

January 8, 1951

Mrs. Helen Hall
44 Genova
Mexico City D.F., Mexico

Dear Helen:

A great deal has happened in the short time since we left and although I have a great deal to say, I shall have to make this just as brief as I can as I have much to do.

The trip up was not too unpleasant but did not improve my love for train travel. I found Mr. Heineman in bed, for while there is nothing wrong with his heart, he must have done himself a fair amount of harm through the fall he had on shipboard. I spent Tuesday of our arrival with him and went to Washington that night. Marion's sister, Helene, came over from Wilmington and spent until Saturday with her. I spent Wednesday, Thursday and Friday in Washington and had talks with all of the people whom I wanted to see and felt that I should see in connection with all aspects of my trip, both personal and business. Everything turned out most satisfactorily; in fact the arrangements which have been made and the understandings which have been reached could not be more satisfactory. I returned here by the night train on Friday and have spent Saturday and Sunday with Mr. Heineman, who is now so far recovered as to be up and about, and we talked things out thoroughly so far as my company business is concerned. Today and tomorrow I shall be busy with further talks and getting the clothes which I need for the trip and putting in as much time with Maryssael as possible. He arrived from Europe this morning. I have not talked with him yet but I think he will be in Mexico City in about ten days or so. I want him to be sure to see this doctor here about his nose before he goes back, as it gives him so much inconvenience constantly and I think the doctor here can help him.

I found in Washington that Burrows is to be assigned here for about three months in connection with the Inter-American meeting which will now be held in March, and Ruth Hughes is to go down there and stay while he is away. She is taking Cynthia with her. Marion and I suggested that she and Cynthia should stay at the house while they are there. It would be a great convenience for Ruth and I think it will be very pleasant for you to have her for company in the house. I talked with Ruth this morning over the phone and she is not yet certain when she will be leaving but it will probably be around the end of January. Ruhbottom is going down beforehand for some talks on Braceros and I doubt whether she can leave the Department for Mexico City before Ruhbottom gets back from these talks. Ruth is very enthusiastic about the trip and I think it will prove very pleasant for her and helpful to the Ambassador with whom the matter has been cleared. I think Ruth has been in touch with you or will be and she will of course keep you informed as to when she will arrive. She wants to put Cynthia into school and will undoubtedly be in touch with you on that.

We want Ruth to be comfortable and happy at the house with Cynthia. She talks a lot of rot about paying for food, but that is all ridiculous and you will pay the household expenses and not let her pay anything.

Helene's husband, Caleb, is as you know a brilliant and charming man and very capable but he has the peculiarity of not taking any holidays and his health has not been good for several years. The doctor has told him that he has to take a complete rest for a month and to see more of people and to get away from Wilmington. I think we have about persuaded Helene and Caleb and they have about decided to spend their holiday in Mexico at the house in Mexico City and in Cuernavaca and they also expect to spend a little time in Acapulco. The important thing is for him to have a complete change and relaxation and to see a bit more of people and to play a little golf. I do not think he should play golf in Mexico City but he could do so in Cuernavaca. Marion and I are terribly sorry that they have to make this trip which we had looked forward to so much while we are away; but the important thing is that he make the trip now and they are planning to leave also around the end of the month, but Helene will be in touch with you. Helene talks a lot of rot too about the expense to us, etc. but that is ridiculous and you will I am sure know how to look after the larder in the house in Mexico City and in Cuernavaca. The deep freeze in the Cuernavaca house is in order to function and all it needs is the plug put in. I think they will probably spend more of their time in Cuernavaca than in the house in Mexico City. In Mexico City the Layton's should use Marion's and my bedroom and Ruth and Cynthia should use the big bedroom on the ground floor or one of the bedrooms on the main floor as they prefer. In Cuernavaca we want the Layton's to use the bedroom that we use. In Cuernavaca if the Layton's and Ruth and Cynthia and you are down there at the same time, I am sure you can have the smaller bedroom downstairs fixed up so that either you or Ruth and Cynthia can use it; in other words with three bedrooms you can accommodate all. I think you can get Don Eduardo to hurry fixing up the bathroom in the new servant's quarters upstairs so that Benito and his family can use it and no longer have to use the bathroom on the ground floor in the main house. That will facilitate things a lot if the Layton's and Hughes' and you are at the Cuernavaca house at the same time.

I think Marion has already suggested to you that the brass bed which we took to Cuernavaca be put up in one of the new servant's rooms so that Louis can use it when he may be spending the night in Cuernavaca. I think that the Layton's will need him while they are there and he might as well stay there instead of going to a hotel and save me that expense. He can sleep and eat at the house, which will be much better all around. I think Louis was looking forward to a three months' holiday and this means that he will have to keep pretty much on the job, but I want him to do it and you can tell him that when I get back I will give him something extra. I want him to be available in every way for the Layton's while they want to use him and if they go to Acapulco I want him to drive them down and back and he can stay there while they are there and you can pay his hotel expenses while in Acapulco. I think you had better see that Louis takes several weeks off now before the end of the month so that he will have had several weeks by the time Ruth Hughes and the Layton's arrive at the end of the month or thereabouts.

You may also want to buy a bed and a chest of drawers for the other servant's room in the new quarters so that if Marie Louise wants to go down with you to get the Layton's settled in Cuernavaca and stay for a few days she can do so. I am sure Marie Louise will be willing to do it, but if Chris does not like the idea of her being there with Louis and sleeping in the next room, you can buy a couple of beds for one of the new servant's rooms and perhaps Chris can get a few days off from the Hurley's to go down with Marie Louise while she is getting the Layton's settled.

Sam spoke to me on the telephone last evening and I told him about the Layton's coming and that perhaps he could help Caleb Layton have some golf in Cuernavaca. I do not think Caleb should play golf in Mexico City, but I think that through Hugh Rose and Harold Circuit, etc. you may be able to arrange that Caleb will have a golf partner now and then at Cuernavaca and you can fix it that he can play at the Club. The latter is easy for anyone can play there by paying the fees.

When we left Mexico City we did not foresee all this, but I am sure you will be able to take care of things and will be glad to and to make the Layton's and the Hughes' as comfortable as possible. I do not think the Layton's will want to go out too much but it is good for Caleb to see some people and I think if you will ask the Ransom's and the Goodrich's and the Katz' and the Ayres' for dinner they will be glad to do something for the Layton's for us.

I think with all the arrangements we made with Don Eduardo before we left everything is going all right with the construction at the new house. There is one point that I forgot and that is I think the two pumps for the black water and the town water should be moved from where they are now and put over against the wall between us and the next property, as their present location is very unsightly. I spoke to Benito about this before I left and I am sure that Don Eduardo and the plumber can work that out all right. If it seems desirable to get larger pumps than the present pumps, they can be gotten in Mexico City or Cuernavaca.

I think that the pesos that you have and with the pesos that will come into my account at the end of every month from the company will be enough for house expenditures in Cuernavaca and Mexico City and for any bills of Don Eduardo's, but if there isn't just get in touch with Bowman in the office and he will give you what you need.

My trip to Washington was very satisfactory.

On Saturday evening I broke the front teeth in my lower plate and I did not know whether I could get it fixed up in time to get away on the ship, but fortunately we got a dentist on Saturday evening and he and his mechanic have been working Sunday and today and I think by tonight I should be fixed up. It was certainly fortunate it happened before I got on the boat. I saw my doctor this morning and had a cardiogram at his insistence and he says that it is much better than in September. I think I must be pretty good still for in the three days I was in Washington last week I did about as much as a human being can possibly do. I am looking forward to at least some rest on the boat, but from the volume of papers that have already accumulated for my study it looks as though I will be reading documents much more than I will be mysteries during the trip.

Before I left I told Randall and Burrows that I would be sending the Ambassador or them a word before I left on the trip. I would appreciate your doing the following. Please tell Randall and Burrows that I intended to write a word to them or to the Ambassador before I left but that I have so much to do that I am passing them on this message through you and they will understand what I mean. Please tell them that I would like the Ambassador and them to know that my visit to Washington was most satisfactory in every way and that everyone seemed to be very pleased that I was taking this trip and that all the arrangements were satisfactorily worked out. They will understand what I mean. Please ask them to give the Ambassador and Mrs. O'Dwyer our very good wishes and to say that we are looking forward to seeing them on our return in March.

The Argentina sails on Wednesday, January 10th, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and she will be arriving in Trinidad (Port of Spain) on January 15th and leaving there the same day. She will be arriving at Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday, January 23rd, and leaving the same day. She will be in Santos on January 24th and leave the same day. She will arrive in Montevideo on January 27th and leave the next day. We arrive in Buenos Aires on January 29th. We will be staying at the Plaza Hotel. If you want to you can send some air mail to the ship at Rio and if you will address it to me c/o S/S Argentina, Moore-McCormack Lines, arriving January 23rd, it will reach me.

I talked with Jimmy over the weekend and the baby has not arrived. I have much to say to Jimmy as to what I want done while I am away and will be writing him this morning, but in order not to have to repeat certain things in the letter I am going to send him a copy of this letter.

This is a very long screed which I have dictated hurriedly. I have just talked with Maryssael over the phone and he says that he had a good trip over. Give our best to the servants and tell them we want them to take good care of our guests while we are gone. I wish you were making this trip with us.

With affectionate good wishes from us both,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

BSM:cb