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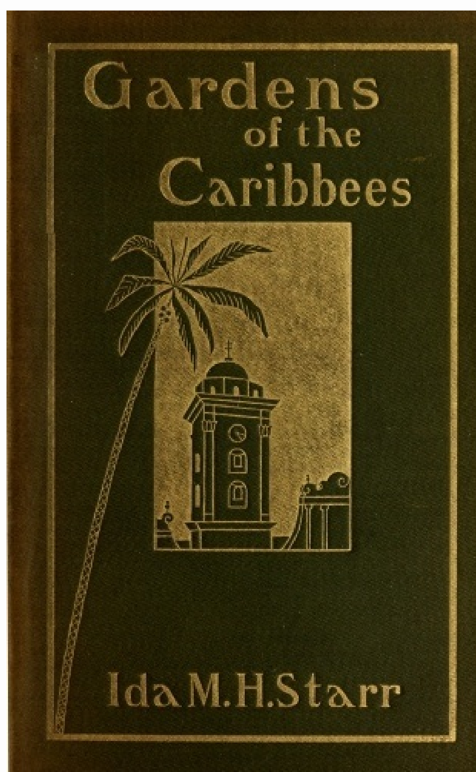


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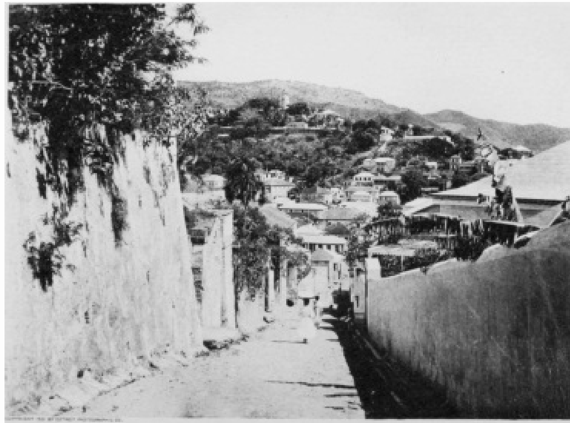

WHERE THE POMEGRANATE GROWS
CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST THOMAS.

# GARDENS OF THE CARIBBEES

Sketches of a Cruise to the West Indies and the Spanish Main

By
Ida M. H. Starr

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I.
*ILLUSTRATED*

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To
My Beloved Children

## TO THE READER

THESE sketches were written during a memorable cruise to the West Indies and the Spanish Main in the winter and spring of 1901. There has been no attempt to write a West Indian guide-book, but rather to give preference to the human side of the picture through glimpses of the people and their ways of life and thought. With this idea it was thought best to give attention only to such of the ports visited as were full of human interest and typical of the life about the Caribbean Sea.

There was a strong feeling that we were sailing in romantic waters, and there has been no desire to eliminate the element of fancy from these pages.

It may be of interest to remember that at no time since—and perhaps never before—could this voyage have been made under the same conditions. Since then man and the greater powers of Nature seem to have conspired to make much of this delightful region forbidding to strangers. Several ports have become dangerous because of fever and plague; proclamations in French and *pronunciamientos* in Spanish have adorned West Indian street corners; Haïti has reverted to its almost chronic state of riot and revolution; the Dominican republic has again chosen a President whose nomination came from a conquering army; Venezuela has been full of alarms and intrigues; while already the Germans are beginning to show their hand in the Caribbean; Martinique and St. Vincent have been desolated by volcanoes then thought to be practically extinct; and of delicious St. Pierre there remains but a sadly sweet memory.

I. M. H. S.

*10 June, 1903.*

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# Gardens of the Caribbees

## CHAPTER I.

### THE VOYAGE

### I.

“THANK you, Rudolph, I believe I will take some lemonade and one or two of the sweet biscuit; that will do;” and I settled back in my ship chair, feeling as serene and happy as a woman in a white linen frock can feel. Every one must have gone down into every one’s trunk this morning; was there ever such a change? Why, the count and his

brother are fairly blinding to the eyes, in their smart white flannels. They actually look a bit interesting. Here they come now; the count has evidently had his lemonade, I see he is still nibbling a biscuit.

This is the first time I have realised where we are going. This arraying of one’s self in cool things and white things makes one really believe that, after all, the voyage is not a delusion.

“Rudolph, you’re a dear,” this to myself, but aloud, as the faithful steward comes with my lemonade, I thank him and take the glass while he goes on in search of the youngsters. What a comfort that old soul has been to us! He began by being willing to speak German, and certainly that was an indication of a great deal of character. I think he was the first German I had ever met, who, knowing enough English to carry on an ordinary conversation, would, at times, express himself in his native tongue. That was good of Rudolph; of course we had to tell him not to speak English at first, but he never forgot. And such care as he gave us those horrible days, when we didn’t drink lemonade or sit on the deck; when the ship wouldn’t go anywhere but up and down; when it fairly ached to turn itself inside out, I know it did. It was then that Rudolph was neither man nor woman, but the incarnation of goodness and patience. Dear old Rudolph!

Let me see—how many meals is this so far? Breakfast at eight o’clock makes one; bouillon and wafers at half-past ten, two; lunch at twelve-thirty makes three, and here I am hungry as ever, simply revelling in number four. I wish I had another biscuit. This is delicious! I mean the sky and the sea and the ship and all the people dressed so airily and looking so unconscious of what has gone before. If no one else will testify, Rudolph certainly can, that much has gone before. But this sea, this straightaway plowing into Southern waters is beginning to make me forget, and for fear that I may do so I must tell you how it happens that I am feeling so blissfully relieved at this moment. Of course I am not perfectly at ease, for I don’t think a woman in a white linen frock can be until it has passed the stage where she has to be thinking of spots.

Six days ago I was not sitting here in a white frock. I was bundled in furs, and even then cringed and shivered with the cold. Ough! it was raw and bleak that sad day of our sailing. The January wind, chilling us to the marrow, swept in from the desolate ocean like the cruel thrusts of so many icy knives. Even the prospect of a voyage to the *Islands of the Blest* left us indifferent and shivering and blue. I vaguely thought that when we were once on shipboard we could get warm, but the doors were all open and the passages so blocked with visitors that even had it occurred to any one to shut the doors I don’t think it could have been done.

My handsome cousin from New York came with a big bunch of lovely violets, and I thought, as I touched their cold faces to mine, that they, too, must certainly be suffering and homesick.

This voyage had been one of our dreams. We two—Daddy and I—had sat many a night by the crackling wood fire in our dear library talking it over. We planned how we should take the little girls and leave the four boys; how we should for once really go off for a glorious lark; but now, alas! every vestige of romance faded from our firelight dreams as we pulled ourselves away on such a bleak day, with not a gleam of sunshine to cheer us.

Had there been at that last moment any sane reason for turning back, I should have done so. I do not see why I had expected anything else but a bleak wind on the North River in January, but certainly I did have a sort of a fancy that, once on shipboard bound for Southern seas, the glamour of our voyage would warm me to the very heart, but it didn’t. I grew colder every minute, and after the cousin had said “Good-bye” and his tall silk hat was lost in the crowd at the gangway, it seemed to me that we were all bereft of our senses to think of leaving the library fireplace; but Daddy was beckoning me, and the little girls were making off in his direction; there was no escape. All I could do was to shiver and follow them. They were in tow of a red-nosed, white-coated steward; that was Rudolph. We didn’t know it then, and even if we had I hardly think we would have cared. Rudolph had our luggage, loads of it, our bags, our rug rolls, our numerous duffle; he had it all well in hand and he forged ahead through the crowd with good-natured indifference to the wrath of those going the other way, loaded down in similar fashion. We were trying to find Numbers 41 and 44. Everybody else was trying in like haste to find some other number. There were more crooks and turns and funny little corridors running off in different directions than you would imagine could be built into a self-respecting ship, with here and there a constricted spot where a narrow steel door led through some “water-tight bulkhead.” Now and then I lost sight of the little girls’ bobbing ribbons and found myself peering down the wrong corridor, following some other person’s luggage; then I would turn and elbow through the crowd, and bolt down the wide passage again to catch a glimpse of Little Blue Ribbons and Sister, both fairly dancing at the prospect of a real voyage in a real ship. And then came the appalling thought, “If I don’t hurry and push through these swarms of people, those youngsters may disappear for ever in a sort of Pied-Piper-of-Hamelin Fashion.”

In a dazed way I stumbled and hurried on, and finally, to my great relief, I heard the children’s voices issuing from Number 41, which proved to be well aft on the upper deck. It was a beautiful, large room, with big lower berths on opposite sides, and convenient mahogany wardrobes for the clothing—quarters quite befitting the dainty little maids who were to call it home for many weeks. My traps were left in the other room with Daddy’s, and as it was but a few moments of sailing time, we left things as they were, ran up the stairway near our door just as the stiff German bugler was sounding the warning for visitors to leave the ship. Then the last preparations for departure began. The gangplank was taken in, and we began to move, ever and ever so slowly, and, shuddering, I turned around to see how the deluded people looked who were going to death and destruction with me. “It is all the fault of that wretched sun,” I thought. “Why doesn’t it know enough to shine on sailing day? If the clouds don’t shift, we’ll all go to Davy Jones’s, and only think of the trouble I have had getting ready!” Much as I commiserated as a whole my fellow sufferers, outside of our own little group there was only one couple of which I have now any distinct remembrance, and I noticed them because I was quite sure they were bride and groom. “It is just too bad of her to wear that lovely gown to a watery grave! She ought to have left it at home for a relative. Anything would have done to swim in if it was only warm,” I thought; but the bride leaned over the rail and waved her handkerchief at some one and laughed, and then wiped her eyes and laughed once more, but she kept the gown on.

A horribly blatant German band, on board an Atlantic liner which lay alongside, bellowed forth national airs, and I wished I could choke it. The dwindling crowd on shore waved and shouted, and I went off alone and directly rubbed against some fresh white paint. That was too much! I just sat down and cried, and wondered why I hadn’t brought some turpentine and why I had ever left the babies, why I had ever forsaken the comfortable library in midwinter; but alas, I wondered a great deal more a few days later!

## II.

Contrary to all precedent, instead of watching the fast-fading shores of New York Harbour, I simply went to the stateroom and began to find myself, and certainly I did not regret it afterward. I unpacked our most necessary clothing, got out the brushes and combs, unstrapped the roll of rugs, stowed away in a handy corner my smelling-salts, and small convenient bottles of various kinds,—all the time accusing myself that I had not been satisfied with the calmer view I had had of "The Islands of the Blest" from our library window; that I must need hunt the real thing by steamship; an ever impossible method, as Kipling had warned me long ago:

"That route is barred to steamers: you'll never lift again
Our purple-painted headlands or the lordly keeps of Spain.
They're just beyond the skyline, howe'er so far you cruise
In a ram-you-damn-you liner with a brace of bucking screws.

"Swing round your aching search-light—'twill show no haven's peace!
Ay, blow your shrieking sirens to the deaf, gray-bearded seas!
Boom out the dripping oil-bags to skin the deep's unrest—
But you aren't a knot the nearer to the Islands of the Blest."

I shall always believe that the force of suggestion was the cause of our undoing. When a lot of people sit down to luncheon, all with one fixed idea, with one definite question in their minds, sooner or later that question is bound to be answered in one way or another. All one has to do is simply to wait long enough and the answer will come. "Mental Science" and "Christian Science" notwithstanding, there wasn't a soul in that dining-room but was wondering with all his faculties whether he would be or would not be. Incidentally, the ship felt the pulse of old Atlantic, and he began to be. And, as time wore on, the dining-saloon became deserted, and the question was answered. I never knew nor cared where the people went. As for myself, I took a rug, made for the warmest corner of the deck I could find, covered myself head and ears, and wanted to be alone. I was conscious that Little Blue Ribbons had tucked herself under my wing, a sad little birdling; but Sister and Daddy were very grand. They gaily walked the decks and laughed when they passed us,—but we didn't laugh! No, we didn't even smile. The ocean had never troubled me before,—that is not to any extent, for I had had a theory that if I could only keep on deck and wear a tight belt, the worst would soon be over. But there are seasons when all signs fail, and this time everything turned out wrong.

The following day I managed to dress and get upon deck with the others. Oh! if I only had a chance at a good railroad, those who would might hunt up the islands; I had had enough already. I made up my mind to one thing, I should give up my ticket at Nassau and go home alone by rail through Florida. I didn't say anything of this plan to Daddy, but I thought it all out and had it all arranged, when I found that I could not get warm and could get so miserably seasick. I considered it a brilliant and original inspiration, and I clung to it with all my feeble strength.

Sunday it commenced to blow furiously, coming first from the southwest, and increasing as the day wore on, until by night, with the wind shifted to north of west, a howling gale was on, outer doors battened down, promenade decks swept by water, and everybody curled up in bed, bracing themselves as best they could, trying to keep from rolling out of their berths. I wish it understood that the word *everybody* is used reservedly, for there were a few exceptions, Daddy being one of them,—cranks who prided themselves on not missing a meal. Then came that awful night! This was the time Rudolph shone. It was he who suggested champagne and ship-biscuit. Daddy didn't know how many bottles he brought to our room, and we didn't, until it came time to pay the bills. Then Daddy was surprised, but Rudolph wasn't. "Rudolph," I said, that terrible night, as he brought in the bottle, and steadied himself to pour a glassful, "were you ever in such a storm as this before; don't you really think we're in great danger?" He assured me that he had been in much worse storms, but I knew he hadn't. I could tell by the way he looked that he was only trying to cheer me up, for he was dreadfully solemn, and had a big black lump on his forehead where he had hit his head as he came in with the bottle. I listened while he told of other storms ever and ever so much worse; how he had been thirty years a steward, how he swore every voyage would be his last; but how somehow he kept on shipping; he didn't mind storms. "So you have never gone down at sea, Rudolph? Oh, I am so glad, for then you wouldn't be here, would you?" He forgave me of course. I was not the first sufferer Rudolph had brought champagne and ship's biscuit.

When Sister was a babe, Daddy gave her a little Jap toy, which we called the "Red Manikin." He was round as an apple, with his face one big grin. Whichever way we stood him, Manikin would jump up serenely on his plump little legs, always smiling and jolly. But one day there came a sad ending to Manikin's smiles. He was smashed in a nursery storm, and we found him under the bed standing straight on his head. Through snatches of sleep, my disordered dreams made a grinning, red Manikin of our ship. I wondered when the final smash would come and our big toy no longer swing back on its round legs? Over and over the great ship went, and I held my breath. "Now this time it will never come back. I know it. Oh! how terrible to have the water pour into our staterooms and never a chance to swim. No, there we go the other way. Now we go, go, go! Oh, if I wouldn't try to keep the ship from rolling over! What good can I do by holding my breath and bracing back in this way? I wonder how the bride feels by this time? That lovely brown dress, she'll never wear it again. Well, I'm glad I'm not a bride."

Whatever happened just then I could not tell, but there was a curious sort of a dull explosion, and all the electric lights went out. Then our trunks broke loose and went crashing back and forth at each other, whack, bang, with a vicious delight.

"I'll not endure this suspense another moment," thought I, "I must have a light and I must know what is the matter, and I must bring Daddy in here this minute. If we are going down I want him to be with us." So I swung myself out of the berth, dodged a trunk, groped my way to the door, and ran barefooted to Number 44. I didn't stop to knock, but turned the knob, as a terrific lurch of the ship threw me against Daddy's berth, where the only man who knew anything about running that ship lay fast asleep.

Of course you'll think that an absurd thing to say, but then you don't know Daddy. He is the kind of a man who was born with expedients in both hands. However much I doubted the wisdom of confessing it to Daddy, away down in my heart I felt that if he would only wake up and come into our room, he would devise a way to save us, if every one else went to the bottom. Hadn't he time and again rescued us from dreadful disasters by fire and water, didn't

he in his quiet way master every situation at the right moment; was there any one more skilled in handling boats, more subtle in knowledge of winds and waves than Daddy? Wasn't there just cause that I should wake him up? Of course there was! It wasn't right that he should be sleeping so peacefully while his wife and children were waiting for the last trump. No, it wasn't right. So I touched him rather lightly, somewhat hesitatingly, because he never likes to be awakened, and I said—well, I don't recall just what I said; you know how I felt; and he, the man of expedients, the man of many rescues, turned over and grunted out, "What on earth are you making such a fuss about? Go and see the captain? No, I'll not go and see the captain or any other man, and I don't want to sit on your trunk. Go to bed, we're all right; the sea isn't as bad as it was before midnight, and what's the use of worrying anyway? Go to bed, that's a good girl." What could I do but go? He wouldn't budge, so I went back to Number 41 with all the injured dignity possible under the circumstances, and I didn't care a bit when his door banged good and hard after me. I have never since then been able to understand his utter indifference to our distress that night. It must have been something he ate for dinner.

It was a weird night outside; a white gray night, shone upon fitfully by a sullen moon and a few lonely stars. Every other minute we were in utter darkness, as a thunderous wave came surging deep over the port-holes; then for a brief moment again the sickly light of the moon would steal through the thick wet glass to where the little girls lay, and I wondered if the morning would ever come.

## III.

The next day I did not dare look from my port-hole. I had not only drawn the lattice-screen to keep out the water —for the ports were leaking badly—but had even fixed up a curtain with some towels, so that I might not see the storm-vexed sea without. I simply lay there wondering why, why, why, I had ever come? But after awhile adorable Rudolph knocked at the door and gave us each our glass of wine and biscuits, and we felt encouraged, and asked him what had happened to the lights last night. He looked blandly ignorant of any disaster, and shook his head and told us nothing. He was a wise man, that Rudolph! Then he suggested that we get up and dress, after he had lashed the trunks back where they belonged, and had straightened up a nice little round spot in the middle of the room, where we could stand and reach for things. With a grim determination, I pulled down the towel, opened the lattice, and looked out. There is no use in trying to tell you anything about the sea, because I couldn't. All I can do is advise you never to round Cape Hatteras in a gale. "But what shall we do about the Islands of the Blest?" you ask. That is a simple problem, start from well down in Florida, and take the shortest cut across!

At seven o'clock by the ship's bell I went to work to keep my promise to Rudolph. I have a distinct remembrance of having put both stockings on wrong side out. I was an hour hunting for my shoes. Everything else had to be scrambled for in the same way. It was two o'clock when I was dressed sufficiently to make a decent appearance; but I needed to have had no fear of criticisms, for as I made my way on deck, crawling up the main cabin stairway, there wasn't a soul to be seen, except the jackies in their oilskins, who looked rather amazed when I poked my head out of the door.

I then had a view of the ship's deck which I had not hitherto had. She was very narrow and long, I hadn't before realised how long and how narrow. No wonder she rolled like a gigantic log canoe, but she was a beauty though! I began to forget her temper because of her looks—a common blunder in judging her sex, I am told. She was stripped naked for the plunge, and to see her pitch headlong into the seething water, throwing foam to the mast-heads, sending a deluge of crashing seas adown our decks, made me scream with delight. It was glorious, glorious, glorious! Down she went,—the beauty,—roaring, cracking, twisting, groaning, howling, and hissing. She fought as with a thousand furies, plunging and rolling into and through the seas, which rushed down upon her as if they would crush her to atoms.

Just then the sun broke from out the fast-moving clouds, and sprang upon the water in a million glistening rays of brilliant light, and my whole being was filled with joy that I had eyes to see such wonders. The storm was at its height the night before when we were to the southeast of Cape Hatteras, after we had steamed well into that beautiful Gulf Stream one reads about. There we were hove to, with head to the storm, engines slowed down, and oil dripping over our bows for twenty-four hours, and were carried one hundred miles out of our course. Unfortunately the oil did little good, for we were in a cross sea which occasionally broke with a thundering crash over our stern as well as over our bows, and we were horribly twisted and shaken. But at last, on Monday afternoon, at four o'clock, the storm quieted so we were able to square away again for the Windward Passage. So much for that terrible gale from the Gulf, which, as we afterward learned, did much damage to coastwise shipping.

As the storm broke, one by one, poor forlorn remnants of our fellow passengers began to appear in all possible states of dilapidation; and for the rest of the day, inspired by a subject of common interest, we sat about, clinging to fixed chairs, talking over our experiences, and watching the fast disappearing tempest.

It was then I learned that my original plan of buying a ticket home from Nassau in the Bahamas and through Florida by rail was shared by every second person I met, and whether the purpose is fully carried out or not remains to be seen.

## IV.

There was one peculiar and unlooked-for feature in the experience of seasickness which may be universal to all like sufferers, but it was novel to me. It was when in one of my sane moments the morning before the storm that I threw myself down on a couch in the main saloon, too inert to lift my head, too woebegone to think that I could ever smile again, that I raised my eyes and caught sight of a figure opposite me, compared with which I was in a state of heavenly rapture. It was none less than his Excellency, Herr Baron von Pumpernickel Donnerwetter Hohenmaltsteinhaufen, high officer in the service of his Majesty, the Kaiser. He was all in a heap, a big soft heap, wound about by a big brown ulster. Poor soul, he didn't care much how it was buttoned, it was all wrong anyway, but he was not thinking of trifles. On a bald pate was a comical felt hat,—one of those little Alpine hats German tourists affect,—jammed over the left eye; his face was unshaven, his hair unshorn and uncombed, his nose big and red, and

his eyes watery, meaningless, colourless, glassy eyes rolling about in helpless agony. He sat there with his arms dangling at his sides, mumbling to himself. I hadn’t anything else to do, so I watched him and listened. What can he be saying? I suppose it’s the “Lorelei;” maybe he dreams he’s on the Rhine! His sorrowful, wife-forsaken look aroused my sympathy; I listened more attentively. I have always had a lingering affinity for the German Folkslieder, but, oh, dear, it wasn’t a Folkslied at all! He was swearing volley after volley of feeble, limp oaths, uttered in a broken and scarcely audible voice. I thought the sight of a woman might stop his flow of wrath, so I lifted myself up a little and looked at him as severely as I could under the circumstances, but to no purpose. His monotonous oaths went rolling on and on, until a kind steward came and asked his Excellency if he would have something to eat. Now that steward ought to have known better. I knew there would be trouble. There are times when men must be left alone, and this was his Excellency’s time. I tried to warn the steward, and even worked up an especial groan to attract his attention, but, like a stupid old dunderhead, he stood there with his mouth open; and then he caught it: “*Verdamter—damter—damity—dam—*” it pealed, bellowed forth with royal spontaneity, and the steward was a white streak out of the saloon door.

There were sufferers in the room besides myself, and it was remarkable to note, how that full and complete expression of his Excellency’s wrath worked like a healing balm upon us all. I shall not confess to any such lapses on the part of my immediate family and friends,—no, I shall never confess to that! but I will say that there are times when the use of strong language is an outlet most beneficial to overwrought digestive organs. I *will* say that much.

The little blue map of the West Indies given to me at our departure, which same map has lain very snugly between the unopened pages of my journal until to-day, shows me, as for the first time I unfold the wrinkled paper, that we have just passed Watling’s Island (the San Salvador of the early explorers) and a lot of other little islands; while a row of tiny dots shows that we are somewhere near the Tropic of Cancer. Daddy tells of watching until late last night to make out the light on San Salvador, and how it blinked up finally from the waves far ahead on our starboard bow and as quickly disappeared, to gradually grow brighter as we brought it abeam of us—our first smell of land since we dropped the bleak shore of New Jersey. My eyes tell me as they look seaward that we have left the great lonely waste of the Atlantic and have come into sweeter waters, on seas of heavenly rest, which flow away from us as do the rolling white clouds above. I watch dreamily the shoals of flying fish darting aside from under the bow in long low lines of flashing silver; and I look away to where ships come up from over the meeting of sky and ocean.

I know now why Rudolph can not give it up.

## CHAPTER II.

### PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAÏTI

### I.

FROM the rising of the sun to its sudden drop into the sea, this has been a funny day in Haïti, our first land-fall. All night we had been threading through the dangerous shoals and past the lower islands of the Bahama group, until at last we turned into that great thoroughfare, the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haïti, and finally were at rest in the harbour of Port-au-Prince. Knowing that we were to make port this morning, I was awakened very early by the delightsome expectation of the sight of a green earth; and long before Little Blue Ribbons and Sister had stirred with the spirit of a new day, I had scurried through the corridor to my delicious salt tub. The ship lay very still. It but just felt the finger-tips of the ocean’s caress. A sweet, warm, gentle, alluring air filtered in through the open port-hole and permeated my body with the delicious intoxication of summer. I threw myself into the bath with every pore a-quiver for its cool refreshment, and as the briny water spread its arms about me, I looked out upon the sea, where my first tropical sunrise burst upon me. It was such a businesslike performance that I laughed right in old Sol’s face, and splattered water at him through the port-hole; it served him right for being so abominably prosaic. Five minutes before his appearance, there was not the slightest indication in the sky that anything was about to happen, no fireworks, no signals, no red lights, nothing but the dull blue sky of early morning. When, all at once, a bright red tip peeps over the water, and in three minutes the big, round ball is on hand, ready for business, whereupon he blazes away *fortissimo* from the start. It was rude and ill-mannered of him to intrude upon my bath, but it seemed to be his way with the ladies, so I fled to find Sister and Wee One in wildest joy, on their knees in bed

crowding their pretty heads together for a peep at the wonderful land about them. The ship had swung to her anchor, and lay bow-on to Port-au-Prince, while to starboard was a range of lofty mountains which clambered and struggled and budded and blossomed into the white sky of morning.

The sudden call of Summer, the eternal loveliness of warmth, the expansion of the soul from out the chill of ice and snow, into the bliss of laughing seas and delicious sunlight; the sight of green, graceful palms bending their stately heads to the summons of the morning, the merry wavelets frolicking, splashing, laughing, calling to us,—Summer—Summer—Summer—was all so intoxicating that, had the choice been possible, who knows but we would have bartered our very souls, with but little hesitancy, for a lifetime of such sensation!

There was something akin to emancipation in the pile of airy frocks which lay waiting for Sister and Little Blue Ribbons, and if our fingers hadn't been all thumbs, and if we hadn't been on our knees half the time in the berth, peering out from the port-hole, we could have donned the summer glories a full hour sooner, and might have been on deck in the open with all the sweets of the early tropical morning about us. But, what could one do but look and marvel, when the sea about us was swarming with tiny boats, laden with treasures of the deep and of the forest? What would you do, now, tell me, if, after long dreaming of the Islands of the Blest, you suddenly awakened to find them really true, and your own dear self in the midst of them? Why bless your heart! You would have looked, and laughed, and wondered, just as we did, and have been for ever dressing, too.

**The Landing-Place Port-au-Prince, Haïti**

Long, long ago, when I was a “Little Sister,” my boon companion had a parrot given her, and one day it screamed horribly and bit me, and ever after I held a vengeful spirit for the whole parrot family. But that morning at Haïti—ah! that first soft morning, when the jabbering black Haïtiens came to us with corals and parrots and strange, freaky fruits, a fierce fancy possessed me to buy a parrot. Of course, the morning was to blame for it. I was really not a free agent. It was a delusion that, somehow, if I bought the parrot, the summer would be thrown in with it. But dear, sensible Sister, my judge and jury and supreme court on all occasions, thought it a foolish idea, so we didn't nod “yes” through the port-hole; we only shook our heads and laughed. But the parrot man didn't have time to answer back, for, before he knew it, a newcomer bumped into the bow of his skiff and made him very angry; so he gave way in short order, for the late arrival didn't carry any parrots or coral, or anything to sell; it carried a very tall, black man, who stood immovably in the centre of the craft. “Oh! Come, Sister, I know it's the President, it must be!” He wore a tall silk hat, with an ancient straight brim, and a black frock coat and a terribly solemn expression. But we were mistaken after all; it was only the health officer. We were sure one of those rollicking waves would spill him over, but, alas, the shiny old stovepipe rose and fell with the precision of a clock and nothing happened, and we were so disappointed! Then it disappeared up the ladder, and we buttoned up a bit more and were dressed at last.

## II.

Port-au-Prince is as daintily hidden away in the folds of the mountains, as a lace handkerchief in the chatelaine of a beautiful woman. There seemed to be nothing left undone by Nature to make it, in point of location, a chosen spot, hidden from the curious world: a realm of bliss for lovers to abide in. Port-au-Prince was once called the “Paris of the West Indies;” that is, when the French were its masters and the blacks their slaves. It is not so now, for when the blacks revolted and drove their masters from the land, the death-knell of civilisation was sounded. It is the capital of the Black Republic of Haïti, the paradise of the negro, where to be black is the envied distinction; where the white man can scarcely hold property without confiscation in some form; where the negro is the high-cockalorum. Yes, it was called Paris, but that was long, long ago. Poor little town! It is now the forlornest, dirtiest little rag-a-muffin in the whole world, still trying to strut a bit, but in truth a ridiculous caricature of civilisation.

**Waiting for Customers Port-au-Prince, Haïti**

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As we approached land, the character of the place was indicated by the boats lying at anchor, and by those which clung, like a forlorn hope, to the rickety old piers along shore. They were the most dilapidated, nondescript lot of craft I have ever seen.

The "fort" at the harbour entrance was in a state of collapse, and about big enough to shelter a basket of babies. The Haïtien "man-of-war" anchored near the shore was an absurd old iron gunboat with rusty stacks and dishevelled rigging, painted in many colours and temporarily incapacitated because of leaky boilers and broken engines. The rest of the "Haïtien Navy," *i. e.*, another old rusty gunboat, was lying neglected and half sunken near by. The pier where we landed was so shattered by time and water that I had to pick my way very carefully in order to keep from falling through. On shore, we were at once surrounded by a mob of jabbering Haïtiens, speaking—well, it's hard to say just what. It started out French and ended in an incomprehensible jargon, intelligible only to the delicate Haïtien ear. As we picked our way along the tumble-down pier, between piles of coral which had been recently removed from the shoal water near shore (in order that small boats could land at the piers), the tatterdemalion Haïtiens escorted us to the city, under a tumble-down archway, into tumble-down Port-au-Prince, to find waiting for us at the other side of this water gate an assortment of vehicles which I find it quite impossible to describe. They had had an earthquake in Port-au-Prince the preceding October, and those carriages looked as if they had passed through the whole shocking ordeal. The horses, not as high as my shoulder, were simply animated bones,—"articulated equine skeletons" somebody said—harnessed with ropes and strings and old scraps of leather, to what were once "carriages," all of antiquated patterns,—anything from a cart to a carryall; and to the enormous Americans, who doubled up their precious knees in order to sit inside, they seemed like the veriest rattletraps for dolls. Off they moved, the whole wobblety procession, to the cracking of native whips and howls of the admiring vagabonds. The white dust blew about us, and the sun beat down upon our heads, and we were in the Tropics indeed. I do not know whether it was the result of seasickness, or what it was, but everything in Haïti looked crooked. Sister said that the Mother Goose "Crooked Man" must have come from Haïti, and I agreed with her.

**The "Coaches" Port-au-Prince, Haïti**

## III.

We preferred to walk up into the town,—not because we were more merciful than those who had wobbled and rattled and jiggled on before us, but because we thought it would be a little more Haïtien than if we drove. We might have taken the tram, but it was more fun to watch it hitch its precarious way along after its stuffy, rusty, leaky little "dummy" engine, down through the crooked streets, than to jerk along with it. The only sensible thing to do was just to stand there within the ruins of a one-time beautiful city and look about us. It was the worst, the forlornest, the most mind-forsaken place of which you can conceive. Earthquakes had cracked and tumbled down some of the best buildings, fire had destroyed many others, and the remains had been left as they had dropped, under the blistering sun, to crumble away into dust; and thronging in and through the ruins like black ants about their downtrodden

dwelling, were swarms of rag-tag human beings whom I call such merely because no species of “missing link” has yet been recognised by our anthropologists.

It was an official building before which we were standing, and as we were about to move on to a shadier spot, the guards, or the soldiers, or whatever one might call them, approached and presented arms under the crooked arch, and disappeared noiselessly within the inner court. This barefooted squad, some ten strong,—negroes of all shades of blackness,—were equipped in gorgeous red caps. Yes, they all had caps, and muskets, every one of them; the remaining parts of the uniform, unessential parts, were eked out with linen dusters and old rags which happened to be lying around handy. I don’t see why they should have bothered about having the dusters, but I suppose it was traditional.

**Main Business Street of the Capital of the Republic of Haiti**
**Port-au-Prince, Haïti**
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Just as we approached the main street under a blazing sun, there came toward us two chariots, with wheels eight or ten feet high, harnessed each to a mixture of tiny, woebegone donkeys and mules, about the size of hairpins, going at full speed with the true negro love of display, for the benefit of the strangers. The charioteers wore shirts and tattered hats, and yelled like wild hyenas at the poor, astonished mules. “Hurrah for Ben Hur!” we shouted, and the triumphant victor rattled ahead in a cloud of dust. Then we went on to the next performance, a Haïtien officer strutting past, bedecked with gold lace and buttons, and great cocked hat, well plumed, and barefooted. There was no use being serious; we couldn’t be. We were in the midst of an *opera bouffe*, with negroes playing at government, with the happy-go-lucky African savage fully possessed of his racial characteristics, fondly imagining himself a free and responsible man; and it was one, long pitiful laugh for the poor black children who were taking themselves in such dead earnest.

## IV.

It was not to imitate Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith in the least that we said we must find a white umbrella, and yet even had we wished to imitate Mr. Smith, could we have followed in the way of a more delightsome traveller? It was simply because we were conscious that a white umbrella, with a soft green lining, is a necessary adjunct to life in the tropics. It is in harmony with its environment, because it is almost a necessity; and being such, we were not to be dissuaded from our desire. So, with that definite intent to our steps, we started to find the white umbrella.

Was every one else hunting for one, too, that the crowd was all going in our direction,—surely not! No sun could ever blaze strongly enough to penetrate those woolly tops. We go on a little farther, and then we begin to understand from a wave of odours sweeping over us that it’s to market we’re going with all the rest; and so for the time we are led from the purpose of the morning.

The stench grows more pronounced; we become a part of a black host, with babies, children, men, women, and donkeys crowding into the square, where a long, low-tiled market-building and its surrounding dirty pavement becomes the kitchen for the whole of Port-au-Prince; a place where filthy meats and queer vegetables and strange fruits are sold, and where all manner of curious, outlandish dishes are being concocted. The black women crouching on the ground over little simmering pots and a few hot coals, jabbering away at their crouching neighbours, were more like half-human animals than possible mothers of a republic. And in amongst the women were the babies, rolling around on bits of rags, blissfully happy in their complete nakedness. But there was something about those black, naked babies which seemed to dress them up without any clothes. Does a naked negro baby ever look as bare to you as a naked white baby?

Stopping a minute, where a louder, noisier mob of women were busy over their morning incantations, my eye chanced to dwell for a second longer than it should have done, on a pudgy little pickaninny, which was lying in its mother’s lap, kicking up its heels, with its fat little arms beating the air in very much the same aimless manner that our babies do. Seizing upon my momentary interest in the youngster, its mother caught up the wiggling, naked thing, and with all the eloquence of a language of signs, contrasted her naked baby with what seemed to her the regal splendour of my white shirt-waist. For an instant I weakened and caught at my pocketbook mechanically, but, as I did so, I glanced up just quickly enough to see her ladyship give a laughing wink to one of her neighbours, as much as to say: “Jest see me work ’em!”—and I caught the wink in time to turn the solemn face into a crooning laugh, when, with the worst French I could muster,—and that was a simple matter,—I told the mother her baby was all

right. It didn't need any clothes; I was just wearing them because it was a sort of habit. People would be lots more comfortable in Haïti without them. For a minute, those black, beseeching eyes had had me fixed, but, fortunately for our further peace of mind, I looked once too many times.

The air was thick with horrible smells and horrible sounds as well. We became a target for begging hands, and "Damn, give me five cents," was every second word we heard. Where the poor creatures ever learned so much English, would be difficult to say, but it was well learned. Over the black heads, over the little cooking breakfasts, over the endless procession of donkeys, carrying sugar-cane and coffee and all sorts of stuff from off somewhere we didn't know about, to the market we did know about—there arose an arch which was even more barbaric than the naked babies and their half-naked mothers. It was just the thing for the market—it fitted in with the smells; it was something incredibly hideous and archaic. It was not French, it was purely an African creation, made of wood, in strange ungraceful points and ornamented with outlandish coloured figures; and yet it was an arch, and we ought to forgive the rest.

But the white umbrella! were we never to begin our search? We left the market and took the shady side of the street. But, being a party of four, we all wanted to do different things, yet, being a very congenial party of four, we went from one side of the street to the other, as one or the other happened to catch sight of something novel; thus, back and forth, zigzag, we made for the white umbrella.

Laddie, in far-off America, had been promised stamps; in fact he had been promised almost the limit of his imaginary wants, if he would only stay with Grandmamma by the sea, and not mind while we were off for the Islands; so it was not only a white umbrella which kept us moving on up the sunny streets, but Laddie and his stamps. Thus the post-office stepped in where the white umbrella should have been ladies' choice.

A nondescript following conducted us to the post-office, where we met a very different type of man. The officials spoke such beautiful French that we became at once hopelessly lost in our idioms. When the Creole postmaster discovered our self-appointed escort of ragamuffins crowding the entrance to the office, his black eyes flashed for a second, and some terrible things must have been said to the crowd, which we did not understand, for the office was emptied in short order. Here, we thought, was the true Haïtien; the market-people were the refuse.

**A Public Fountain**
**Port-au-Prince, Haïti**

Another zigzag, and we stopped in at a *pharmacie* to ask about the white umbrella. We were met by another Haïtien, a courteous, delightful gentleman, the chemist of Port-au-Prince, a man of rare charm and courtly manner. He gave Little Blue Ribbons and Sister some pretty trinkets as souvenirs, at the same time pointing the way to a shop very near, where without fail we could find—you know! Ah! But between that shop and us there was—well, what to call it I find it hard to say, for it certainly wasn't a soda-water fountain, or an ice-cream haven, but into it we went, all of us, and we sat down, while Daddy ordered wonderful things for us to drink, and we had real ice, too; and in my glass there was more than the limes and sugar and ice, which Sister was sipping. There was certainly something more than mere lime-juice in my glass, for I didn't care, after taking one taste, nearly so much about the umbrella as I did before, and Daddy was so relieved. We sat there very contentedly for quite awhile, but the little girls grew restless and said we must go on to something else, so gathering up the fragments of our Northern energy, we were out in the street again.

A sleepy, honest little donkey, loaded with baskets of very diminutive bananas, came our way. With malice aforethought, we made a raid to the extent of three pennies' worth. The keeper sold reluctantly, for he said we would surely die, if we ate bananas and walked in the sun. So we walked in the sun and ate bananas, and didn't die; no, indeed not. We lived to be very thankful for those bananas, as you shall hear later. And then we went on past the guard-house, where the slumbering army dozed by their stacks of rusty muskets; past unnumbered hammocks, out of which long black legs hung in listless content; on past the sellers and buyers of coffee who stood marking the weights of enormous sacks, swung on huge, antiquated scales; on past the women, crouching over their stores of pastry, fruits, sweets,—on to the shop where at last we found the white umbrella, with a green lining, and then there was peace in the family for awhile!

## V.

I could not tell you her name, for she did not tell us, and somehow we didn't think to ask for it. She reminded us of Guadeloupe, our Mexican maid, who had carried Laddie in the soft folds of her *rebozo* so many sweet days

through the paradisiacal gardens of old Córdova. Shall I ever forget the music of her voice, when, with Laddie snuggled closely to her, she would stand in the early evening (amidst the flowers and the rich, ripe fruits which seemed to be waiting for her touch), and say, in a voice like a soft lute: "*Mira la luna, Guillermo!*" And his big, brown eyes would turn from the face of the gentle Guadeloupe to where her hand pointed to the high, sailing moon, throwing its silvery kisses upon the willing earth below. The Creole and the Mexican were affinities, although with seas between them. One was Guadeloupe, the other—what shall we call her; Florentine? Proserpine? What mattered a name! We were content.

We had been strolling along away from the shops, out to where the tramway came to an abrupt end; out to where the level country took to its heels up the hillsides and went scampering off into the deep green mountains. Out beyond the President's palace, whose one-time glories were not yet quite effaced by the sad fortunes of Haïti, to where a row of houses, evidently homes of the Haïtien "Four Hundred," hidden away behind high French gateways and walls, were dropped from the glare of the white sun under glistening leaves of heavy foliage. Deep red, red flowers high in the tops of the trees hung like drops of blood over the crumbling, broken fountains. A sad little marble Cupid, with his bow and quiver gone, was still pirouetting in stony glee over a stained and dried-up basin. The gateway—her gateway—a wonder in chiselled stone and blossoming work of iron, was all but hidden by a mass of heavy, tangled vines. The white umbrella paused; we stood enchanted before the outspreading garden, and, while there, she of the wondrous face came down the steps of the mansion and out into the garden toward us. Down the path she came with a swift and graceful movement, not walking but gliding; her garments fell from her in loose, sweeping lines of grace.

As she approached us, a delicate pink flush spread over her olive face, while with an exquisite charm,—in most perfect French,—she invited us in to the cool seclusion of her veranda. She was the colour of a hazel-nut. Her hair hung in two long, glorious braids, and it was just half-inclined to wave in sweet caresses about her oval face. Her eyes were of a radiant brilliancy, and, as she spoke, the light from them broke full upon us like something sudden and unlooked-for. She was straight as a cypress, and her head was set with the poise of a young palm-tree.

Her family came out to meet us,—the brothers and sisters,—they were all very much at ease, but none of them had the charm of our hostess. Our conversation amounted to very little; it was one of the times when words seemed a bit out of place, particularly so with the sudden demand upon our slumbering French verbs. But she was forgiving, and we were appreciative, and the time passed delightfully.

In the corner of her garden, there was a little out-of-door school, whither she led us to hear verses and songs by the solemn-eyed Haïtien *noblesse*, and we listened, as it were, to the remnant of a once brilliant people in its last feeble efforts to resuscitate the memories of courtly ancestors. It did not seem credible that there could exist any relation between these intelligent children, this brilliant young goddess, and the half-human beings crouching over their sizzling pots in the market-place.

## VI.

This is the way it read:

"HOTEL-CASINO BELLEVUE

Champ de Mars—Port-au-Prince.

DIRIGÉ PAR FRÄULEIN J. STEIN, DE BERLIN

Chambres garnies, avec ou sans pension.
Bassin-douche—Jardin d'agrèment.
Table d'Hôte de 8 à 9 hs—de 1 à 2 hs—de 6 à 7 hs.
Salon de Lecture—Billard—Piano, etc.
Journaux français, allemands, americaines et anglais.

Cette établissement jadis si bien connu, somptueusement remis à neuf, se recommande aux voyageurs et aux residents par le confort d'un hôtel de 1er ordre et par les divertissements que sa situation et ses dépendances offrent au public."

You know there are some things in this world of uncertainties of which one is sure. One is sure of certain things without ever having seen them—something like the pyramids; one takes them for granted. Just how it came about that we took the "Hotel-Casino Bellevue" for granted it would be difficult to say, but we did. It was the one established fact about Port-au-Prince. It had been passed from one to another before we made port that the "Hotel Bellevue" was the *summum bonum* of Haïti. Thither, never doubting, we faced about at high noon, following the small brother of our lustrous Creole beauty, and we found it, the Hotel Bellevue, as did others.

Little Blue Ribbons, Sister, and I were placed—dumped into—three waiting chairs on the white veranda. And then Daddy disappeared, with others, all with the same air of confidence, to order dinner—it was to be dinner, you know, for did not the card say: "*Table d'Hôte de 1 à 2 hs?*"—of course it did. And we all had those little cards and they were all alike. They were our souvenirs.

Why the Hotel Bellevue hadn't any shade-trees in front; why it was so glaringly hot and dusty and brazen-faced, we didn't see. Oh, yes! It was on account of the "Bellevue"—out to the ocean! "*Dirigé par Fräulein Stein*;" that was it. She didn't like trees; she wanted the "Bellevue." She had chopped down the trees—we knew she had. "*Dirigé par Fräulein Stein*"—we didn't care for Fräulein Stein at all.

Some one on the other side of the veranda drops down an awning, and we drop the awning on our side. Blue Ribbons takes off her hat, and Sister wonders what keeps Daddy so long. I think of Fräulein Stein. She's in there, of course; that's why he's so long. That's why all the other men stay so. She is another Circe.

Here he comes. He looks mildly happy.

"It's ordered. I ordered it in German first, then French, and then Fräulein Stein,"—but there he hesitated.

"Yes, it's Fräulein Stein, of course," I reply. "What did she have to say?"

"No, it wasn't Fräulein Stein at all," he answers, "it was Fräulein Stein's manager; he's a Norwegian, so of

course he speaks English fluently.”

“What did you order?” Sister asks. Then Daddy looked a bit sad.

“I couldn’t order just what I thought you’d like of course, because they didn’t have it, but I did the best I could. Let me see—I think the first was sardines. I thought after the bananas you’d need a kind of appetiser, so I ordered sardines first, and some other stuff,—and turkey.”

“Turkey? Oh, Daddy, this is not Thanksgiving Day!”

“No, it’s not Thanksgiving, but there was something said about turkey, and I thought we might as well have what the others ordered.”

We didn’t think we cared much for turkey, but we weren’t hungry enough to argue, so we let the bill of fare go at that, and started out to investigate the premises. Ever since we had been at the Hotel Bellevue, we were unconsciously aware of curious droning sounds. We scarcely noticed them at first, for they were not aggressive,—they were merely persistent, like the sleepy humming of insects. They fitted in with the white light and the hot stillness of noonday. But, after waiting for Daddy, and thinking about Fräulein Stein, the sounds became more distinct; they grew more insistent. The people on the other side of the veranda quieted down, and there wasn’t so much chattering as there had been when we first arrived at the Hotel Bellevue. No, it was much quieter. As the voices ceased with the spreading of the scorching noonday light on the dry walks and the denuded garden,—its few, stiff little lonesome shrubs gasping for water,—the sounds grew to a positive delirium.

We stole out into the “*jardin d’agrément*.” If I could only glorify that back yard I would,—indeed, from my heart I would! But “*es hat nicht sollen sein*!” It was not La Bellevue there! Oh, no! It was not! There was a little gutter running through the yard, and there was some slimy liquid in the gutter which might once have been water. But the ducks didn’t mind; they waddled around in the puddles just the same. By the cook-house, a Witch of Endor was browning some coffee over an open fire. Out of respect to the cook, I say she was browning the coffee. She was indeed browning the coffee with a vengeance; she was burning it black—fairly to cinders. Around with the ducks was *the* turkey. He was the master of that back yard, but alas! he was having his last fling! He did not know it, nor did we; we knew soon after.

**A West Indian Africa**
**Port-au-Prince, Haïti**
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But what right had we to be in the back yard of the Hotel Bellevue? If we didn’t find the gutter agreeable to our over-refined sensibilities why not go where it was “Belle”? But there were those sounds and we were keen on the trail. We should not be thwarted by a flock of waddling ducks. It was evidently from a neighbour’s the sound came, so, picking our steps carefully over a heap of rubbish and broken bottles and discarded ducks’ feet and hens’ feathers, we peeped through a crack in the high board fence and saw in the neighbouring yard one portion of a family party; another crack revealed more, and, putting them together, we counted some eight or ten very serious people sitting around a large oval table, singing a curious chant,—if one dare call it such,—some of them; the others were shaking curious little gourd rattles in time with the monotonous recitative. The “Witch of Endor” tells us that the neighbours are celebrating the birth of twins. Deliver us from triplets!

How far are we from the voodoo and all the savagery of Africa?

There was a glory in that hotel back yard after all. But, to tell the truth, we didn’t discover it until some one behind us, black and half-naked, made a murderous assault upon the turkey. He, the turkey, screaming awful protest, flew into the merciful arms of a breadfruit-tree which hung its great leaves in a sadly apologetic manner over the scene of coffee-burning and waddling ducks. To stand under a breadfruit-tree which was doing its noblest to forget its environment—well, one ought to forgive much, and we did, until we learned that even the breadfruit wasn’t ready done—it had to be cooked.

At last the cloth was laid and the table set, and Little Blue Ribbons unfolded her napkin, and we all did the same, for Little Blue Ribbons seldom makes a mistake. She is a proper child, and had hitherto fed on proper meat. Then we chatted and sat there,—and sat there and chatted. Presently, when we had talked it all over,—the market and the Creole beauty, and everything else,—we stopped talking and just sat there thinking. Sister had some bananas left, and she graciously suggested that fruit before dinner was in good form, so we each took a banana and sat longer.

There was nor sight nor sound of Fräulein Stein, nor of any one belonging to the Stein family. We and our fellow travellers were the silent occupants of the high-ceilinged dining-room. Noon had long since gone with the morning,—

one o’clock, and still no signs of life. One-thirty,—from out the silent courtyard, after an hour and a half waiting; from out the back kitchen, near the duck puddle and the breadfruit-tree, there appeared a negro in solemn state. He had been dressing. I suppose he was the one we had been waiting for. He wore an ancient long-tailed coat with brass buttons, a white waistcoat, and very clean trousers—and shoes, too—and a flower in his buttonhole, and he carried in his hand,—yes, dear ones, he carried in his hand (only in one hand, for the other one was needed for purpose of state)—he carried in his hand one small plate of sardines, our appetisers, which had been neatly arranged in two tiny rows of six each. A menial of lower order followed with the bread, enough for one hungry man, and it fell to the first and nearest table. We were hopelessly distant from the sardines and the bread. The solemn head waiter avoided us. We thought we must have offended him. The sardines continued to pass us. Soon a dish of smoking yams was carried on beyond. We knew then that his Majesty had us in disfavour. The “spirit of ’76” arose; we would have sardines or perish. We raided the serving-room. Sister captured a whole box of sardines and I a loaf of bread. We waylaid a boy with coffee, took the pot, hunted up sugar, ran into a black woman, who was handing in a few boiled yams, seized all she had and sat down to the finest meal ever spread: yams, sardines, bread, and black coffee. At two-thirty, a faint odour of turkey hovered over the dining-room, but we didn’t care for turkey; we had said so from the first, and besides, we had known that turkey in his glory. Sardines we had not despised, and we had sardines. And then the bananas helped out, and so did the bread and the bitter coffee. I would not have had the dinner other than it was—no, not for all the waiting; it was all so in keeping with the whole crazy country.

Fräulein Stein never appeared. I do not think there was a Fräulein Stein, or ever had been. She was just made up, along with the “*table d’hôte*” and the “*chambres garnies*” and the “*douche*” and the “*jardin d’agrément*.” But in a feminine way we laid it up against Fräulein Stein,—that meal and the trees,—and we always shall. For who else do you think could have cut down the trees?

**Courtyard of the American Legation**
**Haïti**

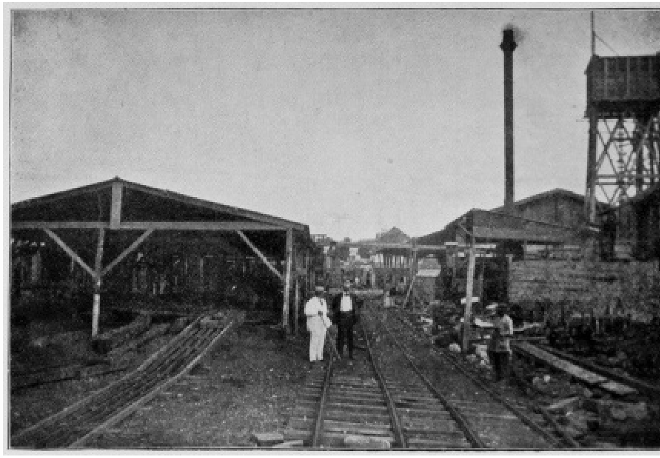
There seemed to be a sort of stupefaction over the whole establishment. I know the poor creatures did the very best they knew how, but they didn’t know how,—that was the trouble. It didn’t occur to them to cook a lot of yams at one time; they cooked enough for one or two, and when those were ready, they cooked some more for somebody else. You can imagine the length of time required for such a meal. But then there’s nothing much else to do in Haïti, and why not be willing to wait for dinner?

Out of respect to the courtly “*pharmacien*” and to our lovely Proserpine, there’s not to be one word more about the “Hotel Bellevue,” and not a word more about anything else in poor little Port-au-Prince; but I could not help wishing that some day dear old Uncle Sam would come along and give Haïti a good cleaning up, and whip them into line for a time at least; but Heaven deliver us from ever trying to assimilate or govern such a degenerate and heterogeneous people. Alas, for that ideal Black Republic, where every negro was to show himself a man and a brother!

As we were leaving for ship, the Haïtien daily paper was issued—a curious little two-page sheet, some eighteen inches square, printed in French, *Le Soir*—and in it appeared this pitiful paragraph, which seemed in a way to be the hopeless lament of Haïti’s remnant for the sad condition of things in this beautiful island:

“The Americans who arrived this morning are visiting our city. But what will they see here to admire? Where are our monuments, our squares, our well-watered streets? We blush with shame! They can carry back with them only bad impressions; there is nothing to please or charm them, except our sunny sky, our starry nights, and the exuberance of nature.”

Is it possible that the writer of those lines had forgotten the Lady Proserpine?



**A Mill for Sawing Mahogany**
**Haïti**

## CHAPTER III.

### SANTO DOMINGO

### I.

"THERE'S nothing in the least to be afraid of, Mother, nothing in the least. Why, see, even his Excellency doesn't mind." It was Sister who spoke, but even so there was a kind of unearthly qualm creeping over me as I made my way cautiously down the ladder and waited until a generous swell from the big outside sent the ship's boat within stepping distance, and then, with a jump, made for the vacancy next to Little Blue Ribbons. When one is on dry land, fear of the water seems so unreasoning that the timid soul speaks of it in a half-apologetic manner; but never yet when landing in an open boat in an exposed harbour, where the mighty roll of the ocean lifts and drops and there seems but a veil between the great world above and the great world beneath—never yet have I been able to take the step from steamer to boat with any real sensation of pleasure.

We had been skirting the southern shore of the great island of Haïti or Santo Domingo since sundown the night before, and at daybreak the word flew around that we were off Domingo City. We must have left all the sunshine with the happy darkies in Port-au-Prince, for, as we glanced from our port-holes, we saw nothing but a tumble of leaden water under a gray sky—just water and sky. Domingo City lay to the other side.

Once ready for the day and out on deck, we were met by a gloomy world. Heavy banks of clouds piled on one another as if determined to hide the sun. There were no dancing, rollicking little harbour waves that morning; they were ugly and sullen ground swells, and told of heavy weather somewhere by their grumbling, threatening heavings. A stiff wind blew, for we had come to the region of the "Northeast Trades," and it was no laughing matter to lower the boats and land us safely, especially with such clumsy boats' crews. There is practically no harbour at Santo Domingo, the capital of *la Republica Dominicana*; that is, no harbour for deep-keeled craft. The Ozama River affords a safe inner harbour for light-draught vessels, but on account of a bar at the entrance to this charming stream,—upon whose shores the historic old city slumbers,—we were forced to anchor in the open roadstead and take the ship's boats for land.

The fear which had so troubled me when we first left the solid decks of our good ship was soon forgotten as we approached the City of the Holy Sunday,—Santo Domingo,—fairy godmother at the christening of Western civilisation, the first to feel the pulse of those undying souls whose spirits spanned the centuries to come!

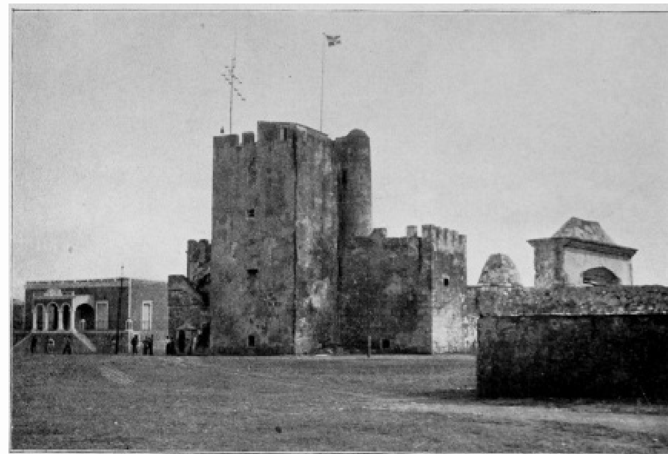
I recall how I looked with all my eyes and with all my soul at the wondrous picture opening before me as we swung into the river entrance, and wondered if I could keep its beauty for ever. Could it be more lovely, more enchanting, more mysterious under a white sun shining from out a motionless blue heaven? Who shall say? Old! Old! Kissed by the winds of centuries, Santo Domingo rests upon the brow of a verdant plateau, and stretches its sinuous arms dreamily beyond the hills on the shore. Great red rocks, in whose rifts glossy ferns and graceful vines have sought safe harbour, break the roll of the sea into a thousand glistening clouds of spray, enveloping the summit of the cliff in a translucent mist. Like a weather-worn, decrepit, but stately warrior, the ancient fort, with massive towers and mossy turrets and bastions and broken walls, still holds its guard over the harbour; and as we passed from the sea into the placid Ozama River, the enchanting view of Santo Domingo arose in full sight. Cloaked in a faintly shimmering mist, under a gray, tumultuous sky, the ancient city rose to greet us as a dreamy, nebulous siren of the sea. Crumbling ruins of ancient stone stairways led from the fort through a water-gate to the river; down those mossy flights I could all but see a gay troop of Spanish cavaliers approaching their quaint old galleons moored hard by. Truly it was an enchanted city; asleep, untouched by the hand of man since the days of its first great builder; asleep, moss-grown, hoary, throbbing still with the dying passion of mediævalism.

**The Old Fort at the River Entrance**
**Santo Domingo**

## II.

Contrary to our prearranged plan, we decided, upon landing, to engage a carriage. Just why, I hardly knew, but there was a subtle power at work in the mind of one of our party, and although it has never been hinted at since then, in calmly going over that carriage-hiring I think I begin to read the riddle. We had left our French at Haïti, and this was our first experiment on this voyage with Spanish, and I suspect some of us were anxious to see how Cervantes's language—*la idioma Castellana*—would work when it came to such a common-place proceeding as the hiring of a carriage.

We came off with colours flying, and took seats in a vehicle made some twenty-five or fifty years ago (quite modern as compared with those of Port-au-Prince), bumped up the steep stony hill, under an old archway, and had our first glimpse of the solid Spanish architecture of Santo Domingo. Everything was interesting; the balconies upheld by graceful supports of wrought iron; the neat appearance of the low-roofed, white and blue washed houses; the ever-beautiful palms and banana groves seen in vistas across the river; even our driver was a source of interest, for I expended my entire vocabulary of Spanish—few words indeed—upon that youth, all to no purpose. All he did was to look dazed and answer, "*Si, señora*" to everything, hit or miss, until we came to the Cathedral, when, just to make it right with my conscience for having been the innocent cause of all his awful lies, I asked him, pointing to the building, which could be nothing in the mind of a sane man but a cathedral, if that was the Cathedral, and he said: "*Si, señora*," and I felt relieved.



**A Closer View of the Old Fort**
**Santo Domingo**

No description can convey to your mind an adequate impression of the beauty of this wonderful old cathedral, for one needs colour, colour, colour, everywhere for its proper setting. It is built of the yellowest of soft porous stone, to which time has bequeathed a luminosity, the brilliancy of which no language can rightly picture. It is purely Spanish in its style, depending for its beauty entirely on its symmetry of form and not on extraneous ornamentation; it is built rather low to withstand frequent earthquakes, and from its solidity and simplicity and directness of construction has a charm which few of the later Spanish cathedrals possess. Time has laid her kindly hands upon this temple of God gently—ever so gently, and through many a lifetime has fulfilled the priestly office of consecration.

I sat down in the shade, for, as we left the carriage, a big cloud tumbled over by mistake and the sun laughingly plunged headlong through the mist before the quarrelsome elements had time to gainsay. With Little Blue Ribbons close by, and Sister and our Spanish Student disappearing within the arches of the Cathedral, I sat there on the base of one of the great pillars at the doorway, and filled my eyes with the beauty of the strong, graceful arches overhead, in whose time-worn curves hung the ancient bells, beautiful bronze bells, now green with age, still pealing forth the praise of God as in the days of Columbus's followers.

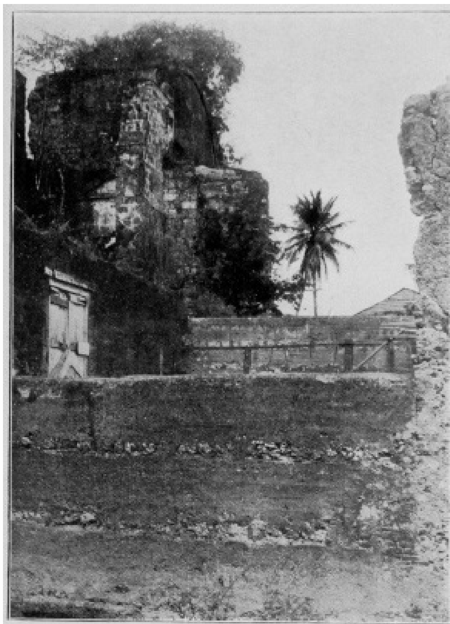
Down the weather-worn and sun-ripened sides of the Cathedral were long streaks of black, like the silent tears of centuries, shed for glories now no more. Was it not enough to rest there, where one could look at the bells and wait for the quiver of the long tongues, ringing out the hour of mass, and catch the thrill of the mottled gray and blue sky sifting its mellow light through the ancient towers? There are some things so absolutely satisfying that it seems an arrant sacrilege to be discontent and want for more. But Little Blue Ribbons, with the impatience of childhood, began to tug at my hand, and the dear old bells must have gone asleep, for with all our longing they hung there covered by their deep, green silence, and Little Blue Ribbons said we would have our waiting all for nothing. For nothing is it, dear one, to forget the stress of living for awhile, and let one's spirit drop into the peace of a sleeping bell?

## III.

We found that the interior of the Cathedral had a very new, clean face, having been recently "restored" and whitewashed; thus being out of harmony with the venerable exterior; however, some one remarked, it was "gratifying to see that the Dominicans appreciate their ancient monument." That complacent remark struck the ear awry, like the whine of a deacon's report at a Sunday-school convention. Appreciate? Why, the people of Santo Domingo worship this spot! It is the one place of interest to them; it is the one thing they ask the stranger if he has seen; it is the centre of their life and love,—that ancient pile of yellow glory,—for are not the ashes of their great *Cristobal Colon* guarded there? Would that we Americans had any relic we held as sacredly!

**The Cathedral and the Statue of Columbus**
**Santo Domingo**

So I suppose we ought not to quarrel with the Dominicans over the new coat of whitewash, for they meant it well, but we can at least wish they hadn't cleaned house so thoroughly. Within those walls rest the bones of Columbus after their many disinterments and post-mortem wanderings—so it is claimed; but whether these are the bones of Columbus, or of some one else, who can say? What does it matter? Somewhere about one hundred years ago,—in 1795,—'tis said, when this island was ceded to the French, the Spaniards took Columbus's bones back to Spain. Later these mortal fragments were returned to Santo Domingo, in accordance with his expressed wish that they finally be buried in this his beloved birthplace and funeral-pyre of his cherished hopes in the New World; which wish had been once before honoured in the first removal of the remains to the then Spanish colony. Sealed in a leaden casket they were imbedded in masonry under the stone floor of the cathedral chancel, and there was no attempt to disturb them until about 1878, when they were *presumably* removed to Havana to be re-interred there, and, as the Spaniards stoutly maintain, again disinterred from their resting-place in the cathedral at Havana and hurried away to Spain just before the American occupation of Cuba, there to receive the sad honour of a costly mausoleum in Seville. But a few years ago a second box was discovered, buried fast in ancient masonry and cement, about three feet from the place in which the first one was found; and this leaden box, the Dominicans claim, holds the real bones of the real Columbus, for they stoutly maintain that the other box contained the bones *Diego Colon*, nephew to Columbus, or, as some say, his son,—not *Cristobal Colon*, our Columbus—and the inscription on a silver plate found inside seems to bear out the authenticity of the later discovery, as does also the location of this second casket and the pains taken to render it secure. Whosesoever bones they were, I was in the proper frame of mind to venerate them, and it was with a feeling of deep awe and pathos that I stood before the much-disputed leaden box, now enshrined in gold and silver, and covered by a very gorgeous white marble tomb, newly made in Barcelona. The box is about a foot and a half long, one foot high, and one foot wide—rather a small space for so great a man as Columbus, but then,—

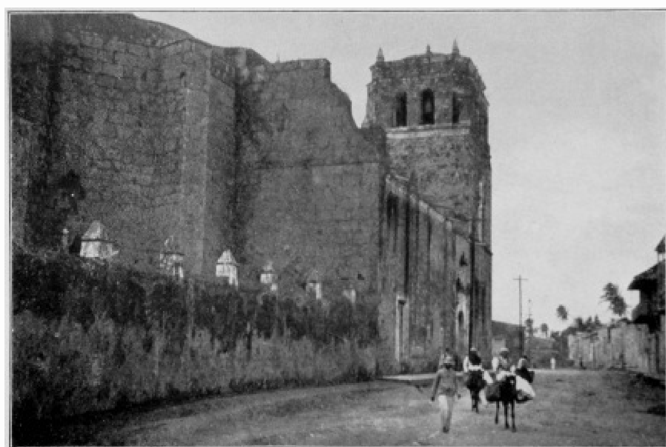


**Ruins of Castle Built by Diego Colon**
**Santo Domingo**
**Copyright, 1901, by Detroit Photographic Co.**

“Imperial Cæsar, dead, and turn’d to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.”

And so the Dominicans had a very beautiful and lofty and modern monument built in Spain and brought across the water to San Domingo, as a fitting shrine for their great treasure. With many minarets and dainty arches cut from snowy marble, and ornate with carvings and gilt, it stands more as a monument to the faithful loyalty of the Dominicans than to the memory of that valiant discoverer. He was a world soul. He belongs to all time, as do all the great. The march of Western civilisation is his monument. The Dominicans plan to erect a building which they deem worthier this work of gold and marble than is the sad old cathedral Columbus founded,—worthier the sacred leaden box; but could there be a more fitting sanctuary for the great Genoese, than within these ancient walls whose beginnings he directed and which rose after death in direct fulfilment of his ambition?

We found built into the wall a huge cross, rudely hewn of wood, which the stories say was set in a clearing in a little plain by Columbus, before the year 1500, to mark the place where his great church should stand. This primitive cross was afterward built into the wall itself. How constantly memories of the great discoverer hover about these walls; for it was in Santo Domingo that Columbus was imprisoned by his jealous rivals, and thence at last he was taken in chains to Spain, where he died, and hither again came his weary bones.



**Where Columbus Planted the Cross**
**Santo Domingo**

How pathetic, yet how characteristic, is this grim example of the Spaniard’s reverence for the past, even if that past may have been so cruelly dishonoured! Columbus, the poor Genoese dreamer; Columbus, still the crazy explorer, but upheld by royal hands; Columbus, the fêted and flattered discoverer of new worlds, giving to Spain greater riches than she dreamed; Columbus, the victim of jealous gossip and intrigue, bound in chains and finally dying,—broken and disgraced. Columbus, in ashes these four hundred years, guarded in pomp, and convoyed by great ships in this final retreat, step by step, from the empire he founded! For with each successive loss of her rich holdings in the New World, Spain has tried to carry with her in her retreat, these precious relics, until the name Columbus, framed in dishonour, disaster, and defeat, has become to her almost a pain. How tragic that Spain should strain to her heart with fierce jealousy, as the last but most precious remnant left of all her American possessions,

the few crumbling bones of Columbus!

We left the Cathedral reluctantly, but as the day was moving rapidly on we were anxious to see as much as possible of the city; so we reëntered the carriage and drove to the *Correo* to post letters and get some money changed. While Daddy was in the post-office, I endeavoured, with my four Spanish words, to make our driver understand that I wanted him to move along to the corner, so that we might look out over the river, but he only smiled and said: “*Si, señora*,” and went on putting up the rubber curtains to keep out the unexpected shower that had blown up from nowhere. So I sat there in despair, for I did want to get that view, but I did not want to get wet. At that moment, seeing my predicament, a gentleman approached the driver and told him just what to do, and then disappeared into the post-office. When the Spanish Student returned, he was accompanied by my kindly interpreter, to whom we were presented.

“Sister,” says the smiling Daddy, “this is Señor Alfredo P—— A——, private secretary to the President, and he has most kindly offered to show us about the city.” We all bow to the señor, and I wonder if he is really the private secretary, or a private humbug, waiting around to ensnare us. Shame upon my suspicion! May that moment of doubt be for ever fruitless in the process of my gradual regeneration!

Señor Alfredo was one of the handsomest men I had ever seen. And this I say not in the enthusiasm of a first meeting, but after carefully weighing my words. Señor Alfredo was dark, and our man blond, so there could be no comparison between dissimilar types and no cause for jealousy, and then I said that the señor was *one* of the handsomest. That “*one of the*” should make all the difference in the world. The señor was simply one of the procession of nature’s adornments in which you are marching. There, now, may I go on, and may I say just what I wish of the señor without offence?

The señor had been educated in New York City, and his English was most charming; it had the grace of a rich Spanish accent, and the correctness of a scholar. I hesitate to tell you of the señor’s charms, lest you think them over-abundant,—impossible in any one man, and you might not enjoy the day in old Domingo, and that would be an unhappy state, truly.

The señor’s first question was: “Have you seen the Cathedral?” Yes, we had seen it in our way, but possibly not in his. Then he dismisses the disappointed coachman, and we follow the señor again to the worshipped temple, and have its wonders revealed to us by one who knew every stone in its construction. After long prowling around, through cloisters and shrines, and after hunting up the place in the chancel where those poor old bones were disinterred, and carefully comparing the former hiding-places of each of the disputed caskets, we leave the cathedral and wander about Domingo City. The señor guides us, not at our request, but of his own free will, to all the places of interest in the city; and then to the old fort which we had seen on our arrival. I should have been quite satisfied to have stayed there all day, looking from the massy turrets out to sea, but the señor was solicitous that we should go about with the officer in command of the fort, and see everything of interest. Old as it is, it is still used by the army; the native military school and the naval academy both being within its walls. The smart-looking men presented arms as we passed from the gateway into the street again, and we took pleasure in telling the commandant how much better his troops appeared than the ridiculous Haïtien soldiery. This seemed to please both of our friends, for the Dominicans apparently have a feeling of contempt for their neighbours of the Negro Republic, and rightly, too, judging from what we saw.

**Entrance to the Fort and Military School**
**Santo Domingo**

Then, we walked and walked and walked, up one narrow street and down another, catching numerous glimpses of most entrancing gardens through the half-way opened doors. We asked for the daily paper, and were taken at once to the office of the *Listin Diario*, whose editor was the brother of Señor P—— A——. He and our Spanish Student had, to them, an interesting conversation about the political situation in Santo Domingo and in Venezuela; and after having promised to dine with us on the boat at six o’clock, we continued our walk in and about and all around, until, much to our surprise, we were taken into a cool, big courtyard, up a wide flight of worn stone steps into the señor’s home. There we met his wife and children, listened to beautiful native dances sympathetically played on the piano by the señor; we rocked in the ever-present Vienna bent-wood chair, talked to the parrot, played with the baby, and drank cocoanut milk from the green cocoanut, and lived to drink from many more. The cocoanut, when used for milk by these Southern people, is cut quite green, before the solid meat has formed and when all is liquid within, and is said to be most healthful. Of our party, the adventurous man and children liked it very much, but the cautious woman a very little. Then we made our *adieux*, not without the promise, however, that the señor would

meet us at three o’clock for the trip up the Ozama River in the ship’s boats.

All day the clouds were reeling heavily in bulky, black heaps, now and then dropping down upon our innocent heads torrents of spattering rain. But we were not to be discomfited by a rain-shower, for were we not prepared? We left the ship with but one umbrella, the white one with the green lining, but as we bade the señor “*Adios*,” a sudden shower called forth his best silk umbrella. He was insistent, and there was nothing to do but for Daddy to tuck Sister under his wing, accepting the señor’s offer, and for Little Blue Ribbons to trot along by my side, under the Haïtien umbrella. And the green lining proved fast green; it did not run, not a particle!

**Looking across the Plaza**
**Santo Domingo**

By three o’clock, Domingo City was a veritable *Port Tarascon*, and it seemed that Daudet must have been here before he wrote of his poor drenched French *émigrés*. The rain still fell. It ran down the streets anywhere it pleased; it dripped off the ruined roof of Diego’s Palace; it scampered down the awning of the German Legation; it stood in little pools on the terrace overlooking the river; it trickled down the face of the timeless old sun-dial, and made the long seams on its face dark and wet, as if from tears.

What bliss if we could only have set our watches by the hour told on the Dominican sun-dial! But there was no sun and consequently no time.

I have an inspiration! It has just come to me. Now my course is plain; now I know what I shall do with the little girls. I have often longed to obliterate for them the thought of time. I have wanted them to grow into a feeling of possession of all the time there ever can be,—countless ages and ages of time, with never a shadow of hurry lurking about; with never a doubt but that the days will be long enough in which to live their fullest measure of happiness. I shall invoke the aid of the gods, in whose arms rests so peacefully this “Island of the Blest,” and they shall build for me an enchanted palace somewhere,—perhaps not just here, but somewhere. I think I shall leave that to the little girls, but it shall be an enchanted palace, all overgrown with sweetbrier and moss, and roundabout shall be a garden—a dear garden, with violets and lilies and arbutus and anemones—and then the trees,—there shall be no end of them!—maple and ash, and slender birch and elm, and linden and—but it seems to me I hear you wondering that we should leave out the palms and the breadfruit and banana and citron. I know it does not seem just as it should be, but I am afraid, if we had the palms and the breadfruit, we’d never feel really at home in our palace, and, of course, we must feel at home even in an enchanted palace. We could have two palaces if we wanted to, and have the palms in the company palace, and the cool, sweet maples we could have for our very own. Yes, that is it! That’s what we’ll do!

In the midst of the garden, we will have a Dominican sun-dial, an exact reproduction of this one. I shall make a sketch of it before we move a step further, and it shall he chipped and worn and sun-baked and tear-stained, and it shall look centuries old. Then there must be a Dominican sky; half-sun and half-shade. And then, don’t you see, the little girls will never know the time at all,—only just as the clouds run off for a frolic. And I shall arrange an indefinite supply of such weather, and that’s just where we’ll all live. Yes—Daddy and all the dear ones, and it will be such a relief not to be obliged to wind our watches.

“Mother!” said Sister, coming up back of me and peeping under the white umbrella which Little Blue Ribbons was holding resolutely over my head while I sketched; “Mother! what is it you’re drawing?”

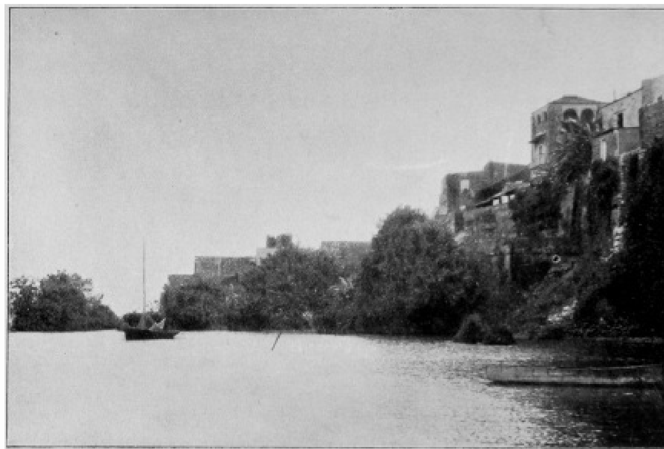
“Do you need to ask? Can’t you see it’s the sun-dial?”

“Oh! I thought it was the boy out there in the rain.”

## IV.

What can the señor do without his best umbrella? Will he take the black umbrella of his wife’s aunt? No, he will not take the black umbrella of his wife’s aunt, dear Mr. Otto, he has taken the umbrella of his wife’s sister, we will say, to adhere to tradition; but, to tell the truth, I could never say whose umbrella the señor borrowed, but when he appeared he was really so beaming under the dark covering over him, that I quite forgot to ask him whose umbrella it was.

Ah! what would the señor think if he should ever read these words? Would he forswear the friendship? We should sincerely beg forgiveness, for we would sooner never see the walls of Domingo again than to lose the señor’s good-will.



**Along the Ozama**
**Santo Domingo**

The excursion up the Ozama was a world of delight from beginning to end. The Ozama is one of God’s most perfect little rivers, deep and rather narrow, winding through an enchanting country. The shore is outlined for miles by never-ending mangroves, and on the higher upper banks are the breadfruit, and palms, and a world of unknown trees and fruits. Had there been no palms, no breadfruit or mangroves, it would have been enough joy to me to know that up this self-same river in centuries long since dead, there had swept the doughty keels of Columbus’s crazy little ships. But the Spanish Student was not so easily satisfied; he wanted to know things; how much mahogany and ebony and *lignum vitæ* was gotten from the outlaying country, and what sort of dyewoods they exported. The señor gave much valuable information, but not much more than the natives themselves, who came gliding down the stream in dugouts, having in tow one or two or three mahogany logs. Who says that all the true Santo Domingo mahogany was cut generations ago? There was a constant and silent passing of these dark craft, for the most part with but a single occupant. Sometimes a woman in the bow, half-buried by a cargo of plantains, bending over a pot of some sort, would be cooking on an improvised camp-fire built on earth above the plantains; and thus busy—one at the fire, the other at the paddle—she and her black mate would slip along out of sight under the dark mysterious shadows of the mangroves, closely hugging the shore.

Not far from the city, the señor pointed to a mighty tree, one of the most gigantic of the tropics, a *ceiba*, to which it is said Columbus made fast his ships. There was no reason to doubt the statement, and, besides, it is so much pleasanter to believe such natural things than to be for ever doubting. And why should not Columbus have made his ships thus fast? The *ceiba* looked a thousand years old. Who knows but that it is even older?

A little way down the stream and closer to the city, there was a spring of sweet cool water, and above it a stately canopy of stone, built by Bartholomew Columbus,—Christopher’s brother,—and called “The Fountain of Columbus.”

Oh, such a day, under the rocking, tumbling clouds, ever moving, ever changing, moulding, blending from black to gray and billowy white, under fitful showers and sudden baths of sunlight! It was a dream day of sleeping bells and timeless dials and ruined towers and enchanted palaces, with the bones of poor old Columbus beating time to the hopes of the ambitious San Dominicans of to-day.

Evening came, and we were at dinner on the boat with our delightful friend from the shore, drinking to the prosperity of the Dominican Republic, and to the hope that Señor P—— A—— might live to be President of his beloved country. But, alas, how many Presidents they have to have in these Spanish “republics” to round out the tally with Destiny!

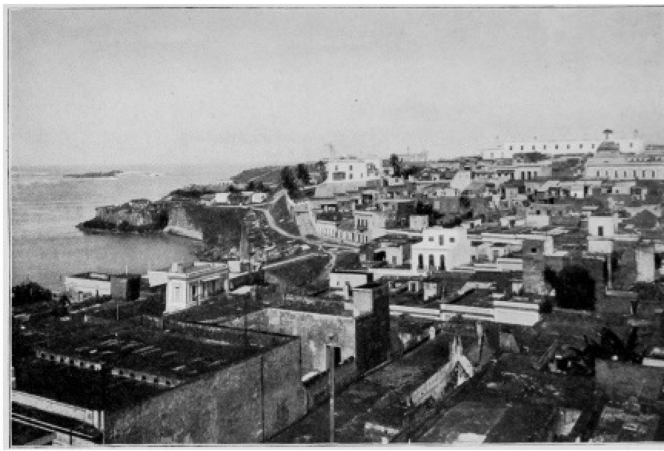
It seemed to me that, for my part, if all Spaniards were as gracious, as hospitable and genuine as our new-found friend, there would never have been a Spanish-American War.

And so next day we sailed away, leaving the City of the Holy Sunday wrapped in peace and good-will; but who can tell the day or hour when the land may again be devastated by revolution?

## CHAPTER IV.

### SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

### I.



**Looking to Sea from San Juan**
**Puerto Rico**
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WE were creeping in toward the entrance of the harbour of San Juan, Puerto Rico, waiting for the pilot, who had sighted us afar off. It was when almost at a standstill that our brown-skinned pilot in his open lug-sail boat came alongside and sprang for our rope ladder with the nimble agility of his prehistoric progenitors. He left two small boys, one at the tiller aft and one in the bow of the boat hanging on to a line dropped them from about midships of our steamer. The pilot continued shouting at the boys as he disappeared over our heads to where the captain stood waiting on the bridge; but things did not seem to go well with the boys below, for instead of at once assuming command of our ship the pilot again turned his attention to the boys. He now followed up his first harangue by a supplement in very angry tones, evidently out of patience with the poor little fellows, who, much excited, could not seem to keep their boat from sheering at a dangerous angle, with her bow against the side of our ship. A quick flash of resentment toward that dusky pilot spread from one to the other of us as we saw how panic-stricken the boys were, and how as our ship suddenly put on a bigger head of steam the little boat alongside had become unmanageable and was in imminent danger of being sucked under our side. To prove that he was powerless to prevent disaster, after incessant yells from his father, the lad in the stern-sheets of the boat jumped to his feet and flung out with tragic despair his two hands, in each of which he held up the fragments of a broken tiller. Then in all the languages of our ship the boys are howled at to let go. Already their narrow boat is beginning to careen dangerously against the side of our moving steamer. Not a moment too soon they let go the rope, and their excited, high-pitched voices sound strangely out of place as they rapidly drift astern of us in the open sea. The pilot had evidently assured his boys that he would look after them, for within a few rods of the harbour entrance a loitering sail is hailed. To our tremendous relief we follow the rescuer until we see that a tow is in progress, and then we feel better.

As we approach the harbour, and at the entrance dodge into a channel between yellow reefs plainly visible through the clear water, it is no small thing to see our dear Stars and Stripes peacefully waving over that relic of mediæval Spain, the venerable Morro of San Juan on the bold headlands to our left; its wide-spreading fortifications, gray with centuries and fast going to decay, running in walls and terraces far above the sea. We throw our whole soul into the soft folds of that flag with a deep sense of joy. There are among our company some with whom as loyal Americans we cannot but feel restraint, owing partly to the whisperings afloat that the aliens are envoys from his Majesty the Emperor of Germany, bent on a mission not altogether that of pleasure. However that may be, we are all the more moved to enthusiasm over our flag when we are conscious of the lack of that sentiment among the Germans. So when we are near enough to the fort to hear the wild cheers of welcome issuing from every parapet and tower of that old pile, we know no hounds and answer the welcome as you would have done had you been there. Spontaneously “The Star Spangled Banner,” started by the boys on the fort, finds a hearty echo from our ship, and my eyes are blurred so that the restless, shouting, singing boys on shore look dim and indistinct. Yes, we are coming home. Uncle Sam owns Puerto Rico, and I am happy to feel that here in the West Indies he has asserted his rank among the nations of the world, and intends to make this colonial home a sweet clean place for all of his children who wander upon Southern seas. Some day this fair harbour will be filled with ships flying the Stars and Stripes, and again our merchant vessels will be doing their rightful share of the West Indian commerce.

The way in which I found my love for those soldier boys expanding was really wonderful. The sight of those old blue flannel shirts, those faded Khaki breeches, those tossing felt hats aroused within me in this strange tropical island unexpected waves of patriotism. There sprung at once a dangerous leak in my affections, and had it not been for the quiet pressure upon my shoulder of a strong hand I so well knew, who can tell what might have happened? Even so, there was not a boy upon the island but I could have mothered with my whole heart, and I could not, however persistently that hand still lingered, quite stifle the upheaval of that undying mother instinct.

Although aware that Uncle Sam was fully alive to the great dower that this island alliance would bring him, I must still believe that his choice was not a little influenced by the actual charms of Puerto Rico herself: that, however much he, a man of some years, might appear indifferent to the allurements of lovely women, he is still like the rest of his sex chivalrously bent upon fresh conquests. In this case let us rejoice that he has been so fortunate, and that so pretty a face has brought so much of real worth.

Although, womanlike, acknowledging a deeper interest in our troops than in anything else, I could not be indifferent to the city of San Juan as we slipped past the reef at the entrance into the wide expanse of harbour and dropped anchor opposite the beautiful landing quay. *El Puerto Rico del San Juan Bautista* (The Rich Port of St. John the Baptist), as the Spaniards centuries before had christened her, opened before us like a bespangled fan, and threw from her glittering white walls the swaying efflorescence of stately palms. From the ancient fort on the headland to the *Casa Blanca* and the city beyond, it was a progression of delicious sights and sounds.

## II.

Has it ever impressed you how rarely nature appeals to one's sense of humour? She brings us infinite delights, but seldom cultivates in us our faculty of laughing. But down here off Puerto Rico, she for once leaves her beaten track of sobriety and indulges in the most extravagant caprices. How she ever thought out such a ridiculous line of hills none but Father Time could tell you; here her centuries of bottled-up giggles have burst forth, and she has made herself the most outlandish head-gear she could contrive, and here she stands, caught in the act of being silly. From this distance I should say the hills are barren, save for now and then a palm, which, dotted irregularly over the epidemic of peaks, gives the hills the forlorn look of a mole on an old woman's cheek. There is every size of these jagged, saw-tooth peaklets jumping up in the air like so many scarecrows, and when our ship swings to her anchor and leaves us broadside to Puerto Rico's shore, the little girls and I enter into the joke and laughingly wonder how it ever happened.

Then to match the distant landscape out came the Puerto Rican shore boats with ridiculous little open hen-coop cabins aft, much like the funny "summer cabins" affected by some New Jersey catboats—only more so. There were no end of fine modern launches of all sorts darting about us, some of them waiting for passengers, and others from our ships in the harbour bringing officers and ladies aboard, but Daddy would have none of them. He and the little girls are already under a hen-coop in one of the miserable little boats and nothing will do but I must go too. I protest, but to no avail. The stiff shore breeze makes prompt decision necessary, and I creep down under the coop an unwilling passenger; I would so much rather have been in one of the puffy boats. So off we go heeling well to the breeze as our funny, high-slung lateen sail drives us shoreward at a great rate.

We were not alone under the hen-coop, for we had some Puerto Rican musicians with us, and my qualms at the flying boat are actually forgotten in the strange but fascinating music of those natives. They carried not only the universal guitar of the usual form, but also a funny little guitar not a quarter as big as the ordinary sort, and a curious round gourd with shot or pebbles inside, which, attached to a handle, they used as a rattle, and other gourds some eighteen inches long, corrugated with many deep scratches, upon which they accented the strong beat of the measure by scraping with a bit of wire in a most dexterous manner. I can well imagine the contempt of some of our European musicians for such music, but as for myself, although trained in the most conservative of foreign schools, I could but acknowledge the deep influence of these untutored artists, and yielded myself in fascination to the weird rhythm of their music. Music to these peoples is not a dreary taskmaster, as it is to many of their Northern brothers; it is as necessary to them as is the outpouring sunlight, and they use it with a freedom and comradeship and love which is unknown to us. My senses are suffused with strange emotions of pleasure as I listen dreamily to the lullings of the water, percolated through and through by the cadences of low voices and the rhythmic repetition of single notes. I was unreal to myself even after Captain B—— and his wife, friends whom we half-hoped to meet in San Juan, had grasped our hands and led us to an army coach near by.

## III.

Instead of being the dumping-ground for all the garbage of the city and the location for unsightly warehouses, the quay at San Juan is a perfect delight. I happened to-day to turn to a precious volume of Washington Irving's "Life of Columbus." While reading along I came across a letter in which the valiant discoverer endeavours to bring to his king some conception of the beauty of his newly found lands; saying that he fears his Majesty may have reason to doubt the veracity of his statements, for each new island surpasses in beauty the one before; in fact that one could live there for ever. Time cannot efface the noble bearing of Puerto Rico, and although far, far removed from the picture which met the eyes of her early discoverers, she is to-day not only from the standpoint of the picturesque, but from the practical aspect of cleanliness and order, a place to which every American may turn with pride.

**Boat Landing and Marine Barracks, San Juan**
**Puerto Rico**
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To find upon landing a noble water-front finely paved, relieved by grassy quadrangles in which choice varieties of palms are set with the unfailing intuition of the true nature lover, places one at once *en rapport* with the best things of life. Why, why are we of the North so blind to the soul's necessity for beauty? Why are we so dumbly indifferent to that craving? If we but looked deeply enough into the psychological influence of beauty, we would be

forced to recognise man’s necessity for its expression in public places. There is no city among the Spanish-speaking peoples but has its restfully attractive plaza, varying in beauty as the wealth of the community permits—a playground and a club-house and a concert-hall in one for all the people. And when my mind reverts in unwilling retrospection to the innumerable hideous and barren cities large and small of our United States, it seems to me that we are hopelessly lost in the fog of the common-place. If we Americans were a poor people, there might be palliating circumstances, but we are not poor, we have more wealth than any people on earth, and surely a republic should give its equal citizens all the beauty and pleasure possible. We are merely blind, that is all. Pray God that our eyes may be opened and that right soon!

In these islands the plaza, where the people live largely in the open air, is the synonym for all that is congenial to the eye and soothing to the ear, and this explains much of the enthusiasm which we starved Northerners express when once within the satisfying influences of such surroundings.

Captain B—— and his wife are graciously willing to wait our pleasure, while we linger idly content, but we must not trespass too long upon their indulgence; so we enter the coach and rumble up the steep narrow streets after four lustrous army mules. Our driver, a native Puerto Rican, speaks to the mules in English, and ready with the explanation before I could form the question, Captain B—— says: “Yes, the boys use English, because their mules were brought here from the States, and of course they wouldn’t understand if the boys spoke Spanish to them.” Stopping for the passage of an army freight wagon, it seemed very comical to me to hear those Puerto Rican lads “gee-hawing” to the sleek American mules.

If the politics of our American cities could be as well administered as those of San Juan appear to be from the cleanliness and order of her streets we would indeed have cause to rejoice. The streets of San Juan were so clean that even the trailer of skirts might for once be forgiven her lack of common decency. She could have walked the full length of San Juan and not gathered up as much filth as she would in one block of one of our Northern sidewalks. Such was the cleanliness of the place that again and again we exclaim over the fine condition of the city; and Captain B—— bore out our impression that Uncle Sam had done his house-cleaning most effectively, and was now trying to maintain that condition by educating a force of native police,—“*spigitys*,” our boys call them.

As we were going through the Plaza we saw a great crowd on the far side, gathered about a regular American “trolley-car,” and wondering at their enthusiastic demonstrations, we were told that this was the first trip of the first electric car in Puerto Rico—a great step toward becoming Americanised.

## IV.

We were in the Captain’s hands, and although Sister and Daddy were decorously unquestioning as to where we were going and what we were to do when we got there, Little Blue Ribbons and I couldn’t refrain from asking, when we found ourselves clattering out of San Juan to the tattoo of the hard little hoofs, if the Captain intended to drive us to Ponce? “Oh, hardly, this evening,” he laughingly replied. “I thought we would merely take a spin out a way on the military road to give you a glimpse of the country. The madam has planned a Puerto Rican dinner for you at the Colonial, and afterward there is to be a concert on the Plaza.” “Simply fine,” I said, “I do so enjoy trying the native bills of fare” (but alas, for their after effects!).

**The First Trolley Car in San Juan**
**Puerto Rico**

The military road, a beautiful macadamised highway, swept through a country whose surface was richly covered with broad pasture lands where many cattle were grazing. The plains were fairly peppered with palm-trees, which, owing to their long trunks and pluming tops, interfered but little with the pasture beneath. The military road is fringed by these noble trees, at least as far as we go, and although now to us a necessary feature in the West Indian landscape, I never weary of their aristocratic grace. We must have gone some miles when the madam suggested our return. A crack of the whip, a vociferous shouting to the mules, and the coach faces right about with military precision for San Juan. With many a bewildering twist and turn through the upper town, we reach the Morro headland, and are glad enough to leave the coach and throw ourselves into the deep grass, where we sit a long time looking out to sea.

Those of you who have been there know; those of you who have not, never can know the loveliness of that far-spreading vision. No, not if all the poets joined in one grand panegyric, you would never know what it all meant. You would need to feel the dull booming of the sea against the cliffs and hear the cool rattle of the palms crooning over

the children in the Casa Blanca; you must run your hands through the stiff deep grass down to the earth which makes so sweet and so warm a bed; you must throw back your face to the uplifting Northeast Trade; then you will know what it means to sink down upon the green carpet of San Juan and look out to sea.

A veil dropped over the still water; the sea and sky melted into one substance; then we arouse sufficiently to realise that the madam is waiting. By this time San Juan had made ready for the night; we could see the fitful flicker of her electric lights down near the barracks, and here and there the dull red stare of an olden time street-lamp swinging midway between the dark lanes which intersect the upper town like long tentacles.

**The Military Road Across Puerto Rico**
**Near San Juan**

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We ran down along the sea-wall, under the lattice of the stately Casa Blanca, and came into the city; turning abruptly to the left we were about to follow the Captain up the steep street, when I was stopped suddenly with my whole soul ablaze with wonder, for there on the top of the hill, as if on the very stones themselves, there rolled a great yellowish-green moon, and about it there fell a heaven splashed with emerald and gold. There were green and yellow and strange hues of blue all blending into a splendour which dazzled the senses and made one feel dumb. I am so thankful that we saw the moon before dinner. I couldn’t have looked in the face of a green moon afterward, no, I could never have done it.

I beg of you to be as considerate of me as possible in your judgment. I do not mean to be ungrateful to our dear hosts, or unkind or disagreeable; but after that dinner, planned for us with so much care and pride, all I could say was, “O Lord, have mercy upon us—miserable offenders!” We had things to eat I had never dreamed of, and may I be spared a recurrence of them in my future dreams! There were:

Tomatoes and peppers.

Pork chops, and peppers.

Codfish, vegetables and peppers.

Chicken and peas and more peppers and some black coffee and cheese, and the sweetest sweets I ever tasted, with a final dessert of beans with a sugar sauce. After dinner madam had chairs arranged on the balcony over the Plaza. She led the way, and said the concert would be delightful in the moonlight. But as the pepper and the various concoctions of grease and greens and sugar and beans began to make themselves felt, I turned my chair around, saying that I never could look at the moon any length of time, especially a green moon. Then Sister gave me a despairing look and turned her chair around too; gave my hand a hard squeeze, and leaning over, said: “Mother, it’s the peppers and sweet things; do you think Daddy could get me some Jamaica ginger?” A whispered consultation is held, after which the Captain and Daddy disappear, and then something warm and comforting is fixed up for Sister and me, and we decide that after all we will turn our chairs around to face the moon, but alas, the inconstant creature had slipped on her black hood and was scurrying off like a little fat nun. She was no more to be seen that night.

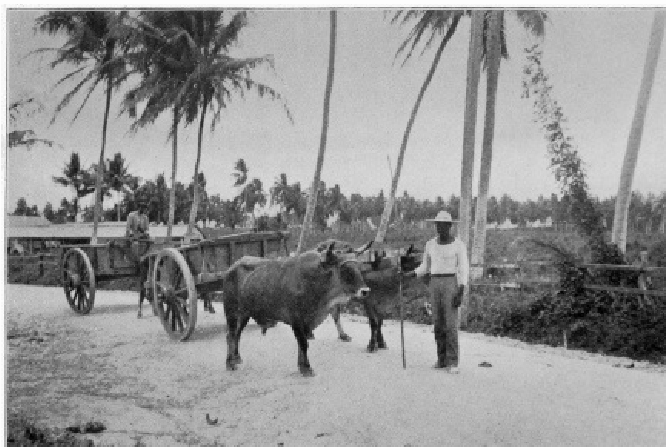
But her displeasure does not affect the humour of San Juan, for by this time the Plaza is filled with people making “*el gran paseo*” around and around the square in true Spanish fashion.

Meantime the Plaza is being filled with chairs—rocking-chairs—which seem to spring up out of nothing. I never saw or expect to see so many rocking-chairs in any one place. Here the “Four Hundred” sit, having paid a small fee for the use of the chairs, and here they rock back and forth and back and forth in endless waves until the music begins. Some rock with the elegant ease of the portly *señora* and others with the sprightly jerk of the laughing *niñita*, and as seen from the veranda of the Colonial, the eyes ache as they involuntarily follow the moving crowds circling countless times around the improvised barricade of oscillating chairs. But the music begins, the people are suddenly still, and out over the luminous night, still eloquent of the retreating moon, there fall the first notes. I know that it is rank heresy in me to acknowledge to any race but the Germans a preëminence in musical intuition; but I shall do so in spite of all the traditions of my youth. I believe that if the Spanish-American races could be given the skill and the knowledge to formulate their musical ideas to such an extent as has come to the painstaking Germans by generations of grinding, we would have greater music—and certainly more human music—than the world has ever heard. The Puerto Rican, as well as the Mexican, the Cuban, the Dominican, is the natural musician; he feels to his finger-tips every vibration of sound he utters, and he makes you feel what he does. His music is akin to that of the wild sea-bird, it is brother to the moaning of the winds, to the wan song of the dusky maidens in the dance—to dream sounds in cocoanut and palm-tree groves; it is life, moving, quickening, pulsating life their music speaks, and without life, what is the stuff we call music?

“Thank you, thank you, you have given us an evening we shall never forget. Shall we not see you in the morning? *Buenas noches.*”

## V.

It was high noon as Little Blue Ribbons and I left the empty Plaza and started out with grim determination to do our duty. The streets were silent as the sun crept over our heads and sent its burning, perpendicular rays through the white umbrella. But that was of no consequence. We two had made up our minds to accomplish a certain purpose, and when we make up our minds neither man nor weather can prevail against us. We had been idle long enough. Time and time again we had drifted to the time-ripened Morro. Days had gone by and we lacked the energy to begrudge their inconsequential passing, but now a time of reckoning had come. We would have no more such idleness. Little Blue Ribbons and I had awakened on this particular day to a realisation of our unperformed duty, and although detained through one pretext and another all the morning, by noon we forswore further procrastination and hurriedly left the Plaza before our good intentions could again be lulled by inaction.



**Inland Commerce**

**Puerto Rico**

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It was to the Square of Ponce de Leon we were going; and although not sure of its exact location, we remembered a fine old church near by, and that was our landmark.

It is strange indeed what a web of dreams the past weaves about its heroes, however recent their careers; but when the hand of time leads us back to the remote events of centuries gone by, we are hopelessly bewildered by the discordant wrangling between the real and the improbable.

Although the early companion of Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of Florida and the intrepid voyager on many seas, the conqueror and the first governor of Puerto Rico, and later the powerful and hated rival of Columbus’s son, Ponce de Leon’s one unrealised hope, his tireless search for the fountain whose waters were to contain the elixir of life, has so over-shadowed his actual achievements by the glamour of the legendary, that his very name has become the synonym for the stuff of which dreams are made. Standing thus as the embodiment of the unattainable, the knight errant of roseate hopes and undying aspirations, he has ever been, in spite of the irascible humour given him by history, a figure from whom none could wrest the talisman of romance.

Where are his contemporaries, where are those greater discoverers, abler rulers, better men who thronged these alluring waters during the two generations of Ponce de Leon’s eventful life? Dead, even in name, many of them, or else safely embalmed in the musty pages of some old history seldom read. But in him there was the spirit of the poet and the mystic, which ever has and ever will appeal to the imagination of mankind and through imagination attains immortality.

Thus it suggested much to us to find his statue in San Juan and to have heard some one assert with an air of authority that his bones rested in the old church hard by; all of which bore incontrovertible testimony to the fact of his having once been an actual living personality. So we two decide without saying a word to any one that we will make a pilgrimage to that church of the uneasy shades and prove for ourselves Ponce de Leon’s identity with fact.

With a feeling of affinity for the doughty old cavalier, and with half a sigh that I can never again lift my feet with the light-hearted grace of the little maid at my side, we wander on through the deserted streets until we come to the square of Ponce de Leon. It looked as it had before, only much whiter, much brighter, and oh, so silent! The church stood passively asleep; there were only the still hot rays reflected into our faces from the sun-baked pavement. The same, and yet not the same, was the empty square, for as we made nearer approach we found that the pedestal upon which before the figure of Ponce de Leon had stood with lofty bearing and haughty mien was now but a bare block of stone glaringly white in the noonday silence with naught but the inscription left.

The figure was gone! “Can it be that we have been dreaming, that it was never there?” I ask, in consternation. “No, Mother, surely not, I remember perfectly well a statue was standing there as we drove through only last evening.” With a startled tremor I wish the place were not so deserted, I wish some one would come, I dislike being so alone, and I wish that we had Daddy with us. But pulling ourselves together with a frightened glance over our shoulders, we pass the abandoned pedestal and go toward the church, unquestioningly sure of safe sanctuary within its open door. To our amazement we find it barred and locked. We try a side entrance; that too is mysteriously fast; but hearing a faint sound, as of retreating feet within, we venture a timid knock on the door. But our rappings bring

no response save a hollow echo and a momentary cessation of the footsteps.

Still hesitating as to our next move, we stand there in the white glare, while a sensation of strange unreality creeps over us. Hesitating, but still unwilling to relinquish the pilgrimage without further effort, we spy an ancient iron-bound gate in the high stone wall adjoining the cathedral. We try its rusty latch and find it unlocked. We cautiously push it open. It turns heavily on great creaking hinges stiff from long desuetude, and swings to after us as with an ominous sigh.

We find ourselves in the secluded corridors of an ancient cloister. The sun still lingers on a patch of green courtyard dropped in the midst of the shadows, and up from the luminous verdure a cool fountain plays its restful measure. An ancient sun-dial speaks of the deathless tread of time, and in the deeper shade of a dark recess, on tables of venerable age, huge volumes lay, on whose yellow pages were strewn adown the wide-spread lines of the quaint Gregorian staff, the great square notes of an ancient Latin chant. Then,—

> "On a sudden, through the glistening
> Leaves around, a little stirred,
> Came a sound, a sense of music which was rather felt than heard.
> Softly, finely it inwound me;
> From the world it shut me in,—
> Like a fountain falling round me—"

My hand is held close and with wide eyes Little Blue Ribbons asks if she may drink at the fountain. Half-refusing, half-assenting, we are about to draw near, when from out an opening door, whence seemed to come the music, there appeared a figure bent in contemplation and wrapped in the shadows of the past. It was so like the statue on the square without that the one at my side gasps, "It is he, Mother, what shall we do?" and shrinking spellbound, I hold the dear little hand, glad to feel the human warmth of its pressure. With dread and yet with fascination I watch the lone, sad, weary figure, as it were the phantom of old age eternally unreconciled to the flight of youth. I watch while it moves eagerly toward the fountain to lean forward and drink deep, deep, with an insatiable thirst; and then with a hopeless sigh it paces back and forth among the shadows.

**A Ranch Near San Juan**
**Puerto Rico**

A bell clangs out the hour of one, and the great wooden gate swings open of itself, while we two, much affrighted, slip unnoticed behind the columns of the corridor into "the twilight gloom of a deep embrasured window" which for long years had been sealed from the light by the gray masonry of the ancient church.

Even as we look the silent figure has vanished, and we are left there with only the sound of the plaintive, ever murmuring fountain.

Awed and silent, we creep from our hiding-place and drag open the unwilling gate and once again we are out in the dazzling sunlight.

There—wonderful to relate—on its pedestal was the statue as it stood the day before, with outstretched hand and far-away look, scanning the distant horizon where to his ever disappointed eyes was just lifting the palm-fringed shore of that mythical island of Bimini, where at last flowed the long-sought fountain of youth.

Lest the unhappy shade again returning should seek sudden vengeance for our bold espionage, we took our flight toward the Plaza, nor stopped to breathe until again we found refuge in the crowded shops.

## CHAPTER V.

### CHARLOTTE AMALIE. ST. THOMAS

### I.

AFTER the long stretches of ocean, you from the North will find that there is something positively cosy about these dear islands. You tuck your head under your wing with the parrots at night, off one island, and, the next thing you know, it's morning, the sweet land-breeze steals in through the port-hole, and you're up with the monkeys off

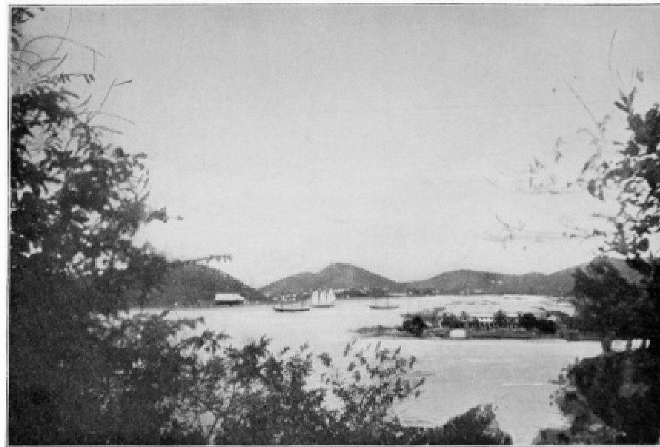
another island—perhaps more enchanting than the last. Why, it seems not half the trouble going from port to port that it is to make fashionable calls in the great city, and such a lot more fun.

But speaking of parrots and monkeys: the only ones we have seen thus far were some very solemn little creatures which have been brought to the ship for sale,—poor captives, chained and unnaturally pious, sitting alongside their black captors.

We have not heard a single bird-note since leaving the North. Is it possible that there are no song-birds here, and in fact no birds of plumage left about the settlements? We fully expected the latter, but not a glimpse have we had of them,—no, not even in the forest along the Ozama, did we distinguish a single bird-note. Can it be that the plume-hunters for our Northern milliners have ranged through all these sunny islands? Ah, my friends of the feather toques and the winged head-gear, what have we to answer for? It all seems so empty without the birds where trees and flowers grow so gladly; just as if Nature's feast were spread to empty chairs. After all, how fondly we do love that particular expression of creation with which we are long familiar! My heart reaches out in homesick yearning for the notes of our dear Northern songsters. How brutal are the details of the "march of civilisation!"

From San Juan, Puerto Rico, to St. Thomas it was only a night's journey, and I am sure, had we been so disposed, we might have touched some other islands equally lovely on the way. But there must be some time for rest,—even though Little Blue Ribbons said she did not want to sleep (she knew she couldn't), and Sister thought it a great waste of valuable experience not to make all the ports there were. Nevertheless, when morning came and the sun was wide awake, I had no little trouble in arousing the children.

And now it came to pass that all those threatenings and fitful tears and dire forebodings of the day before were simply whims and weather jokes. The sea fell into a gentle calm, and on St. Thomas there never shone a brighter sun or blew a sweeter breeze; and we realised that at last we were under the lee of that smiling windbreak of the Caribbean—"The Windward Islands." Getting our anchor early, we moved from our first stopping-place, well out in the harbour, over to the wharves; where the huge piles of coal rose up before the port-hole, with other ranges of piles, like mimic mountains, farther on, while we were so close to the dock that I could see the gangway being lowered, as I bent over the sleepy little girls.



**The Harbour**
**Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas**

"Look, children!" I said,—"look, wake up, you're losing so much!" And they rub their pretty eyes and want to know what's the matter.

"Here we are, dears, at St. Thomas, the coaling-station. Daddy is waiting for us. I'll go up on deck. Send word by Rudolph if you want me to help with the ribbons."

So I hurried up the after companion stairs. Close to our side were the mammoth piles of coal, from which we were to make requisition; off about a mile to the other side of the great amphitheatre lay Charlotte Amalie (the chief city of the Danish Islands), making for herself as beautiful a picture as one could wish. We were in a superb harbour, with high, dome-shaped hills embracing us on either side, and the little city of Charlotte Amalie to the right of us on the beautiful slopes above, like a white lady reaching out her jewelled hands in gracious welcome. Whatever tales of buccaneer and pirate, of scuttled galleons, of buried treasure, of maidens fair, of romance, I had ever heard, came hurrying back to me in that delicious spot; and when the Castles of Bluebeard, and that erstwhile king of pirates, Blackboard, came into view, it seemed truly as if we ought to fly at our main-truck the black flag with the skull and cross-bones, and run out the cold bronze nose of a "long-tom" over our bulwarks, just to add the finishing touch.

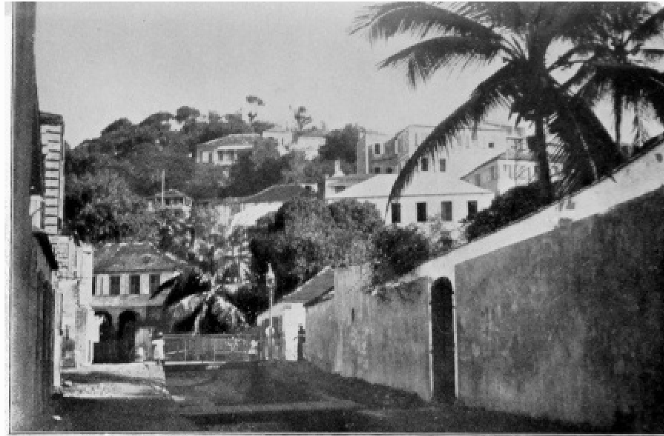
The little girls and I were simply determined to let romance run riot in Charlotte Amalie. We would eat pomegranates and wear flowers in our hair; we would dream dreams on Bluebeard's turret, and win into smiles his villainous, wrinkled, old ghostship. But, firm as was our purpose, it required no small effort to keep it uppermost in our minds. We thought Daddy would certainly be dragged into the water before he had engaged his shore boat. He was howled at, pulled at by the sleeves, jerked at by the coat, by great roaring blacks, fairly gnashing their teeth in impotent rage at Daddy's indecision. But who could decide in such a mob? We were beckoned, at last, to come along, and picking our way down the ladder, plumped ourselves into "Champagne Charlie's" boat, leaving "Uncle Sam," "Honest William," "Captain Jinks," and a score of others screaming a medley of imprecations and their own praises in a mad scramble for the next victim.

We were not only beset by those in the boats, but also by a swarm of semi-amphibious imps,—not little imps by any means, but huge, muscular, bronze Tritons, who pursued, with wonderful rapidity, "Champagne Charlie's" catch, and clung to the gunwale of our boat, and dove underneath and about us, wholly indifferent to our terror at the thought of being capsized. They howled, they swore with Southern abandon because we would not throw them

pennies to dive for; and away off lay the little White Lady—the beautiful Charlotte Amalie. What a naughty lot of children she had! Daddy told “Charlie” that if he would not hurry us out of that mob, he’d not get a penny for his trouble, and Daddy used forcible English, too; for, strange to say, English is the common as well as the official language of the Danish West Indies. But I must not mislead you. It’s not your English or my English they use; it’s a funny kind of jargon; a baby talk disguised by Scandinavian intonations and besmirched by generations of African savagery. Sometimes you think you understand it, and then you think you don’t, and again you wish you hadn’t—so there you are.

Well, “Charlie” is at last aroused and a few good strokes of his oars free us from the vermin and bring us into less troubled waters. On the way across the land-locked harbour we passed a Danish man-of-war, a Russian frigate, a Venezuelan cruiser, a little schooner-rigged sailing “packet,” which carries the mail to other islands, and a number of powerfully built trading schooners; still nearer shore, there was a fine floating dry dock, where a very shapely little schooner—evidently once a yacht—was out of water being repaired.

## II.

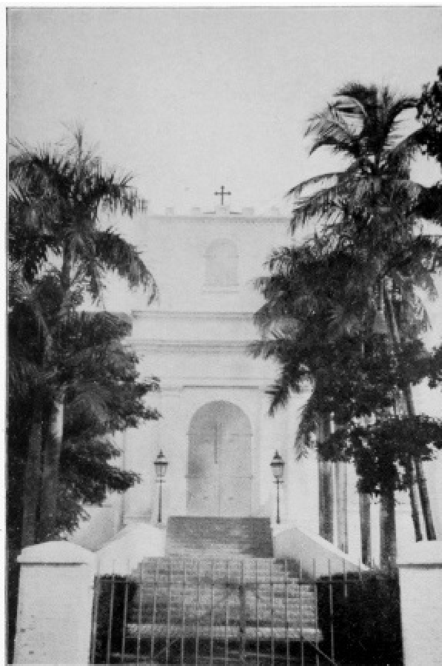


**Hillside Homes**
**Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas**

As we stepped on land and walked up under the shade of mahogany and mango trees, while the boatman’s fees were being struggled with, it seemed to me that I had never walked in so clean a street, or stood in such delicious shade. Oh, it was so clean and cool and beautiful! The macadamised streets were sprinkled and moist, the houses were all white and green, hugged close by high-walled gardens overflowing with flowering vines,—in particular that marvellous *Bougainvillia*, which flourishes in such triumphant splendour over these tropic walls; and everywhere the odours were sweet. The sky, as it glistened through the heavy, glossy mangoes, was as blue as blue can be, and the women carriers of water moved with rapid, noiseless tread, bearing their burdens upon their turbaned heads, and the little children offered us flowers. I find, as I write, that my mind constantly reverts to the cleanliness of the place. First, I said: “Oh, how charming!” and then, “Oh, how clean!” but, before I proceed further, you should be told that, the widely followed example of Spain—mother of the picturesque—is not responsible for this delightful condition of things, for in the Spanish-speaking islands, alas! it is otherwise!

Just here I must make a confession. I couldn’t tell you of the petty blemishes on the time-furrowed brow of wonderful old Santo Domingo—no, I could not, for there were those tears that for centuries had worn their cankering way across the face of the weary old Mother Church,—and then the long-suffering bell, and the tired, sad-faced sun-dial! No, I could not tell you then; and now that the memory of those tears comes to me again, I hardly feel it in me to confess to you after all. No, I never can! Those half-forgiven regrets could be told only to the dispassionate bells of the City of the Holy Sunday; you shall never hear them.

Yes, Charlotte Amalie’s face was clean. She wore a fresh pinafore and a green frock, and her bonnet was pink and starry white; and she was very prim and quiet, was the Lady Charlotte, despite her merry, laughing eyes. But the little lady has a funny lot of children. She doesn’t mind, though—not she. She folds her hands, and shakes her pink and white bonnet, and makes no apology. A funny lot of children she has indeed: blond pickaninnies and black babies,—black whites with kinky hair and white blacks with straight hair, all higgledy-piggledy, and they all speak a blond pickaninny’s language. Charlotte Amalie herself, when in state, speaks real English, and some of her officials Danish and French, as well. Her little daily paper, which came to us wet from the press,—*Lightbourn’s Mail Notes*,—was printed in English; so you see her ladyship knows the real world-language when she sees it, even if she is a foster-child of Denmark and burdened with the everlasting curse of Ham.



**In Charlotte Amalie**
**St. Thomas**

## III.

While some of the party were writing postal cards and letters in a cool, flowery retreat, reached by devious shady passages and looking out into an open court, known as a post-office, I strolled up the quiet street to the first turning, where the cross road came to an abrupt, but very beautiful end in a little white chapel, sheltered by waving palms. There seemed to be but one main street, which followed the shore awhile and then went loitering off up the hill in a most indifferent manner.

The houses, with one story in the rear and two in the front, were built on the hillside, so that the chapel before me—well up on the slope—was approached by a long flight of stone steps. Snow-white columns upheld the simple portico, and the royal palms rose higher and higher from one terrace to another, their regular trunks like stately shafts of stone, until their warm plumes met over the golden cross. The picture, with chapel and palms and terraces and flowers and delicately wroughtiron gateway, was so compact, that it seemed as if some one just a little bigger than myself might tuck the whole affair right into a pocket for a keepsake.

Turning slowly about to look for the children, I glanced through the half-open blinds of a house on the corner, and there met a pair of very engaging eyes, which besought me in the universal language, to come in and see what there was for sale. The eyes belonged not to a maiden, but to a tiny, stoop-shouldered Spanish-Danish-English woman, who fluttered about in great excitement at the prospect of a sale. Strangers do not drop from the sky every day in these remoter of the West Indies. I bought a piece of needlework, and my change, in St. Thomas silver and Danish copper, was brought me by a regal old negress, in a voluminous red calico gown, standing out like the “stu’nsails” of a full-rigged ship, flying as her proper colours aloft, a brilliant green and yellow bandanna. My! but she was tall—six feet, it seemed, and she smiled all over her face with the meaningless good-nature of her race. What teeth she had left were glistening white. By the way, why is it that on these islands you find so many women, and not necessarily old women by any means, but girls from fourteen up—both white and black—with many of their teeth gone? Has the American dentist yet untrodden fields?

Black Susan salaamed me out, and seeing Daddy and the little girls ahead of me, I followed the clean—I repeat, clean—narrow street, as it wound up the well-tilled hillside to “Bluebeard’s Castle.”

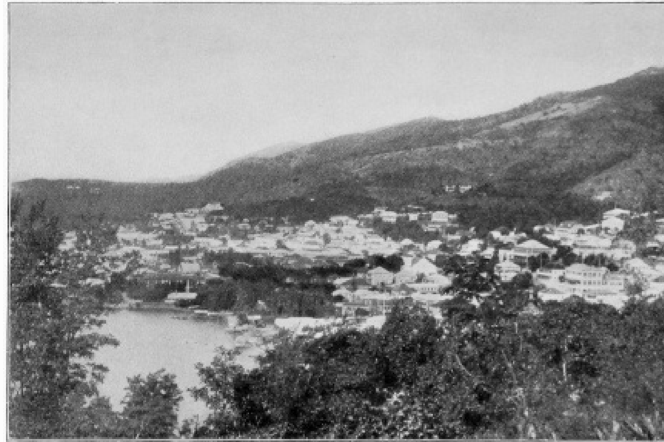
## IV.

It was a long, hot walk, that climb, in spite of the good breeze and the white umbrella’s shade, and we stopped a number of times on the way up to cool ourselves, and, incidentally, to envy the carriage of the brisk and leathery old women, who came striding past us up the hill, with great water-cans on their heads and water-jugs in their hands, stolidly indifferent to the hot sun and the heavy burdens they were carrying. It comes to me now that I did not see a young negress in the whole town, but this was explained on our return to the ship.

It was next to impossible to be keen enough to appreciate fully the remarkable vegetation and flowers and animal life all about us. The flowers seemed hung at the wrong end, and all the vegetable world strange and topsy-turvy; even some insects that we saw seemed quite outlandish. For a long time, as I sat between two rusty old cannon, dangling my feet with most awful irreverence over Bluebeard’s fortress wall, I kept my eye on an old bumblebee—a black and yellow pirate that bumbled of the peaceful present and the strenuous past; but even the every-day bumblebee was twice as big as he had any right to be, and he had the deep-drawn drone of a sleepy country parson. Then, just as the bumblebee hummed himself out of sight into the heart of a deep red *hibiscus* nodding its heavy head at me from the top of the wall, out of the mouth of one of Bluebeard’s piratical cannon there peeped two shining, yellow eyes in a little green body, and they stared at me, and I stared at them, each most curious about the other, until the inspection became rather embarrassing, and I rapped on the rusty, weather-worn old murderer, and away scampered Mr. Eyes, back with the ghosts and memories—all dying together. A little green

lizard, with life for a wee bit of awhile; an ancient cannon of curious shape, rusting, but outliving a little longer; a great gray rock underneath, disintegrating piece by piece, going back again into the universe; and an immortal soul in a human body; are we all part and parcel of the same cosmic dust?

Twenty cannons dropped into the heavy embrasured masonry of Bluebeard's wall looked down with grim irony upon a pious, self-complacent, twentieth-century gunboat, entering thus unchallenged their own waters. Whether it was the lizard rustling among the grasses inside the cannon, or whether it was a reawakened pirate's ghost, I shall not venture to assert; but there certainly came to me a whisper which translated itself into the most disdainful reproach of our much-vaunted humanitarianism. I tried to explain to this little voice that nowadays we had reduced the killing of men to a science; that it was less painful to be blown to pieces by dynamite shells from a torpedo-boat than to be hacked to pieces by a pirate's cutlass, therefore, more honourable, and that fighting was still necessary because diplomacy was too young to be weaned. But from certain mysterious sounds, very like the chucklings of an old man, I thought best to beat a retreat. Besides there were Daddy and the little girls waving to me from the top of the sturdy old watch-tower, so I gathered my umbrella, hat, and basket, and put to flight the flock of geese which had been examining my umbrella with long-necked curiosity. They, little caring for the sanctity of my far-reaching thoughts, went hissing and squawking down the hill in a most irate humour. I took a long breath, pinched myself to get awake, and started up the steep tower steps.



**Charlotte Amalie from “Blue Beard's Castle”**
**St. Thomas**

From the top of this tower of “Bluebeard's Castle” (kept in repair by the Italian consul, whose residence is here), one could look out across the pretty town to the rival fastness of old “Blackbeard,” crowning another hill of surpassing beauty. A road, white and smooth and shaded with palms, clung caressingly about the white-crested bay, and I longed to follow it. Yonder another road struggled up a hillside, through sugar-cane and fruit-trees, and tumbled off somewhere on the other side. I longed to follow that one, too. Another, white and edged with tamarinds and oranges, wandered off somewhere else, and I wanted to go there. But the last carriage had clattered off, and it was too hot to walk “over the hills and far away;” so, after a long quiet feast of the glory about us, we leisurely made the descent, and were again among the cannon crowning the ancient parapet. We strolled along down the steep winding highway, stopping now to trim our hats with flowers, gathered with much difficulty from behind a prickly hedge, and then to look with rapture upon the scene below, and again to talk about it all. The sun beat down upon our heads, but we did not mind that, for the cooling breeze came up from the sea, sweetly and gently, as if it loved us, and the mountains and the earth were oh, so richly clad, and the eyes so content with seeing and the nostrils so glad with the fragrant air!

## V.

I wondered then why we Americans should not settle the matter at once with Denmark. As I understand it, there were negotiations for the purchase of these islands approved by General Grant, then President, in 1867; but, for some reason, the proposed treaty with Denmark was not ratified by Congress, and the little island was forgotten; but since the recent growth of our navy and the necessity for its constant care of the Caribbean Sea, and especially now that we seem destined to become sponsors to an Isthmian canal, the island of St. Thomas comes again to the front as one of the most desirable possessions the United States could have in these waters. The harbour of Charlotte Amalie is so protected by mountains and guarded by bold islands, with deep water inside, and an unimpeded channel from the sea, that, with sufficient fortification, it could be made absolutely impregnable, a West Indian Gibraltar, and at the same time a most valuable and protected station for naval supplies, docks, and the like.

**On the Terrace**
**Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas**

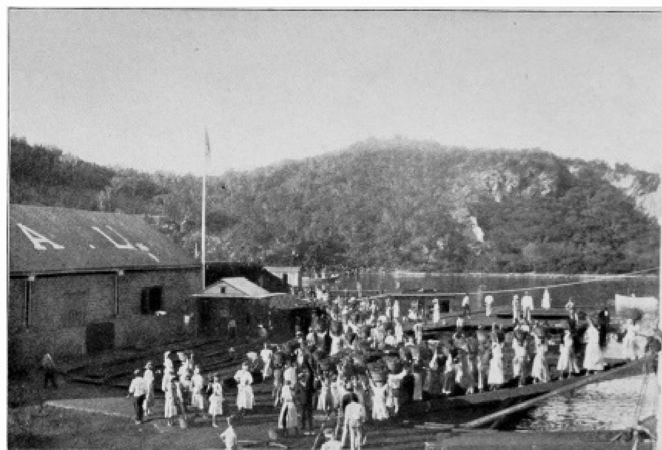
I do not believe in war, battle, or bloodshed, but I do most forcibly believe in the present necessity for our policy of expansion,—not alone because of the advantage to ourselves, but as well for the good of the yet unborn West Indians; and if we can extend our power through diplomacy and peaceful measures, I should be glad to see “Old Glory” floating over all the Greater and Lesser Antilles, provided—and this is the terrible *if*—that the present mixed and degenerate population could be miraculously reformed or removed.

In the case of Charlotte Amalie, there seems to be among the educated middle classes a sincere desire for American supremacy, and, although there is some opposition—largely sentimental—from leading Danes, the only important points that have arisen seem to be the question of how much we are to give, and whether certain influences in Denmark will permit the confirmation of a treaty for the transfer of the islands to the United States. I was told that the price suggested was somewhere about $5,000,000. This, I presume, does not include the rest of the Danish possessions among the Virgin Islands; but, while we are interested, why not take in the whole family; St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix, and the other small islands adjacent?

Will the Germans try to block our acquisition of this group? The Kaiser’s subjects talk fair enough, but they unquestionably want St. Thomas—and who knows?

All through this day our fellow passengers, the German officers, were very busy making photographs and writing notes, and their interest even went so far as to lead to the suggestion by one enthusiastic Teuton that some day the German flag would fly over this beautiful harbour—but that was a slip of the tongue, and no doubt he would gladly have recalled the hasty remark a moment later.

There is truly no limit to the possibilities of these islands, if only the natives can be taught the value of their soil and the Adam-given necessity of labour. Here the mango grows; the mahogany, tamarind, guava, orange, lignum vitæ, cypress, bay, cocoanut, pomegranate, fig, and palms of all varieties—rare woods and rich fruits. Vegetables would grow more freely if only tilled and encouraged a bit. The export for which St. Thomas seems famous is its bay rum, made from the bay leaves and berries, brought mostly from Lesser St. John’s Island, and distilled in great stills well-nigh filling the fragrant cellars of several of Charlotte Amalie’s largest establishments.



**Coaling our Ship**
**Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas**

## VI.

“I’ll give you a quarter if you’ll throw Mary in!” shouted one of the passengers from the rail of our ship to a great powerful negro, the bully among bullies of a crowd of blacks which swarmed as thick as bees on the pier close to our moorings.

“Mary” was one of several hundred negro girls who had been coaling our ship since early morning. All day long, the endless procession of short-skirted, straight-backed, flat-hipped, bare-legged, bandannaed negresses, carrying

on their heads the baskets of coal to be emptied through the coal-chutes or into a barge, had gone on amidst deafening roars of laughter, insane oaths, and noiseless tread. The barge, when filled, was towed alongside the vessel and unloaded into our starboard coal-bunkers. The port bunkers were filled direct from the dock by similar baskets of coal dumped into the port coal-chutes.

We were watching the black children from the deck, and Paterfamilias turning to me, said, in a wholly justified tone: “There, now, my reformer, you see a practical working example of equal rights for women! It means equal or greater labour, as well, and a sad breaking down of all womanliness. The women do the work and the men loaf around at home to spend the money.” “Do you mean to infer, my dear, that if we women in America had equal suffrage, you men would stay at home and wait for the money we earn? Surely I’d never believe it of our American men—never!”

Whatever other men would do, the negroes of St. Thomas certainly did not do the work, as far as we could see. There were a few fellows who helped with the barge, and who handled the shore boats, but the heavy loads were borne on the heads of the women, and they appeared to be in every way equal to the occasion. We were witnessing a marvellous exhibition of endurance, for the sun was by no means gentle, and the baskets of coal weighed well up toward a hundred pounds each, but they were carried with the ease of so many feathers, with a light, active step, from morning until evening, without cessation.

“Throw her in and I’ll give you a quarter!” Mary was a young girl, black as night, with a hard, cruel, unsmiling face, and the restless watching eyes of a wild animal. She, too, had been carrying coal all day, and when her work was done, she, with some fifteen or twenty others, had followed along the dock to the ship’s bow, where pennies were being tossed to the pier by some of our plethoric passengers. A coin would fly through the air, drop on the pier amidst a scrambling, wriggling pile of howling negroes, with legs and arms and heads in a hopeless heap. Mary fought well; she already had a mouthful of pennies; she was as swift as thought, and as merciless of the others as the unfeeling elements. It was easy to see that she was a match for any man in the crowd, and it was easy, too, to see that, when the promise of “a quarter”—a mighty pile of money to those poor children—was held out to the one who should throw her into the water, there was more willingness to get the money than to approach Mary. She knew enough English to take in the situation, and stood there on the pier, not ten inches from the edge, with her bare arms folded, her thin, powerful legs tense, her head thrown back with defiance in its motionless poise, her fierce eyes rolling from side to side, watching for the first who would dare approach her.

One more word from the ship, and Mary was caught around the waist by a black giant who had been waiting his chance. In an instant, she seemed to grow a foot taller. She made a plunge for the man’s throat,—bent him down, down, down, with her eyes fiercely terrible; and there she held the unhappy creature until he begged for mercy, and amidst cheers from Mary’s admirers, slank away out of sight. Her spring was so sudden, so silent, so fierce, that I could not think of her as being human; she was more of the wild beast than one of her Ladyship’s children. And yet we cheered for Mary, too, and she it was who won the quarter.

I wish the Lady Charlotte would look after her children better.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MARTINIQUE

### I.

THERE are so many different ways of seeing things—I suppose as many ways as there are souls to see; and yet, in a measure, one can generalise these many ways under two great heads. Just as we call the infinite variations of light, from the first bird-note of breaking day, through all the changing fancies of brilliant sun and wandering clouds—as we call it all day; and the wonders of darkness, night; so can our ways of seeing things be generalised under two great heads. There is the orthodox, scholarly, scientific way, and there is the heterodox, unscholarly, and unscientific way. Following the law of compensation, there is much to be said on both sides. If the mind is fully prepared, through study and research into the nature of the object to be seen, one has the satisfaction of viewing it as one would the face of an old and familiar friend. On the other hand, when the mind greets the object to be seen, unprepared, in an absolutely unprejudiced, plastic state, it has all the delight of surprise, enthusiasm, and novelty, over a newly acquired possession. And none will deny that this unscholarly, unprepared way of seeing things has its merits. In travelling where the countries visited are interesting mainly from an historical standpoint, no doubt much would be lost to the traveller whose knowledge of the background for his picture is indistinct; in that case, truly, the scholar is the one whose enjoyment should be keenest. On the other hand, where the charm of a place lies largely in its picturesque beauty, in its possibilities of surprise, through novel and curious phases of life, I believe that the traveller who is wholly unprepared has pleasures in store for him equalled only by the exquisite and spontaneous enthusiasms of childhood.

This long preamble is not so much to explain the two ways of seeing things, as it is to console myself for having known so little of the West Indies before starting on this cruise. There is no use in trying to appear wiser than one is, because, before one knows it, along comes some one who does really know; out flashes the critical knife, and off vanishes that beautifully flimsy wind-bag into thin air. For instance, I might have stood complacently unmoved when the great mountain peaks and the sleeping volcanic craters of Martinique rose in green majesty from the Caribbean Sea, and I might have said: “Why, certainly, that is just as I expected!” But I did not say so, because I had not expected such mountain peaks in the West Indies, though somewhat prepared by the islands we had thus far seen.

Once on a time I had a very charming picture in my mind of the West Indies, but, charming as it was, it was not the real islands as I have found them; and ever since having known the reality I have been trying to revitalise that former picture and compare it with the genuine impressions; but I find it of so ephemeral a nature that I can scarcely recall it. All I remember is, that I expected to find the islands low and flat, and mostly of a coral formation. Some of the islands are indeed of this nature, but comparatively few. As we sailed under sunny, cloudless skies, over a

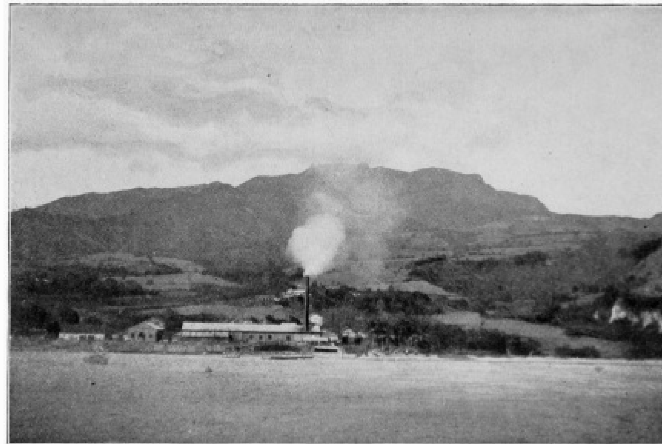
brilliantly blue sea, the monarchs of the Caribbees arose one by one in glorious majesty; and especially these Windward Islands, a great windbreak to keep out the big Atlantic, with Martinique the crowning summit. At times, single gigantic rocks, the homes of sea-birds, lonely and desolate, stood out from the deep; and then great ranges of mountains, covered to the summit with densest foliage, lifted themselves to the sky many thousands of feet. It is said with authority that, on these islands—particularly on St. Vincent—there still survive some of the ancient Caribs, the aboriginal West Indian race, no doubt descendants of those brave Indians so harried and murdered by the early Spanish explorers. In Martinique, the mixture of Carib blood is still apparent, showing, even through generations of negro pollution, in many a coppery skin, wild fierce eye, and proud head with straight black locks.

To me it seemed that Martinique is an epitome of the whole West Indies. In appearance, in products, in people, in history, it might taken as the highest type of these garden isles, once enjoyed by vast tribes of pure-blooded and self-respecting savages, but now held by the conglomerate descendants of all colours and all nations.

## II.

Now had I been more familiar with the rare though limited treasures of West Indian literature, I would not have marvelled at the glorious mountain summits of Martinique that day we came to picturesque St. Pierre; I might have said to my companion: “Ah! here they are, quite as I expected; old, old friends; little white city, square cathedral tower, narrow, hilly streets; above and beyond little irregular fields—all hanging to the mountainside as they should!” But, instead, I stood fairly on tiptoe in the bow of our great ship, as she cut through high-running waves, with my hair blowing in a thousand directions, grasping for an impish pin to gather up as much as was amenable to reason, marvelling with all my senses at the approach to Martinique, as the dim mountains, coming nearer and nearer, were humanised by the habitations of men.

We four were there together. Sister’s curls were a flutter of gold in the low afternoon sun, and her sweet gray eyes were straining far ahead at the slopes of Martinique; Little Blue Ribbons clung to Daddy’s strong hand, while she leaned over the bow to watch the laughing foam dance up to kiss her pretty lips. How good it was to have them with us!—the two little girls—so keenly joyous in all the new marvels of sea and land. If Laddie had only been there, too—But for the other three boys, far off in our warm Northern nest, I had no longings. With them aboard, life on the ship would have been one vanishing streak of six black-stockinged legs, with an avenging Mother in pursuit from dawn till evening.



**The Sugar Mill Near St. Pierre**
**Martinique**

Now, whether it happened while I was trying to pin my hair together and could see nothing, or whether I was so absorbed with the great wonders that lesser ones failed to attract me, or whether it came by magic, I’ll not say; but at all events, in less than no time after we had taken our pilot aboard, the sea seemed to be alive with innumerable small sailing craft. I would look out toward Martinique on the port bow, and see what appeared to be the crest of a combing wave,—for the “Northeast Trades” were blowing fresh, and we were not yet under the lee of the island—a second more and this same white crest would change into a sail, darting off, close-hauled, into the wind, as swiftly as a pelican plunging at his prey. These materialised wave-crests continued to appear until I counted over thirty of them on all sides of us, on the same tack, making for land; low, narrow fishing-boats, coming in with the day’s catch. These were replaced, as we finally made port and dropped anchor, about three-fourths of a mile from shore in an open bay or roadstead, by a horde of little canoes, filled with chattering, copper-coloured natives, who came swarming out to us, each in a single boat, except a few who shared some larger canoes, and each arrayed in a bit of loin-cloth. These remarkable natives were so interesting to us all that I cannot resist giving you a description of their peculiarities.

As I told you, I came to the islands sadly lacking in information regarding the island of Martinique or the city of St. Pierre. I knew a little about it, to be sure; I knew that the Empress Josephine—the beautiful and unfortunate wife of the great Napoleon—was a creole from the shores of this island; I read in our West Indian guide-book (fortunately a very tiny affair) that Martinique is 43 miles long and 19 miles wide; that it has a population of 175,000; that its mountains rise to the height of some 4,500 feet; that the annual rainfall is great—some 87 inches; that the mean temperature is high, about 81 degrees; that the soil is rich and readily responds to cultivation; that the island was discovered by Columbus in 1502 (or in 1493, as some say), and settled by the French in 1635; that the belligerent English had, at different times, interfered in its peaceful life, capturing it first at the end of the Seven Years’ War,

and subsequently holding it for two periods covering a considerable part of the Napoleonic wars; that it had been occasionally frightened by volcanic eruptions from Mont Pelée, and more often shaken by earthquakes; all of which sounds very much like an encyclopedia, in fact all of these historical data were copied word for word from our guide-book, which I took down at Daddy's dictation. It is really all his fault. He said I was not definite enough; that people wanted facts, not tinselled trivialities, so I acquiesced: "Very well, read it off," and there it is. You see how it sounds. I don't like it myself, but some people may.

**Coming to Welcome Us**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**

There was one fact about Martinique which was worth more to me than all the data put together. I had a servant—a French woman—who for years took care of the children.

Once upon a time she had lived in the household of the Governor of Martinique, after he had returned to Paris; and she had darned his stockings; think of it! My good Elise had darned the stockings of the Governor of Martinique, and many a time she had darned mine! Wasn't that enough to establish a lasting bond of interest between Martinique and the wanderer from the North?

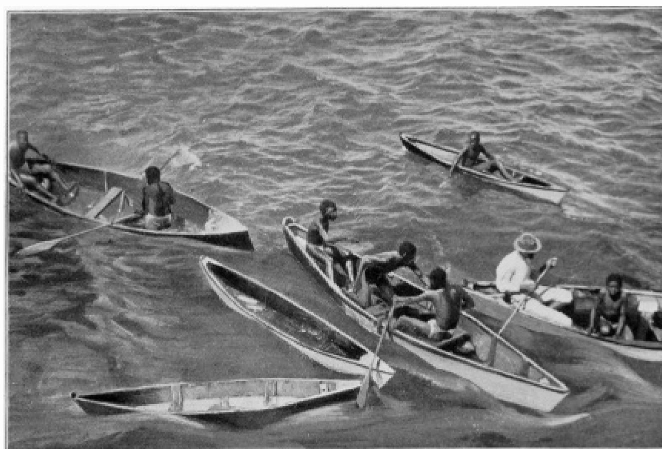
But these dark things in the water—where do they belong? Elise and the Governor of Martinique's stocking could never help us settle that question. As I said, they swarmed about the ship like so many insects. They were an entirely different type of people from the black imps of St. Thomas.

At St. Thomas the native was quite as ready with his guffaw as he was with his oaths. He was a big African animal, black as coal, with the flat nose and heavy lips, with all the idiosyncrasies we know so well; a somewhat exaggerated, wilder, freer type than the Ethiopian we meet in our Southern States. But these natives of Martinique were altogether different from the blacks of St. Thomas. Their bodies were often of the most beautiful copper colour, verging on red; their features were regular, and in some cases rather attractive,—rare cases these, however; their expressions were fierce and saturnine, even in the youngest children of eight or ten years. They had to a marked degree that animal trait of fixing their eyes upon an object and never leaving it until what they wished had been granted them.

These swarms of men and boys had come out to dive for coins—silver preferred—and how had they come? Mostly in slender canoes, some seven to ten feet in length, varying in dimensions according to the size of the occupant, one boy in each canoe. These flimsy shells were about a foot to fifteen inches wide, and six or eight inches deep, made of thin boards or even the rough sides of light packing-cases skilfully joined together and payed up with pitch. They were flat-bottomed, sharp at both ends and barely wide enough for the single occupant to sit in, and without seats, oars, or paddles. In what one might call the bow—if bow there is to such a craft—the low sides were bridged over and boxed in underneath, with a narrow slit in the top of this tiny locker into which to drop the captured pennies. This was the diver's bank, where he deposited his capital after his mouth was too full to hold more. In lieu of paddles, he had a bit of thin board about the size of a cigar-box cover in each hand; sometimes this artificial fin had a loop to fit back of the hand, and sometimes the little fellows would use only their hands to paddle themselves about, sitting well down, leaning forward, darting rapidly through the water. Meanwhile some bigger boys and men appeared, two or three together, in larger skiffs propelled by oars or paddles.

The divers whisk in and out among the host (for there were also other larger boats now come from shore to see us) with marvellous skill, and when we toss a coin into the clear sea, away go the paddles and boats, and down go a half-dozen copper-coloured bodies, each making for the same shining point, and all we can see for awhile is several pairs of whitish soles gleaming under the water, and sometimes the short turmoil of a fight below the surface; then up comes a sputtering heathen with the coin in his hand, to show he has found it. Into his mouth it goes and then off he chases for the abandoned canoe, which by this time is full of water and looks a hopeless derelict. But that is nothing to this semi-aquatic creature, for he grasps the two sides of the boat, gives it a dexterous roll and lift combined, emptying most of the water, bails out the rest with a rapid movement of his hands, throws his body across

the canoe and is inside before it has time to capsize.



**Looking from the Deck of Our Ship**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**

These boys and men gave us a most remarkable exhibition of swimming. For the consideration of a little silver, they even dove under our steamer amidships, coming up on the other side in about the same time that it took us to walk across the deck. It must be remembered, however, that these divers do not go to the bottom for the coins, as we are often led to believe by traveller’s accounts; they dive underneath the coins and catch them as they go zigzagging toward the bottom. It would be well-nigh impossible, so I am told, to recover a coin in thirty-five to fifty feet of water, even were it not very difficult and dangerous for a swimmer to reach the bottom, on account of the pressure of the water at that depth.

During the entire performance, the shouting was continuous, at times almost deafening, and yet not a sign of laughter or merriment with it all. They were fearsome creatures, these divers. With no very great stretch of the imagination, I could picture a cannibal feast with these very men the chief actors. Their fierce looks were unlike those of any human being I had ever seen. They suggested at once the ancient inhabitants from whom the Caribbean Sea has taken its name.

## III.

After our ship’s papers had been duly passed upon, the process of disembarkation began, and although late in the afternoon, we were all most eager to land and see the charms of Martinique at closer range, and, incidentally, to post our letters. We anchored as I said, quite a distance out, which was rather a surprise, for as we approached the shore we saw that sailing craft of all sizes and descriptions, from sloops to full-rigged ships, were moored within a hundred yards or so of the levee, with anchors ahead from each bow, and stern-lines out to shore. This was a most unusual sight in an open roadstead. It was partly accounted for by the fact of there being deep water close up to the shore, but principally because St. Pierre is in the latitude of the true northeast trade-winds, which at this season are as sure as the rising of the sun, and this harbour is on the leeward side of the island, and thus smooth and protected.

We had been sailing under the beneficent care of the trade-wind for many days now, without fully appreciating it, and it was only when the daring of these trading vessels was explained, that we realised why it was that they had nothing to fear from contrary winds, or from the danger of being blown on the rock-paved beach.

**The Harbour and Shipping**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**
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Some years ago, at home, I was quarantined with a case of fever, and I recall most vividly my demand for suitable literature, paper bound, something that could be burned up if necessary; and I can yet see the amused expression on my nautical husband’s face as he handed me volume after volume of sea stories. I had no choice in the matter; I read my books and ate my food as it was handed me, and asked no questions. Now, long years after, in the harbour of St. Pierre, with brig and brigantine, and bark and barkentine safely moored to the levee, the charm and fascination of those delightful sea yarns comes stealing over me once again, and I can appreciate how surely the mariners must have counted upon the time when the trade-wind would rise and carry them on their course. Steady and hearty it blows. At ten or eleven o’clock of the morning, the heat of the tropics lifts its hat to the “Doctor” as the natives call the trade-wind. At six o’clock it bids him good night. At eight o’clock, he calls again for the few hours of darkness, so that both day and night are tempered by his salubrious presence.

Our joy would now be complete if we could but see the Southern Cross, for we had felt the rushing hurry and the firm caresses of the Northeast Trades, and despite all our former indifference to the sea, the mariner’s spirit was surely asserting itself.

It was at the close of a long, delicious tropical day that we four stepped from the shore boat to the paved beach of St. Pierre, to the beach where empty the clear streams of mountain water flowing down through the streets of the town above. Had our coming been that of royal guests, our hostess could not have been trimmer or neater. Sister left us at the pretty white lighthouse right on the beach, and ran on ahead to pick up an especially beautiful shell which she could not resist, and we walked on along the street that follows the shore, under the shade of the mangoes, until, when we turned to wait for her, she seemed to have been caught into the very arms of the tower and held there for hostage. To be sure, she was only arranging her shells in the basket, but she was so quiet and the tower beyond was so old, old—so white and so still—that I called to her in a kind of dumb terror at some impending evil: “Sister, come, you must not loiter behind, keep with us!”

**The Lighthouse on the Beach**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**

It is possible that had our landing in St. Pierre been at noonday it would not have been so ever-memorable. We might have felt industrious, we might have thought we ought to see things and do things. But, ah! we were spared that! It was at the drop of day when men do not work nor women weep; and so we had nothing to do but follow where the people were going, on beyond the little lighthouse tower dozing by the sea.

The bells in the white church under the hill had been ringing as we rowed toward shore, and it was not long before the church emptied itself into the street, nor long before we were part of the happy worshippers who scattered in every direction. St. Pierre arose from the very water’s edge. A row of substantial stone buildings shaded by wide-spreading glossy mangoes stretched as far as I could see in the twilight. The street made a turn away from the beach and the buildings followed after. In the other direction it led to the church and then came to an end.

But St. Pierre couldn’t have built on a straight line had she wished to do so. She has chosen a mountain for her home and she had to plan accordingly. So she builds until her streets become a series of stone steps, up—up—up; and then, when they finally run against a sheer wall of rock, they stop going up and go round, for they seem to go on indefinitely.

But we were not to be baffled by stone steps, we only pushed on a little more vigorously, and started the climb into St. Pierre to post the precious letters which had been written under such stress of circumstances. We went up and about, and found the post-office, just too late to satisfy the demands of Martinique red tape; for the black officials were still redolent of sealing wax as the last sack of outgoing mail was closed; and what were we to do next? We were advised to hunt up the American consul, and possibly he could, by special suasion, find some way of caring for our letters. So we went on through the clean, narrow stone streets, passing many a home which shone out in the early twilight very enticingly, through the high gateways, down to the consul’s house, which we found barred and bolted for the night.

**The Street Along the Water-front**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**

Oh, these comfortable American consuls of the tropics! They live among flowers and palms, arise late and go to their town offices by noon; then “business” grows dull and they bolt the office at three or four o’clock and take flight to a gardened home, in some cool mountain suburb, to rest from the wearisome grind of diplomacy. Would that we all might rise to the *dolce far niente* of an American consulate! But after all we need them; for if our flag is now seldom seen in out-of-the-way ports, who but the American consul will protect the wandering American?

Two gentlemen, standing in a notary’s office hard by the consulate, explained that the ship *Fontabella*, which was to carry the mail, had not yet arrived, and that perhaps our letters must go to New York by way of Southampton. Then it was not too late after all. Why not leave them in the box at the consulate? “Would they be sent?” we ask. An affirmative reply decides us. What mattered a short delay? Those letters couldn’t be hurried however urgent their contents. They must wait for the *Fontabella* until she was ready, and when that time would be none could say. What could be more romantic than to send our letters by this fancifully named ship, however long her voyage, however indolently she loitered in these fair seas; wherever she strayed she was still the *Fontabella*. Who knows but some of her charms might miraculously sift in through a rent in my package and breathe a spell upon my words? Ah, *Fontabella*! Heaven bless you; and I stand sighing over the mysterious music of a name!

## IV.

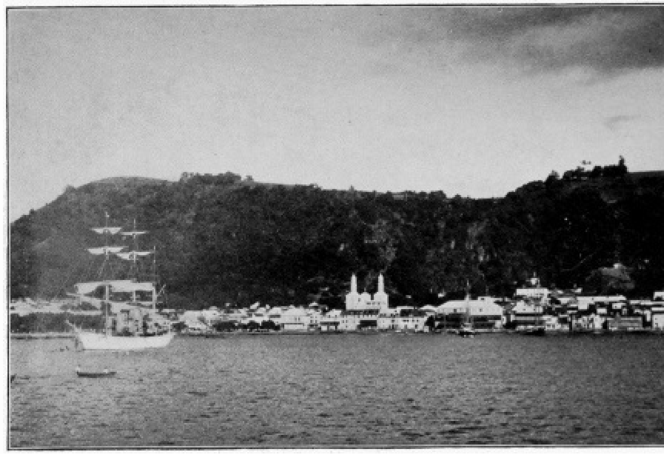
Do you remember a game we children used to play, which had this little refrain?

“Look to the East,
Look to the West,
And choose the one
That you love best!”

We, too, were uncertain which way to choose, so we looked to the East, and we looked to the West, and we chose the one that we loved the best; it happened to be a side street up a very steep hill, beguiling us to a broad avenue, evidently one of the approaches to the famous *Jardin des Plantes*, of which our felicitous little pamphlet guide had made particular mention. For fear lest, in our delight over the novel experiences of the evening, I should forget to mention one feature of St. Pierre peculiarly and distinctly unique, we’ll stop for a moment to look down the funny little street, up which we have just laboured. You see on each side of the narrow pavement a deep stone gutter, two feet deep and nearly as wide, down which plunges a constant torrent of light bluish water, with the colour peculiar to all mountain streams; this rush and tumble of water you will see not only in this street, but in all the streets of St. Pierre. It gives one a generous sense of well-being. You feel as if you might take a bath on Monday and Tuesday, and all through the week, and the town would not be threatened with the water famine that is ever hanging over one in some of these tropical towns. How delightful for the children, too!

It is a positive relief to my mind to have finished telling you about those wayside streams, for, ever since our arrival in St. Pierre I have been followed by the thought of them, until almost in a state of distraction. Something was continually hammering into my ears: “Why don’t you tell about the aqueducts? Don’t you know they carry down the mountainside and into the city the finest water of the West Indies? Why don’t you give more information?”

But now we may go on, and would you mind if we didn’t try to learn one bit of anything more for the rest of this beautiful evening? Is it not enough to stroll idly on under the shadow of the mountainside, wild with tangled vines and interweaving foliage, black as night and deep as the sea? Would it cause you, in the rush of Western civilisation, a pang to lean with us over this high wall above the city, and watch yon bark lift her sails athwart the blood-red sun, merging his grandeur into the peace of the ocean? Let us call her the *Fontabella*; to be sure the *Fontabella* is probably a matter-of-fact, puffy, old mail-steamer and is not to arrive for days, but that’s no matter. Yonder ship is our *Fontabella*. We shall name her such, truly she is worthy the honour; she is getting ready for sea; her sails rise slowly with the sleepy yards and stand out in black relief against the iridescent sea of glory about her; from afar comes the faint creak of her incoming anchor-chains, and, as she rests there motionless, down drops the sun, and a ship we shall see no more fades into the night.



**The Cathedral and Water-Front**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**
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Stopping to inquire of a small boy if we are on the main highway, and not on some path which may lead us either to destruction or to nothing at all,—either of which events would be undesirable,—a well-dressed man, of more than middle age, offers to give us the needed information. We are so continually beset by volunteer “guides” of all classes and colours, that we have of late grown most short in our rejection of unasked-for advice; who knows how many angels we may have thus turned away unawares? This evening, our new acquaintance not only tells us where we are going, but calmly joins the party, and, taking the lead, pilots us in spite of our protestations. He speaks the French of a cultivated gentleman, and goes on leading the way and the conversation most agreeably. And so we start along the Boulevard toward the public gardens, which lie back of the town in a gorge of the mountain.

We are followed by a half dozen or so children, who, for the most part, stare at us very curiously, and then chatter among themselves in low voices; I noticed that, as our self-appointed guide walked along, he was continually knocking and poking with his long cane at stray bunches of leaves which had fallen upon the road, and now and then he would let fall a remark about “*les serpents*,” which he said were often on the road after nightfall.

If there is one thing above all others upon this beautiful earth which my feminine soul abhors, it is a snake; the very thought is chilling to my blood! I had no intention of running any risk of an encounter with serpents,—poisonous or otherwise,—if it could be avoided. Still we all felt that this might be something similar to the rattlesnake stories told to trusting travellers in our country, and fancied that our leader shared the popular theory that we were gullible American travellers, who supposed that all tropical forests were alive with venomous reptiles.

By this time it was night, heavily black with the deepening curtain of the mountain, hanging over us on one side, and the sombre shade of the trees on the other. Curious sounds came from the undergrowth, and long, low, melancholy whistles dropped from among the trees; heavy odours hung their narcotic spells about us, and our leader, in his long frock coat, was just visible as he strode ahead of us, sweeping the path for serpents.

Little Blue Ribbons was clinging to my hand, and her persistent whisper begged me every minute to please not go any further. I called to Daddy: “What’s the use going any further? I want to go back. I don’t see why we have to follow this man if we don’t want to.” But Daddy’s and Sister’s steps rustled among the leaves ahead, and Little Blue Ribbons went on, whispering, and we all kept following.

Taking courage, I skipped ahead of Sister, and caught up with our new friend, and very gently expressed to him our wish that he reconduct us to some place a little lighter and less deadly; but it didn’t make the least impression upon him; he simply went on and kept up a string of talk about the wonderful Botanical Garden, whither he was leading us, part of which I understood and part of which I didn’t. “But,” I exclaimed, “we do not wish, desire, expect, or hope to see the Botanical Garden in the night; we have not survived the perils of the deep to be devoured by wild animals, or poisoned by reptiles, or slain by man-eating Caribs, at this late day. All we want is to be peacefully allowed to go home in our own way.” But you might as well have talked to yonder bark asleep on the breast of the ocean as to the grim back of our black-coated companion. It was another case of the “Pied Piper of Hamelin,” and it would not have surprised me, such was the mood of the night, and the mystery of the place, had he marched us up into the side of Mount Pelée, hanging far above, and slammed the door in thunder behind us.

Lights—grateful, beautiful, heartening, most entrancing lights—finally glimmered at the end of our long détour, and we were brought to the gate of the Botanical Garden, which of course we did not enter, but, turning into another way, followed the people who were coming down this road from Morne Rouge into the city. It was remarkable to observe how the conversation revived. We talked about the island and its people, of their various occupations, their exports, their schools; we stopped to lean over the walled-in river, to see through the dark the white clothes drying on the rocks, like much-discouraged ghosts, and then we became hilarious, and as we neared the possibility of food, passed jokes and had a very jolly time. Then our friend—let us now call him “friend”—said that he must leave, that we needed but to follow the road ahead of us and we would reach the Grand Hotel; and he turned his way, and disappeared,—a very tall attenuated figure in a long, black coat.

## V.

We hurried on, still in a state of suppressed excitement, I, for one, wondering if we should ever find the Grand Hotel. But we did find it, to my relief. Why, I was so hysterically glad to see the familiar faces of our friends again that it was all I could do to refrain from embracing Herr Baron von Donnerwetter, who stood with others, sad-faced and dejected, waiting in the hope of a meal.

The usual state of things prevailed: hungry Americans were clamouring for impossible foods; helpless waiters

were doing their best to pacify the ravenous demands; a feeble, unhappy host was beating the air with oratorical violence, and the Americans—always good-humoured, in spite of their clamourings—waited and waited, only to be satisfied with poor stuff at last; and finding it thus we fled.

The man of the family had, it seems, been quietly reading the signs as we first wandered up into St. Pierre, and the name of a modest little inn had stuck well in his memory; but, manlike, he kept still about it. So with his bump of locality well in evidence, we followed his sturdy steps; in short, found the place in question, and entered a dark, covered, arched passageway, which opened into a number of dimly lighted apartments.

The room we first entered was a kind of *salle à manger* and *salon* combined, for it had a sofa—a very hard, rock-like affair—a number of chairs, a quaint old sideboard, a table in the centre, and a lamp on the wall which gave a feeble, flickering light.

Do you remember about the children who followed us so silently on our long walk? Well, when our tall friend left us, the children kept right along, and, as soon as it was discovered that we were trying to find a place all on our own responsibility, their number was augmented by others—big grown men, black men—whose services being rejected, quietly but firmly joined the procession.

The keeper of the inn was a magnificent, great creole woman, well on in years, with a pleasant, winning smile, and an air of hospitality more for the guest than the purse. She said, if we could wait for awhile until the noisy students in the adjoining rooms were pacified, she would do her best for us, but she feared she had nothing suitable.

Ah, friends, how humble doth an empty stomach make the human animal! We told her that we adored fried eggs. In fact we could not picture to ourselves anything more delectable. (We hadn't had fried eggs at every turn in the West Indies for nothing, our stomachs were becoming acclimated.) Whereupon she bowed her gracefully turbaned head and leisurely left the room. Then the process began, and we may as well keep you right in the room, for to adequately appreciate the repast that followed, good appetite must be seasoned by hilarity and waited upon by patience.

We had on the table a red oilcloth cover, various well-used salt-cellars, and a motley array of knives and forks. Two long-limbed negresses began to arrange our feast, speaking as usual one of their home-made languages, impossible to comprehend as a whole and difficult even in part. These two black cupbearers began, as I said, to arrange the feast, and we sat by, looking on, hungrier every moment, as the prospect grew less promising. After a while some bread, several big chunks,—or loaves, I suppose I ought to say,—were laid on the table. They were shaped like small turtles with heads pulled out at both ends. Next came a bottle of red wine (from the old country!) and the glasses. Then we sat there and sat there fully three-quarters of an hour.

The dusky nymphs had flippety-flapped off; the hostess with the smile had also disappeared, and there was silence. I began to think that, perhaps, the bread and wine was the first course, that so things were served in St. Pierre; and besides there wasn't even a whiff of garlic anywhere. I was confident that no creole cooking was going on; and, the more I thought, the more I became convinced that we ought to begin. But Daddy thought we ought to wait, and Sister and Blue Ribbons thought so, too, they are such proper lassies. Why did they ever have a mother who would be so unconventional? But I was famished and that bread turtle was put there to eat. I knew it. So in awful silence, with the family holding its bated breath, I began to pull at the bread. I got one of the heads off the turtle, and poured forth the ruddy nectar into the pressed-glass goblet, and took my first delightsome taste of French wine in Martinique. I was just about to continue, when into the room sauntered the black waitress with a steaming dish of soup, and as she discovered my glass of wine well begun, she set her bowl down on the table, fastened a reproving look on me, and putting her arms akimbo, exclaimed:

"*Oh, lá, la!*"

Then the other black heathen came in, and with her eye upon me, added her astonished:

"*Oh, lá, la!*"

And then the head of the family said, in a "told you so" tone:

"*Oh, lá, la!*"

And then the youngsters joined with a choice duet of:

"*Oh, lá, la!*"

And I said, "Why, certainly, '*Oh, lá, la*,'" and took another swallow of wine.

I felt perfectly justified in my conduct under the circumstances, but no amount of explanation, I am convinced, could have ever placed me in the proper light in the minds of those two black women. I had even some difficulty in explaining the matter satisfactorily to my own family.

I do not think there are in all the French language three small words which can express quite the scorn and derision of "*Oh, lá, la!*" From the high courts of justice to the dim little dining-room of a Martinique inn, "*Oh, lá, la!*" withers and humiliates. So I took my bowl of soup very meekly, and said: "*Merci, mille fois*," and went to work. After the soup, we waited again long, and, with appetite appeased, more patiently.

## VI.

A noise in the dark passageway caused me to look in that direction, and I saw, leaning one at each side of the doorway, two big, black negroes—two of the crowd of an hour before. They stood there silent and motionless; they had "standing-room only," but they were there to see the finish.

"What are these?" I exclaimed.

"Cherubs," replied his lordship.

"Go 'way!" I say. "We don't want you!"

Then comes a humble voice from the dark: "Gif me dol' an' half. Gif me dol' an' half!"

"Go 'way, go 'way, Cherub! We don't want you!" again we cry out.

"Gif me two cents! Gif me two cents!" comes from the cherub.

What a fall, my countrymen! At that juncture, her Royal Highness, the big landlady, swept through, her very

presence clearing the premises, and peace was restored.

Then the dinner progressed through the invariable course of eggs and the delicious sidedish of fried bananas, until we came to the salad, which, I confess, has been my inspiration for many pages.

Now, here was a case where the wholly unexpected created a sensation which no amount of information, regarding the relative merits of the dish in question could produce. In a way, I rather expected to find in the West Indies all manner of curious fruits and vegetables, but I did not expect to eat immature palm-leaf fans with French dressing.

We had finished with our bananas, and were waiting with that good humour which characterises the third course of dinner, when the black heathen appeared, flanked by the entire retinue of kitchen retainers, the big creole hostess bringing up the rear, bearing in her hand a deep dish, in which she had prepared our salad. It was none less than the famous palm salad, about which so many travellers have told. We, too, must add our encomiums. It is taken from the centre of the palm head when the inner leaves are very young. It looked very much like fine cabbage as our hostess sliced it in long strips for salad; in colour it was creamy-white, and in flavour as delicate as a rose. It was so tender that it seemed to melt in the month, having none of the tough qualities of either lettuce or watercress or cabbage. The taste is something I could never describe, for it was a combination of such sweet flavours that even those who partook thereof were at a loss afterward to recall its peculiar delicacy.

The following day, we tried to buy some palm in the market and went from one group to another, asking for palm salad; but it had all been sold early in the morning, and, as I recall the experience, I am quite content that we were not successful in our morning’s marketing, for who knows but the dressing had something to do with the irresistible palm salad—or perchance even the surroundings—and who but those replete with the blood of many sunny races could give that touch?

Guava jelly made by the madame herself, black coffee from berries roasted freshly for us; ripe, mellow, richly flavoured mangoes, sweet honey oranges, and star-apples finished the dinner.

Do you think we noticed the red oilcloth table cover, the dingy lamp, and the rock-bottom sofa?

There are so many different ways of seeing things!

## CHAPTER VII.

### MARTINIQUE, “LE PAYS DES REVENANTS”

### I.

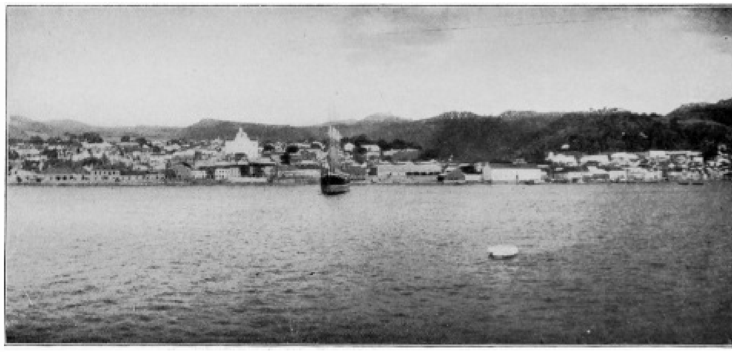
BEAUTIFUL, beautiful Martinique! Well named art thou, *Le Pays des Revenants*, for my spirit will ne’er rest content until I have again revisited thy marvellous treasure-trove of beauty! If I were asked where in all the West Indies I would return with greatest delight, where I would wish to remain indefinitely, where I would choose to live, I should say first and last, in fair Martinique,—Empress of the Caribbees—with, however, an occasional visit to our dear Lady Charlotte of St. Thomas.

In the brilliant morning light when the sun crept to the tip of the deep green mountains and threw its slanting streams of glory over the white walls of St. Pierre, it seemed that, for the first time, my eyes were beholding the true essence of beauty. I had never before known what colour meant, I had never seen blue before, nor azure, nor green. I was in the mixing-room of Nature, where her first, and deepest, and richest dyes were thrown together in experiment; where, freed from all schools, she let loose the riot of her senses, producing effects of colour never dreamed of in her saner moods.

It has been my desire in these sketches to reproduce, as nearly as my powers permit, the exact impression which the Islands of the Caribs have left with me. I have hoped to take you to the islands with the same surprises awaiting you which awaited me, wishing thus to cling to Nature hand to hand, and to draw the picture freshly as our eyes first beheld its wonder. This has been my desire. But now I intend to change my habits for a moment.

Instead of asking you to join us in our morning walk, in sweet innocence of what might befall the traveller were he always to go thus unprepared on the island of Martinique, I shall ask you to sit with us here upon the broad white deck of our good ship, to talk over some of the marvellous tales which have been whispered to us, sullying the name of yonder fair isle. I cannot say that it will increase our pleasure, but it will certainly heighten the interest of the morning excursion. Do you recall the warnings of our black-coated friend of last evening—warnings against “*les serpents*,” as he called them? He spoke from experience. Our derisive remarks about people who are for ever looking for snakes in every brush-pile were ill-timed, to say the least.

It seems that there is upon the island a species of reptile classed by the scientists as one of the family of *Trigonocephalus*, and known to the natives as the “*Fer de Lance*.” The bite of this serpent is so deadly that, unless immediate help is procured, the victim cannot recover, and even with prompt medical aid recovery is doubtful. The island, one might say, is fairly under the domination of the *Fer de Lance*.



**The City and Roadstead**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**

True, the East Indian mongoose has been imported in the hope of exterminating this common enemy; but when it was found that this little rascal, after a short period of snake-hunting, preferred to content himself with eggs and chickens,—a less dangerous prey,—leaving the forest wilds and taking up quarters in the more congenial surroundings of the farmyard, the hope of help from the mongoose was abandoned. The West Indian cannot live without chickens and eggs,—at least so he thinks,—and consternation prevailed when it was discovered that instead of his deadly enemy, his pet object of diet was being imperilled. So the mongoose, however worthy, must go. Just why the tiller of the soil could not, in the face of such danger, erect fortified chicken-houses, to protect his fowls against the felonious depredations of the mongoose, I cannot quite understand, unless it was too much trouble. At all events, he prefers to keep his chickens and the *Fer de Lance*, and do away with the mongoose, rather than run the risk of an occasional raid upon the hen-coop. So now the question is, how shall he get rid of the mongoose?

The mongoose is a plucky little fellow; and so Kipling vividly pictured him as “*Rikki-tiki-tavi*,”—a bright-eyed, big, brown weasel in appearance,—very efficient in killing the dangerous snakes of India. We saw them in confinement, the snappiest, most vicious little animals one could imagine. It is inexplicable to me that the inhabitants of Martinique should be willing to give up the fight against this great danger for the sake of a few hens; for my part, I would not object if all the fowls were destroyed and the feathers flew away to far Jamaica, if only after the little robber had had his feast, he would be willing to hunt his legitimate prey, the *Fer de Lance*.

From the various forms in which chicken appears on a West Indian table, and from the frequency of that appearance, I have come to the conclusion that, to do without fowls would be a greater grief than to be in constant peril from the bite of a snake. As for me, well—there are times when I feel that, without the least sacrifice, I could miss an occasional meal of fried eggs and stewed chicken. In fact, I am convinced that, if I had had fried eggs three hundred and sixty-three days of the year, I might not pine if the hens didn’t lay the last two days. But there is no accounting for tastes. The West Indian doesn’t look at it in that light.

The *Fer de Lance* has been described as a rat-tailed, red-skinned, powerful-looking brute, from four to eight feet long; and, unlike most snakes, he is fearless, and as a rule will not get out of the way when he hears one coming. He takes his walks at night, unfortunately preferring the open road to the garden; the smooth patch before the house to the brushwood; and he even comes down into the gardens and paths about the city. This is the great danger of Martinique; yet, while it may seem more sure, more quickly certain to us, than the danger of other places, I do not know that it is so.

Wherever the foot of man finds habitation, danger goes hand in hand with beauty. Unseen danger of a thousand kinds, in poisonous vapours, in decaying flesh and vegetation, lurks hidden within the dwellings of all mankind; deeper, deadlier danger, too, than bolt of *Fer de Lance*, looks sullenly forth from the soul of God’s own image—man; danger unto himself more terrible than the writhing, striking reptile of the night-shade; and, as knowledge comes only from an understanding of comparisons, I do not feel that Martinique, afflicted as she is, can vie in her troubles with the clangers which threaten mankind in some of her sister isles.

## II.

The little girls and their father have all but lost their patience. “I’m ready now,” I call to the beckoning eyes. “Just wait until I get the St. Thomas basket, and I’ll be there.” After a quick dash to the stateroom and back, I’m armed with the basket and umbrella. But after all these snake stories you would rather not join us in our morning walk? You’re not nervous? That’s fine; I like your spirit! Suppose we go first to the market, and then in a roundabout way to the Botanical Gardens.

There are always guide-books to be bought in every town; there are always those on shipboard who never separate themselves from a red cover; there are always those who tell you what you ought to see, and especially afterward what you ought to have seen; but we four are born dissenters; we kind o’ forget about the mummies when there are live human beings to watch. We know the mummies will be there when we’re tired of the rest, but we’re not so sure of the people. It’s such fun to find out what the natives are doing, thinking, saying; what they wear, what they eat, how they live, how they dance, and walk, and play, and work.

Here in Martinique we find the market a perfect babel of voices, all speaking a curious French *patois*.

It is next to impossible to distinguish one word from another in all that hum of highly pitched creole voices. The famous “*porteuses*”—long-limbed, slender, shapely, tall, and agile half-caste and negro girls—have brought their heavy burdens from the mountains and the country roundabout; and here they sit, like flowers in a garden, surrounded by their goods. Some have little piles of fruits, or of vegetables, cooked and ready to be eaten, wrapped in banana leaves; some have a stock of dried meats, made up into tiny portions; some sell fancy cakes; some, pies; others crouch down, fairly hidden by showy piles of calico and bright silks, with needles, threads, coarse laces, and beads scattered about them in great confusion.

And here are the sinewy men; the fishers with heaps of fish. Such beautiful fish! Does it seem credible that you can stand in a smelly fish-market, and be fairly enchanted by the colour and beauty of great trays of fish spread out upon a stone pavement? Their beauty is amazing. Here are enormous trays of flying fish, glittering silver, sweeter to the taste than any trout; here are others, all pink and red, and here are wee bits of fish sold by the glass—some sort of “white bait,” maybe.

We elbow on through the babel of voices, looking, as I told you we did, for the palm salad, but there is none to be had. Still I remember its flavour, and I remember that the creole madame brought us a piece which she had bought in the market for four *sous*. It was very like a round stick of ivory, a foot and a half long and two inches in diameter. We shall have to be content with that one sight.

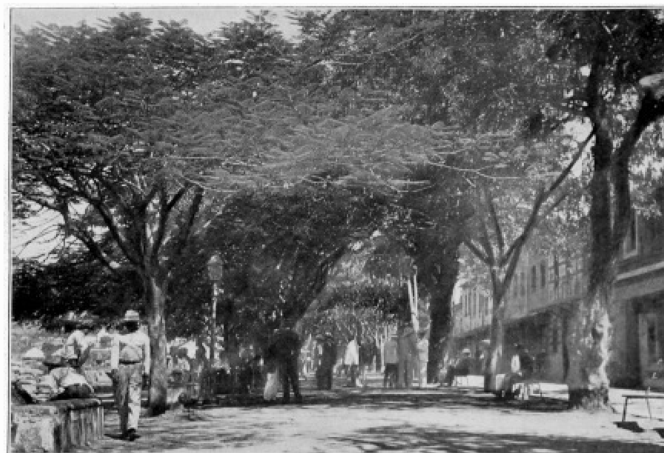
But what is the use in going to a market unless we can buy something? So we stop in front of a *porteuse* as she squats behind her pile of fruit on the market floor, and buy oranges, and get almost a pint of coppers in change for one silver piece; but not without grave doubts on the part of the seller. She looks at our silver and shakes her head, and all her neighbours come together, and the colours of their bright turbans and the little funny ends of handkerchiefs tied so that they stand up on top of the head like plumes,—all these ends flutter and bob as they comment in their funny French, while we tell the women that our money is good, good silver. Finally a big-eyed, handsome girl comes elbowing along and proudly explains to her doubting sisters that we are right; then at last we get our change, distribute it in our various pockets, take our oranges, and leave the market.

## III.

Eager as the children are to reach *Le Jardin des Plantes*, the famous Botanical Gardens of Martinique, we must stop on our way for a closer inspection of one of these bright birds of the forest,—the Martinique *porteuse*.

The women of the tropics have an affinity for nature such as we of the North cannot comprehend. As the forest and the flowers and the birds and the insects abound in marvellous hues, so do these children of the sun love to bedeck themselves in all the schemes of colour known to the dyer’s art. Let us, just for the sake of the picture it will give us, stop this woman coming and make excuse to buy one of the green cocoanuts of which she seems to carry a great load on her head. Look at her! Isn’t she magnificent!

Have you heard of the feats of endurance which these young girls perform? How they will carry upon their heads, over one hundred pounds out from St. Pierre across the mountains, a distance of fifty miles in one day? And this while barefooted and at all times of the year, through all kinds of weather, through dry seasons and wet seasons. Not only on such days as these, when the air is sweet and cool in the shade, but days when the sun scorches and withers, even under the deep recesses of vine-clad porch and lattice. She is the ever-willing burden-bearer, the unloader of ships, the handler of cargoes, the welcome carrier of bread for the early breakfast in mountain homes, the vender of all stuffs and utensils by the roadside where no cart could well be taken; where even the patient donkey might refuse to go. Agile, nimble, erect of body, motionless of head, with eyes that pierce into every crook and turn of the way, and poised like a queen, she is the dweller among the green, yellow, red, and purple of the forest, and in her love of colour she follows in her adornments the strong instincts of nature. She it is whose burden is so great that were she herself to attempt to lift it or take it from her head, it might mean a rupture, a dislocation, or a broken vein; she it is whom all men, from the richest to the poorest, help to unload, so great is the respect in which she is held.



**Near the Landing-Place**
**St. Pierre, Martinique**

And yet we talk of the idleness, the weakness bred in the tropics! It is true that continual summer enervates, and necessitates slow methods of living; but I can truthfully say, that (outside of Haïti), I saw less vagabond-age, less indolence, in the West Indies, than in any of our Southern States. We were constantly witnessing most remarkable feats of endurance in both men and women. In these countries the horse is scarce, and the donkey costs money, so that the human back becomes the carry-all for the plunder of man.

This motionless bronze statue before us, with the great tray of fruit, appears—to one unaccustomed—more than indifferent whether we buy or not, for she stands there, mute, her fruits higher than our own heads; she is tall to begin with, and the great tray itself is six inches higher, and the head pad on which it rests is more than an inch thick; so, altogether, it is so high that we can only make a guess at the fruit she carries, from the fringe on the edge and the pyramid on top. This is our first experience with *la porteuse*, and we wait for her to stoop, camel-like, to

unload. But not she! She knows too well the possible penalty of such rashness, and quietly stands with her quick eyes questioning us, and we stand wondering what she wants us to do.

The kerchief about her shoulders over a light chemise rivals the rainbow. I try to fix my eyes on some predominating colour, but when I decide that it is yellow, in will blaze a green stronger than the yellow, and then huge red roses splash their lurid colour into the yellow and green, and royal purple and blue daisies and magenta buttercups career around in wild indifference as to conventional form and tint. A loose calico frock hangs to her ankles, with the bare, tireless feet, straight, shapely and well-formed, showing beneath.

Intelligence dawns upon us at last, and the tall man reaches for a green cocoanut, just toppling on the edge of the tray, for we realise we must reach for the fruit if we want it. This cocoanut, encased in its green husk, is just about the size of a small melon, and has a striated, light-green, smooth skin. A vender near by, interested in the purchase, and charitable to the strangers, takes the cocoanut, and, with a sharp knife, dexterously pares off one end, and with a slash straight across the top, cuts through the still soft shell, and hands it to us ready to quench our thirst with a long pull, for there is as yet no meat in the cocoanut, only a quantity of the rich milk. I cannot say that it is particularly good, or particularly bad; it has an inoffensive sweet taste, is said to be perfectly harmless, and is one of the few fruits of the tropics that the uninitiated can eat with impunity. After we have all drunk, there seems to be quite a bit of the milk left. So it goes to the most insistent of the crowd of small boys, who are, as usual, escorting us with much enjoyment, and a constant merry chatter of French.

Let us move on now up the clean stone street, up, and up, and up, passing many a walled recess where sparkling jets of water fill the jars brought to the fountain by barefooted girls,—up and on, on and up, past votive shrines—*les chapelles*—and high-walled gardens, coming finally to the broad avenue leading to the Botanical Garden,—the same road from which we were so glad to escape the night before. We follow the white, dusty road in the bright sunlight, with now and then glimpses of the mountains above, and come at last to the broad stone gateway of *Le Jardin des Plantes*, which, entering, plunges us at once into the deep shades and marvellous beauty of a tropical forest.

## IV.

Oh, that I had words and power and skill to paint even a shadow of the beauty before me to a likeness of itself! Here Nature defies all art of pen, of thought, and brush of man! She seems to glory in the impossible loveliness of her face and form—impossible to reproduce through art or reason. Here one should find new words—words more intense, more poignant, more vividly keen to cut into the heart of the matchless colours and shades. No description can ever bring accurately to the mind the wealth, the magnificent beauty of such a spot upon God’s earth.

With skilful art, the French have utilised the hand of Nature in the formation of this wonderful garden to such a degree of perfection that none can tell, unless a master, where the two fair sisters, Art and Nature, first embraced. The natural tropical forest, running up a great ravine into the mountains, is intersected by broad and winding paths that lead from one fair view to another by mossy flights of rough stone steps. Through a rift in the hillside, down an abyss of heavy, wet foliage of a green so intense that the eye can scarcely conceive its depth of colour, cataracts of water leap through the abiding shade, through the ever-growing, ever-dying processes of nature, down into a pool whose depths reflect the blue glimmering sky and the vivid green of over-hanging vines in opalescent sheen. Great clumps of bamboo, with long, slim, arrow-shaped leaves, hang gracefully, waving like giant grass, over the walk; and an ancient bridge, ablaze with purple vines, reaches out from under the rustling thickets and spans a branch of the *Rivière Roxelane*, a delicious mountain stream which murmurs on through the forest, filling one with poetic musings as to whence came its romantic name.

On we sauntered heedless as to time, sheltered from the sun by the impenetrable shade of arborescent ferns and towering palms, and lured ever deeper into the forest, into the wonders of God’s marvellous creation by some unspeakable burst of beauty just beyond.

Here we find not only the trees indigenous to the soil, but trees native to all tropical climates, from all parts of the world, for this garden is the pride of the island and a wonder of the Indies. The names and habitations of foreign trees are most skilfully marked on enamelled plates fastened to the trees, part of the plate bearing the carefully engraved botanical name, the lower part containing a coloured map, indicating the country to which the tree is native.

What a pitiably weak understanding we have of God’s unending and infinite creation! However much we read of life in remoter countries the mind, like a rubber ball, ever reverts with persistent force to its original point of view. So that we, the dwellers in the North, in the land of ice and snow, of pines and duller hues, where Nature bestows her gifts with somewhat sparing hand,—we of the North forget the limitless power of creative energy, and when we come into such an overwhelming feast of colour as in this mighty forest, sighing and breathing for very burden of beauty, we try in vain to reconcile our former crude conceptions of the Creator with this new, vast revelation of his unspeakable power.

As we penetrate deeper and ever deeper into the forest, the mind reels under the effort to grasp the marvels of plant and tree and earth. Vines hang in long festoons from tree to tree, and drop down before the face in thousands of living ropes, which seem to have the power of returning upon themselves and growing up again without any visible support. Parasites, air-plants, and orchids—not singly, but in millions—cover giant trunks so that the tree itself is lost in the growth external. Off through a break in the deepest green, I see for the first time that queen of the tropics, the *Amherstia nobilis*, called—and well named, indeed—“the Flamboyant,” the most magnificent flowering tree in the world: tall and heavenly leafed, of graceful form, its top covered by a mass of brilliant flowers so vividly red and of such size as to seem like a blaze of fire in the forest shade. And taller than all the others of its kind, the Royal Palm lifts its regal head out into the freedom of light and air, and sways its majestic plumes in rhythmic motion. How well the Spanish do to call it “*the palm*,” in distinction from all others.

Everywhere about you, life, life ever coming, ever going. A deep, impenetrable wall of green, denser, thicker than any fretwork, keeps you to the path. A native lad springs into the black, green, brown depth, and you shudder involuntarily; there might be danger. The two figures—hand in hand, Life and Death—haunt the dim green shadows about you.

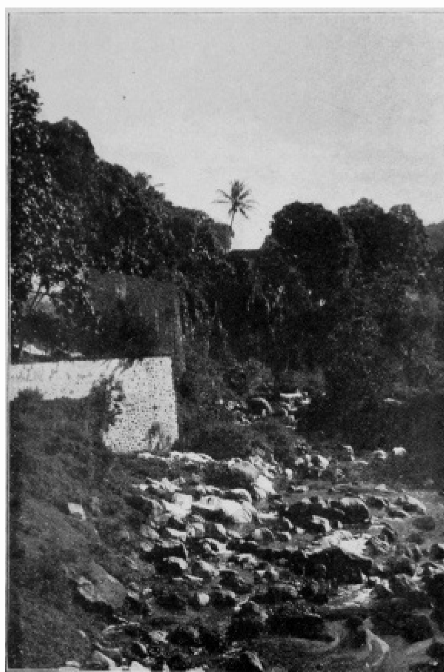
## V.

We are joined by friends as we wander on, following the sound of tumbling water. It comes to us as a surprise, for the forest has been wrapped in a deep silence; its slumberous shade has not been broken by a single bird-note; all animal life is quiescent. A few steps more and we come to a cleft in the mountain, an opening in the green vault, and a veil of glistening water drops between us and a wall of cool, sweet ferns. The spell of the forest is about us. We turn down a steep path in silent awe before so great a masterpiece.

Our party separate, we linger behind while our friends stroll on and are lost in an abrupt turn of the path. The straight noonday sun makes white patches upon the walk; strange heavy odours, as of earth dead a thousand years lifting up her soul again in rebellion against her long, deep sleep, steal about us. Suddenly from the deathlike stillness of the forest there comes a shriek, followed by sounds of commotion. We run quickly in the direction of the voices. My friend's white face tells the story; it was the *Fer de Lance*. We could see nothing. The flight had been swift; it was impossible for her to say how it ever came there, whether it had dropped from the limb of a tree, as she thought, or had sprung from a bush, but suddenly it was there, lying in a double coil at her feet. It made a strange rapping sound upon the earth, and darted swiftly off into the undergrowth. A few of us, much affrighted, lead the way most precipitately down the ravine to the gateway. We carry our umbrellas aloft in spite of the shade, and, shuddering, secretly envy the one who saw the *Fer de Lance*.

## VI.

After all, I am glad that we did not accept the offer of a carriage for Morne Rouge, for it is a long drive to the summit of the mountain,—fully four hours there and back,—and had we gone, the journey must needs be made with great haste; so we chose rather to leave before satiety deadened our enjoyment. But there will come other days in Martinique—there must come other days, for is not this *Le Pays des Revenants*? Must we not see Gros Morne, Capot, Marigot, and La Grande Anse, hidden away in the mountains, asleep in their sunlit valleys, and the wild forest—*le grand bois*—and *La Pelée*, the old volcano with the queer lake in its extinct crater, and the cavern-like opening in its cleft side, where it is said that even yet there may be occasionally heard strange groanings and fearsome hissings—shall we not come some day to see all this?



**The Rivière Roxelane**
**Near St. Pierre, Martinique**

We take the road to the left and follow down the *Rivière Roxelane* to St. Pierre. As we join our friends returning from the mountain, they share with us a calabash of wild red strawberries which they bought by the roadside. The berries have that rare, delicious *bouquet* found only in the wild fruits, and, as one would naturally suppose, have their own funny way of growing; small and pointed and very compact. We hover around the one who holds the calabash until all are gone, and then indolently follow the stream, passing a group of women under a shady mango-tree, spreading heaps of cacao (chocolate) beans on the ground to dry; where we linger, tasting the beans and trying to chat, ever fascinated by the natives and their ways; and then wander on toward the stony pavements and narrow streets of the city; and thence down to the landing-place.

Night draws over. The quickly falling luminous night of the tropics. How can I bring again the witchery of that vision? The greenly liquid sky, the great yellow moon, the near, the brilliant stars, and the deep, dark Morne, covering her wild luxuriance with violet clouds, and back of all "*La Montagne*"—*Pelée*, the sleeping; the sounds—distant, low, mellow; the moving, glistening phosphorescent water, and Martinique, in white slumber, fading astern.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## ISLAND OF TRINIDAD. PORT OF SPAIN

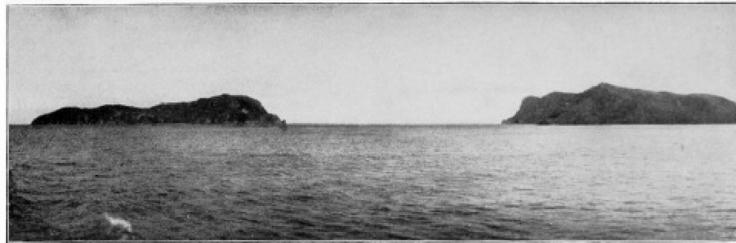
### I.

"I'SE here, Missus; I'se here, waitin' fo' you" (from one of a crowd of chattering Spanish, English, French, Portuguese creoles, outnumbered by the ever-present black, in every shade, from deep chocolate to light saffron), greets us as we step on land at Port of Spain, Trinidad.

We do not feel quite sure which particular one, in all that pushing, scrambling, good-natured crowd, is waiting for us; whether it is the man with the two monkeys, or the man with the green and blue parrot, or the woman with the baskets, or the boy with the shells; but whichever one it is, he's there, and all his friends are there, with everything salable they possess, strung around them, fastened to them, hitched to them, in some fashion—any way to allow them free use of their arms.

"Well, we're glad you're waiting, Sambo. We fully expected to find you here. It wouldn't be Trinidad without a monkey or a parrot. We'll buy later. Oh, no! Not the monkey; we have one at home, and Heaven knows that's enough! But maybe, by and by, we'll see about a basket."

If there is one thing in the world Sister and I can never resist, it's a basket. That distressing mania breaks forth at the slightest provocation; it doesn't seem to make any difference where we are, or how impossible it is to gratify it; difficulties only whet the appetite. The more inopportune the occasion, the more we want the basket.



**The Dragon's Mouth, Entrance to Gulf of Paria**
**Between South America and Trinidad**

So we stood there on the quay at Port of Spain, with the lofty headlands of grand old South America away to the south of us, taking their morning bath among the clouds, and off in the north the mountain sweep of Trinidad, watching the queer old city at its feet, and betwixt the two, the Gulf of Paria, loosened from the Dragon's Mouth, spreading and expanding, with its waters a commingling of the blue of the Caribbean and the brown of the near-by Orinoco, washing the outstretched feet of the great mother and child; and we stood there, with all this grandeur ablaze in the first light of the morning, wondering if we would better buy the basket right then, on the spot, or whether we should wait until our return.

To be sure, we had one big basket—and a beauty, too—from St. Thomas, but it was always full, a sort of catch-all for our curious leaves, and seeds, and coral, and beads, and newspapers, and precious bills of fare,—treasured reminders of old balconies and lingering melodies; and it really seemed to be our duty to provide a number two size to carry to market. We could use it in so many ways, and then we wanted another basket. But, before we had time to strike a bargain,—for it's a half-day's work in these ideal lands to buy anything,—some one cried out: "If you are going to the Coolie Village, you'd better come right now, or the carriages will all be taken!"

"Who are the coolies?" Blue Ribbons asked, as we rattled along up Frederick Street. The answer to her question was squatting not far distant, where some cars, just arrived from San Fernando, were being unloaded. His hands were clasped around his thin bare legs; his face, serious, dark, immovable; his hair, black as ink, and straight; on his head, a voluminous white turban bespoke the worshipper of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. It was with mingled sensations of awe and fear that I beheld this unexpected Hindoo. His apparent unconcern of mundane affairs recalled not only deeply treasured teachings from his great masters, but, in his eyes, there was the black, unforgotten story of Lucknow. It was hard to reconcile the two.

It seems that the Hindoo "coolie" is imported by the ship-load into Trinidad, and indentured for a period of ten years; at the expiration of which time he may return to India at his company's expense, if he so chooses (and he usually does choose to do so, taking home with him a goodly store of gold). He makes a most valuable and reliable labourer, and has really been the salvation of the vast sugar and cacao estates on the island. It has been next to impossible to exact any continuous labour from the negro, without some system of slavery, and had it not been for the Hindoo, the resources of Trinidad would have been practically undeveloped.

The coolies were in evidence everywhere. In fact, they seemed to form a considerable proportion of the population. We do not wonder any longer at the emaciated pictures of the famine-stricken East Indians, for here, in a land of plenty, where food, almost ready cooked, is only waiting to drop, the Hindoo is the sparest, leanest creature imaginable. His ever-bare legs are not like flesh and blood, but small-boned and thin to emaciation, and almost devoid of calves below the knee; they have the hard statuesque look of bronze stilts. And the arms, too, are thin, and terminate in slender little hands that seem incapable of heavy and prolonged labour.

### II.

Port of Spain, compactly, squarely built, and well paved, extends for quite a distance over a flat, alluvial plain to a grassy *savannah*, two and a half miles wide; one side of which, facing the Botanical Garden and the Governor’s Mansion, brings you to the base of the mountain.

The city is neither beautiful nor clean. Its architecture, dominated by the taste of the Englishman, is about as unattractive as that of our own country. The business streets are dusty, shadeless, and devoid of cleaners, except for the vulture, who, with his long, bare legs, his skinny neck and head, and huge black body, plays the part of city scavenger. These ungainly, hideous, repulsive creatures stalk around everywhere; they are under the horses’ feet; they roost on the eave troughs asleep in the sun, sit reflectively on chimney-tops, or come swooping down after some horrible piece of carrion in the street.

How can a civilised people be willing to turn the civic house-cleaning over to a lot of vultures? No wonder that plagues and fevers rage upon these beautiful islands. Under existing conditions, they surely have the right of way.

**The Business Section**
**Port of Spain, Trinidad**
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Did I understand you to say that the carriages were all gone when you came ashore? Come in with us! There, the front seat with the driver is just waiting for you, and really, to walk is hardly safe under this vertical sun. Would you mind if we make a stop or two on the way out to the village, for the man of the family must have some fresh white ducks to wear in South America; let us wait for him here in the carriage.

It seems pleasant to-day not to make any exertion. I’ve no doubt we can get a lot of information from the driver, if we question him. He responds, oh! yes, he responds with great ardour, but with what result? One word in ten, we recognise. He thinks, of course, he’s speaking English, and I suppose we might better let him think so, but, bless you, if that’s English, what are we speaking? It’s just another of the West Indian surprises. You come to a country which has been under the beneficent English rule for over one hundred years, and you find the natives—the men who drive for you, who row you ashore, who carry your plunder, the women in the market—all speaking an almost unintelligible jargon of French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, with a little Hindustani and Chinese thrown in. Try the native on your best French, and at every five or six words he brightens up with understanding. Take any of the other languages and you have the same result; for your Trinidadian understands when he wants to, but woe betide you when you ask a question and want to know the answer. The native in Trinidad is bright and quick; he is not like his big lazy lout of a brother down in our Southland. He is a mix-up of many people, intelligent and active, and his language tells what a conglomerate he is, and what a happy-go-lucky life he leads.

## III.

What can be keeping the shoppers so long? We shall certainly have to hunt them up; let us look inside.

I have often wondered what our mammoth cheap stores of the North do with their leftover plush albums, china shepherdesses, antiquated ready-made clothing, tin jewelry, their untold unnumbered tons of clap-traps; and now I know. It’s all dumped right here in the West Indies. From South America to Cuba, there is one vast collection of trash imported to catch the pennies of these long-suffering people. It is always difficult to obtain any of the native work; we have to go among the natives themselves for that. One glance at Port of Spain’s emporium, the *Great Colonial Stores of Blank and Co. Limited*, is enough!

“Mother,” said Sister, “I have an idea! Let’s try the deaf and dumb sign-language on the cabby.” And she does. It works like a charm. Off we swing for the savannah, a great, green, grassy plain, the playground for the Trinidadians. Here, they have their horse-racing and golf and cricket and polo under the fierce, tropical sun; here, the merry-go-round and pop-stands burst forth every Saturday afternoon; here the inevitable “picnic” is held, and as we happen here on a festival day, we see the children—big and little—gathering from every direction. There is something indestructible about the customs of an Englishman. He does not change his methods of living, as do other races, but, wherever he goes, he carries from pole to equator the customs and habits of his own country. So he plays golf and cricket and polo in Trinidad, when, at its mildest, the heat is about equal to our August.

It is on this savannah that we have our first good opportunity of viewing the mighty ceiba tree near at hand. You remember it was a great ceiba to which Columbus made fast his ships on the bank of the Ozama River in Santo Domingo? The ceiba may not be the largest tree in the tropics. I do not wish to say it is, for it would seem then that one was limiting to a given scale the grandeur of the tropical tree. There is apparently no limit to anything in the way

of size or beauty under these skies. There may be greater trees in the "High Wood" than the ceiba, but, in our experience, it was by far the most wide-stretching of anything we had yet seen. One stands before it awed, stupefied by its immensity, its age, its strange manner of growing. And we think over all the words we know to express its size and beauty, and we feel so poor and powerless in expression.

**A Village Greeting**
**San Fernando, Trinidad**

The ceiba on the wide savannah has endless room in which to spread. It is perfect in form, like a mammoth gray and green umbrella, and reaches out its immense branches toward every side in perfect symmetry. And such branches! They alone are as large as our forest oaks, and they throw themselves out from the trunk horizontally, in stupendous strength. Its foliage is rather thin; the power of the tree seems to be spent in trunk and branch. Its bark is like an elephant's hide, and its trunk has a strange way of buttressing out its side in huge wings. It is even said to be the worshipped tree of the superstitious black natives—a mysterious sort of *fetich*, the mighty, silk-cotton ceiba.

## IV.

Fine residences skirt the savannah, each garden a marvel of beauty, in palms and trees whose names we do not know. Each little villa, has its English name plastered upon the gateway. This part of the city is clean, and the road is fine, so we will try to forgive and forget the shabby appearance of the lower town. We pass countless gardens, and then the houses grow fewer, and the gardens turn into banana patches, and the people begin to look different; the negroes disappear, and we are in the beginning of the "Coolie Village," where a row of thatched roofs, supported by bamboo poles, ranges on either side of a long street, which disappears under an avenue of palms and breadfruit-trees, quite out of sight.

And here are the Hindoo men and women,—quiet, serious people, displaying very little curiosity about us, going on with their work, just as if we were not near them. What a relief from the hideous faces of the negro are these straight-featured, well-poised East Indians!

The men dress in white and are not overly clean. It does not look to me as if shirt and turban were often washed, but as their artisans work sitting on the ground, there is really small chance for immaculate linen. It is upon the women that the Hindoo displays his sensuous love for colour and jewels. She is his savings-bank. Every bit of silver or gold earned is taken to the jeweller to be fashioned into ornaments for her.

Let us leave the carriage and wander about among these interesting, silent people. Little Blue Ribbons would like to carry away one of those curious silver bracelets the women wear, and as if our thoughts are divined, we are in no time surrounded by a lot of girls who are simply covered with silver and gold. They wear as many as twenty bracelets on each arm, of different designs, some very beautifully twisted into serpents' coils and heads, others engraved with intricate arabesques, others merely crude bands, with a few ornamental lines. Every part of the body, where a ring can hang, is covered with ornaments; head, ears, nose, fingers, arms, waist, ankles, toes. And some of the dear little brown babies, from two to five years old, were dressed only in pretty silver whistles, tied about the waist with a black string.

We examine many bracelets. The arms held out are more beautiful than any bits of silver about them, and the women have low, sweet voices, and their eyes are brilliant, and their skin is lustrous, and the fascination of the Orient is about them. The Hindoo women may have a hard time of it in some ways, perhaps, off in East India where the missionaries are, but here in Trinidad they have every appearance of being well cared for.

Daddy is the one who buys the trinkets. He has a way of finding always the most curious and the most beautiful things, and the Hindoo women crowding about him, and the little girls, too, seem to have suspected his talent. After examining the wealth of a dozen arms, two silver bands are selected, which, after being carefully washed by a very particular Daddy, are snapped about the white wrists of the expectant girlies. He has not only a way with him for finding beautiful curios, but, alas! I must confess he has a decided talent also for discovering beautiful women. My only consolation in the matter is his catholicity of taste, for he shows no preference, as a rule. His is a universal admiration, the simple homage to beauty of an artistic soul, and that comforts me. There is safety in numbers!

So it did not surprise me, while we are prowling around back of the huts, in search of some Hindoo needlework, to return and discover him chatting in a one-sided conversation with a little girl, about the age of Little Blue Ribbons. She was leaning in a dreamy attitude in the doorway of a shop—the most prosperous one in the village.

Just then he spies hanging in the shop some odd pipes made of clay. He goes in and buys one or two. The

proprietor and his wife are standing behind the counter; she, fat and comfortable, a mass of silver bracelets, smiled at us as we approached; but he, thin as a churchwarden pipe, and solemn, my! solemn enough to be Buddha himself, with long, gray hair, curled up at the end, and impassive face, answered our questions about the pipes in precise, curiously clipped Oriental English, without once looking at us. His eyes were fixed on something beyond us, and they were the eyes that speak but rarely, and then terribly. Daddy praises the shop, the wife's ornaments, and finally the little girl, and asks if he may take her picture. The mother smiles a "Yes;" the father just looks outside. Immediately the little one is called into an inner room by her mother. She stands in the doorway so we can see what is going on. I cannot tell you how much the mother loads upon her.

The straight, low forehead is covered by three circlets of gold and silver; the little ears are weighed down by filigree hoops of gold, reaching to her shoulders; her pretty pierced nostrils hold a delicately fashioned gold plate, which drops below the sweet red lips; a tiny jewelled rose screws into the side of her straight little nose; her graceful neck is loaded with chain after chain, hung with many silver dollars of different countries, while one necklace is of twenty-dollar United States gold pieces. Ten of these necklaces drop from the round throat to the slender waist. A band of silver, two inches wade, spans her upper arm, and from the tapering wrist to the shapely little elbow, the brown, soft skin is covered with bracelets. A bright silk skirt falls to the ankles, which, in turn, are encircled by bracelets or anklets, while little rings are fitted to each toe of her slender, shapely feet; and then, to cap the climax, the mother brings out a long yellow scarf and starts to wind it about the little one's head.

That was too much. Daddy begs the mother off. He wanted to catch the beautiful oval outline of that little head. So the yellow scarf was discarded, and the little one came outside, and stood under the porch against a green, leafy background, and her small hands were folded before her very demurely, and she looked at us with her father's black, serious eyes. All the while, he stands within, like a motionless gray shadow,—absolutely unmoved by our admiration of his daughter.

A few feet beyond there is the goldsmith, squatting cross-legged on the ground outside the door of his shanty. This is his shop,—this dirt floor. Here, on a bit of cloth, are his wares, very beautiful some of them, masterful pieces of work, and this diminutive bed of charcoal is his furnace, these tiny hammers and pincers are his tools, and that little black anvil is the scene of his daily toil. Can it be that, with these few crude tools, he can fashion so wonderfully? His pattern is the insect that hovers for an instant on its flight at noonday; or the sleeping serpent, hidden under the bamboo; or the palm above the village; or the spider's web over the doorway. Nature close to him—dear to him—is the master of his art.

## V.

The road on through the village is too beautiful to leave; we must go farther, deeper down among this strangely silent, mysterious people; and we drive on to where the palms meet over our heads, and we get glimpses of the blue and green Gulf beyond, and some one tells us—or have we dreamed it?—that, farther on, we shall come to the Big White House, and we wonder if we are really ourselves, or some one very unreal out of a book.

Surely we shall soon awake and rub our eyes and find that we have just been asleep in the library corner, and that we never reached the Leper House, and never heard the whispering of Hindoo feet; that it was all a daydream, a sweet heavenly dream, made long by some good fairy; but, no, we look at one another, and it must be true, for we hear the waves lapping the beach near by, and the brown, naked coolie babies look wonderingly at us, and we jog along under the fitful showers and sun, and Blue Ribbons raises the white umbrella, and Sister looks ruefully at the sad, discouraged, rain-bespattered ribbons, so it must be real.

Yes, real; and yet to see the Big White House, now visible through the mangoes, and know that within its walls live victims of the most awful disease of all time,—a disease whose origin is lost in the dim vistas of antiquity,—to come thus unexpectedly, in the twentieth century, upon a manifestation of the "sins of the fathers" of thousands of years, we cannot make it seem real to us. Had we been off in the South Seas, sailing toward Molokai, or had we been looking over the hills of Galilee, it might have seemed more probable. But to find a leper settlement here, not three miles from a thickly peopled modern city,—a settlement which must be a constant and deadly menace to society,—was beyond my powers of credence.

I remember so well, in reading Stevenson's account of his visit to the leper settlement in the Sandwich Islands, that I wondered how he dared go among them, for even so great an object as the vindication of Father Damien, and lo, here we were, without any warning, almost in the midst of the same plague. Although fully aware that leprosy did exist, just as we know that the moon must have form and solidity, it still seemed an uncertain, far-removed possibility,—in a way half-legendary, half fact, a tradition of the far East, a memory of the days of the Holy One of Nazareth; not a tangible awful reality, to be met and battled with all the force of modern knowledge. I could not convince myself that within a stone's throw were lepers whom we might see, to whom we might speak, and I wondered if it would be safe to enter the enclosure. All this time we drew nearer to the gateway, while the white house in the centre of a large, shady park, fenced in by high iron pickets, seemed to us like the great Cross on Calvary, raised for the sins of the world.

In various parts of the yard, inside that fence, groups of men are sitting on the grass under the shade of great trees. It is white noon. It cannot be possible that these men, lolling about and visiting together, are *lepers*, for, from a distance, they bear no signs of disease about them. They look like the rest of the people we have been amongst all day. They are mostly Hindoos (some with a touch of negro blood), very dark of skin, and apparently in good health, that is, viewed at a distance. I must confess that a terrible feeling comes over me as the man of the family—for here we are at the gate, with the horse's head facing the sad white house—suggests that we enter the enclosure. I remember how it was said that the lepers in olden time must cry out: "Unclean!" "Unclean!" and that he whose garments but swept the shadow of one thus afflicted must undergo a long purification before he could be allowed intercourse with the world once more.

As these old stories recur to my memory, and beseech me for my life not to take so great a risk,—but how long it takes to tell it all!—a big, jolly-faced black gatekeeper quiets my apprehensions by saying that we would not be exposed to the least danger whatever; that some of the labourers and attendants have been employed to work among the lepers for years with no bad results. With this comfortable assurance of a doubtful safety from the gateman, the

driver whips up, and we move on into the yard, and up the avenue to the hospital, made gruesome by horrid buzzards perching on its roof and eaves in grim expectancy.

But it is the coming closer into the deep shade which reveals to us its true significance. From without, this white house is long and low and restful to the eye, and the trees bending over it, with clinging arms, seem to breathe only life and beauty, and the white-coated men here and there under the shade are the labourers resting during the still noon hour.

But a nearer approach and a closer acquaintance changes the whole scene. Was it upon such wrecks of life that the gentle *Saviour* gazed in pitying love? These are not men; they are pieces,—parts of men, hung together by the long-suffering cord of life.

The first leper we see near at hand seems to take an interest in us. The others we have passed lie around in a dull, listless way. I presume they see us, but they evidence no concern other than keeping in the shade. But this leper —I hardly know how to designate him—has more life in him than the others; he is walking about and nods to us as we pass. He has strange, unnatural ears; they are twice the normal size and have nodules on the outer edge. His face is swollen into mushroom-like patches, and deeply seamed by ridges, and yet the skin has apparently the same appearance it had in a state of health, except a little grayer and more lifeless looking. Another patient hobbles toward us, and we find that he is walking on stumps of feet, without toe. We throw some pennies to another group, and the one nearest the coin picks it up by making a scoop of his flipper-like palm. His fingers are gone, only little points are left, as if they had been whittled off with a jack-knife. An old man looks at us with one eye, the other eye, eaten away by the relentless advance of the disease, has commenced to run out. These are only the moderately sick patients.

**Where the Lepers Live and Die**
**Trinidad**

As we drive nearer to the hospital, a dozen or so horrible-looking creatures crowd to the end of an upper gallery and stand there, leaning out over the railing, a ghastly picture of misery. I scarcely dare look at them, their faces have been so mutilated by the disease; and others worse there are inside, whom the heroic Sisters—Romish and Protestant—care for and comfort until the living hideous death is at an end and life begins.

We move slowly along up the drive, and come quite near to the great archway which leads into the courtyard. There we call to the cabby to stop, and the tall man, who is never afraid of anything, gets out, and his leaving the carriage becomes, unwittingly to us, a signal for the poor lepers to approach. One hurries away from his companion —an emaciated, becrutched Hindoo—and comes to within a few feet of us, and just as he does so, our protector turns to me and says: “Did you ever think I would find myself talking to a leper just three feet from me?” and, interesting as the experience is, I recoil within myself for fear that the money which we want to give them may necessitate a closer proximity than we desire. But the unfortunate victim understands the situation and keeps his distance, while the tall man coming back to us, stands there with one foot on the carriage-step, still turning toward the leper.

By a certain sort of mental telepathy, I know that he cannot say good-bye without leaving some word of cheer for the poor fellow, and just what to say, how to say it, how to express a wish which we know can never be fulfilled, makes a moment’s very embarrassing silence. If you had ever been in the presence of such a living, unpitying death, such a picture of horrible hopelessness, and felt it your duty to make the burden easier by some word of cheer, when you had all things—life, health, and happiness—about you, and he only the refuse of a rotten body, if you must presume to tell such a martyr to be brave and all that sort of thing, when you know that his absolutely uncomplaining silence is greater bravery than you, in all your health and vigour, know how to comprehend—well, I tell you it’s no use! However optimistic by nature, it’s hard to find the words. Why, even a parson would be dumb!

And so he lingers there uneasily. He looks at the two dear little sweet-faced maidens at my side, so white and clean and fresh and young, and then at the gray, misshapen, mutilated silent figure before him, living his lonely death of agony each day, and says, with a choke, “Good-bye,”—that is all. Tell me, what would you have said?

END OF VOLUME I.

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**Typographical errors corrected by the etext transcriber:**

her persisent whisper=> her persistent whisper {pg 235}
Hayti=> Haïti {pg 310}

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GARDENS OF THE CARIBBEES, V. 1/2 ***

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