Leesburg
September 3, 1924. 6 a.m.

Dear Margaret:

I arrived in Leesburg on time on Labor Day evening. ~~the~~ I thought I was an hour late, being innocent of the fact that I had slipped back into Central Time. We had also slipped into vast forest and swamps. "Swamps" are just plain wet jungle full of Spanish moss and snakes.

Dr. Barnes met me at the station. I had seen him last in Bangkok & Chiengmai in 1921.

Yesterday morning I was thoroughly initiated. I was advised to put on old clothes that I could wade in, & accordingly bought a new pair of high leather water-tight boots and a straw hat to go with my beautiful khaki shirt & pants which Aunt Anna thought so becoming. The straw hat was a farmers haying hat & cost 30 cents. The costume, when worn without a tie, was consistent, uniform in color, and looked quite professional after I had dipped the boots in swamp mud. Swamp mud is black and has no bottom. For some reason you usually stop sinking just before the water reaches the tops of your knee boots. You are always surprised that you stop at all.

We spent the whole day yesterday at a negro lumber camp called "Swampville". I think the malaria staff named the place to suit themselves. Barnes began talking snakes (and the awfulness of not warning the men to look out for them) almost before I reached the hotel. It reminded me of Dr. Dorchety's great respect for creeping things.

(But speaking of creeping things, let me return to the hotel, where I saw none, but owing to no fault of the management. I have never seen so dirty and neglected a place in any part of the world. It has beautiful pillars + veranda in front. All the old bottles + cigarettes and face powder and dirt, and tins of previous generations or degenerations, are still in the room. The blue ceiling + walls are the adornment of my sleeping quarters, with nail-holes for stars, knot-holes for planets, and a ~~[illegible]~~ water-~~stained~~ washed place on the blue plaster wall for the milky way. My new good straw hat will do for the rising moon.

~~We went~~

Anyway, the people are resourceful. When it threatened to rain a colored man appeared. I shall get up courage to ask him sometime if it is not almost time for the annual sweep and removal

of refuse. But he spoke first this time, and brought a message from the unseen landlady that if it rained I should "close" the outside shutters because the glass was broken out of one of the windows. As it was evidently going to rain I "closed" the shutters but one of them was quite thoroughly wrecked. I did not care as the room could not be seriously damaged by water, unless it could reach the dust in the corners.

We went to Swampville, Barnes, a Dr. Balfour, and I. We caught mosquitos in negroes houses, while the inhabitants told of "miseries" and fished for free medical advice. We crawled under the houses and lay on our backs catching mosquitos. The negroes did not follow us there, — too uncomfortable. Later we went to a big swamp with fine trees and all sorts of creeping, flying, & hopping things. The snakes don't seem to be afraid of anyone. ~~The~~ Buzzards and cranes flop about, ~~an~~ and huge frogs give a chirp later a bird and make a flop later an alligator. You wade ~~and~~ dip for larvae and ~~sh~~ put the catch in a bottle with the help of a spoon. You also look in hollow trees and catch the mosquitoes there.

All around are beautiful trees, many of them ~~strange~~ & some very large. The Spanish moss (not the small California kind, but very different) hangs down ten or twelve feet, and the water adds ~~to the~~ to the scene by throwing beautiful reflections.

One time Dr. Balfour & I went wading in a grass & water-lily marsh. ~~W~~. Dr. Balfour almost stepped on a moccasin snake but was not much worried about it. When we returned we found Dr. Barnes on the edge of the marsh with a huge club he had carried all day, poised in the air and his eyes glued on the grass before him. ~~He~~ He looked like a heroic ~~statue~~ statue tense with action. Finally he struck and broke the back of a moccasin measuring four feet one inch long & about 3 inches thick. The inconsiderate beast had lain in wait for Dr. Barnes and when he was just about to step on him, he saw ~~on the~~ ~~the~~ the snake ~~lay~~ ~~there~~ waiting to devour him and making no effort to move aside. Dr. Barnes is going to discard his worn-out leggings & buy high boots to-day. He is getting too many thrills.

But I must stop, for breakfast will soon be ready. Fried eggs & black coffee.

With love,
William.