

S.S. Porthos, off the northern  
end of Sumatra, going west,  
March 24, 1921.

Dear Margaret,

If I remember rightly, my last narrative letter was finished on the train before we reached Bukit Mertajam in the Federated Malay States. At that place we alighted with our numerous pieces of baggage and took the night train from Penang toward Kuala Lumpur, the capital of the Federated Malay States. We saved practically a day by not crossing over to the island city of Penang, which appears to be an important port of the Straits Settlements in spite of the fact that it had apparently never entered my consciousness, or else did not <sup>the city and</sup> stick. They tell me that the Emden sailed into Penang between <sup>some</sup> ~~some~~ Russian warships and ~~some~~ British gunboats, so as not to have to fire toward the city, and sunk the warships and licked the gunboats and sailed away. She had passed the patrol boats as a British vessel.

We found the night train for the south very comfortable. For the first time I met an efficient shower bath in a sleeping car. In this land of late dinners we had no trouble in getting our meals in the dining car.

We arrived at Kuala Lumpur at 6:45 A.M. and ~~cloied~~ <sup>cloied</sup> up in a room in the Railway Hotel, which forms a part of the station building and is the principal hotel in the city. The buildings make a most favorable impression. The government buildings have a consistent Moorish architecture and are very pleasing, especially the railway and administration groups. The gem of the buildings is a Moslem Mosque in the point of land at the junction of the two rivers. I have a picture of it that gives a slight idea of its beauty in its setting of cocoanut palms.

As usual we visited health officials, and Dr. Heiser accepted an invitation to luncheon with Mr. Maxwell, Chief Secretary & (practically Governor) of the Federated Malay States. I was the guest of the Principal Medical Officer, who later loaned us his car. ~~to~~ We used it to go and visit the laboratory and call on Drs. Stanton and Fletcher of the staff. In the late afternoon we dropped in to see Mr. Highfield, chief surveyor of the government railway at his office in the Moorish building ~~across~~ across from the hotel. He is the husband of one of the passengers who sat at our table on the Montoro. Of course he invited us to tea, as the hospitable people of the tropics do, and took us to his home, which is a nice government bungalow on the crest of a hill commanding a view of the mountains. There we met a Miss Beattie of Brisbane, or rather Yerongpilly (?), who is a guest of Mrs. Highfield and was also at our table. <sup>to talk</sup> After tea Mrs. Highfield took us in the motor car to call on an American woman, Mrs. Addison of Long Island, who was visiting Dr. Savage of the city health department. I had an interesting talk with the latter about malaria control, which has been undertaken on a large scale in Kuala Lumpur. They drain the ravines by burying hollow tiles to carry the water to the larger collecting ditches. Afterward Mrs. Highfield took us shopping, but, being a poor man, I did not buy much, so do not get your expectations too high. Dr. Heiser plunged a bit. We were then taken to the station in time to get our luggage and ourselves aboard the night train for Singapore.

We were turned out early in the morning at Johore Baru, where we took a small steamer for the island of Singapore. In the early days the Straits of Johore were the main channel through which the trade from the west to China passed. Johore, on the mainland, is the only remaining Malay state which is not in the Federation, but it is already dominated by British advisors. It has a sultan, who is quite wealthy.

An hour's ride took us across the island into Singapore. We took a room at Raffles Hotel, which is the best known. It is expensive and is owned by the Sarkies Brothers, Armenians. The food is poor and mostly meat.

At the consul's office I got your two nice letters, which I have already answered. Dr. Heiser received a cable from Dr. Cumpston saying that the Federal Ministry would go into effect on March 7 and that Mr. Greene would be Minister of Health. While in Singapore, I had five suits made: two of silk, two of white cloth (duck is unobtainable), and one of khaki.

At the bank I ran into Mr. Darlington again, and found him buying some Siamese money to send to someone in Bangkok, with which to purchase the much-desired pair of Siamese cats. The cat that he abandoned was perfect except that it had white toes, which is not according to rule.

We called on a Mr. Figart of the General Rubber Company, who was once Dr. Heiser's secretary in the Philippines. There is a terrific trade depression in Singapore and the Malay States on account of the slump in the price of rubber owing to overproduction. It would look as though many plantations would have to be abandoned, and the people are very unhappy. The Malay Peninsula produces over 60% of the world's rubber. It also produces most of the world's tin, the major part of which is smelted in Singapore, and the price of tin has also slumped. The F.M.S. government depended mostly on an export duty on tin and now it is hard up for funds. Prices have surely slumped. I understand that even Henry Ford is right up against it for cash with which to keep his business going.

On Saturday, March 19, Mr. Figart took us to luncheon at the famous Singapore Club which overlooks the water, - I am not referring to the tendency to consume liquors.

On Sunday Dr. Heiser and I were guests of Governor and Lady Guillemard at Government House. Government House is a veritable palace on the top of a low hill in the midst of a most spacious park. The Governor's aides and secretary and ~~xxxxx~~ a few ~~xxxx~~ more permanent visitors made up a luncheon party of about ten. Dr. Heiser sat on Lady Guillemard's left and I sat on the other side. For desert we had the famous Sunday desert of Singapore, - gula Malacca, sago with a syrup suggestive of palm sugar and a milk expressed from grated fresh coconut ~~pared~~ over it. It is very good. After dinner Dr. Heiser and I talked with the Governor on the great verandah. In front of the house soldier~~s~~ guards were marching about with guns with polished fixed bayonets and bringing their guns noisily to the ground, resting for a moment and then starting on another round, - quite impressive. Some Indian troops mutinied in Singapore early in the war and killed a number of white people. They were finally publicly shot, at least the ring leaders, as a warning to the other native peoples.

At four o'clock we visited Mr. Figart at his home in the

suburbs. The roads are beautifully kept, and there are many fine residences about Singapore, speaking of the great profits formerly made from rubber and tin. We met Mrs. Figart and the two children. Later Mr. Figart took us driving in his car, and we went through the beautiful botanic gardens, with their wonderful large trees and great lawns.

In the evening Dr. and Mrs. Brooke, came to dinner with us at the hotel. I did not mention the review of his book, as you suggested. I thought he might be a bit sensitive by now about pink corsets, or whatever color it was that he recommended for the tropics. The music at the hotel was furnished on this evening by the orchestra from the flagship taking the Japanese Crown Prince around the world. The Prince himself was not visible. In fact, when he came ashore to dine with the Governor on Saturday, preparations for his reception had to be made in three places, soldier escort and all, so that assassins could not tell where he was going to land. Even the Governor did not know at which point the landing would take place.

On Monday the Porthos sailed in and we went aboard in the evening ready for an early start the next morning. At the hotel, before we left, Mr. Rock of the U.S. Department of Agriculture looked up Dr. Heiser and told us of his experiences collecting Chaulmoogra oil tree seeds, in Siam and Burma. He confirmed the story of the tiger that killed three of his collectors. A Chinaman tried to sell us a tiger's skin while we were waiting for some prints at Kodaks, but we were not interested.

We sailed from Singapore at ten A.M. on Tuesday, March 22, on the French liner Porthos. It is a very large ship and is most steady in the water. It is frightfully expensive. We have a large and comfortable cabin with two set bowls and running water, a luxury on ship board. I am not crazy about the splendid French cooking, however, although Dr. Heiser, like the other Victor, is praising it habitually. We have ~~breakfast~~ a meal- I don't know what they call it- from 7:30 to 8:30, and the men come down in their pajamas. This consists of coffee and marmalade and perhaps a little fruit, and a slice of cold ham if you want it. At 11:30 they have breakfast which is almost identical with dinner and consists of an interminable series of meat courses, every little morsel being served as a separate course. <sup>dinner is at 7 and tea at 4</sup> The French certainly live to eat. They talk of Americans and Australians being meat eaters, but I have never seen anything to compare with the compulsory proteid rations of this French boat and the French Hotel in Bangkok and Raffles'. They at least had porridge for revoltors at Raffles. Then, the French seem to fry most everything and to let the French fried potatoes soak in grease until tepid. I shall be glad to get back to your good old American cooking, with British cooking as a second choice. We had pressed meat with pickles, stew, chops, and duck curry as four successive courses for breakfast this morning. We are undergoing a partial starvation for carbohydrates. I suppose the free red wine puts a rosy tint on the diet for those who make the most of it.

We are having a wonderfully smooth trip. So far we have been sheltered by the island of Sumatra, and the ship kept an even keel. We have just left the end of Sumatra behind us on the left and now you could tell that you were at sea by the very slight, almost imperceptible roll.

We have changed our course and are headed almost due west toward Ceylon. We expect to reach Colombo on the 28th, and I hope to get passage on the Orsova for Freemantle on the 11th of April. I shall keep in touch with the American Consul as I am anxious to get the news from you without any delay. Do take good care of yourself. With much love,

Yours

*Hibon*