto the pavements.

A lot of my time was spent in the first few days finding my way round and in this my fellow medical students were very helpful. I particularly enjoy wandering around the less commercialized parts of the city and watching the expressions of astonishment on people faces especially those of the children. Travelling by bus and tram is an experience in itself and if I had not seen it

myself I would never have believed that so many people could fit into such a confined space without tempers becoming frayed but everyone seems to be very easygoing and very tolerant of me in their midst.

A lot of my time so far has been spent walking around the shops and stalls in Central District and trying to avoid insistent shopkeepers who try to persuade me to buy their goods at twice the price. At first I was fooled but one of my first phrases in Cantonese was “Give me a discount” which seems to surprise them and then I try throwing my head back in mock dismay and say “Too expensive!” — It seems to work too. I have been asked by many of my friends to bring them back different articles and these include Thai silks, records and the best of all — a Chinese Lantern. At this rate I will have to send all my clothes home ahead of me and fill my cases with gifts. I will probably present quite a sight at London Airport with my luggage filled with curios and clutching a lantern in one hand.

Working in Q.M. proved to be quite different from work in the hospital in Newcastle. The hours worked tended to be the greatest shock as my usual timetable only includes working four days per week as Wednesdays and Saturdays are free.

Also we have half-hour coffee breaks each morning and afternoon. However, I soon found that work was not so arduous as I had expected and for the first time in over a year I am beginning to get enthusiastic about it. Whether this is due to the kindness of my fellow students or to their good example I don't know but it is something quite new I assure you.

Anyway this may be my first visit to Hong Kong but I have fallen in love with it already and I know it won't be my last (But next time I'll take a crash course in Cantonese before I come!).