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Travel Diary: December 6, 1914

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(At sea)

The same afternoon, on Sunday, November 29th, we arrived at Carupano, at 1.30 o'clock, and left at 4 P.M., after loading some cocoa. The little town is backed by fairly high mountains, and on the left as we go in a rocky promontory with a light house runs out a short distance. It is a sort of roadstead with a pier and bridge. The coast along here looks much the same as after leaving LaGuayra for Margarita. When we woke up the next morning, we had passed through the bocas between the Peninsula de Paria and the northwest corner of Trinidad, where begins a low range crossing the island in continuation of the coast range of Venezuela. We were indeed approaching Port of Spain. It looks very picturesque. There is a wide roadstead with a good many steamers and many sailing craft along the water front and town, and beyond pretty green mountains. The doctor took our temperatures and gave us slips of paper enjoining us to report to him on shore every morning for eight days. This seems to be against bubonic plague, although I heard of none now in Venezuela. At the custom house a dusky official took, and in an impertinent manner proposed to read, a bundle of postcards and letters which Mr. Goedeke had written in Venezuela and on the boat, but had not had time to mail. The same individual calmly remarked "We are the government". An Englishman later was quite civil, and we were finally, after appealing to the head man of the customs able to deliver unopened Doyle's letter to Mr. Sewall, and to Mr. Dominguez, the local representative of the Oil Company. I went with Mr. Dominguez' letters of introduction from Doyle, drove about to get the sailings for the Guianas and Ciudad Bolivar, and called on McConnico, the Consul, and then went to the Queen's Park hotel, where we found good rooms and shower baths, but vile food and no screens against the flies, which continually tramped all over the food.

oil wells on the island. He seemed a most kind and delightful man, and at once offered to send us by motor down to see the asphalt lake, etc. We also met Mr. Ralph Arnold, a geologist who had been doing some work for the company and his wife. At 4 P.M. I went with the consul to the Red House to call upon the Governor.

The next morning, starting about 7.20 o'clock, we had a very pleasant motor ride of 57 miles to Brighton. The roads on the island are excellent, as well they may be, with rock on hand for the macadam and with asphalt oozing out. The road runs inland among the hills, and then through fine woods shading enormous plantations of cacao trees, and with a fine view of the green mountains at the back. Later it runs through huge flat plains, mostly in sugar, and again into stretches of woods and cacao.. There are a number of villages recalling those of Jamaica. There did not seem to be quite so many schools here as there. The population is all negro and East Indian, the latter indentured labor on five year contracts. They get a shilling a day and their food for the first two years, and quarters. The plantations of the island are largely held by big land owners. The total population of the island is 355,000, 125,000 being East Indians. The rest are negroes and mulattoes, with the exception of about 10,000 whites, it is said, although I believe the last figure exaggerated. The size of the island is 55 miles long by an average of about thirty miles wide. Port of Spain shows at once a franker love of trees and flowers and more care for the comfort of their shade, than one usually sees in a Spanish town. The architecture, too, is without the Spanish note. It is rather neat and nondescript. The streets are well paved and clean, the black policemen stand up straight in good uniforms, and one senses, in short, the touch of northern efficiency and quiet self-respect. It is interesting to notice the effect on the negro of the different civilizations with envelope him. In Port of Spain his vanity and cheek take a more quiet and serious form and seem to tend somewhat more toward solid

environment. The death rate for the city is about 36 per 1000 and for the island about 30 per 1000, due mostly to dysentery and such maladies. Two years ago there was some yellow fever at Brighton, and three Americans died. The water is not safe, because the mountain stream gets polluted. The dry season is the middle of December to May, the wet season from then to December, but there are occasional showers at all times, and there are always more or less mosquitoes. The failure to utilize wire screens seems typical of British stubbornness. In 1904 the blacks gutted the Red House because they thought they were discriminated against in connection with the water works. The officials were stoned. The commerce of Trinidad is as follows: The chief article of export is cocoa, which some 60,000,000 pounds, 70% of which goes to New York; next comes sugar, 49% of which goes to England, and 51% to Canada. It is brown sugar, for which there is not much demand in the United States. Asphalt is the third article of export. Coconuts are another important article of export.

To resume our excursion, we came down to the sea again in passing through the busy little town of San Fernando, and after that traveled the remaining eighteen miles to Brighton. Just before reaching there we passed through the tiny little village of La Brea, where we could see the asphalt outcrop, and then went by the celebrated asphalt lake lying back between us and the sea, and looking at a distance, with the pools of rain water on the surface, like an ordinary slough. Beyond on the hills which slope to the shore, and which are thoroughly cleared, stand the neat white buildings of the company, all well screened in Canal Zone fashion.

We arrived at 11 A. M., and a Mr. Weller at once showed us over the asphalt lake and the refining and shipping plant. There are trolleys to carry the asphalt overhead in buckets out to the head of the pier, where it is dumped into ocean going vessels. That which is refined here goes in barrels. Then we went to the house of Mr. William Dillon Fowler, the local manager, and his pretty young wife, who were to put us up on account of Mr. Sewall's

introduction. After lunch Mr. Weiler took us by motor back through the woods into the country to a field where seven or eight wells were working, and from which, through pipe lines, the oil is pumped out to the end of the pier before mentioned for loading. At present the asphalt business is slumbering because, I suppose, the war's financial consequences have slowed down the paving business at home, besides stopping the European market. The oil business, I gather, is still in rather preliminary stages. Powerful English interests have some oil wells nearby, but the American enterprise is the most important.

The rest of the afternoon we talked with Mrs. Fowler. After dinner Mr. Maddren, a hard headed oil man from California, was also present. The next morning the chauffeur was fifteen minutes late, and we had a terrifying dash to reach the 7.05 train at San Fernando, doing the eighteen miles in continuous terror in 42 minutes. About nine o'clock we got back to Port of Spain. Along the road there were six or eight stations, and at each were large crowds of negro passengers, mostly rather neatly dressed and well-to-do looking.

On this day, Wednesday, December 2, we did some shopping, talked to the consul, and in the evening at eight o'clock I dined with the Governor. There were present Mr. Sewall, the Consul, Mr. Henderson (who was formerly consular agent at Ciudad Bolivar and whose son now has that post), who, with his brother, have an American firm here in Port of Spain, owning plantations and exporting cocoa. There were also the head of the Customs, Mr. Agostini, Mr. Bell, the Attorney-General, I think, the Governor's aide-de-camp, an officer born in Trinidad and belonging to a local organization, his private secretary, and several other government people. The dinner was conspicuous for ponderous dignity and quite remarkably bad food. After it, with the air of fleeing from the terrors of conversation, everyone was shoved at once to bridge or billiards. Mr. Sewall and I managed to defeat the governor and his aide-de-camp at billiards. When this long process was over, we assembled in the sort of hall drawing room at the front of the house and the Governor

began bidding us goodnight. When I returned to leave my card I saw by daylight that the garden was pretty, as one passed the neat guardhouse with a man standing at attention with fixed bayonet, and came up to the porte cochere, where signing a book, not leaving cards, was expected. The governør himself seems to be one of those enormous, slow, rather heavy, straightforward, honorable men that one often encounters with some respect and admiration, but without much diversion, among our cousins the Empire Builders.

The next morning I received from my father a brief answer to the long cable I had sent him immediately on landing. I then decided to take this ship that same afternoon with the idea of having two weeks at home, and then going to Versailles for a month, and then resuming the Latin American investigation. We spent the day in getting our tickets, packing, etc., and sailed about 9 P. M. This ship is comfortable enough. It was built for the Indian service and so has airy passages on the cabin deck. There are not many staterooms, as it is designed chiefly for freight. The food is excellent. On board besides Mr. Sewall are Mr. Maddren, and a Mr. Fraser, an oil-refining expert who left Brighton with us in the motor; a number of returning oil drillers; a few commercial travelers; a girl with a noisy parrot, etc. Both Friday and Saturday we usually had in sight some of the Windward Islands, of which I have counted, I believe, some fifteen or so, including Nevis, where Alexander Hamilton was born. Last evening at Sombrero Light we saw the last of them.

(Not dictated: On Friday morning, December 4th, at 6.30 o'clock, we arrived at the Island of Grenada. We did not enter the harbor, but we could see the town nestling among the hills, and an old fort. In many respects it looked like the Island of Margarita. The water was beautifully clear, and the diving boys were as expert here as in Curacao and other places. We left at 9.30 A .M.

After passing Sombrero light, we ran into the tail end of a storm which had passed along the coast, but which did not delay us much, and on Friday, December 11th, we passed up New