West African Yellow Fever Commission,
P.O. Box 148, Lagos, Nigeria
Dec. 14, 1926.

Dear Margaret:

The sun has set as it rose a soft red ball in the haze of the harmattan. I am sitting at my desk in the dormitory between two large screened windows, and it is already too cool to take my coat off. In fact the much maligned harmattan seems to me a blessing, as it brings cool air. For two nights I have had a blanket over me. But I had better go back to where I left off in my last letter.

We anchored off Sierra Leone on December 5th. The town was surrounded by low hills and further back was a mountain resembling a sleeping lion with a prominent hip bone and an empty stomach. The town ~~was~~ is pretty, with red roofs, red roads of laterite, and luxuriant green foliage. On the hill close behind the town is the Sir Alfred Lewis Jones Research Laboratory of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

A letter was brought on board from Dr. R. W. Gordon

(over)

of the Institute saying that the Director, Professor Blacklock was "up country" but that he would be glad if I would dine with him at the institute. I went ashore and looked up the Dr. Gordon and had a very pleasant chat with him and his assistant. Dr. Gordon had succeeded Dr Wapleston, whom I knew at Townsville. Both have done research in hookworm disease. I went back laden with reprints, and the ship sailed at about 9.30 a.m.

The next day we anchored at Monrovia, but there was not time to go ashore & return. We put a few men ashore who were going to work for the Firestone Co. We took on Mr. Check, a former U.C. track man of the class of 1900?) Perhaps you will remember him or his younger brother who was the famous U.C. hurdler. Mr. Check represents the Firestone Co. Monrovia is a pretty town beside a low river which shone in the morning sun. The black-faced officials came out in a boat rowed by

men in uniform and flying a flag like ours with the exception that it had only one star.

There were many interesting people on board, and several were Australian mining men or geologists. A Dr. Lloyd, entomologist, of the Tsetse Investigation Laboratory in Northern Nigeria told me many interesting things about his work. The flies lay their larvae on the ground in the shade near streams, and the campaign against sleeping sickness consists, in part, of the felling of trees along the streams.

On Dec. 8, 1926, we anchored off Sekondi, Gold Coast. I had received a telegram at Sierra Leone (Freetown) asking me to go ashore at Sekondi with Dr. Walcott of the Yellow Fever Commission and motor across to Accra, where I joined board the ship again. So I was hoisted up in the "mammy chair" by the derrick and dropped into a row boat and taken ashore. The ship was a half mile out, at least, and the oarsmen sang native chanties and clicked their tongues as they worked. A tall negro in the stern tapped a metal affair to keep the time.

(over)

It turned out the Dr. Walcott was also a McC. man. He had two years in college there + went through the medical school. We had many mutual friends. He had been camping with Sterling Bunnell and he knew Mr. Cheek (on the boat) intimately.

We drove in the car 175 miles from Secondi to Accra. In the town I had my first good look at an African negro town under British control. My first surprise was to find that the natives do not run to extreme colors as in the U.S.A. They had printed cloths slightly resembling Javanese batik in coloring — mostly browns with a little blue. The women had their babies riding low on their backs, usually tightly bound against them. The babies were nearly always asleep and often their heads were hanging over the edge of the cloth. ~~The were nearly always sound asleep.~~ A few were seen working to one edge until they could get at their milk supply without interfering with the rapid progress of their mother.

Our road was near the sea at first and went through high jungle.

There were hornbills ~~and~~ about and also large crows with white breasts. Occasionally we came to a white fort on the coast, Portuguese, Dutch, or English. Cannon lie about rusting, and the forts themselves are used as rest houses or office buildings. They are relics of the times when European countries wanted protected landing places for their traders. We passed through Salt Pond, famous for yellow fever, and went within 17 miles of Asamankese, where this years epidemic took place. We reached Accra at eight o'clock, and I spent the night with Dr. Walcott in his bungalow. A white man had died of yellow fever in Accra on Nov. 30, only 10 days earlier.

The next morning I was carried on the shoulders of two black men to the whale boat and was taken about a mile to our ~~boat~~ ship. I was the only passenger, and the crew of eight sang and rolled their tongues as they plied their peculiar three-pronged paddles.

On December 10 I reached Lagos. We went up the waterways to the docks, where I was

(over)

met by Dr. Beemokes and the other members of the staff. He drove in an auto to Yaba, which is reached by crossing from the island to the mainland on a bridge. There is a ~~large~~ large group of buildings here, most of them portable. I have two pleasant rooms in one of the dormitories. In the evening Dr. & Mrs. Beemokes gave ~~the~~ a dinner in my honor and invited several of the local doctors and their wives. The next day I signed the various books of the notables, and I have already received an ~~invitation~~ invitation to an "At home" at Government House on Dec. 23. I have accepted also an invitation to luncheon to-morrow and dinner to-morrow evening, in honor of Dr. & Mrs. Beemokes, and to luncheon and to dinner on Christmas Day.

They have recently had lots of plague among natives and a small group of fatal pneumonic plague cases including one of the doctors. There have also been one or two recent yellow fever cases here.

Dr. Beemokes looks tired and he & Mrs. B. will sail on the Appam day after to-morrow. The leptospira has not been found and there is little

prospect of any immediate starting development. I have just come in time to do the heavy work on an annual report and also start the ~~[illegible]~~ construction of three buildings to cost over $40,000. I would rather play in the laboratory or rose about in the field.

I am hoping to get news from you by the next boat. It is a long time to wait without hearing a word. I hope it is not very cold and that the furnace is behaving well. It is hard to believe that it is really winter anywhere. How is the radio working?

I have drawn no checks since my last letter.

Give my very best love to Peggy & Gertrude & Ruth & Billy, also to Grandmother & Auntie Gertrude. As for you, I love you all the time and wish you were here. You would enjoy a few of the meals they serve. I have papaw and fresh pineapple alternately at breakfast.

Much love to you all,

Hilbert.