

Dominica, May 11th, 1885

My dear girl:

The mail boat leaves here for Antigua, St. Thomas and New York to-night about 12 o'clock or later and I intend to go back to Antigua on her and to settle down in my old quarters again.

The last few days have been filled with the greatest enjoyment of my life in the matter of sight-seeing, collecting and general entertainment. It would take a book as big as "Tom Sawyer" to put down all the points.

Dominica is especially rich in tropical vegetation, wild torrents, canyons, precipices, gorges, waterfalls, steep bridle paths, rich valleys, sulphur springs, and volcanic eruptions.

Since coming here Mr. Stedman has spared neither expense, pains, nor trouble to make my stay altogether pleasant and never to be forgotten.

Last Wednesday eve he gave a dinner in my honor - and all the big guns of the island were invited. The table was most elegantly prepared and fitted up to please the most critical eye - and the most particular appetite.

Last Saturday eve the President of the island - Mr. Eldridge gave a dinner also for me.

Last Saturday we made a party for the "boiling lake" and the scene of the late eruption. The preceding night I stopped at Mr. Stedman's country seat (a beautiful place surrounded by a plantation of lime trees and as handsome as any park.) In the morning at five o'clock we started horse-back on our journey. At first we wound up a mountain while all the time miles of pleasant valleys were spread out before us. Then we plunged into the woods - ringing with the songs of strange birds. There were precipices of ferns, great leaves, vines in every direction, massive trees whose trunks were hidden by ferns -, mosses, orchids, and large leaved plants. Great festoons of vines hung from the limbs. Ever and anon we crossed a mountain brook rushing wildly down to the dark valleys a thousand feet beneath us. After a ride of an hour we came to a few cabins of mountaineers, one of whom we employed as guide to the volcano, (not the cabin but the mountaineer.)

We were up now to such a height as to feel the cold and it set us to wishing for heavier coats - the air had changed from enervation to energy -.

The path became so rough with rocks and roots and steeps and brooks that we were obliged to walk and lead our horses. Clouds were around about us filled with rain that pattered and drizzled upon our umbrellas. The forest became heavier. The roots of trees would permit a horse to be stabled between them as they left the parent stem. The spaces between the great trees were at times quite filled with great vines reaching from the distant limbs to the rich mold below.

An hours ride of this and we came to where the horses must be left. There we found a hut made of palms beside a mountain torrent. The waiters brought in the huge basket and we took some goodly things to refresh the inner man. Then the guide led us through dark recesses, up steep heights that made us puff and blow and wish that we could take it as cool as the guide, Although the rain came down and we were enveloped in mist and the air was cold, the perspiration rolled off us in streams - on and on - up and up - the timber getting quite small and stunted and signs of the eruption in broken branches and sand upon the ground. An hours walk with increasing signs of the eruption and we finally came to the top of the mountain we had been ascending. Here the stunted trees became shorn of their branches - the sand and debris lay thick on the ground - branches were piled in confused masses.

The mists completely obstructed our view for a time when suddenly they lifted and a thousand feet below us could be seen the "boiling lake" - great clouds of steam arose before us and sailed away to the departing mists - an amphitheater of two square miles was at our feet filled with volcanic eccentricities. To our right the land had slipped from the mountain's side, carrying millions of tons of old debris, trees and vegetation down to the bottom of the gorge where once lay a peaceful mountain side clothed in trees and rich vegetation - now a mountain side of red volcanic earth.

We commenced the descent - trunks of trees yet stood - their bark stripped - great bruises in their sides where the

rocks had struck them when they came showering to the ground. The nearer we approached the crater the less the tree trunks, when finally they disappeared altogether, all covered by the great quantities of debris. At this time we concluded to pass by the "new boiling lake" now nearly extinct since the eruption and distant about a half mile.

The hills were quite steep, the rocks very slippery and the debris rolled under our feet. We passed brooks black as ink and steaming hot coming from crevices in the rocks, a "hell-broth, boil and bubble." One stepped on boulders which were as heavy as we could lift, lately from the bowels of the earth. We slipped and slid on beds of old volcanic ash, some grey and of the consistency of putty, some brown, some red, some black. Crude pieces of sulphur lay at our feet, streams of ashy liquid discoloured the rocks where it oozed out and joined in the mad black torrent now hurrying on towards the sea. In time we came to the scene of our destination. A great cloud of steam whirled and swung in the air rushing up the mountain side. We passed into it and down a difficult ascent into the crater. Where in the first days of January a boiling caldron of the diameter of a hundred feet or more, now we walked in comparative safety on a debris composed of sand, gravel and rocks. At one side of the crater the water rushed up through the debris accompanied by clouds of steam. It hissed and bubbled and sputtered and rushed and roared and finally joined in a scalding stream and started down steaming, fretting and tearing to unite with its sister streams in their restless trend down the mountain side into the valleys and out to the sea.

5.

A few minutes' contemplation of the scene, varied by picking gravel out of our shoes and a cool drink of water from a rivulet emptying into the crater from the mountain side and we bade good-bye and retraced our steps to where we left the vicinity of the new crater. Soon we came to the spot accompanied by a heavy rain and strong wind- a fitting introduction to this new Inferno - and entered the arena. On either side the works were in full play; they were running on full time. Since the twelfth of January, in agreeableness with the revival of trade all over the world, those works have been running night and day. We heard no complaint of dull times, no strikes in these works these times. I never saw more earnestness displayed in any undertaking, never, no less results, for practically all that is manufactured is steam and hot water and it goes to waste.

On the right hand side we found the boiling pool inaugurated since the eruption. It has a diameter of about fifty feet and is in a considerable state of ebullition, some parts throwing up water quite nicely. It is of a muddy color and steaming hot with no outlet.

Here we took a little lunch, then commenced an ascent up a most precipitous place that has some of the essence of danger in slipping and from land slides also.

When we reached the top the weather cleared and we had a fine view - could see the city and distant mountain tops and miles of tree tops in beautiful foliage and miles of blue sea beyond.

Reaching home at last towards night, just about as tired

and dirty as we could be and not a dry thread of clothing on us. The sunshine was very welcome to us when we got ~~it~~ down from the mountains. The first time I ever remember of seeking sunshine in the tropics.

Have gathered a lot of ferns, some beautiful beyond description, (almost!) and most rare. There are about a hundred varieties on this island alone. I find them in all sorts of places, some where the water from the water-fall constantly drips upon them, others in the tops of trees, some in eternal shade, some in sunshine, some white and silver, some golden (and such a golden), some blue, some black as night, some small as a lucifer match, some large as a tree. It is a wonder Dominica is so little known in the States. It is really wonderful in its way and a regal way it is, too.

There ought to be a hotel here for winter visitors. Here they can enrich themselves in botanical specimens. The sea is so rich in fauna, and minerals are in her mountains in great variety. There are wonderful bridle paths through the mountains and around the island.

The purity of the water cannot be excelled in any State in the Union. The mountain brooks are very timorous and combined with the rich vegetation and fearful steeps, never cease to be objects of pleasant interest.

In all my travels in South America or other West Indian Islands I never have seen the equal of Dominica. Her city is a poorly looking place to a new comer, made so from the fact of the grass growing in the streets, the non-appearance of wagons or carts and the non-adornment of her houses in any way whatever.

Her people are the most democratic in their political

views of any in the West Indies.

They are very hospitable and never cease to make a stay pleasant to any American.

The Sugar Commission party spent a week here in March, I believe and were highly delighted.

I shall leave the island with many regrets that I did not see more and understand better and hope to come again sometime.

Well, dear girl, how many times I've wished for you in the past few days. The time I just have written of is only one of many good journeys I've made here.

Only one woman has visited the volcano as yet, a Mrs. Watt. I'm sure if you were here you wouldn't rest until you had seen it. I think you could stand the journey - to surprise you and all your relatives. I'm powerful glad you have a bit of muscle about you so you can trot around and get tired so you can sleep well o' nights. If you ever come here you will have to ride horse-back. Seems to me I've heard you state that you rode when a "gurrel." Somewhat of a tomboy, I believe. The training perhaps was good. I tell you mountain climbing is tough. It exercises a new set of muscles. Coming down is hard on the knee joints.

I hope to be in such trainingⁱⁿ that I can carry the lunch so you can swing your arms or claw in the gravel as the case may need.

Now I've exhausted myself on this letter and don't feel like writing to anybody else.

Goodness! Its nearly two months since I've heard from you What! What!! have you been doing -----?