Parkstone, Dorset.

May 20th. 1902.

My dear Will

I hope you had a pleasant holiday at Keswick & went to the top of Skiddaw or some other mountain. I & Ma & Olive Carey went to Broadstone on Monday. Ma planted ferns, Olive planted about 100 orchises in flower one of our men brought me, while I had a hard job, planting in temporary pots & pans, 6 rare waterlilies & several other aquatic plants received the day before from America, & which required to have warm-water to bring them on before planting out: I had to rig up a support in the Greenhouse for a bath & small zinc-tank, with a shelf to support lamps under & thus keep the water warm till my heating boiler can be fitted in the Cellar; and I think I have managed it successfully. I have been so busy and, so tired every evening that I have had no time yet to get estimates for the wiring of Elect. bells. As neither I nor Percy Curtis know anything about it, we shall be wholly at the mercy of the contractors to put in what material etc. they like as we shall be quite unable to know whether a simple article specified is of the required quality or not. However when the house is a little more advanced I will see about it. As the cellar will be warmed it will not be the best place for the battery which can be in the small closet next scullery where the Gas Generator would have been, & where paraffine lamps will be now kept & trimmed probably.

The two largest Ironmongers in Poole - Bacon and Bailey do its electric lighting, so I can get the estimates from them.
There is little apparent advance in the house last week except
the roof, & there not much. Not a single door or window. frame
has been received yet, & the walls are therefore all left with
ragged openings for them though this was one of the things I
specially asked Mr. Dowkins ’ to arrange the drawings for before
’ Xmas!! And we only got them about a month since, & now the
makers have delayed us a fortnight beyond their time.

One of the difficulties of building one house, or any special plan
[[4 ]] is, that the various fittings & materials can only be ordered
as wanted, having no place to store them, & then, when ordered
they are often delayed for weeks. It is therefore impossible to
get on as quickly as a contracting builder can do, with his
houses. However it will I suppose come to an end some day.
The Monogram had to be ordered, & now the bricklayers are
waiting for it.

C. Doyle ’ s " Hound " story was quite a disappointment, for
though the plot was ingenious, it was quite below his best form.
You were right about the " Naturalist " being the chief character.
Was not the W. Indian Eruption (or eruptions) awful! Nothing
known in history like it. Even Pompeii & Herculaneum I suppose
not quite so terrifically sudden & destructive!

Your affectionate. Pa | Alfred R. Wallace [signature]

ENDNOTES

1. ARW ’ s son, William Greenell Wallace (1871-1951).

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