

A TRIP TO JAMAICA

AMONG the most interesting spots in the West Indies is the old town of Kingston, Jamaica.

The Island of Jamaica has been for a good while one of the popular winter resorts for Americans, yet the vast majority know little of life and conditions in this queer old English town.

People who live in the island say that Kingston is not at all typical of the country and do not care to spend more time than necessary there.

By
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There are several market buildings similar to those in our southern cities where there are booths or stalls where almost every conceivable commodity is displayed for sale. Coconuts, mangoes, oranges, limes, bananas, meat, fish, tobacco and a thousand other things. These market buildings are not large enough to hold half the sellers so the streets are lined for blocks with market women who sit all day trying to sell the produce so laboriously brought in.

Interesting sights galore presented themselves but good photography was very difficult because the display of a camera was the instant signal for the gathering of the crowd, each individual member of which seemed determined to look into the lens.

An hour or so among the motley throng and one conceives a desire to see where they all come from. We found that the trolley cars ran several miles into the country, so boarding one of these we started out.

Mile after mile was passed and still we met the constant incoming stream of basket laden women and girls. We wondered if there was no end and inquiry disclosed the fact that in

fractory and was trying its best to wind her up with the leading string. Her efforts to get things straightened out, the goat started toward home and at the same time to maintain the poise necessary to keep the basket in place were amusing in the extreme. The wrathful expression of face and very evident desire to do things to that goat were decidedly at variance with the dignified bearing necessary to balancing the basket. I at once decided that a burden upon one's head which could not be set down and must not be dropped would be a most effective aid in maintaining one's dignity under the most trying circumstances.

Whatever else may be true there is no color line drawn in Jamaica.

It is quite common to see a well dressed negro and an English gentleman seated together in a street car earnestly discussing the live questions of the day. Or riding out into the country to see a crowd of people playing the great game of cricket upon a fine green near some beautiful villa and to discover that the players represent all shades of color from the coal black negro to the pure Caucasian.

This condition of things in Jamaica explains, to some extent, the troubles of the foremen upon the Canal Zone who have charge of gangs of Jamaican laborers. They have acquired, or learned to ape, the feelings and independent manner of the typical Englishman and are very proud of the fact that they are English subjects. Most of them are very ignorant and lazy and as is usually the case the more ignorant they are the more finicky about their dignity and rights.

Thousands of them have gone to Panama to work for the Canal Commission and the result is a scarcity of labor in some parts of the island, and as the change has been brought about by the superior wages paid by the Commission it has occasioned some feeling of hostility.

Kingston, like most tropical cities, presents the greatest possible extremes in the home life of the inhabitants. Some of the English villas are very beautiful. Usually set well back in the midst of spacious grounds and surrounded by high walls or iron fences or perhaps the rear and sides protected by stone walls crested with broken bottles set in cement to discourage the stray prowler, and the front by a high iron fence through which one may look and see the avenues of royal palms and rare shrubbery and flowers.



Market Scene, Kingston Street

It is quite true that when one lands there late in the day and makes his first trip into the town at night he does not receive a very favorable impression of the place.

The streets are ill-lighted and thronged with as motley an array of human beings as can be well found in a civilized country.

MARKET SCENE, KINGSTON STREET.

The dusky throng jabbering a peculiar mixture of negro dialect and cockney English is about as easily understood as a crowd of Columbians or Central Americans speaking their Spanish patois. However, a little patience and one begins to recognize some resemblance to the English language.

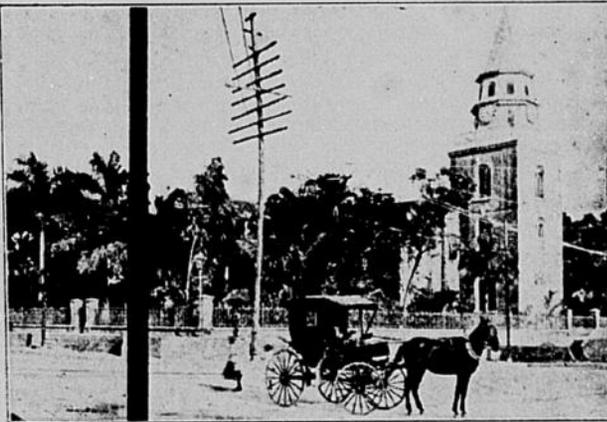
A little inquiry and investigation disclose the fact that the town is well supplied with very good hotels. The first thought is that in this tropical country the nights will be very hot, but one is generally happily disappointed for the sea breeze is almost always cool and I have never spent a night in Jamaica that compared in heat and general discomfort with many that I have spent in Chicago and New York.

With the advent of daylight we get a better idea of the old town with its low brick buildings, its covered sidewalks, narrow streets, which on the whole are well paved, and its variegated population, which comprises all shades from coal black to the pure English face.

Entering the town even in the early evening one finds the stores nearly all closed and almost absolutely dark, the display windows so familiar to us being entirely lacking, while the better class of people are little seen upon the streets. The negroes are, however, numerous enough, mostly women and children, and nearly all bare-footed, trudging along the middle of the street.

In the early morning the scene is one of the greatest interest to the visitor. Upon every street leading into town is a stream of the poorer class, nearly all black, coming to the city market, each one loaded with produce of some sort. Here a woman striding rapidly along with nearly a bushel of mangoes upon her head and a smaller basket on her arm, walking as freely and easily as if without a load, there another with a similar load of vegetables upon her head and leading a diminutive donkey, which is almost hidden by the great panniers filled with garden truck. Just ahead may be seen the woman's husband walking jauntily along clad in clean linen, the product of his wife's toil, an old silk hat upon his head and a cane in hand, and evidently bent on looking after the proceeds of the sales.

We follow them to the market place and find the streets given up to the public market, already thronged with the early arrivals and the town people who are buying supplies for the day.



Old Church—Kingston

many cases they came twenty miles or more to sell less than a bushel of fruit or garden truck.

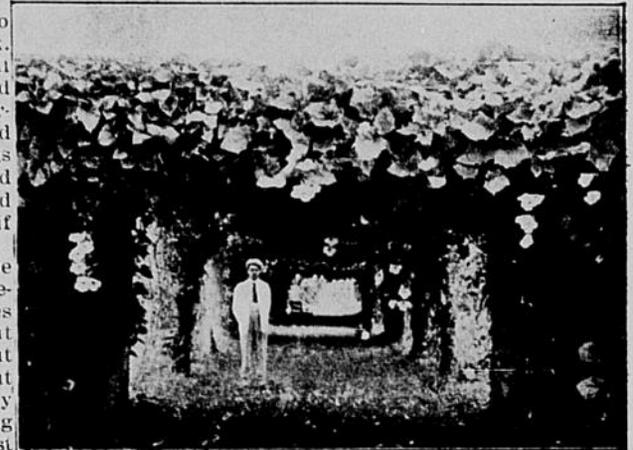
As we returned to the city we found that all of them did not walk all the way to town, and also how accommodating the Jamaican mortormen can be. Several times the car stopped and waited while a woman put two or three bags or baskets of fruit or vegetables aboard and stowed them under the seats, and as we watched the process we wondered how they would fare if they were dealing with our interurban service.

If one returns to the town toward evening he again meets the seemingly endless procession returning whence it came, and after traveling miles and meeting an almost constant stream I thought that I should find the market places deserted, but not so. I found the crowd somewhat thinned but still on the ground, and later learned that many of them remained all night, sometimes sleeping upon the ground, but determined to sell the last of their stock before starting upon the homeward tramp which was, in many cases, nearly thirty miles.

A clergyman told me that attempts had been made to establish depots or local markets, so that the produce could be disposed of near their homes at a slightly reduced price, but the fascination of the crowd in the city and the higher prices induced most of them to take the long tramp with their heavy loads, although the gain received for a twenty-mile walk and perhaps two days on the ground only amounted to a dollar or two.

One sees among these market people many curious and interesting sights, but one made a particularly strong impression upon my mind.

A fine looking negro woman had started on the homeward trip balancing on her head a large basket apparently filled with purchases made in town and leading a goat. The goat became re-



Arbor—Hope Gardens

From these beautiful homes the dwellings grade downward until one finds the most squalid huts imaginable, crowded with human beings whose conditions of life hardly rank with that of the self-respecting farmer's pigs or cattle. One advantage that they have over the very poor of the northern cities is that they do not suffer from the cold, although the discomforts of the rainy season are not to be ignored.

As for food, fruits at least are very cheap, especially bananas and mangoes. The bananas are plentiful and excellent and they are shipped north by the ship load every week, but the mangoes are much more in evidence. The trees grow everywhere and seem always to be loaded with fruit in all stages of development. The natives are very fond of them and vast quantities are brought to