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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

Hotel Washington,
Colon, Panama, July 14 1920

Dear Folks:

Here we are again, beneath the devouring stripes of Old Glory, as the Central Americans term it. Yes sir, it is good, very good, to be here.

And as for cosmopolitanism, as Meyer says, you have it right here, and plenty of it. Oodles of Jamaica niggers, who refer to themselves as "the West Indian colony"; and plenty of Chinese merchants, and Hindu merchants, and not a few Syrians, and quite a sprinkling of Martinique creoles, also niggers.

I wish Paul could have joined me the morning after I arrived, when I visited the Hindu shops in search of a pair of pajamas. By an odd freak of chance, I was the first customer to enter the shop of no less than six merchants, and for some reason unknown to me (you know those Hindus are great mystics) the good luck of that merchant for the rest of the day depended upon my buying something of him. They showed me pieces "made by the hand", and then sliced the pieces in their two hands and jerked them about ostentatiously (but very safely) to show how strong they were; and if it had been a trunk, sure as fate they would have jumped on it, just as the boy did in the Calcutta bazaar. And when I started to leave the store without buying anything, the proprietor shouted after me, just like Professor Jagadis Chunder Bose did when the carrot began to wiggle. Yes, they're all alike. And the nerve of them, thinking they are fit to govern themselves! Take it from me, the day the British Raj disappears from India, Mexico is going to be uninteresting.

And then the Chinaboy has a pretty good layout, too. I got two pairs of Jap crepe pajamas, to carry out my crepe motif. They look like good ones, tho they button down the wrong side. I didn't know all the chinee men were left handed. Herb must look into it. And they smell like a joss house. When I wake up in the night and smell myself it startles me.

Yes sir, I sure wish old Paul were with me now.

I have a beautiful room here in the Washington, wh cost me \$2.50 a day, \$4 to people not in Govt employ. And the meals are good, but high price. It is costing me \$5 for my room and two meals a day, and I lunch for the other meal. However, its worth it, for a few days. And yesterday I called on the Supt of the commissary, presented my credentials, and got commissary privileges, so now I'm going to buy 6 new BDV and a dozen hose and a few other things.

And I made an appointment with Admiral Marbury Johnston, USN, commanding the Fifteenth Naval District, for a conference Friday. I re our policies. By the way, Paul has the ONP ever paid that \$148 into the Am Sec and Tr Co?

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I feel pretty sure it hasn't, and I am inclined to speak rather severely to the Admiral about the matter. The admiral, by the way, is over in Balboa, and I am going over there tomorrow, to visit Fort Amador. I suspect I will stay over there at the Tivoli three or four days; coming back here about the 18th, to get ready to sail for Santa Marta on the 22nd, UF Great White Fleet.

Speaking about the Great White Fleet, that Pastores, on which I came down from Limon, is a perfectly magnificent ship, by post-war standards. It made me wish I could stay right on board for a month or two. I think she is about 8500 tons, while the one on which I go to Santa Marta probably will not be more than 3000 tons, but even that looks good to a man like me, who is used to cruising the Mexican gulf in a forty footer.

But I had two great disappointments here. One was that the ice cream is pretty poor, being made principally out of tinned milk, and there seems to be no place where you can get a bang-up good soda or sundae; and the other was, that they charge duty on dutiable goods sent to the U S from here. On this account, I abandoned the idea of sending my Guata blanket and CR saddlebags home to FOP, and mailed them to the Ofs in Washn instead, on the hope, not the certainty, - that they won't assess any duty, or whatever you say, because they are addressed to the Govt. Now PP, take notice; when you go to Washn again, you hunt up these things, and take em away with you, and do with them what you think best. If you are going to Calif soon, you better hold them and take them with you, otherwise mail them to FOP. The blanket is not a very pretty one, but is very fine quality of wool and fine weave, so it is very warm. Inside the saddle bags are two very choice huipiles, one Mixco special and one Totonicapan regular, which I want added to my collection. The Mixco article is a gem. There are also a few other things in the saddlebags which are to go home. A piece of fine manati hide, clear as amber; and a pair of Guata spurs, for keepsake (they aren't fit to wear), which Bob gave me. PP, be sure you get this stuff, or the blanket will be eaten up by moths. And the saddlebags are to be kept for me. You can take em to Calif and use em in the meantime if you want to. They ought to be handy.

It looks good to see real life sized trains once more, with American crows. And everybody here is treating me well, so far. I have not gotten out much yet, as I have had to put in a hard two days to clean up my back work and get my notes off to Washington. This morning I cleared the boards and now I can go ahead and look at the Isthmus, and then Ho! for the Spanish Main!

Ever lovingly

Witt

Hotel Washington
Colon, C Z, July 20 1920

Dear Folks:

I arter be at work writing on my report to D F, but I've had a busy day and I think its time to quit. As it is, I am rather surprised at the amount of work I have been able to do here in the Zone. It has been exceedingly hot, but I've plugged right along. I suppose I couldnt keep it up long, but-in the past, I have usually never kept it up long enough to get started. My superior success in this instance I attribute entirely to a new discovery in dietetics which I have just made. The great trouble with people here in the Tropics is that they eat too much (meals here at the Washn, 1.25 and 1.50 each). Therefore, I skip at least one meal a day. Usually I take a light bkfst consisting of oatmeal and two rounds of hot cakes. I figure this is pretty nearly all nourishment, and I couldnt get anything else for my 65 cents which would stay by me so long. Then at noon I do with a stick of milk chocolate. And at night, when it is table d'hote, I simply eat and eat and stuff and stuff my belly until it actually hurts. Then I go to bed, and sometimes (miravellis miravellis!) I am not hungry when I wake up in the morning and dont have to eat again until noon, and then I stuff myself and with a stick of milk choc at night I hold out until the next morning. Great system. Try it, Herb. Only dont try it if you eat a la carte. Table d'hote system is de rigeur.

I've decided to go to see the Goya and the Gioconda again tonight, since they are now here in Colon for two days. Of course I saw them three nights running in San Jose, but it wont do me any harm to see em again. Im going to get a gallery seat this time, since there wont be any one in the house that knows me.

I came back from the Panama-Balboa-Ancon side (they are all so mixed up with each other that you cant tell where one ends and tother begins) on the flyer at noon today. By George, that's a fine train service they run! Of course I had a pass, -its so long now since I have paid any RR fares I am going to get insulted the next time the conductor asks me for my ticket, - and I sat by the window all the way across and looked at the canal, and it is a very interesting sight. As I think I wrote you previously, I dont think I have ever traveled as interesting a 47 miles as this one between Colon and Panama. And by Gorge, they have done a lot of work on this isthmus. The thing that surprises me is not so much the canal itself, as the huge amount of side ~~line~~ lines there is to it. In fact, they have to establish about everything from an ice factory, bakery and laundry down to a lunatic asylum to carry out the work of this enterprise. It is a whole social system worked out on the basis of about 15000 people. And by the way, they have an interesting way of separating the whites and blacks here. The blacks were originally paid in silver, apparently, and the whites (Americans) in gold or U.S. CY, so they have the gold

"Gold Employees" and another "Silver Employees", and the RR stations there is a seat for silver and a seat for gold. Everything is the same.

Well, I had a very interesting time over on the Panama side. Had two dinners and a game of golf with Capt Punker at Ft Amador, and he took me over the fortifications, which are very interesting. Then I called on nearly everybody worth while; the chief health officer Col H L Fisher, and the Supt of Ancon Hospital, Col Hess, and the Entomologist, James Zetek, and the Dept Quartermastery U S Army, Col Garrard, and so on, not omitting of course the Commandant of this Naval District, Admiral Johnston. And I found at last an ice cream parlor in Panama where they served first-class chocolate ice cream, tho the strawberry was no good, and I put down two ice creams daily, in lieu of one of my meals. I got pretty well acquainted with that side of the Isthmus.

Now tomorrow I go out to Frijoles, nearly half way across the Isthmus, to see an avocado grove which the Govt has established there, and the next day I go across Gatun lake to see their citrus grove, and that will end my activities, for the following day, on sea Wednesday, I am booked to sail for Santa Marta. I have a pass on the Army launch to ride over to Ft Sherman, which Col Cloke of the fort right next to the Washn hotel, gave me today; but I fear I won't have time to use it. I tell you, being a Govt employee is quite the right thing here in the Zone; you get in on a good many free rides and reduced rates.

But I tell you what, I get up a pretty good sweat when I walk down street about 2 p.m., as I did today. And yesterday from 1 to 3 I walked around Balboa taking fotos; it rained all morning and I had to seize the opportunity. My shirt gets ~~wringing~~ wringing wet, just like that of Andy Evans used to.

Dunno whether I will get another chance to write you before I leave the Zone or not; but probably not. I am going to have a pretty busy time the next few days, just as I have had ever since I got here. My fondly-imagined loafing about here in the Zone has all gone up in this smoke; I didn't know there was going to be so much to do and see here. I thought I could sort of loaf around for several days, but it ain't to be.

Fine sea breeze here in the evening; while the Panama side is much prettier in general, I like the sea breeze here on the Caribbean side, and this hotel Washn beats the Tivoli a mile on rooms; the food at the Tivoli is just a trifle better, but when one's gustatory sense is dulled the way mine is, he can't distinguish the fine differences between the Tivoli roast duck and the Washn roast duck.

Good night

Ever lovingly

Dill