

■ Situated so near the Philippines, Hongkong is known as the —

SMUGGLERS' PARADISE

It might surprise you to know that a former fishing village which could barely support a handful of inhabitants has become one of the most important trading ports of the world — all in less than a hundred years.

When the treaty of Nanking ended the Opium War between England and China in 1842, Hong Kong was ceded to the British as a war indemnity. The place used to be a notorious haunt for pirates. This British Crown colony is ten miles long and about four miles wide. Kowloon and other leased areas are included in the name Hong Kong with a total area of 391 square miles. It is one of the largest and most beautiful natural harbors in the world. Once known as the "Gibraltar of the Orient," the Washington conference in 1921 stopped its military development when the United States, Japan, and Great Britain agreed not to fortify

any military or naval base in the Pacific. It was occupied by the Japanese in December, 1941 and reoccupied by the British late in 1945.

A large number of natives live in sampans, a kind of one-room house boat. This indigenous water population, together with the farm folk, forms a distinct and stable element in what is, as a whole, a fluctuating and changing native population. Residential homes dot the hillsides. These are the homes mostly of well-to-do Chinese businessmen. Another group of residential homes are found on the Peak, a valuable sanatorium for the white population, because the place is generally about eight degrees Fahrenheit cooler than sea level.

Since the city is crowded, it has to expand upwards, giving rise to the skyscrapers. I was surprised to see water drops in the crowded downtown Hong Kong on a hot

day only to discover that they came from wet clothes hanging from poles sticking out of the windows of tall buildings. A tourist cannot find an empty lot for laundry lines. The situation is described as "too many people, and too little earth."

Cable cars going up to Victoria Peak, tram cars, and double-decked buses serve the commuters pretty well even in the rush hours. Coolies pull their rickshas for some people who like to be transported alone. Rizal did not like the idea when he saw the Chinese coolies in Hong Kong working like draft animals for the reason that it lowers the dignity of man.

The floating restaurants in Aberdeen are wonderful tourist attractions. Fishermen bring their catch from the sea fresh and alive into the glass tanks of the restaurant. People can choose what they like to eat — fish, squid, lobster, crab and what have you. Your choice is scooped alive, and in a few minutes you have it steaming hot on your table.

The Tiger Balm gardens is one of Hong Kong's beauty

spots which tourists go for. Typical Chinese plants, buildings, and artwork are found inside its wide compound. The picturesque Hong Kong waterfront is one of the most beautiful in Asia.

This Crown colony is administered by a governor assisted by executive and legislative councils. As a center of British commerce in the Orient, it is the meeting point of East and West, where Oriental merchandise are displayed side by side with the latest Paris fashion. It is the point of transshipment from the closed interior of the Orient to the outside world, the springboard of commerce of goods sold, stored, and reloaded.

Since Hong Kong is a free port, it has become the shopping center of the Far East aside from Singapore. In recent years it has become the principal center of rice distribution in the world. Next to Java, it is the chief sugar-distributing center and after Singapore, the chief tin market in the Far East. It is also the chief center of Far East passenger service. About a third of China's export and

import pass through Hong Kong.

With the influx of refugees from the mainland, the five British and ten Chinese high schools are hardly enough to absorb the students. The University of Hong Kong, the only British institution of higher learning in the Far East, offers advanced instruction in most forms of Western science and learning.

There are some vegetarian restaurants in Hong Kong. I was surprised to see fine-looking and dignified people entering in these eateries. One of my students informed me that there are some Chinese sects who are strictly vegetarian.

I believe that dishonesty is not the monopoly of a country. There is not so much of it in Japan, we are told, because the culprit's finger would be one joint less for every offense. The neatly wrapped and stapled pair of pants I ordered from a Chinese Hong Kong tailor was, lo and behold, not the kind I carefully selected when I

opened it up in Manila. The tailor instinctively knew I was so in a hurry to catch my Manila-bound PAL plane that I would have no time to look it over. I took him for granted and I decided I won't be gypped again.

Why is Hong Kong called "The Smugglers' Paradise?" Regular Hong Kong-Manila "commuters" are in the know, or are supposed to know. Along with the enormous bulk of trade goods passing through this beautiful British Crown colony are undoubtedly undervalued, undeclared, and misdeclared items that find their way to other countries, the Philippines included.

There is now no legitimate movement of opium in the colony, and yet we have dope addicts here who seem to have a steady supply of narcotic and its several relatives.

I have reasons to believe that the government "junketeers and vacationers" have their own vignette of Hong Kong. — *By S. G. Miraflores in Manila Bulletin.*