

Eaton Hall, Runaway Bay, Jamaica
7th December, 1923.

Dear Niece:-

Your very welcome letter enclosing little Hugh's photographs, which we were much pleased to have, reached us a few days before we left Ottawa, when we were literally too busy to write in reply. We rented our house there, furnished, from the 1st of December until the 1st of May, but as we had to take the train on the afternoon of the 26th Novr. (Monday) to be certain of getting the boat at New York on the morning of the following Wednesday, we had the tenants move in that morning and handed over the house and Adam as a boarder to their care. At New York, we were fortunate in being invited as guests of friends living on Randall's Island.

On Tuesday, we both went down town. I obtained our sailing permit, reported at the steamship office and bought this portable typewriter I am now using; Matilda did some shopping and in the evening we all went to the theatre and saw a play we did not at all like. On Wednesday, about noon, we sailed and arrived at Kingston, Ja. at break of day, about 5.30, on the following Monday. The captain of the boat, who had commanded another ship belonging to the same company on which we had returned last spring recognised us, as did a Jamaican, whom we had seen on the island. The weather on the passage was very calm, and very sunny, but Matilda, although not sea-sick, was compelled to keep her berth much of the time. The quarantine army physician, to whom I had been introduced at Port Royal last spring, also remembered me and made matters easy for us and we were the first persons to go ashore; on the dock we were met by a lady and her husband who conduct a private hotel, to whom we had written in advance, and whom we knew very well during our former visit. They brought their motor and by seven o'clock, we and our light baggage were at their house. We stayed at Kingston until Wednesday morning following, when at 6.15 a.m. we started for this place in a motor, as we concluded it was best to travel the entire distance that way instead of taking the train part way and then transferring. Our host succeeded in packing all our baggage, consisting of two steamer trunks, two suit cases, a holdall, and several packages as well as ourselves into a single car. The road we came is very lovely at this time of the year, as the fall rains are now over and we passed through Spanish Town, Bog Walk, Linstead, Moneague, over Mont Diablo, and by Claremont to Brown's Town, where we called to see the lady from whom we are renting this place. There our driver discovered a leak in his gasoline tank, which he stopped to repair. We had run past our landlady's residence al-

though we had called on her last March. I got out to make make inquiries and approached the first white man I saw coming towards me. I at once recognised him as the Rev. Bathurst Hall, whom I knew in Alberta. We were delayed there over an hour, which we utilised in part by going to the store and public market to buy supplies and provisions. Imported articles are perhaps a trifle dearer than in Canada and probably not so good. Beef, any cut, was being sold at seven pence half penny per pound on Wednesdays; on Saturdays at six pence. We bought eight fine Tangerine oranges tied together on a branch for three farthings; grape fruit at a penny each; eight ripe bananas for three pence; but Irish potatoes were scarce and twopence per pound. Then we came on and arrived here at two p.m., having travelled seventy-five miles, being about five miles out of our direct road, due to our visit to Brown's Town. Here we are on the north shore of the island about midway of its length, and overlook the Caribbean towards Cuba, which is over sixty miles distant and of course out of sight. The lot on which the buildings stand lies on a slight promontory jutting out from the coast road into the sea, and contains about ~~ten~~ three acres of land and rock. It is separated from the road by a wall of stone and cement, six feet high and three feet thick, which at the ends, turns at right angles and runs down to the edge of the cliffs, which drop precipitously to the water, some twenty five or thirty feet below. The entrance is ~~xxx~~ by a strong iron gate, which is locked at night. On the opposite side of the coast road lies a cocoa-nut plantation of several thousand acres and many thousand trees heavy with fruit. To the east there is a small grove of cocoa-nuts, unfenced, between the road and the sea; and to the west on the shore, first, a small unfenced vacant lot, then at a distance of two hundred yards, the storehouses and wharf of this little port, where cocoa-nuts, logwood, and fustic are occasionally shipped on a coasting vessel. Inside our fence is first a row of cocoa-nut palms also well fruited, extending from end to end, with poinsettias now in bloom, crotons, and other shrubs in between the trees. Directly in front is a great clump of huge crotons on either side of the steps, which lead up from the flanks of the house to a landing, from which another flight of steps lead up to the front verandah of the upper story. These stairs and the landing are of massive cement, and are supported by a series of arches and pillars, which also sustain the verandah, and furnish entrances to the rooms on the ground floor from the front. The house is 72 feet by 48 feet with its sides to the road and sea; the ends are a steep pitched double gable. It is of two stories with very lofty ceilings. The lower story is of stone and cement, with walls

three feet thick, cement floors throughout, including the stoops or lower verandahs, front and back. It contains an immense dining room, pantry, laundry-room, fuel-room, caretaker or servants' room, and another now unused, and a stairway. On the second floor are a very large sitting room or parlor, a large long room into which the stair ascends, which may have been intended as a smoking room or ante-room, but which I am using in windy weather as a sort of study or workroom, and at either end two large and one small bedrooms. The two verandahs extend along the full length of the house at the front and back and are nearly nine feet wide, wide enough to swing across an ordinary hammock, which we have done on the back, where I am writing this, overlooking the Caribbean to the north, east, and west at a distance of not more than fifty or sixty yards. In each direction I see the coral reefs where the water is shallow, green, dark blue, pink, and yellow; on the distant horizon is a large brigantine or schooner, under full sail, heading eastward. Before daylight each morning we hear the voices of the negro fisherman, shouting their chanties as they go out; and at break of day we often see a dozen canoes paddling about and hallooing. The sound of the waves never ceases, but up to the present the sea has been as calm as a huge mill-pond. The kitchen or cookhouse is an isolated rough-cast building; there is a garage for two motors, a privy built over a great cleft in the rock, through ~~xxxx~~ which the tide rushes twice a day, a bathhouse and private swimming pool fenced off from the deep sea and sharks by a wide coral reef. Contrary to the usual custom here the dwelling house and also the kitchen is plastered throughout on the walls but not on the ceilings. It is completely furnished with good quality of articles, mahogany tables and great four poster bedsteads in the four large rooms, chairs, dressing tables, couches, rocking and easy chairs, cupboards, small stands and tables of all kinds, stools, a melodeon, some pictures, rugs, flower pots with ferns on the front stairway, which need no watering as the dew and salt air is enough to keep them growing in perfect health, lamps, dishes, kitchen utensils, and bedding, except sheets, towels, and table napkins; the latter with some silver and our clothing and other necessaries for a prolonged stay being all we brought with us. For all this comfort and even magnificence we pay only six pounds rent per month, equivalent at the current rate of exchange to \$27.80. The original building was, it is said, a hundred or more years ago, a slave pen below, and afterwards was converted to what is called "a great house for the adjacent estate. Not very long ago, Dr. James Johnston of Brown's Town bought it and rebuilt and remodelled it for use as a sanitarium. This enterprise was not as successful

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as he had hoped and he rented it occasionally, sometimes to an American physician, who occupied it for several months for seven successive winters, and at other times to people he knew, and some of whom we know, living in the highlands in the interior, who wished to spend a few weeks by the sea. He has been dead for two or three years and the property belongs to his widow, who keeps it in good repair and has a black woman living here constantly as a caretaker. We have taken her over as a general cook and house servant at her regular salary of five shillings per week and she boards herself. We have had another woman here for two days washing, ironing, and cleaning at a shilling a day, finding herself. She is anxious to engage for five shillings a week and has offered to go to Brown's Town market for supplies to-morrow, eight and a quarter miles, probably on foot; they think nothing of a twenty or thirty mile walk, to attend market on Saturdays, which is their great holiday and gossip day. The village is small, perhaps contains two or three hundred people, not a single white person among them, but two Chinamen, who are store-keepers. The nearest white family lives about three miles away. We have only seen one white face since we settled here, being a Baptist clergyman, who conducts a small church about a mile away on the coast, being one of six or seven. He called to ask the use of the swimming pool for a bath. We are, however, within two minutes walk of the post and telegraph office, constabulary station, and Chinaman's shop. The post-mistress and telegrapher is a coloured girl and the constables are blacks.

Besides the trees and shrubs I have mentioned the grounds contain poncianas, now in pod, but which in season bear a most gorgeous flower, a very feathery tree which they call a willow but not much like our willow, several almond trees, lilies, pines, and other herbaceous plants, and two small iron cannon, mounted on concrete bases, pointing seaward.

Since writing the foregoing pages, we have been down at the swimming pool taking a "dip". The water is much warmer even in December than I ever felt it in Lake Erie and delightfully refreshing. Our only regret is that we cannot share this delightful place with friends from the frozen North at this season of the year. We have invited some of the people who entertained us at our last visit to visit us in turn.

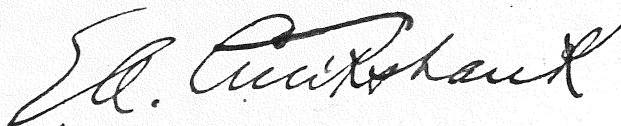
This is a long and appears an egotistical letter, but I thought these things might interest you and perhaps induce you some time to visit this delightful island yourself, as the passage is not very expensive; indeed we were told that some people on the boat were making the round trip of 21 days.

railway and motor fares on the island from Kingston to Port Antonio, Mandeville, and Montego Bay, and return. This seems scarcely credible to me, as the minimum passage from New York is \$107 at the regular rate.

Matilda will write to you in a day or two and tell much I have not thought of. She is very much interested in Hugh, as I told you she would be. We will try to send you some "snaps" of this place when they are taken and developed, for the latter process, they have to be sent to Kingston.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a very happy New Year,

I am sincerely yours,



Mrs. M. E. Atwood,
Fort Erie,
Ont.

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Fort Erie,

Ont.

Canada.

