

# **THE CLIMATE OF JAMAICA**

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The climate of Jamaica by James Cecil Phillippo

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**JAMES CECIL PHILLIPPO**

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OF JAMAICA**



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CLIMATE OF JAMAICA.

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THE  
CLIMATE OF JAMAICA.

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THE VOYAGE TO JAMAICA.

TWENTY-THREE years ago, when in New York, desirous of getting a passage to Jamaica by steamer, I inquired of a clerk in a large steamship office there, which then ran a line of passenger vessels to Colon, whether their vessels touched at Jamaica. He stared at me, and, with a look of wonder, said, "Jamaica! where is it?" I informed him that it was a British island in the Gulf of Mexico, not far off Cuba, and that their steamers had lately called there on their route. He said, "Oh, that place! yes, our vessels did call there. Do you wish to go there?" I said, "Yes." He then looked at me with an air of commiseration, and added, "I tell you what, young fellow, if ever you go there you will never get away again!"

He may have referred to the difficulty of access

and egress from the island, owing to the withdrawal of the line with which he was connected ; or perhaps he thought, as was generally thought then, that few people ever lived out the allotted span of human existence there ; or he may have had some idea that I should turn black, marry a negress, and settle down in a semi-civilized condition, like the man described by Tennyson in "Locksley Hall"—but evidently he looked on me as a man going to the Ultima Thule, bent on self-destruction, and in a bad way altogether. Such were the opinions held generally in Europe and America in those days, and such being the opinions held by many still, I have taken the opportunity of a few months' relaxation, after so many years of constant and unintermitting daily work in the lowlands of Jamaica, to give the public, and especially the medical profession of Europe and America, the views that I entertain of it from personal experience, and from the experience of others ; as also from the only statistics that I have been able to obtain, but which are a host in themselves—viz., those contained in the Reports of the Army Medical Department.

I shall, I hope, be able to convince the reader not only that Jamaica is not the deadly climate that it has been represented to be, but that it presents many advantages to the European and



American, both as a health resort for the invalid and as a temporary, and even permanent, sojourn for all those to whom the rigorous winters of the North are seasons of confinement, imprisonment, and death. Those also who have sufficient capital and energy, and are inclined to a pastoral life amongst the rich uplands and valleys of our mountains, and who are willing to devote themselves to the cultivation of coffee, ginger, tobacco, tea, cinchona, spices—among which is our indigenous product the pimento—grasses, and flowers, all of which grow luxuriantly, and none of which demand excessive fatigue, will be able to pass a life of refinement and leisure, without exposure to those malarious influences which too frequently abound in the lowlands, where the sugar-cane is cultivated and its juice manufactured into sugar and rum.

Jamaica, I must premise for the benefit of those whose geographical knowledge has mainly been kept up of late years by war correspondents and emissaries of foreign States requiring loans, is an island in the Caribbean Sea—one of the West Indies, in fact. It lies between the 17th and 19th degrees of north latitude, and between the 76th and 79th degrees of west longitude. It is about 160 miles long by 40 broad, and contains, according to De Cordova, "between 4500 and 5000 square miles, and rather more than 3,000,000

square acres of land, of which not more than one-fifth is under cultivation." Although a considerable portion of this is arable, by far the greater part is hilly and rocky, and more fitted for pasture land and for the cultivation of the various products already enumerated, and the edible roots and greens of the peasantry. A range of mountains, of which the Blue Mountains are best known, with its peak 7100 feet above the level of the sea, runs along the whole length of the island, completely dividing the north and south sides, sending down spurs into the plains, between the valleys of which are numerous streams. The scenery is varied and beautiful; few have been there who have not wished to revisit it, and many of its old inhabitants who have left it to end their days among their relatives and friends in Europe often regret their departure from it, and in the midst of the chilling winters, as they sit by their firesides, long to see once more its clear blue skies, and to feel the crisp winds from the sea and the balmy breezes from its hills.

By the traveller and invalid the first questions asked are not only, "Where is Jamaica?" but "How, when, and by what means is it to be reached?"

Of course, though (for many are ignorant of the fact, Jamaica being a small and unimportant place) as it is an island, a sea voyage is neces-

sary in order to reach it, but this is by no means a necessary *evil*.

There are many to whom a sea voyage proves to be a great advantage, and that it is so is shown by the fact that many young people who have been sent to Jamaica from England with coughs, incipient phthisis, and spinal irritation, have arrived already cured, or in a fair way for recovery. The rest on board, the invigorating sea air, the daily companionship of strangers of different countries and nationalities, many of whom have seen the world in all its shapes and have mixed in society of every grade, and are all equally and necessarily idle and inclined to pass the time agreeably to themselves and others, make life at sea not only endurable, but enjoyable. Though statistics show that a maritime life is by no means exempt from phthisis, many are prepared to prove that a long sea voyage is decidedly advantageous to those suffering from that disease in its incipient stages; and at all events there can be no doubt as to the value of a voyage of from three to six weeks' duration. It can be made by the magnificent steamers of the Royal Mail Company, which start from Southampton on the 2nd and 17th of the month, in eighteen or nineteen days. These vessels have been running now to the West Indies for over thirty years, with such regularity that they are