

All Around This Wonderful World

by Geraldine Mitton, revised by Dr. Sandi Queen, ND

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Dear Reader,

Our favorite educator from the turn of the last century was British educator Miss Charlotte Mason. One of things Miss Mason recommended to make a child's education enjoyable and memorable was the integration of what she called "living books."

A living book, according to Miss Mason, is simply a book that brings the subject matter "to life." Most often, we would think of these as history books – historical fiction that gives a vivid mental picture of life during the time period in which the story is set, biographies that make the reader feel as though they know the subject personally, and so on.

Living books about geography have, up until now, been hard to come by. We have made it our mission at Queen Homeschool Supplies to publish living books in all subjects, including those not in the genre of history. Books like *Arabella Learns About Children From Around the World*, *Charlotte Mason's Elementary Geography*, and this one, *All Around This Wonderful World*, may be found, along with hundreds of other books and curricula inspired by Charlotte Mason's teachings, on our website at queenhomeschool.com.

Within the pages of the volume you now hold in your hands lies a story. This happens to be a story of the wonderful, varied world we all inhabit, showing the vast differences in the terrain, the people, the climates, and so much more, through story form – a true living book which brings the world we live in to life.

Suitable for all ages as a read aloud, most 4th graders will be able to read this book independently.

We hope you enjoy this book, and that it will inspire you to continue to learn more about this wonderful world!

In Christ's Service,

Dr. Sandi Queen, ND

WHICH WAY?

When you see a fly crawling on an orange, has it ever occurred to you how a man would look crawling about on the earth if seen from a great height? Our world is like an orange in shape, only it is very much larger in comparison with us than an orange is in regard to a fly. In fact, to make a reasonable comparison, we would have to picture the fly crawling about on a ball or globe fifty miles in height; to get all around it he would have to make a journey of something like one hundred and fifty miles. It would take a determined fly to accomplish that! Yet human beings often start off on a journey around the world happily, though it is more difficult for us than for the imaginary fly, because the globe is not a smooth surface of dry land, but is made up of jungles and deserts and forests and oceans. There are places where people can do nothing in the heat of the day, and others where their flesh freezes in a moment if they don't take precautions.

To set out on foot around such a world would be ridiculous, and man has invented all sorts of machines to carry him,—trains and cars and planes—which can make the journey much faster.

Here, in our own homes, we see the same things every day—fields and trees, cows and horses, if we live in the country; and houses and streets and vehicles, if we live in the city. Everyone we meet speaks the same language; even if we were to go up to a stranger to ask a question, he would likely understand us. We have cold days and warm ones, but the sun is never too hot for us to go out in the middle of the day, and the cold never so intense as to freeze our noses. The houses are all built in much the same way; people dress alike and look alike.

But wait until you have traveled a bit, and seen people and places which *are* different from ours!

You are not likely to travel? Well, I'm not so sure of that, for I'm going to offer to take you, and you need not even bother about expenses. I am going to carry you away with me in this book to see the marvels of other lands; lands where the burning sun strikes down on our own countrymen wearing white helmets on their heads and suits of snowy white as they walk about on lands where lines of palm trees wave their fronds over the surf washing at their roots. We will visit other lands where you look out over a glowing pink desert to seeming infinity, and see reflected in bitter shallow water at your feet the flames of such a sunset as you never yet have imagined. Or you can ride out across the same desert lying white as snow beneath a moon far larger and more glistening than any you have ever seen. You shall watch volcanoes shooting out columns of fire which roll down toward the villages nestling below, and gaze at mountains which raise their heads far up into the region of eternal snow. You shall see the steel-blue waves rising in great heaps with the swell of an unquiet sea. And these are only a very few of the wonders of the world we are about to travel in this book.

Where shall we begin? That requires some consideration. As the world is not a solid block of level ground, we shall have to choose our track as best we can along the routes that are most convenient, and we can't go in one straight line as if we followed a piece of string tied around the middle of the earth. We shall start from England, and we shall turn eastward first, coming back from the west. The eastern part is the Old World, and the western the New World, of which the existence was not known until centuries later. It is natural, therefore, to begin with the older part

first. If we do this, we must start in the autumn so as to arrive at some of the hottest countries in what is their winter, for the summer can be unbearable.

Have you ever realized that Great Britain is an island? Well, of course even the smallest children have been told so, but to *realize* it is a different matter. An island is surrounded by water, and none of us have ever sailed around it and made the experiment of seeing for ourselves that it is so. You have been to the sea perhaps, and seen the edge of our island home, but have you ever thought of that long line which runs away from your seaside place? Have you followed the smooth sandy bays and the outlines of the towering cliffs; have you passed the mouths of mighty rivers and gone steadily northward to the bleak coasts of Scotland where the waves beat on granite cliffs; have you rounded stormy Cape Wrath, and sailed in and out by all the deep-cut inlets on the west of Scotland, and come back to the very place from whence you started? If you can even imagine this, it gives you some idea of what being an island means. We here are on every side surrounded by water, and nowhere can get away to any other country without crossing the sea.

The nearest country is France, and at the narrowest point of the Channel there are only twenty-one miles of sea to get over. One way of starting on our journey is to cross this strip of water and take the train across France to the other side, then meet a ship to carry us. Or we can start in the same way across the Channel but go much farther on by train, all along Italy as well as France, and then we can catch the same ship a considerable way farther on in the Mediterranean.

Or there is another way, the quickest of all, and the newest; by this means—after crossing the Channel—we can go the whole distance across Europe, and Asia too, by train, and come out on the other side of the world, near China, in about ten days! To do this we should have to get to Russia first by any European line we pleased, and on arriving at the town of Moscow change into the train which does this mighty journey. It starts once a week, and is called The International. It is quite a small train, though the engine is large. There are only half a dozen coaches, and one of these is for luggage and another is a restaurant. First class people are put two together into a compartment. It certainly sounds as if that would allow plenty of room, but then if anyone has to live and sleep and move for ten days in a train, he can hardly be expected to sit cramped up all the time, he must have some space to stir about in. At night one of the seats forms one bed and another is let down crossways above it. There is, alas, no bath, but there is a small bathroom for every two compartments where we can wash after awhile. There are even books provided in the restaurant car, some in Russian, some in French, some in German, and some in English.

The journey itself is not very interesting, and we should be glad enough to get to the end of it I fancy. No, I am not going to allow you to take me that way, not even if you begged hard! It is very useful for business men, whose one idea is to save time, but for us who want to see all we can of this glorious world it would be folly.

On the contrary, the route I should like to take is the very longest of all, and that is by sea the whole way, on one of the great liners running east. The real choice lies between this and the railway journey across France to the seaport of Marseilles, or Toulon, according to which of the great British lines of steamships we choose—the Peninsula and Oriental, known as the P & O, or the Orient. I am willing you should decide between these routes. Think well. In order that you may understand better what the choice means I will tell you what you will see if we take the railway journey.

AT CHARING CROSS



We shall have to start one morning from Charing Cross Station in London. All around us people are carrying bundles of rugs and magazines. Some, like ourselves, are going far east, parting from those who love them and will not see them again for a long time. That fair young man standing by the carriage door looks little more than a big schoolboy, but he is going out to India to help to govern there. He is a clever fellow and has passed a very stiff examination to gain this position, and he eagerly looks forward to all the new scenes in the life awaiting him. His mother and sister are seeing him off; they are so much alike they might be mistaken for sisters; they are trying to talk and joke lightly, but you can see how hungrily the mother's eyes are fastened on her son, as if she could never see him enough. Rightly too, for when she meets him again, he will not be the boy he is now. His face will be browned by the tropical sun, and he will have become a man; he will have an air of command which comes naturally to a man who lives, often by himself, in charge of a district, and has to rule and judge and decide for the Indian people.

Close beside us there are several men, and one of them says loudly, "All right, old chap, I'll bring one back for you next week; I shall cross again on Monday." He runs over to Paris on business every week and thinks no more of it than of going to his office in the morning. A trip to France is very easy when you have the means to do it comfortably.

Then we take our seats, and the train steams out of the station, leaving the crowd on the platform to scatter. After a long run, with no stops, we reach Dover and go on board a steamer which seems quite large enough to anyone who is not used to steamers. Our heavy luggage has been sent on board the big ship which will meet us at Marseilles, so we have only our handbags to carry. The crossing is quite short, and it is best to stay on deck if you don't want to be ill. The very first thing to notice, as we gradually draw away from the land, is the whiteness of the towering chalk cliffs which stand out prominently near Dover. Perhaps you have read of the "white cliffs of Old Albion," and if you live in the north or away from the sea, you must have wondered what they were; now this explains it all. When the Romans came over from the Continent they crossed the sea the shortest way, and in approaching this unknown island were struck with astonishment at the high gleaming white cliffs, unlike anything they had seen before; they were so much amazed that ever after the "white cliffs" were the chief feature of Britain in their eyes.

There is a break in the cliffs, where Dover now stands, and here the Romans later on made a port, and a port it has remained to this day.

If we are lucky in getting a fine day for the crossing we can sit on deck-chairs, looking at the dazzling milky-blue sea and sky until someone cries out, "There's France!"

NUMBERS OF EAGER LITTLE PORTERS



You will not be able to make out anything at all at first, because land does not look in the least what you expect when you see it first from the sea. You would naturally search for a long dark line low down on the horizon, but it isn't like that at all. There is a hazy bluish cloud, very indistinct, and seemingly transparent, but as we draw nearer it grows clearer, and then houses and ships can be discerned, and after a good deal of maneuvering and shouting and throwing of ropes and churning up the water with the screw, two bridges are pushed across to the dock, and numbers of eager little porters, dressed in bright blue linen suits with very baggy trousers, surround us and implore us to allow them to carry our baggage.

"Me Engleesh speaking, sir."

"Good me, good man me."

"Baggage carrying me."

They are here, there, and everywhere, so good-natured, so lively, so different from the stolid English porters. Their eyes are very bright and they will take money of any kind, French or English, it matters not to them.

We have had to get our money changed on the boat, and that is the first thing that makes us feel we are really out of England. In exchange for an English gold pound we get twenty-five—not twenty—French shillings; these shillings are called francs and are not unlike our shillings at a first glance, but they are thinner and lighter. Some have the head of Napoleon, the last French Emperor, on them—these are old; the latest new ones are rather interesting, for they have a little olive branch on one side and a graceful figure of a woman sowing seed on the other, so one can interpret the meaning as peace and plenty. If you change a franc into copper you get ten—not twelve—pennies for it, and French pennies look very much like those of England. There are also half-franc pieces like little sixpences, and two-franc pieces like smaller florins, and gold pounds called Louis or Napoleons, and half-sovereigns too, but all the money seems light and rather unreal when one is accustomed to our more solid coins.

We walk up the gangway into a large barn-like place, where we meet some smart-looking men in uniform with pointed mustaches turned up to their eyes and a fierce expression. They stand behind a shelf, on which all the baggage from the boat is put, and we approach this with our bags in our hands.

PASSING THE CUSTOMS



The official demands in French if we have anything to declare, meaning, are we bringing across anything which it is forbidden to sell in France, for if so we must declare it and pay something to the Government for allowing us to bring it. We answer that we have nothing. "Rien, Monsieur," very politely, hoping to soften his heart, and as we both have honest faces he believes us and scrawls a chalk-mark on our bags and lets us pass. We are lucky, for now we can go straight on to the train and get good places before the crowd follows. Some unfortunate people, however, are caught. One woman who is wearing a hat with enormous feathers and very high-heeled shoes, has two huge trunks.

She tries to slip a five-franc piece into the hand of one of the custom-house officers. It is a silly thing to do, for it at once makes him think she is concealing something; very loudly and virtuously he refuses the money, hoping that everyone notices how upright he is, and then he insists on the contents of her trunks being turned out on to the counter. Piles of beautiful underclothing are spread out before everyone; silk and satin frocks come next; numberless dressing-table ornaments in silver and gold, and little bottles by the dozen; boots and shoes and books follow, while Madame begins to weep and then changes to screaming and raving. She is a Frenchwoman who has been staying in England, but she did not escape any more than an English-woman. How she will ever manage to get all her finery stuffed back into those boxes without ruining it I don't know, and we haven't time to wait to see.

The platform is very low and the train looks in consequence much larger than an English one, as we have to climb up into it almost from the ground. It is a corridor train, and the first classes are lined with a kind of drab cloth, which does not seem so suitable for railway work as our dark blue color. The guard sets us off with a little "birr-r-r" like a toy cock crowing. When we move out of the station at last we find ourselves going at a snail's pace along a street, and at once we catch our breath with interest—it is all so strange! Never will you forget that first glimpse of a foreign land! The very air is different, with a sharp pleasant smell of wood-smoke in it. Some people say that every foreign country has its own smell and that they would know where they were with their eyes shut! This must be an exaggeration, still there is something in it!

As the train goes slowly forward a clanging bell rings on the engine to warn the people to get off the lines, which are not fenced in in any way. On every side you see neat little women wearing no hats, with their hair done up in top-knots; they are out marketing, and most of them carry immense baskets or string-bags stuffed with cabbages and carrots and other vegetables. The children have bright black eyes, and they look thin but full of life. The boys wear a long pinafore or overall of cheap black stuff, and even the biggest go about in short socks, showing their bare legs, which looks rather babyish to us. The sun is shining brilliantly, and on most of the pavements there are chairs set out around small tables where men in perfectly amazingly baggy corduroy trousers and blue blouses sit and drink variously colored drinks. A little boy who was too near the line is caught away by his agitated mother, who pours out over him a babble of words, and the child, laughing, answers her. Not one sentence, not one word, can we understand, though we are quite near and can hear it all. When you remember the painfully slow way you have learnt *avoir* and *être* at school it is maddening to think that this child, much younger than you, can rattle away in French without any trouble, and it is still more annoying that when you *did* think you knew a little French you cannot make out one single word! French spoken is so very differently from French learned out of a book! However, for your comfort you must remember that that little bright-eyed boy, whose name is probably Pierre or Jacques, would think you very clever indeed to be able to talk in English.

The houses have a strange look; it is chiefly because every single one of them, even the poorest, has sun-shutters outside the windows, set back against the wall; they are of wood, mostly painted green and pierced with slits. In countries where the sun is hot and strong at midday the rooms must be kept cool by such shutters.

When we are once clear of the town the train soon gets up great speed, and we race through green fields with hedgerows and trees as in our own land, and yet even here there is something different. It may be because of the long lines of poplars, which appear very frequently, or it may be the country houses we see here and there, built very stiffly and painted in bright reds and yellows and greens that look like streaks. At the level crossings you see women standing holding a red flag furled, for women seem to do as much of the work on the railways as men; and waiting at the gates there is often a team of three or four horses, each decorated with an immense sheep-skin collar, that looks as if it must be most hot and uncomfortable. Occasionally we catch sight of what looks like a rookery in the trees seen against the sky; however, the dark bunches are not nests at all, but lumps of mistletoe growing freely. Rather a fairytale sort of country where mistletoe can be got so easily!

We can stay all night in Paris if we like, and travel the next day to Marseilles, and stay a night there too. That is doing the journey easily. Many people go right through, running around Paris in a special train and being carried speeding through France all night. There are sleeping cars made up like little cabins with beds in them and every luxury. But it is tiring to travel on continuously in a French train, as the carriages are made very hot by steam, and French people object to having the windows open at all, so the atmosphere gets almost unbearable, according to our ideas.

We shan't have time to see much of Paris if we just stay the night there, but as we drive through in a taxi-cab we can see how full of life it is, though at this time of the year people do not sit out at the little tables on the pavements late in the evening as they do in the summer. There are taxi-cabs everywhere, and they all pass each other on the right side, you notice, the opposite side from that which we use; you will find this in all other foreign countries but Sweden, and in some Provinces of Austria. Though Great Britain stands almost alone, in this case she is certainly in the right, for the driver ought to be on the side near the vehicle he is passing, and also the whip coming in the middle of the street is less liable to flick anyone than if it was on the pavement side.

The hotels in Paris are many and magnificent; when we arrive at one all gilt and glitter, we ask for small rooms, as it is only for one night, and are taken up to two tiny apartments simply crammed with furniture. It is enough to make anyone laugh, for there is hardly room to turn round. Both are alike. In each the bed is covered with a magnificent yellow satin brocade coverlet; there is a large arm-chair, which quite prevents the door of the huge wardrobe from opening. The washing-stand, which has taps of hot and cold water, is crammed into a corner so that one can hardly get at it. There is a writing-table with ink and blotting-pad and everything else for writing, but no dressing-table and nowhere at all to put one's brushes. Above the mantelpiece is a big mirror, too high for you to look into, though I can peer round that immense gilt clock to do my shaving. The rest of the mantelpiece is taken up with heavy marble ornaments—utterly useless—and gilt candlesticks. There is a telephone on the wall, and with this we can give our orders into the hall. Luckily I know enough French to ask for what we want, though if you stand giggling at me every word will go out of my head when the man below inquires my wishes.

It is by means of this telephone I order breakfast for us both to be sent up next morning. All we can get is coffee, or tea, with rolls and butter and two poached or boiled eggs. You'll have to make this do. It is the custom here. In France people start with only coffee and rolls and then go off and do a good morning's work, and come back again to eat a large meal which is a sort of breakfast and lunch rolled into one, at about twelve o'clock. It all depends on what one is accustomed to, and certainly we look very hungrily at the small dish of eggs that appears!

Meantime I am getting a little anxious about my boots. I put them out last night to be cleaned, but this is such a large place, with so many people coming and going, that I began to wonder if they have been taken to the wrong room; timidly I ask the waiter, who brings the breakfast, if he can find them. With a knowing smile he stoops down and opens a tiny cupboard in the wall near the door, and there, slipped in from outside, are the boots! "Voilà!" he says triumphantly, as if he had just brought off a successful conjuring trick. Certainly what with the taps and telephone and trap-doors for boots this hotel is very much up to date.

North of Paris we have seen orchards of apple and cherry trees, but farther south, as we rush along, we get into a land of vineyards, where rows of little vines are being cultivated on every foot of ground on the hillsides. By nightfall we reach Marseilles, and if we were going on to Toulon it would have taken two hours more.

Marseilles is the largest seaport in France, and is second only to Paris in size and importance.

Do you know those preserved fruits which generally appear about Christmas-time in oval cardboard or long wooden boxes? Have you ever wondered if they are real fruit, and where they come from? They *are* real fruit, boiled and dipped in syrup, though they taste very different from the same fruit freshly gathered. A great deal of the preserving is done in France, especially along the south coast, and when we get to Marseilles we are in the very heart of the business.

After passing the night in an hotel we have time to wander about a bit before going down to the docks to find our ship.

The sun is shining brightly as we turn out after another breakfast, which only seems to have given an edge to our keen British appetites. There is a nasty cold wind blowing round corners and buffeting people. The pavements are very lively; we see women and girls hurrying about doing household shopping, and boys in heavy cloth capes and military caps, so that they look like cadets, this is the uniform worn by better-class schoolboys in France. The French policemen, called gendarmes, are also in uniform of so military a kind that unless we knew we should certainly mistake them for soldiers.

There are stalls set out on the pavements, heaped up with embroidery and odds and ends, including soap, which is manufactured here very largely. Bright-eyed girls try to entice us to buy as we pass. One street is just like a flower garden, lined with stalls piled up with violets and roses and anemones and other blossoms. Trams follow one another along the rails in an endless procession. We walk on briskly and turn down a side street; here at last is what I have been looking for, and well worth finding it is too! It is a shop with great plate-glass windows; on one side is every kind of preserved fruit, and on the other a variety of chocolates, tarts, and expensive sweets. Look at that dainty box filled with dark green figs, artistically set off by sugared violets pressed into all the niches! These are rather different from the flat, dry brown figs which is all that English children recognize under that name. Another box glows with tiny oranges, mandarins they call them here, and piled up over them are richly colored cherries shining with sugar crystals. In the centre is an enormous fruit like a dark orange-colored melon, surrounded by heaps of others, while the plain brown chestnuts, that don't attract much notice, are really the best of all, for they are the *marrons glacés* for which Marseilles is famed, and once you have tasted these, freshly made, all other sweets will seem insipid to you.

Inside the shop there are many carefully dressed ladies, daintily holding little plates, and going about from one counter to another, picking up little cakes filled with cream and soaked in syrup. They eat scores of them, and they do it every day and any hour of the day, in the morning or afternoon or whenever they happen to pass. No wonder they look pale and unhealthy! We are only here for once, so we need have no compunction about our digestions, especially as there is an empty place left after that tantalizing bacon-less breakfast. We are soon provided with a plate

each and a little implement which looks as if it had started life as a butter-knife and suddenly changed its mind to become a fork.

The shop-girls take no notice of what we eat; we can pick and choose freely, and at the end they trust us to say how many cakes we have had. We can get here also cups of thick rich chocolate, and, if we wanted it, some tea, though it is only of late years that French people have taken to drinking tea at all freely, for coffee is their national beverage.

Well, come along, tear yourself away, we must get a cab and go down to our ship which is at the docks.

In the cab we pass what is called the Old Port with picturesque rows of weather-beaten sailing boats; only the sailing boats are allowed to come in here. Rising up against the sky at the far end of the port is a curious bridge quite unlike any other you have seen, for the bridge part is at a great height and there is nothing below by which people or vehicles can cross over. How is anyone going to take the trouble to climb up there? How, above all, are carts or carriages going to manage it?

You can easily make a rough model to see the principle of this bridge for yourself. Get a couple of the tallest candlesticks in the house, and put a stick across them, run a curtain ring on to the stick, and to the ring attach numerous threads fastened at the lower end to a flat bit of card or board like a raft. Then, by pushing the ring along the stick, you can make the raft follow across below. The stick represents the high bridge, and the raft in reality rests on the surface of the water, and when the machinery above, represented by the ring, is set in motion, it rumbles across and draws with it the floating raft, which is large enough to take a great number of men and vehicles. Every ten minutes or so this floating bridge passes over from one side to another, and people pay a sou, which is the French halfpenny, to travel with it. Thus, you see, when a tall ship comes in she has only to avoid the raft, and she can sail in beneath the high bridge without any trouble. We could, if we wished, go up in a lift to the high bridge; but the railings up there are far apart, and there is a high wind blowing, you are not very big, and if you slipped between I should have to give up my voyage round the world; so I think we won't, if you don't mind!

Besides, we have to catch our ship waiting at the docks, and she will be off very soon.

Now that you have heard what we should probably do and see if we went across France, will you take this journey or will you start from England and go right round in the ship?

You answer that though you would like to see the little blue-bloused porters, and that it would amuse you to think that the little French boys and girls could speak no English, and though you would certainly *love* the *marrons glacés*, you think, after all, having heard about it, we might just as well go the other way round, though, of course—the *marrons glacés*——

Forget about them! We'll go around. In the very next chapter we'll be up and off in earnest.