

EASTER IN BERMUDA

By HELEN E. WILLIAMS

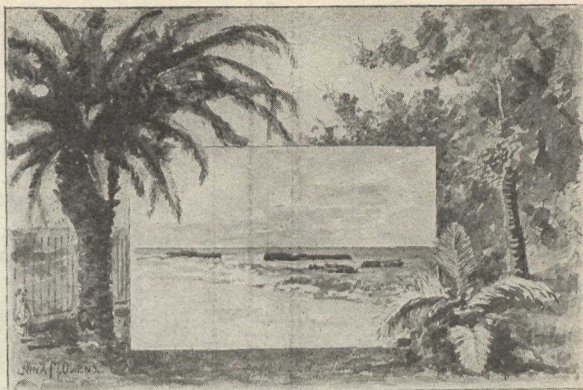
Illustrated by Nina M. Owens

It was on a morning in mid-April that we emerged from the portals of "Seaward," and stepped out upon a tribe road leading to the Hamilton parish church, where an early communion service was to be held at half-past eight. The day was perfect as only Bermudan days can be. All the sunshine of the hours distilled in the blue sunlight. Around us oleander trees were just blushing into bloom; match-me-if-you-can burned against a night of dark green cedars; white houses of native limestone gleamed between clumps of cocoanut palms, tamarisks, palmettoes and pride-of-India trees; while in the near distance stretched the wonderful expanse of water which is at once the envy and despair of artists. "The blue reminds the traveler of the Mediterranean when the Mediterranean is at its best," wrote Charles Dudley Warner. And the author of "Tuscan Cities" and "Italian Journeys" expatiating upon the Latin range of color and voluptuous overtures of the waves said he "used to recall Italy there, but for beauty Italy is nowhere beside Bermuda."

Skirting a field where a white something shimmers like watered silk, weaving odoriferous arabesques into the soft breezes of this lotus land, we pass through a churchyard where every grave is literally snowed under a profusion of Easter bloom, and enter the church. And then we realize that never before have we seen a church decorated. Oleander leaves, interlocked and sewn together like the links of a chain, festoon the walls. English ivy be-

There is a saying in Bermuda that even the birds sing, "Don't hurry—don't worry!" One sees them everywhere, these little choristers, and the cardinal bird, in particular, makes an effective splash of color seen against a background of green foliage, saffron houses of Spanish-American fancy, fronded palm, or pendant hair of palmettoes. But here, as elsewhere, the things which appeal to some are foolishness in the eyes of others, and the "Don't hurry! Don't worry!" message of the birds, approved of and put into practice by the easy-going Bermudans, who love not work of any kind, has been censured by at least one tourist, who in no uncertain accents asserted that what was needed here was "a little American vim and enterprise."

"You work awhile," an onion weeder once epitomized his life philosophy, "and then you raise up and chat, and the time passes." And the attitude is a typical one. In striking contrast with it was a conversation we had with the old gardener who showed us the calabash tree of Tom Moore fame, at Walsingham. We had allowed our admiration for the



"WHERE ATOLLS RING THE WATER"

purposed attending Divine service at St. George's (the most picturesque part of Bermuda, where the narrow, crooked streets remind the traveled visitor of Gibraltar, and where St. Peter's—the oldest church on the Islands—which had for some time previous been closed for repairs, was to be reopened to the public, and the massive silver communion service, presented by William the Third, in 1684, again used). The minority were to participate in their first cave luncheon.

Of more recent discovery than Crystal, Joyce, and the Walsingham caves, the one in question yet casts over the beholder the same eerie spell. Everywhere thousands of tapers, especially brought over from England for the purpose, light up the weird and jagged stalagmitic and stalactitic formations. And as you look, almost you can persuade yourself that they have been chiseled by gnomes of a dateless long ago, almost they seem to breathe. And over them play all the iridescences of the kaleidoscope.



CONVENT, MOUNT ST. AGNES

wreathes the font, and most of the pillars. Roses—red, white and cream—bank the chancel. Roses are in the cross on the font. But the general effect is of lilies. The six white pillars which separate the choir seats and chancel from the body of the church and reach nearly to the roof, are covered with lilies. The ends of the pews are white with lilies. Thousands of lilies! A riot of lilies! Everywhere lilies—lilies—lilies!

Some estimate of the extent of the lily fields themselves can be formed by the statement that they cover acres of ground, one "grower" alone having a field which comprises fifteen acres. Before Easter it is customary for the large growers to send off boxes each containing upwards of sixty lily buds, which are placed in cold storage on the boats, and arrive in America, just opening, in time for Easter. But the tendency nowadays is to cultivate the lilies more for the bulb than for the flower. Consequently it is no uncommon sight to see the paths between the rows strewn thick with flowers and buds which have been clipped in order that the entire strength of the plant may go into the bulbs destined for export. Once Easter is over, the fields are shorn of their glory for the same reason, the Bermuda lily bulbs being shipped in scarcely smaller quantities than are the onions and potatoes.

Among the many spots of interest which we pass upon this Easter morning, driving in to that beautiful, albeit unfinished bit of architecture, the cathedral at Hamilton, is one to which the visitor is sure to have recourse, sooner or later, for souvenirs—the Boer's Place. It is only a little low hut by the roadside, but here two of the nine Boer prisoners of war, who alone refused to take the oath of allegiance to Great Britain after the cessation of Transvaal activities, earn their livelihood by carving boxes, canes, and kindred articles, out of the fragrant red cedar wood. Very proud they are of the distinction of their unique position, and in a corner of these souvenirs are always to be found the pricked initials, "P.O.W." (Prisoners of War).



A BERMUDAN ROAD

quaint old place to a little find outlet in the words, "Ah, oui," he grunted, with an accent distinctly French-Canadian, "Good cli-mat, but no monee!" and he bestowed a look of supreme disfavor upon the soil, whose copper coloring, between rows of light green lettuce plants, we had been secretly admiring.

After attending the full choral service at the cathedral, where Bishop Jones—to whose extensive diocese these Islands belong—delivered an eloquent sermon, we separated. Some of us had planned a drive to Prospect Hill to see the soldiers. Others



WALINGHAM, WHERE TOM MOORE LIVED

Color calls to color. Not the colors we have known above, but the ghosts of those colors. In the inevitable little lake "wedding this marvelous cave to the sea" are all these shapes, with their colors reflected. And the mystic beauty of them carries us through the gates of the actual into a veritable painter's paradise. If, as Amiel believed, every landscape is a state of soul, then are the caves of Bermuda the Maeterlinckism of color.

Returning to "Seaward" by way of the Hamilton Parish Church, one of our party was reminded of an amusing incident which had occurred there at a colored wedding a few days before. The bride-elect, Annie Isobel (famously known as "Issy"), had acquired the habit of turning her coquetties to material account by proceeding almost as far on the road to matrimony as the initial strain of the wedding march, only to change her mind—and keep her dowry gifts. On the present occasion, therefore, her mistress had taken the precaution to have her donations brought in her carriage to the church door, and given a former admirer explicit instructions concerning them. So that it chanced that shortly after the minister had somewhat sternly put the fatal question to the fickle charmer, and the watching coachman had seen through the open door that the nuptial knot had actually been tied, the unique spectacle of a wedding cake and its various accessories were seen being rapidly transferred to the carriage of the triumphant Annie Isobel.

But although cave luncheons, colored weddings, greased pole contests, military balls, and clam bakes may for a time engage our attention, it is always to the water that we return. Intense are the rainbow sheens on "these lovely isles that stud the sea like emeralds on a silver zone."

It has a spell, this Bermuda. Colorful, mystic, unforgettable. And when the tang of the salt sea-flats no longer carries with it the suggestion of lily fields, when the summer isles are only a vanishing speck glimpsed from the deck of the "Prince George," this is that makes us register a silent vow to come back—another Easter.



IN THE HAMILTON PARISH CHURCH, BERMUDA