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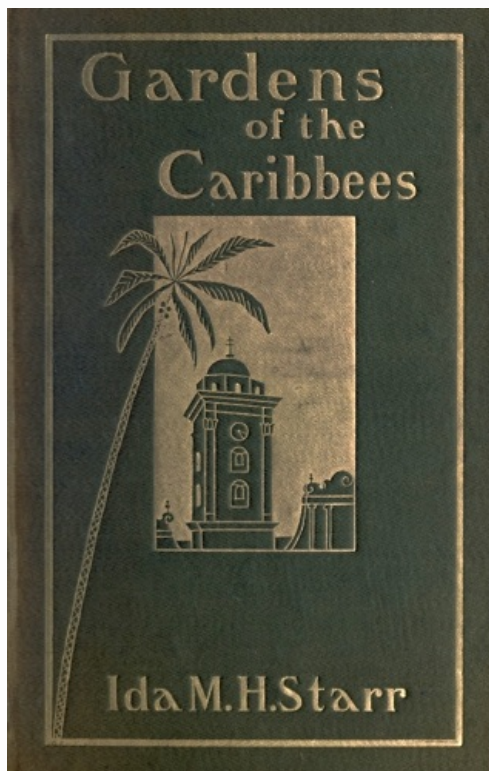
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FROM OUR BALCONY  
CARACAS, VENEZUELA.

**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. II.  
*ILLUSTRATED*



Boston

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## Gardens of the Caribbees

### CHAPTER I.

#### ISLAND OF TRINIDAD, "IERE"

##### I.

HAD we known just a little more about Trinidad, it would have made a great difference in that luncheon, but it all came out wrong because some of us didn't know. Too late to influence us in the least, we read in the *Daily Gleaner*, of Jamaica, that the beef sold in Trinidad is exported alive from Venezuela. To be sure, we were aware that Venezuela occupies a large part of the northern coast of South America, and were conscious that Trinidad lies enclosed in a great bay of that coast, called the Gulf of Paria, off the delta of the Orinoco River; also, in a hazy way, we knew that the Spanish Main is a name applied somewhat vaguely to that same South American coast—a relic of the days of pirates, buccaneers, and freebooting English admirals; but we no more expected to be served a roast of beef from the Spanish Main than a dish of Boston baked beans from our castles in Spain. The two dimly intangible names had ever borne a close comradeship in our minds, a poetic association affiliated them in closest bonds. The same sun kissed into rose tints the turrets of our castles in Spain and the lofty summits of the Spanish Main. The same romance lifted them both away from reality into that land just bordering upon the Islands of the Blest, and much as we longed to materialise our dreams, and make the Spanish Main a usable fact, when the opportunity came for us to do so, it slipped away from us before we were conscious of its existence.

Unaware that the illuminated postal-card *menu* on the table at the Queen's Park Hotel, Port of Spain, could in any sense lift the veil from our enchantments, we read the following bill of fare:

Mayonnaise of Fish, with Lettuce  
 Oysters *en Poulet*  
 Scrambled Eggs with Asparagus Tips  
 Irish Stew  
 Haricot of Oxtail  
 Brain Fritters  
 Curry of Veal *à l'Indien*  
 Boiled Turkey and Rice  
 Ham and Spinach  
 Fried Sausages and Potatoes  
 Salad  
 Assorted Cold Meats  
 String Beans    Rice    Mashed Potatoes  
 Macaroni *au Gratin*  
 Chocolate Ice-cream    Cakes  
 Cheese

Eight of us sat down at a table on the veranda, white-walled, white-ceilinged, and white pillared. A white-gravelled walk led out into the white sun, through a stiff, boxed-in, English garden, stuffed with plants in green tubs, and redeemed only by those natural things that will grow and be beautiful in spite of all conventions. Thirsting for cool ices and delectable fruits, looking wistfully for our vanishing fancies of West Indian ambrosia, we turn in a listless, disappointed way to that bill of fare, where ham and spinach and Irish stew and fried sausages send our hopes a-scampering off like a lot of frightened children.

What man in his sane mind would order an haricot of ox-tail in the tropics, when he needs but lift his hand for the food of Paradise; what man, with any sense of the fitness of things, would eat curried veal, when, for the asking, he might sup a libation fit for the gods? Alas! The asking never brought it, and we—that is, one, at least—settled down to scrambled eggs, and felt and looked unutterable scorn upon the one next at table who began at mayonnaise of fish, and took every course to cheese. Ah! friends, this was a case where the one who didn't know fared ill. She

lost her first opportunity of paying her respects to the Spanish Main.

Hungry and disillusioned, the one and the only thing to do is to forget those steaming sausages and the Irish stew as quickly as possible. We shall not stay here a moment longer. Hotels are makeshifts at the best. Let us leave these unromantic, unscrupulous venders of ham and spinach!

There, over yonder on the other side of the savannah, there is a delicious retreat where we can make good our escape.

## II.

We shall never again see anything which can compare in beauty, of its kind, with the *Jardin des Plantes* of Martinique. No, we never shall—still, we must be just to all. Trinidad's Botanical Garden is beautiful in its own way, and we were impressed with the idea that it possessed some features which that of Martinique lacked. However, that might have been owing to the fact that we did not view the Martinique Garden in its entirety. Had we done so, we might have found the same species in both places.

From casual observation there seemed to me to be one distinctive characteristic of tropical vegetation; the trees did not appear to grow so much in great social orders as do those of temperate zones. In the North, vast families of the same species of trees gather together and keep together with as rigid a pertinacity as any Scotch clan; the beech, birch, oak, maple, pine, hemlock, walnut, hickory, all have their pet homes and their own relations, and no amount of coddling or persuasion will ever induce them to a wide change of *habitat*; but in the far South, the tropical trees seem willing to settle anywhere in this land of endless summer. Of course, one finds that certain trees love the swamps, and others prefer the high lands; and some will grow in greater magnificence in some places where the conditions are absolutely congenial, than in other places where they are not so. There is the mangrove; it loves the wet and the mire—the mosquito-ridden, miasmatic river borders—and wherever, on these coasts, you find a swamp, whether in the very hottest spots, or in others only moderately so, there you'll find the mangrove sending out aerial roots, reaching down into the muck for new strength, forming—banyan-like—a family of new trunks, all under one leafy canopy, quite content if only it has the water about its roots and a certain degree of heat.

Away up there in Haïti, we find the ceiba, and down here in Trinidad it is equally at home. These conditions make the formation of a botanical garden, representing the world-growth of sunlit vegetation, peculiarly favourable. Trinidad is said to possess the most superb collection of tropical plants in existence; and though gathered from all lands, growing not as strangers or even stepchildren, but as rightful heirs to the immeasurable vital force which pours forth from a rich soil warmed by a blazing sun the year around.



The Barracks, through Live-Oaks and Mahogany-Trees  
Trinidad

The garden once entered, we pass a great, squarely built mansion, the governor's residence, and are in the midst of a wonderful vegetation from the first step. At the very entrance, we are greeted with, perhaps, the most unique tree in these latitudes.

After all, there is something stupefying in the effort to describe tropical wonders. When they are passing before one's eyes, each has a feature distinct to itself, which, in a way, is its own manner of description. Each has its peculiar wonder, its own glory,—no two alike—and yet, when one sits down to think it over, there is the same old alphabet from which to draw new pictures, new miracles; and how to make each different with the same letters is a question indeed.

If I could only tell you the name of this particular tree which stands at the entrance to the garden, you might some day hunt it up yourself, but as I know neither its family nor home, we will let that all go, and just tell you how it is dressed.

It is a heavily, glossily leafed, symmetrical, low tree, just about the size of those dear old cherry-trees we used to climb, oh, so long,—so long ago! From the tip of every branch there drops a cord-like fibre about a foot and a half long, and at the end of this little brown string there hangs a cluster of delicate pink flowers. These are suspended in almost exact length in rows from the lowest to the highest branch, and it really seems as if Nature were experimenting to see what wonderful living garlands she could create for a canopy above our heads.

## III.

The character of the garden is defined at once upon entrance. It is a botanical garden, pure and simple, a place

for strange plants from far away, a sort of orphan asylum for everybody's vegetable baby. It is not, like Martinique, an enchanted forest with cascades and glens fit for nymphs and dryads; it is matter-of-fact, orderly, prim, and businesslike. Aside from its unique trees, there is little to attract one, so we decide for once it would be wise to engage a guide who can tell us something about the inhabitants of the place, which otherwise promises to be rather dull.



**Governor's Palace and Public Gardens  
Port of Spain, Trinidad**

So we hunt up a crooked, stump-legged Portuguese gardener, by name Manuel, who takes our heavy baskets, we following down a little glen which grows at once quite dark and sweet and silent.

Through long, freshly cut bamboo poles, streams of water are being carried hither and thither to special spots in the garden, and we stop to watch the trickling, and dip our hands down into its pleasant coolness. Away up through the dark leafage, a mighty royal palm with stern aristocratic grace swings and rattles its great, dead, brown arms—the skeleton of its last year's growth—beneath the luxuriant crown of this year's green plumes.

In the thicket, we find the nutmegs, hiding among the delicate foliage of a low-branching tree. Sister reaches among the leaves and pulls off some of the fragrant fruit, and gathers many from the ground. A sense of rare luxuriance comes over us. This gathering of the spices of life from the very ground upon which we tread is intoxicating, and we just begin to understand the causes back of those dark pages of West Indian history, when man first partook of this delirium.

These large-leafed, upright little trees are the Madagascar coffee, and the smaller and more graceful ones, the Java coffee—how they take us back to those happy days and months among the coffee plantations, long ago!—and near by is the friendly banana, so common an object that we pass its torn, drooping leaves with scarcely a thought, but it is worth more than a passing glance, for there is no plant in all the tropics more useful than the banana. It has not only delicious fruit of many sizes and varieties, but it is also cooked as a vegetable, and forms one of the chief sources of the native diet. It is planted, on account of its heavy shade and quick growth, to shade the coffee, while trees of slower growth and more permanent shade are maturing, thus forming a necessary and temporary protection; it is also used for the same purpose among the cacao trees. It is a sort of foster-mother to the cacao, to care for the tender shrub until its real mother, "*La Madre del Cacao*," can assume permanent care of its charge. The banana takes so little vitality from the ground that, as protection to the coffee and cacao, it is indispensable. We had some very delicious, green-skinned bananas at several places, and found the small apple banana everywhere.

Manuel leads us on, and stops under a spindling, tall tree, flowering with dainty, pink buds of a delicious odour, and there's one branch just low enough for Little Blue Ribbons to reach on tiptoe. Does it seem possible that the little brown cloves, rattling in my spice-box at home, could ever have been so fresh and soft and pink? Poor little mummies!

And just see what we are coming to! Did you ever imagine there could be such shade? It's a tree from the Philippines. We stoop to get under the black leaves, and there the shade is absolutely impenetrable. What an adjustment of things there is in this grand old earth of ours!

My thoughts fly back to our Northern woods. I see the sinuously graceful elms, with the sunlight streaming through their wide open branches upon an earth longing for warmth; and long shafts of white noonday shooting through the interstices of basswood, maple, and ash; the woods are not black and sunless; they are translucently green, quivering with light and needed warmth. But here, where the sun is a ball of redundant flame the year around, Nature bequeaths to her children a shaded forest, rigidly trunked, stolidly formed, thick-leafed, which no blazing sun can penetrate or sweeping hurricane desolate.

#### IV.

Quite as one strokes the head of a favourite animal, Manuel leads us to an insignificant-looking tree, takes a branch caressingly in his hand, brings out his clumsy knife, selects just the right spot, cuts off a bit, and hands us a piece of camphor wood.

Into the dear St. Thomas basket it goes, with the leaves of coffee, the pink and white clove blossoms, and a long spray of *araucaria* from the Norfolk Islands,—a strange company, indeed!

Yonder long yellow avenues are cinnamon and spice groves with reddish-yellow bark, smooth as wax, casting slender shadows in the golden light. Here is the shaddock, entirely weaned from its Malayan home, and farther on a clump of low bushes, in among the nutmeg trees and coffee, with small satin-like leaf, brings us to the herb that "cheers but does not inebriate,"—the tea.

Just see those glorious great lemons, glowing in the ever-splendid sunlight, which transmits to every living object a radiance, a dazzling brilliancy, in which life progresses and finally dissolves out of sheer exhaustion from the exuberance of vitality.

Oh, to our starved eyes of the North; to our senses benumbed by dreary days of darkened sky, hearts chilled by bitterness of wind and gray, unyielding frost, this never-ending, unspeakable sunlight, filtering through the yellow vistas of clove and cinnamon, comes like the actual presence of Apollo, the Shining One! We may, in unguarded moments, in ungrateful moments, maybe, consider his embrace too positive, and we may raise the white umbrella, but we never quite lose our rejuvenated love for his golden glory.

Manuel, but half-clad, looks as if he would dismember at any moment. His trousers are hitched by a couple of old leathers, and his shirt looks as if it wished it "didn't have to," and his old hat is only there on sufferance, and his shoes—old flippety-flops—have dragged their ill-shaped existence through many a weary mile. But Manuel doesn't care; he loves his garden, and the sunshine and the luscious fruit, all his children so well behaved and so obedient to his voice. He takes a bamboo pole and gives one of the big, juicy lemons a rap, and down it falls on Wee One's head with such a thump! Then Manuel is very sorry, and he apologises for his child's misdemeanour in his funny, mixed-up Portuguese-English-Spanish and the rest, and we understand and don't mind a bit; in fact, we wouldn't care if more would fall in the same way.

Once upon a time, in the far-off golden days, when the Divine in Creation had not been quite forgot, there came to this shore a band of men,—not faultless, no, not faultless—but great men "for a' that," who, with glittering cross aloft, christened this fair land after the blessed Trinity. But this was not her first sacrament. Deep in the eternal silence of the forest, the dweller in the High Wood had sought expression of the divine through beauty, and chose a name from out the radiant wilderness which would tell for ever of its wonderment: "Iere," the land of the humming-bird, they called her—those dusky children of the High Wood—and to this day she clings lovingly to her maiden name.

We look about us. Where are the birds once peopling these forests, like myriads of rainbows? Oh, sisters! members of Humane Societies! Hunt up your old bonnets and see the poor little stuffed carcasses ornamenting your cast-off finery! So Trinidad has been bereft of her wonderful birds, and now there is but a name, a sad-sounding, meaningless name—Iere—to tell of days which knew not the pride and cruelty of women.

Think of it!—at one time, there averaged twenty thousand humming-birds a year exported from Trinidad to England alone!

And now, well—there are none left to export. We must find new islands to denude, to ravage, to desolate, for our adornment. But it's too unpleasant,—this seeing things as they are; we'll hide the poor little innocent card which the black woman gave us at the hotel; we'll cover up the word "Iere" with these coffee leaves. There, now the spray of *araucaria*, now the stick of camphor, and I think the lemon will fit right in among the nutmegs.

Come along, Manuel, we are ready; and we follow through the birdless paths, down where the *Nux Vomica* grows, and the pepper, and the lime and the calabash, and the orange and breadfruit, and tamarind, and pineapple; and we go on and wake up the comical lizards who scurry away like brown flashes of whip-cord. What ridiculous creatures they are, and how desperately frightened! Why, surely they must be fifteen inches long, and fully four inches high, and what funny, nimble legs! They start off in the same spasm-like way as do the toy lizards we buy for the youngsters.

Manuel brings us to the plant house where the great forest wonders of the Far East are babied and loved into strength, and I could not but think of Daudet's dear old *Tartarin of Tarascon*, dreaming by the homesick little baobab-tree, which grew in his window-garden; and of the long nights under the mellow moon of sunny France; and how he fought great beasts and achieved great fame in the land of sweet illusion.



**On the Way to the Savannah  
Port of Spain, Trinidad**

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Dream on, Tartarin, wherever you may be! The time will come when it will all be true, and you, too, will rest under the yellow splendour of the golden trees; and the earth, the great Mother Earth, will open her heart to you and breathe upon you the spirit of limitless possibilities!

Good-bye, Manuel! The basket is heavy to carry with its spoils of fruit and flowers; and we take "turn about" across the savannah.

The races are on, and horses are dashing around the grassy turf, and the Trinidadians are yelling, the cricket games are going, and the picnic parties are gathering up their baskets for home; and the Hindoo girls clamour to carry our basket, and we gladly give over the load to a tough little head; and the merry-go-round wheezes out its squeaking tunes, and we pass through the black crowd, and narrowly escape taking a cab, for the way to the quay looks long, and we waver and weaken, and are just about to give in, when up comes a tinkling tram, and we jump in,

with a penny to the Hindoo girl, and rumble away.

The man with the two monkeys, and the man with the green and blue parrot, and the boy with the shells, are still waiting.

Alackaday! Where is the woman with the baskets?

## CHAPTER II.

### ISLAND OF TRINIDAD. LA BREA

#### I.

WE were led to believe, through various accounts from former travellers, that the excursion to the Pitch Lake would be attended with considerable discomfort and some hardships.

After a run of about four hours from Port of Spain, Trinidad, we made La Brea at two o'clock in the afternoon of a blistering hot day. Fully one-third of the ship's company were frightened off, while the rest of us made ready for the much-anticipated expedition.

It was a funny-looking company that stood at the gangway, waiting for the first boat ashore.

Handkerchiefs took the place of collars and ties; coats and vests were, for the most part, discarded, and all endeavoured to make themselves as light in wearing apparel as possible.

The Caribbean Sea, which had, until now, been ruffled only by the regular sweep of the "trades," was badly tossed by a strong wind, so that the embarkation in the ship's boat was to me unpleasantly exciting. The sea was running so high that, in order to reach the boat without being wet through, we had to gauge our time well and take the jump just as the boat was lifted to the top of the wave. As we started down the ship's ladder, with Little Blue Ribbons tightly holding Daddy's hand, Sister having gone before in the whale-boat with friends, the ship's mate begged us to leave the Wee One with him. He said the sea was too rough and the landing too difficult; and besides he would take such good care of her, and she should have ice cream, and be a little queen all day,—if she would only stay. So, with some tears, and disdain for ice-cream, Little Blue Ribbons remained on board; the only time in the journey thus far when she was not one of the party.

Had it not been for the confident man, who likes the water, and the absurdity of the thing, I should have begged to be taken back to the ship.

We were in the second boat. The captain had arranged to have the launch tow us ashore, but the launch—true to the traditions of "oil engines"—had no intention of towing us ashore; it puffed and popped and made a great fuss, but would not move an inch. The engineer lost his steerageway, and it seemed every moment as if the great, clumsy thing would crash into us; and there we lay, going up and down the side of the ship, rolling from side to side, and bobbing from bow to stern, in a very disagreeable situation for those who don't like that sort of thing.

I know quite well that I was not the only one who would gladly have felt himself safe on the solid decks of our ship. For once, the incessant talking had ceased, and our boat-load of people sat there absolutely quiet, thinking very hard.

After numerous unsuccessful attempts to make the launch behave, they gave up the attempt, manned our life-boat with six round-faced, lubberly, German "jackies," each with a big oar, and went off independently.

I was heartily thankful not to have been assigned to the launch, for it could not compare in sea-going qualities with the boat in which we were placed.

As I said, it was a long row to the landing, but we finally reached smooth water, and disembarked at the end of a long bridge-like pier; not, however, without some difficulty.

We were still some distance from shore, which was reached by means of a narrow board walk, carried along one side of the pier, and bridging over the shoal water.

At the quay, a big "down-east" schooner (thank Heaven, there are a few American merchant vessels left!), two barks, and one full-rigged ship, were being loaded with pitch, by means of great steel buckets, travelling on an endless wire cable, which went from the end of the pier, up an incline, to the works on the hill, near to the great deposit of pitch beyond.



The Beach of la Brea  
Trinidad



This ship at the pier was the first full-rigged merchant ship we had seen during the cruise—most merchantmen seeming now to be rigged as barks or barkentines—and was, even in spite of its black cargo, a beautiful sight. There is something in the look of a ship—its mass of rigging, its straight yard-arms, well set up, its black, drooping sails, half-furled, its inexplicable riddle of shrouds and stays and braces and halliards and sheets—that always stirs my soul mysteriously. Black as this vessel was, prosaic as was her cargo, unsightly the hands that loaded her, she was a picture. By right, she should have carried teas, and spices, and silks, and jewels; but she was worthy of admiration despite her humble calling.

Once on land, we realised, looking up the long, black hill ahead of us, and feeling the heat from a blazing sun directly overhead, that the walk would be a hard one, and that we must go slowly, in order to make it with any degree of comfort; but walk we must, or stay on the beach.

The pitch was in evidence immediately. Reefs of hard asphalt ran through the sandy beach into the sea. The hill was covered with asphalt, and down near the shore it lay in great wrinkles, where, when the road was being made, it had overflowed and taken to the hedgeway. It was apparent under the grass and weeds, around the roots of trees, and in the banana groves; in fact, there was pitch everywhere, black, oozing, and dull.

## II.

Up the hill laboured the little procession of red-faced adventurers, in all conditions of negligée. The large lady from Kansas puffed and sweated and mopped her face; the doctor vowed we would die of sunstroke; the mother and her daughter, from Boston, made the ascent as their ancestors had stormed Bunker Hill, with features rigid and teeth set; our neighbour at table, who had been thrice around the world, wondered what on earth we would think of Manila in the summer-time if we called this hot; our jolly, delightful friend from New Haven laughed us all the way up the hill, and said he was suffering with the cold; the German baron, under his green umbrella, passed us with the superb stride acquired from his sturdy ancestors and his military training; down the hill back of us straggled on the rest of the company: the little women, the tall women, the lean ones, the fat ones, urged and supported by long-suffering husbands and brothers and friends who mopped and fanned furiously.

There were hats of all descriptions: white East Indian helmets built of pith and lined with green, deliciously light, cool things; and all conceivable shapes of Puerto Rican hats, of a pretty, fine white palm "straw," very much like the Panama; and hats from Haïti; and French hats from Martinique; and then there were Puerto Rican sailor hats, one of which I wore with great pride. Our shoes were the heaviest we had, and our clothing the oldest and lightest available.

Thus all marched on in broken file, with very hot faces, and shaded by all manner of outlandish umbrellas, over the hot asphalt to the Pitch Lake.

As our little party plodded along, going so slowly it hardly seemed as if we were making any progress at all, my courage began to wane somewhat, for I remembered most vividly a similar day on the island of Capri, when I had been overcome by the sun, and in consequence of which had suffered many months after. With this in my mind, we stopped at a shanty half-way up the hill, where we saw some bananas growing, tore off part of a leaf, and asked for some water of a negress, who was one of many watching the procession with great amusement. In fairly good English she told me not to wet the head; in fact, by her vociferous rejection of our plan, we were led to believe that it would be dangerous to carry it out at all, so we threw away the leaf, and worked on up the blistering highway to the top of the hill.

There was not a bit of shade in sight. To right and left, rank weeds and cacti grew in wild confusion, and with the exception of a few banana groves, and the huts of negro labourers farther down, there was nothing of a shade-producing nature along the road. The asphalt was so hot to the feet that we broke company, and took to single file in among the weeds on the edge of the road.

As we approached the summit of the hill, a fine breeze gave us new courage, and the sight of the Pitch Works, not far distant, dissolved our fears of the heat into most absorbing interest of the great phenomenon coming into view. An endless train of buckets, which led the way up the long ascent, on a wire rope supported at short intervals by large sheaves on iron pillars, went squeaking along, one row down to the dock, full of great chunks of pitch, and the other back, empty, to be filled and started on its round again.

## III.

I looked ahead as far as I could, and located our fellow voyagers, now here, now there,—white dots on the strangest landscape I had ever seen. I sat down on a barrel of pitch under the welcome shade of a rough shed in the power-house, and had my first glimpse of the great lake.

Why it has been called a "lake," I fail to discover; it was probably named thus by the English. In that case, the matter is explained; it is called a lake because it is not a lake at all. The Englishman never seems to understand that the object to be named ought to bear some slight relation to its appellative. He decides upon a name, and the unfortunate victim has to fit himself, herself, itself, into its new form as best he can. If this curious deposit had been called the "Pitch Bed," there might have been some reason in the naming; some, possibly not all, but some of the existing physical conditions would have been suggested to the mind, and the traveller might thus have been able to form an approximate idea of the phenomenon before seeing it.

Instead of a lake, you see a vast, flat, fairly smooth, black surface of pitch, with only here and there small pools of water,—in places, yellowish; in places, clear,—intersecting the black surface in all directions. Sometimes they enlarge, and, uniting, cover the surface quite a distance, and in the centre several feet deep; and again the intersecting, stream-like pools shrink to mere threads, but, as I said, the general aspect of the Pitch Lake is a flat, solid, black surface, covered occasionally with water, the water being only in the crevices between great masses of pitch that have pushed up from beneath.



Asphalt for Northern Pavements  
Pitch Lake, Trinidad

We were as yet unconvinced of its carrying qualities, and, not wishing to run the risk of getting stuck in the pitch, we waited the approach of one of the trains of little cable-cars, running from the works out on to the lake, which we could see coming toward us. The brakeman is good enough to stop, and we pile into the ridiculous little steel cars and hang on as best we can, while we are sent flying down over a narrow-gauge track, laid on top of the pitch, to the place where most of the digging is going on.

Here a great crew of black men—black as the pitch in which they stand—with bare feet, all with picks, dig out the wonderful formation, which breaks off in great brittle pieces. Seeing these men so fearlessly defying the forces of nature, we gained confidence, and stepped out of the buckets on to the surface of the so-called “lake;” and although our feet would sink in a half-inch or so when we stood still, we found that we could walk everywhere with perfect safety, with the exception of a few places where the surface seemed to be in big bubbles and disposed to crack and break away under us.

It was remarkable to me that the pitch is both viscous and brittle at the same time. When standing still, the water—thick and yellow, with a sulphurous odour—would ooze up about the feet and form new rivulets, which, uniting, would trickle into some near-by pool. There were innumerable small, crater-like openings, some like air-bubbles in the sea beach, others, deep, black holes, two and three feet in diameter, but no appearance of heat or fire. All over the lake, small springs of yellowish fluid were constantly bubbling up into the pools. The supply of pitch is apparently inexhaustible, for, after a great trench has been dug out along these temporary tracks, some four feet deep, and many rods wide, by the next day the hole will again be so far filled that the mining goes on as before.

The manager told us that it had not been found necessary to change the tram tracks for two years, that the level of the pitch fell only seven inches last year, after immense amounts had been removed for shipment.

The depth of this deposit is not known. It has been sounded a number of times, but it seems to be impossible to find the bottom. I do not know the exact dimensions of the lake, but, making a rough estimate, should say that it is half a mile wide, and about a mile long; its extent is said to be about one hundred and ten acres. The great asphalt deposit in Venezuela, which has been the cause of so much recent trouble,—through, I am sorry to say, the quarrels of two American companies,—is thought by some to be shallower than the one of La Brea, although it is apparently much larger, being in the neighbourhood of ten miles in circumference. This Trinidad pitch is also worked by an American company, under concession from the British Colonial Government.

#### IV.

It seemed to me that I had never before seen such black pitch or blacker “niggers.” They were a good-humoured lot of men, making no complaint of the heat, although they worked untiringly, bare-footed, in the hot, oozing pitch.

We stopped one fellow, about as black and tattered a figurehead as we could find, and told him we wanted his picture. He was perfectly delighted, and struck a very fetching attitude. After the button had been pressed, we gave him a bit of silver, and then came a howl from a dozen others for a similar opportunity, all posing for us as fancy struck them. Seeing that we were obdurate, the fortunate holder of the silver doubled up with a tremendous laugh, and I can yet see before me his two rows of glistening white teeth and his wreck of a hat and his rag of a shirt, and his bepatched breeches. His laugh so exasperated the others, that one, an elderly gentleman who wore grand side whiskers, shouted out in tones of deepest sarcasm: “Guess I’d git my picture took, too, Sam, if I was such a orangoutang as you is!” It seemed as though they would come to blows, but, had I known the good-humoured blacks better, I should have had no fear, for their battles, fierce as they seem, are only words, and usually end in a laugh.

There are two kinds of pitch: one, pure pitch, dead black, was loaded in the small cars, and the other, of a light brown colour, was carried off in dump-carts, drawn by mules. This black pitch forms the basis of all our asphalt pavements, and such a deposit must be worth millions to the *cessionaires*.

Now, when did this mighty process begin, and what internal force is at work producing this continual outpouring upon the earth’s surface?



**Loading Cars  
Pitch Lake, Trinidad**

At the farther end of the lake, women and young girls were busy gathering pieces of wood which were thrown up out of the pitch. I do not claim to understand this marvellous phenomenon. I would rather put the question to those of you who have access to the wisdom of libraries, and give you the privilege of bringing some light upon these strange manifestations of God's unknowable. As I understand it, pitch is obtained from tar, boiled down, and tar is a black, viscous liquid obtained by the distillation of wood and coal, so this residuum which we see is the third step in one of Nature's great caldrons; a process millions of years in forming, a process still in operation.

Is this wood which is continually coming to the surface of the lake an unused part of that vast primeval forest which was when time did not exist; when chaos was revolving into form? How long has it been wandering, and what force is it which sends it thus unharmed, save for the loss of bark, out again into the light?

Some very strange implements and tools, recognised as South American workmanship of a remote day, have come to the surface of this lake, and one theory for their appearance is, that they have been drawn under the Gulf of Paria, and up through the lake of La Brea by some unseen, but mighty power from the lake of pitch in Venezuela, of which this is supposed by some to be the outlet.

The wood, gathered by the women, is not petrified, but merely impregnated with the pitch, and has all its original qualities as when it first left the parent stem, with, however, the additional affinity for fire which its pitchy bath would naturally give.

We were much entertained by the women and children, who stood knee-deep in the fresh pools at the further end of the lake, doing the washing. The clothes were laid out on the pitch to dry, and the naked babies rolled around on the black stuff quite as much at home as our babies are on the clean nursery floor. The women had on but very little clothing, or none,—and some of the girls and boys, fourteen and fifteen years of age, were entirely nude. One young girl, as we approached, modestly hung a little fluttering rag about her loins, and, thus clothed, was not ashamed.



**A Native Washerwoman on the Pitch Lake  
Trinidad**

I have seen more immodesty on the floor of a modern ballroom than ever from the bare bodies of these black women. But terrible as the stories are which one hears of the immorality of the West Indies, I feel that here the evil is less heinous in the coloured races on account of the primitive nature and conditions of a half-savage people. Unfortunately this great and degenerating danger to the white inhabitants is ever present. The pitch lake foreshadows the terrible conditions of the people in Trinidad and Jamaica; the continual welling up of this black mass suggests the doom which awaits these beautiful islands, unless a giant hand is put forth to save them.

The difficulties of this excursion have been much exaggerated. To be sure, we had a long walk, but we also had a good breeze most of the way, and our fellow traveller who, in spite of all warnings, had worn his immaculate white suit, came off without spot or blemish, notwithstanding the old proverb about "keeping away from the pitch."

## V.

Hot and tired, I left the party, who wished to make the entire circuit, and took my way over the yielding pitch, over the sulphurous yellow puddles, until I finally came to the grateful shade of the power-house. A rickety old carryall looked very inviting, and in no time I had ensconced myself therein, and leaned back in full anticipatory

enjoyment of a restful quarter of an hour.

As I sat there, looking out over the distant sea,—for I was on the brow of a hill,—gradually the unsightly powerhouse, the pitch cars, the little huts where bananas were sold, the native shanties, the long, narrow bridge, even the rim of the canopy above my head, seemed to fade away into nothing. The ships at anchor had slipped their cables and were gone; the iron pier, with its busy life, had disappeared; all had changed, vanished. It was silent, ghostly.

Then, out of nothing, out of dimness, there came a moving, a forming, a changing, and I became conscious that I was no longer alone, but that a company, great and illustrious, was assembling by ship-loads upon the beach of La Brea; and that, without word or confusion, five ancient, lofty-sterned, lumbering craft, and a quaint little caravel, lay bow-on to the strand, while one was already being careened on her side in the shoal water of the beach by cumbersome tackle fast to her thick mastheads. Their huge, clumsy hulks were gray with time; their gaping seams told of hot, blistering suns, and upon their decks there lay an array of guns and armament, crudely ancient and unwieldy. Silent men were noiselessly moving about at the command of one most beautiful to behold, in scarlet cloak, and silken hose and doublet of rare elegance, with hat beplumed, and glittering sword, who walked amongst the company as a king.

To and from the ship there moved a ghostly procession of grimy sailors, carrying pitch to the beach, where fires were burning, and the venerable three-deckers were being daubed with the smoking fluid, and made ready for the high seas.

It was a merry company, in truth, of lords and gentlemen, and scholars, too, who came upon my vision, and wonderingly my eyes followed the gallant leader. It seemed to me that I could all but catch his words. He spoke with a poet's grace, so full of charm and so deliberate, so courtly was his address. His face once turned, I knew him to be English. His fair skin was burned by deep-sea voyaging; his pointed beard just touched the lace of a deep, white ruff, and over his shoulder hung a plume, white and curling. In all my life, I had never seen so gay a gentleman, and I could not get my fill of looking and of wondering.

Could it be that this great company were the revived followers of the dauntless Sir Walter Raleigh, searching, centuries ago, for *El Dorado*? And it came to me, in that curious mixing of past and present, of which dreams are made, "Does Sir Walter, with all his wisdom, suspect that here, where he pitches his ships, is to be the great gold mine—some later man's *El Dorado*—while he eagerly sails away in futile quest of golden sands that are always just beyond his reach?"

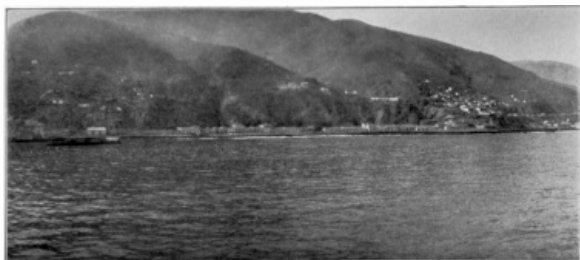
I lifted myself to strain my farthest sight, when lo! all was gone; galleons, gentlemen, scholars, sailors, even the little caravel—all! The sun was beating down upon the black road, the air was blistering; negroes were weighing the buckets of pitch, and the machinery clanked, with deafening indifference, through the quivering air; and up from behind a clump of bushes a red bow, atop of a well-known white hat, chased away the phantoms of long ago. I took off my dark glasses, rubbed my eyes, and, half-dazed, stepped from my enchanted carryall.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SPANISH MAIN

#### I.

**S**TEAMING out of the Gulf of Paria the day before, away from the muddy water of the Orinoco, we had come again through the Dragon's Mouth, close to that long, eastward-pointing finger of South America that forms one side of this famous gateway, back into the welcome Caribbean Sea. Thence through the night we skirted the South American coast, passing the celebrated pearl-fishing island of Margarita—"The Pearl"—where it was said that a German gunboat with covetous eye had these many months been making careful surveys and taking elaborate soundings—so forehanded, you know! And now we were at anchor in the roadstead of La Guayra, the seaport of Caracas.



Where the Mountains Meet the Sea  
La Guayra, Venezuela

Leaning over the rail of the white ship, early in the dawning of that day, it came to me over and over again that we were at last in the presence of the great West Indian Mother, and that her face was in truth an exact realisation of our imaginings.

A strong breeze blew the waves fast and loose, one upon another, to the near-lying shore, where a white line of surf circled about a rounding promontory, and lost itself on the other side of the cliff. Up and beyond, rose the mountains, and some one said: "The Andes!" and we looked again, and longer, and said to ourselves—"The Andes,—South America, we are looking upon them with actual eyes!"

Up, and still up, rose the mountains; great, tender lines of undulating softness, all green and blue and gentle and grand, one sweep upon another of matchless warm tints; one sweep upon another of voluptuous curves in billowy green, and dropping in and about the contour of the great continent's majestic form, far disappearing valleys swept into the dimness of soft, shadowy depths.

Like a great mother, asleep, spread with a coverlet of the changing tints of malachite and beryl, South America lay before us.

Clambering up her skirts were the little white roofs of La Guayra, spots on her verdant garment,—irregular spots here, there, and everywhere; now in patches, comfortably huddling together at her feet; now stray offshoots away beyond. All very square and very Spanish were these houses, very quaint to look upon; and if this is La Guayra, where is Caracas? Must we, too, clamber and climb away into those mountain heights, and, perchance, awaken the Great Mother, who sleeps so gently under the drowsy lullings of the deep sea?

## II.

Things are moving on the shore, and in the distance dots like men and women stir about the tiny houses, and a toy train toots, and toy engines rattle, and toy cars seem filling with toy people; and we think it time to go ashore and see if we can find a seat in one of those cars; so we run up forward, where our impatient fellow voyagers have been hurrying into the launch this long time. It has just puffed away, and we are really glad.

There is something very like the "stray sheep" in our make-up. It is Americanism boiled down,—this love of going alone, and being self-reliant.

A beamy shore-boat is engaged at one *bolivar* apiece (negotiations having been started on a basis of five *bolivars* apiece, charged by the boatmen), and we have plenty of room for all, even the Doctor, who is going with us (for he was just too late for the launch—perhaps, with malice aforethought); and so we row to the stone steps of the quay of La Guayra, the port of Caracas, our first landing on the "Spanish Main."

We have left the land of what we supposed to be our mother tongue, and are come to a country where we can really be understood, or misunderstood, according to our abilities to express ourselves, in a language more constant than English. I take a mental stock, and find four Spanish phrases which did not fail me in Santo Domingo, and shall not fail me here. Besides I have been practising them since then! With these I can fare sumptuously:

*¿Cuanto cuesta?* (How much does it cost?)

*¿Qué hora es?* (What o'clock is it?)

*¡Mucho bonito!* (Very beautiful!)

*Yo no entiendo.* (I do not understand.)

This, with a few nouns sprinkled in, was my vocabulary; but I had no fears,—had we not our own interpreter?

And the big, strong oars brought us to the landing. Then we girls, in charge of the Doctor, were stood up in the shade of a warehouse, where we watched the white uniformed South Americans, struggling with our obdurate men for their landing charges—for here they charge for the right to land. Then the men disappeared with the bags, and we waited what seemed to us a very long time, until, with one consent, we just thought we wouldn't stay put another minute; so the Doctor takes the lead with his big white Indian helmet jammed over his eyes, and Little Blue Ribbons and Sister raise a fine cloud of dust, running on ahead. But we older ones know what it means to be in La Guayra, so we follow on very leisurely. On the way, we meet an excited messenger already sent to hurry us to the train.

La Guayra is said to be the hottest place about the West Indies, and I could well imagine how the Great Mother would have to fan her little white children, when they once really felt the breath of the unconscionable sun; but, as we walked along, even though the sun had climbed a few steady hours, we found it far from uncomfortable, even carrying our heavy satchels, and the white umbrella, besides.

Along a dusty and sun-stricken water-front, disfigured with railroad tracks, and low warehouses, we came to the station, where the men, triumphant, were impatiently waiting, after sending out their belated relief expedition. Tickets had been bought, gold pieces divided up into fascinating silver pieces, called *bolivars* (in honour of the great South American liberator—accent on the second syllable, if you please), and all in our lord and master's own Spanish, of which we were justly proud; and then we find places in the train, and in a few moments after our arrival we jerk out among the white houses.

It was a clever bit of forethought—that move of ours to hunt up the men. Had we not done so, we could never have caught the early morning train, for the messenger was slow, and we would have become merely a part of the hot and dependent crowd on the later "special." It's better sometimes *not* to stay where you're put.

We move along at a good pace among the gardens of La Guayra,—rather sparse gardens they are,—and then we climb to the balconies, and then a turn and we are hiding about the Great Mother's green petticoats; and anon we pass up to the roofs of La Guayra,—which reach out like a white sombrero over the little people below.

Then the pull begins. Two powerful, stocky, low-built, narrow-gauge mountain engines haul us along with apparently no effort, up into the mountains, up a grade which seems to grow steeper every minute. Our men say that the average grade is over four per cent. I can't see how it is that men know all these things about grades and percentages. It seems like such a lot of plunder to lie around in the brain. But—about such trifles—men must know and women must ask, and that's all there is to it.

It is a continuous twisting and turning and winding, seldom on a level stretch; it's up, up away from the sea from the very start. Now, we are far above the tree-tops of the town, and our white ship out in the harbour lies motionless, and seems far away. We wonder at the courage of the people who would dare so great a feat of road-building, and grow doubly curious to see the city, hidden beyond in the clouds of the mountain.

## III.

La Guayra lies just above sea-level. In two hours, we must climb over the Great Mother's back, going thirty odd

miles to reach Caracas, which lies at an elevation over three thousand feet in a valley, only six miles in an air line from La Guayra.

Up, up into the thin vapours, into regions of other trees still higher, whose tops again we pass amongst. The sun is hazy through a translucent veil of mist, and far away, the white horses of the sea dance up against the shore and out of sight, and the white sombrero drops beneath an emerald cloak, and everything but the sky is shut out.

We jump first to one side of the car and then to the other, for the sea-view and for the mountains. We are whirled around quick curves, and all but lose our feet; and some of us—even men—get dizzy looking at the drop below us; and then we cut through the mountain and hurry on up the steep climb until the plucky little engine decides to stop, and we are told that we have reached the summit; and we hurry from the cars and feel the sweet coolness of the mountains, and the actual presence of the Great Mother.

We stand close together on the brink of a chasm and look tremulously into the depths of her great heart; down, down, a thousand feet and more of living, breathing green, into every hue of purple and blue, deepening into black near the far-off valley, and disappearing into azure among the clouds,—silence, shadow, tenderness, sublimity, overspread by the ineffable loveliness of morning.

We are moving again, and now it is down, gradually, for Caracas lies a thousand feet below the summit. We follow along a white highroad, the mountain trail from Caracas to the sea. Now we are on its level; now we leave it. Long trains of pack-mules make a cloud of gray dust against the green, and here and there a red blanket thrown across a burro's back brings a delicious bit of life and colour into the passing scene.



Caracas and the Mountains  
Venezuela

Now we seem to be on the level, and scurry along at a great rate; and soon there spring up out of the brown earth *adobe* houses (the first we have seen since we were in Mexico), and here are more and yet more, and there, ah! that must be Caracas, the great Venezuelan capital, the habitation of over one hundred and fifty thousand people!

But, shall we say it? Must we be honest at the expense of all else? The approach to Caracas is a disappointment. There is scarcely any kind of a habitation which gives a landscape quite such a distressful look as the *adobe* hut. Built of sun-dried mud blocks, it gives off an atmosphere of dust with every whiff of wind. It comes to our mind always with the thought of dry barrenness, heat, sun, dust, shadeless fields of maguey, prickly *nopals*, broad sombreros, and leather-clothed *rancheros*. And to see the suburbs of a great city, the outlying habitations, in gray, crumbling *adobe*, makes an unpleasant impression, in spite of the fact that, from the distance, we catch a quick glimpse of a peaceful campanile and high, imposing roofs a bit beyond. There's only time for a suggestion, but that suggestion biassed all our later impressions. We steam into the station and begin to pick up our traps and make for the carriages.

#### IV.

As we said before, the spirit of independence gained supremacy, when we were once fairly upon the Spanish Main. Out of many, a few of us escaped the tourist agent. A courier had been sent from New York, and at every port we had the privilege of availing ourselves of his guides, carriages, meal tickets, *et cetera*, if we wished to do so; and for some it was certainly a great advantage, for, unless one knows some French and Spanish, one is at the mercy of every shark that swims, and these waters are full of them, as are all others for that matter.

We found the prices very high everywhere, with few exceptions; equally high for poor accommodations as for the better, the reasons whereof, for the present, must be left unexplained. Suffice it to say, that the American is his own worst enemy. Nine-tenths of our party thought it would be unwise to go through South America from La Guayra to Puerto Cabello on their own responsibility; so our little group were the only ones to experience the joy and excitement of an independent tour through a strange country, where English—good, honest, live English—is a rare commodity.

The Doctor, and Mr. and Mrs. M— from Boston, and Daddy were keen for the experience. I was afraid we might be left away down in South America, with no train to carry us on from Caracas, for "the personally conducted" were to have a "special," but my fears were finally allayed by constant assurances of safety; so independence carried the day.

Once inside the Caracas station, Daddy disappears, and, after a bit, we see him beckoning to us from in among a crowd of vehicles, all very comfortable and well-appointed, and we sidle along among the noisy South American cabbies, and jump into the selected carriage.

Now, what was said to the cabby, I'll never know; but we were no sooner in that carriage than the horses

started on a dead run, rattlety-bang, whackety-whack, jigglety-jagglety, over stones and ruts, through the city of Caracas. Up the hill we tore, and all I could see from under the low, buggy-like canopy was the bottom of things sailing by in a cloud of dust. Every now and then we struck a street-car track on the wrong angle, and off we would slew, still on the run, with one wheel in the track and the other anywhere but in the right place, for half a block or so, and then no sooner well under way again, than we would all but smash to pieces some peaceful cab, jogging toward us from the opposite direction. A train of donkeys, coming from the market, on the way home to the mountains with empty baskets, narrowly escapes sudden death at our furious onslaught; and I can yet hear their little feet pattering off and the tinkle of the leader's bell, as his picturesque little nose just misses our big clumsy wheel. In a jumble we see the small feet of the passers-by, and so we jerk along until all at once we stop with a bump at the *Gran Hotel de Caracas*.

There we wait in the garden while our recklessly independent men seek lodgings. None to be had! Off we gallop toward another inn, catch glimpses of a square, stop again, wait in the carriage, and find the standing still very delightful. In a few minutes, our bold leaders return with the look we know so well,—jubilant and hopeful. Beautiful rooms, fine air, clean beds, sumptuous parlours, and all that,—you know how it reads.

We enter the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*.

## V.

May I be forgiven if I leave the path of calm discretion for once, or how would it do to leave out the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela* altogether, and turn the page to where the mountains begin? But, you see, if we leave out the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*, we should have to leave out Caracas, and that would never do at all.

There was one member of our party who never sat down to a meal that he did not declare it was the finest he had ever eaten in his life. This faculty of taking things as they come, conforming gracefully to the customs of a country, is, perhaps,—next to unselfishness,—the most enviable trait in the traveller. Well might it be applied, as we begin the search for our rooms in the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*. We climb a wide, winding, dirty stairway, pass through the sumptuously dusty parlour, up another flight of the same kind, only narrower and dustier and darker. An English housekeeper leads the way, and some one exclaims (Oh, the blessed charity of that soul!): "How pleasant to find a neat English woman in charge of the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*!"

It has never been clear to me just what state of mind could have inspired that remark; whether it was a momentary blindness, occasioned by the mad drive, or a kind of temporary delirium, from the sudden consciousness of power over perplexing foreign relations; or whether it was merely the natural outburst of an angelic disposition, I could never quite make out. But those are the identical words he used: "How pleasant to find a neat English woman at the head of affairs in the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*."

The "neat English woman" had dull, reddish, grayish hair, stringing in thin, stray locks from a lopsided, dusty knot on the top of her head. She had freckles, and teeth that clicked when she smiled. A time-bedraggled calico gown swung around her lean bones, and at her side she carried a bunch of keys, one of which she slipped up to the top into a wobbly door, and ushered us into our "apartments."

The "neat English housekeeper" fitted into that room to a dot. It was gray, and red, and wobbly, and she was gray, and red, and wobbly.

If it hadn't been for the everything outside, away beyond the balcony (for, thank Heaven, no Spanish house is complete without one!), no amount of philosophy could have atoned for that room. It was simply white with the accumulated dust of no one knew how long. Our shoes made tracks on the floor, and our satchels made clean spots on the bureau. Two slab-sided, lumpy beds suggested troubled dreams. Two thin, threadbare little towels lay on the rickety, dusty wash-stand, and an old cracked pitcher held the stuff we must call water. A thin partition of matched boards dividing ours from the next "apartments," rattled as we deposited our things in various places which looked a little cleaner than the places which were not so clean.

Had it not been for the balcony, we could never have endured it; though we had put up in queer places before. We had not even the satisfaction of leaning on the balcony rail; it was too dusty. But we could stand, and we did stand, looking out over and beyond the picturesque buildings, to the everlasting hills, to the Andes, their lofty summits encircling us like an emerald girdle, with calm La Silla thousands of feet above all.

Below us lay the city and the Square of Bolivar, with the bronze statue of the great Liberator in the centre, in the midst of a phalanx of palms, rising above the dust and the glaring white walk.

## VI.

To the left, the Cathedral, one compensation at least for all the rest. What combination of characteristics is it that makes the Spaniard such a marvellous builder, and, at the same time, such a wretched maintainer? He builds a Cathedral to be a joy for all time; its lines fall into beauty as naturally as the bird's flight toward its nest. Whatever he builds, he builds for posterity; simply, beautifully, gracefully. Even his straight rows of hemmed-in city houses have a touch of beauty about them somewhere; and in the Cathedral, his true artistic sense finds full expression. Close at hand the noble Campanile, swung with ancient bells, watches in serene dignity and beauty the moving, streaming life below. Sweet lines, harmonious to the eye, lift the Cathedral from the hideous dirt and unkempt streets; from the whirling dust and circling buzzards, to a sphere of forgetfulness, where beauty struggles for the supremacy she holds with royal hand so long as we continue to gaze upward.



**Equestrian Statue of Bolivar, the Liberator  
Caracas, Venezuela**

But once let our eyes leave the mountains and the Tower, and it all changes into that other picture, the other side of the life of that curious compound of traits, the Spaniard. For here, South American as he calls himself, down deep in his heart he is ever the Spaniard, and although he has claimed his independence of the mother country these many years, through the heroic victories of Bolivar and his brave associates, his characteristics are Spanish, his arts are Spanish, his life is Spanish; his glorious Cathedral is Spanish, and his horrible streets are Spanish; his magnificent statue of Bolivar is Spanish, and the dowdy, dusty garden about it is Spanish. Was he ever intended to be a householder? Should not his portion be to beautify the earth by his artistic intuition, and let the rest of us, who do not comprehend the A B C of his art, be the cleaners and the menders? Is not this a people left like children to build up the semblance of a government from the wrong stuff? Will not the world in time come to see that one race cannot be all things; that some must be artists, and some mechanics; that some must be leaders, and others followers; that some will be the builders of beauty, to last for all time, and others must be the guardians of health, the makers of strong, clean men?

## VII.

Why is it that the President's house,—the great yellow house across the square, shown us by the Minister of War himself to-day,—one of the homes of Cipriano Castro, the present Dictator, is nothing more or less than an arsenal, packed to the full with cartridges, muskets, and rapid-firing guns, and alive with armed troops? How is it that Castro is said to have laid by a million dollars out of a twelve thousand dollars a year salary? Why is it that our going into Venezuela was considered by some unsafe? Why did we shake every bone in our bodies over the upturned streets and boulders of Caracas? Because the Venezuelan is trying to do that for which he is not fitted; in which, during all these long years of constant revolution, he has failed. He, past-master in certain of his arts, has taught the world his colours and his lights and shades; he has given to earth notable tokens of his skill in building; but in house-cleaning—municipal or national—he is out of his element, and should no more be expected to excel in that line than a babe in arms should be expected to know the Greek grammar.

Like all Spaniards he is mediæval in his instincts; he cannot really govern himself as part of a republic.

The city of Caracas exemplifies this statement. It is in a horrible state of dirt and disproportion. Its people are kind and courteous, but its streets are a nightmare; and over all hovers the strong hand of military despotism.

## VIII.

After dinner our first expedition was to call upon the United States Minister L— and his wife, who were occupying the former residence of Count De Toro, some miles out of the city. And what a drive!

To move comfortably in Caracas, you must either take the donkey tramway—which never goes where you want to go—or you must walk. But to walk a half-dozen miles in the hot sun, on a dusty, stony road, is not particularly inviting, so, with our respects to the sun, we decide to drive, and all the way out we wonder why we ever did. And yet, had we walked, I suppose we would have wondered why we hadn't taken a cab.

As it was, the dust blew about us from the rolling, bumping wheels in great clouds, and the big stones in the road sent us careening about from one side of the carriage to the other. Again we think of Mexico—of the dust, the parched earth, the *arroyos*, and the saving mountains beyond. We pass a dried-up river-bed, where women are washing in a faint trickle of water, and then we wind about the hill and climb up the rocky way, enter a sort of wood, and come suddenly to the minister's house.





**An Interior Court  
Caracas, Venezuela**

Our nation's arms on the gateway make us feel at home, and we jingle the bell and send in our cards and wait in the shady court. In a few moments, Minister L— appears, and with him Mrs. L—, who bids us enter her cool, delicious drawing-room, very clean and sweet and old-fashioned and quiet, though the house is truly Spanish, with wide, airy rooms and curious pictured walls. The men went off up a flight of stone steps through the garden to the office, to talk politics and the "Venezuelan situation," I suppose; while we sat there with the minister's wife, who told us much of her life and the customs of the country, and, among other things, how difficult it is for a foreigner—even a diplomat—to gain access to the real home-life of the Spaniard; how the women live shut in, and see but little of the world, only glimpses now and then, never knowing anything of our Northern freedom.

## **IX.**

The drive back to the city was one continuous round of jolt and bump and dust. We rattled down and up the streets which, despite their narrowness and general dilapidation, could not be utterly devoid of interest, if viewed from the eyes of the lover of wrought-iron handiwork and graceful handlings of simple and strong elements in building.

We were told that it was our duty to view the Municipal Palace, and dear Sister, although I knew she was tired, did not want anything seeable omitted; so we most willingly left the cabs at the palace door, with the hope of never having the agony of that ride repeated.

As the Spaniard builds his cathedral, so does he impart to each important structure a fitting grace and dignity of style commensurate with its office. The Municipal Palace is built about a great hollow square or plaza, which is filled with palms and other similarly beautiful vegetation. But, oh, dear! oh, dear! the dust! The great reception-hall, or audience-chamber,—or whatever one might call it,—was lined with stately gilt chairs and sofas, done up in linen dusters. The effort of driving and seeing and jolting and being agreeable had been such a strain that I just thumped down on one of the wide sofas and spent my time looking about me, while the others conscientiously made the *grande tour* from one end of the great room to the other.

It is a large oval hall ornamented with some very fine historical paintings. The Spanish Student had found an obliging officer—for soldiers are everywhere—and I quietly left the two alone. I thought it too cruel, after our long drive, to expect him to retranslate for my benefit, but then there came a faint suspicion in my mind, from a troubled expression on his face, when the guide launched into the deep waters of Venezuelan history, with Bolivar rampant and the Spaniards fleeing, that, possibly, it was not all clear sailing; that, possibly, this was just the occasion for the last of my phrases. No, I watch the face; it resumes once more its usual expression of serenity, and I sit there and think how beautiful it might all be if it were only clean; if Bolivar could only come back again and teach his children their unlearned lesson of disinterested self-love of country and home.

Bolivar appears to have been the only liberator (and each new "President" who throws out the defeated party and instates himself is called "liberator") who ever died poor, having spent not only public funds for the betterment of arts and science and education, but nine-tenths of his own personal patrimony as well.

The guide closes the blinds, and our party comes together at the door, leaving nice little clean spots where they have stood in groups on the dusty, once highly polished floor, and we turn down the long, wide balcony to an open door at the end. A brilliantly uniformed, handsome lad bars admission, for Castro the Great is holding a cabinet meeting there, and we can see the collar of a black alpaca coat and the back of a very solemn-looking chair, and hear a low voice speaking,—and that was all we saw of Castro.

Some one proposes a drive; some one else suggests the shops, but we decide to go home. That dear old word sounds lonesome away down here in South America. Does it mean the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*? Was this the home; or was it the wide, out-reaching mountains, fading into the deeps of night; or the Cathedral, rising from the dread below in her sweet chastity?

## **X.**

Tired bells jangle out the slowly passing time. An ancient carillon sounds the quarter, an added clang the half, one note more for three quarters. The long black arms reach to the hour, then another and another passes, and night brings rest to the Great Mother. But the soft gentle eyes are no sooner closed than all the children, the white children at her feet, begin to stir and move, just as yours and mine do when mother sleeps.

The old church towers, with sweet grace, wrap about her stately form a mantle of whitest silver, bordered with great lines of black, and away above her head, up in God's garden, forget-me-nots and heartsease blossom out into twinkling spots of starlit beauty.

The moon rolls languidly on in the gentlest heaven that earth e'er looked upon.

Below, beneath God's garden, the white children brighten and awaken from the drowsy languor of the long day. Lights flare out, doors open, and streets fill with happy voices, and a white-frocked humanity empties itself into the Plaza to hear yet again the great Military Band of Caracas.

There comes a hush, and then—it must be from the garden away off so far—there drops a veil,—the veil of forgetfulness, in sounds of music so inexpressibly tender and alluring as to catch the soul from earth away up to where white angels gather the forget-me-nots and heartsease. The crumbling city and its disordered sights, the dust and all unpleasantness pass away beyond the veil, and all that remains is covered with the witchery of music.

To make it real, we, too, join the children and press in close, just as our little ones do who fear not the expression of their emotions. We, too, press in where the makers of this wonderful music, sixty of them, stand in a great semicircle at the head of a flight of stone steps, and then we listen to the old, eternally old stories of life and love and joy and tragedy; listen, until our souls are filled to the utmost with the deeps of life!

An intermission comes; we take a deep breath; meanwhile he of the Spanish vocabulary, made bold by enthusiasm, threaded his way to where the leader of the band was nonchalantly smoking a cigarette, wishing to congratulate him on the masterful work done by his musicians, and also to thank him for having just played "The Star Spangled Banner," in honour of the Americans present.

Shrugging his shoulders, the bandmaster remarked that his men had almost forgotten that American thing, as it was twelve years since last they played it! Thus does the Venezuelan show his love for these United States. But we forget that in the charm of the reawakened melody, for it is the kind of music that speaks real things; that brings the great forgetting of things visible; that brings the great remembering of things eternal. Mellow notes, as from the throat of a blackbird, slip through the liquid night as softly as the splash of feathered warblers in the cool water brooks, and when the strong word is uttered, it comes forth like the voice of a seer, unjarring, made strong through great tenderness.

Closer and closer we press to lose not the slightest note, and we realise that it is the music which comes to our cold Northern senses but once in a lifetime, and our ears plead for more and yet more. No strings could ever have so mellowed themselves into the loveliness of that night as did those liquid oboes, whose sylvan tones filtered through our senses with ineffable sweetness. The wood and brass seemed to have been tempered by long nights of tears and days of smiles, so ripened were they into an expression of the soul of humanity.

At last the Great Mother sleeps, her children are tired and go to rest, and God's garden blossoms away, away off beyond in the far country.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN VENEZUELA. CARACAS

#### I.

THE choice lay between a luncheon on board our vessel down in the hot harbour of La Guayra, with President Cipriano Castro and his suite invited as guests of honour by the German officers, or an added day in Caracas; and then a glimpse of South America on our way by Valencia to Puerto Cabello, where we would again take ship. The question was well-discussed, *pro* and *con*, and finally decided in favour of Venezuela, the country *versus* Castro, its dictator. After all, General Castro was not so very different from the other Venezuelans all about us, except in that great element, his personal success for the time being; and then you know we did see his alpaca coat and the back of his chair, and we heard his voice in the council-chamber,—at least we thought we did,—and that really ought to be enough to satisfy any one.

In a way, we did feel satisfied, and yet there was a lingering inclination toward that luncheon. It might be that, for once, the great man would look, act, appear just a little different from the every-day sort. It was only a remnant of the everlasting hope for a perfect adjustment of mind and body,—that futile phantasmagoria which would make the great man great in all things. And to give up and leave Castro in a common, every-day alpaca coat,—and only the back of it at that,—when we might see him in gold lace and gorgeous uniform, well, it was too bad; but then old common sense comes lumbering along and spoils the whole thing, and tells us it's no use, no use at all, mourning over the impossible; he's only a man, and a little man at that, and there are plenty of fine men all over the world, and there's only one South America; and so and so on, until the balance weighs so heavily against the Castro faction that, when the time came to take the train for La Guayra, we divided the party, sent the little girls back to the ship with our friends, and turned ourselves loose upon the sunny streets of Caracas.

#### II.

We had no guide-book, no one told us what to do, no one seemed to know what we ought to do; so, freed from all restraint, we had the delightful sensation of unlimited liberty.

It was Ash Wednesday and the church-bells rang incessantly. We took to the left, passing the Cathedral, whose black shades enveloped one after another of the faithful, and kept straight on, to where the women in white frocks and lace mantillas, and the black serving-girls with baskets, and the small boys, and trains of burros were streaming down in the direction of the market. Most naturally we join the procession, now in the street, with the cabs and carriers of all sorts of things, and now jostling in among the people on the narrow sidewalk of the shady side.

We have no intention of telling about the flies and the smells and the dirt. They were all there and can easily be pictured, and we really have no intention of staying but a moment in the market, for we have seen so many before; but once a part of the big throng of buyers and sellers; once fairly free from the South Americans who insist upon speaking English, once free to use our own laboriously acquired Spanish, we stay on and on, buy and eat all sorts of

curious fruit, until we fear for the consequences, and are delightfully uncomfortable and happy.

It was a surprise to find in Caracas a market which surpassed in varieties and quantities any other place we had ever seen.

Caracas, with its abortive palms, its dusty, dried-up appearance, gave one the impression of unproductiveness; and the dinner of the night before, with meat, meat, meat,—an exaggerated Trinidadian affair—led us to expect anything but fresh, sweet, delectable fruits; but here they were in masses! We had searched every port for pineapples, and these were the first ones we had found which answered to our ideals formed years ago by the pineapples of Amatlan and Southeastern Mexico. And such dear little thin-skinned refreshing limes! I wonder why they are not exported more freely in place of the big, thick-coated lemons? I suppose the impression prevails that the American wants everything on a big scale, so he gets the big lemon in place of the dainty aromatic lime. There we found in great abundance all the fruits with which we had grown familiar on the islands, but more surprising, the fruits of the temperate regions as well. There were some queer kinds of melons, too. We tried them, of course; we tried everything, buying here a slice of pineapple for *dos centavos*, and over at another stall a *medio's* worth of mangoes; then we take up a piece of a curious fruit and examine it rather suspiciously. Its meat is yellow and covered with little black seeds, just the size and appearance of capers, and when one eats it, the seed is the only element of flavour. It has so exactly the taste of water-cress that one needs to use considerable will-power to believe it is a melon, and not a salad.

Here were grapes, both white and black, and sweet and sour lemons, and all sizes of oranges. There were peaches and apricots, and curious little apples, about the size of a small crab-apple; and delicious little Alpine strawberries from away up in the Andes, and then there were in every stall mangoes, and sapolillas, and granaditas, and pineapples sweet as honey and luscious, and curious aguacotes and zapotas and many unknown fruits—besides the ever-present cocoanut.

And vegetables! I only wish we could tell you the names of all the aromatic herbs and green stuffs spread out to tempt us. But there was one thing we did recognise at first sight: the beans—nine different varieties in one stall and maybe as many more in another—“*frijoles de todas clases*,” the market-woman announced for our encouragement. A procession of bulging baskets crowds us along out of the market, and we move on to make room for a stream of empty baskets coming from the opposite direction.

### III.

We take a straightaway course down toward the ever-beautiful curves of a massive old church, some blocks off, and on the way, with the wanderer's prerogative, step into the open door of a fine modern building, apparently a bank. The Spanish Student walks up to a grilled window in the court to get an American gold piece changed into Venezuelan bolivars and is at once invited to enter. The president and vice-president of the bank were at conference in a finely appointed, spacious office, and as we appeared, both greeted us most cordially and addressed us in perfect English. The weather started the ball of conversation rolling, and from that we chatted on about the voyage, and the islands, and all sorts of things; and then the men launched into a discussion of the political situation, and from that to the power Germany was acquiring in a mercantile way in their country. And they told us how the Germans came there with their families, and taught their children from babyhood the language and customs of the South Americans, at the same time holding firmly their grasp of the mother tongue and the thrifty business methods of their home concerns. Thus given from infancy this advantage of a thorough knowledge of the language and customs of the country, they acquire a prestige with which no amount of ability in a foreigner can compete should he be less ably equipped. How dangerous to America is becoming this Teutonic power and prestige we do not realise, for who can fathom the ambition and persistency of the Kaiser and his subjects in South America—Germans all, though thousands of miles from Berlin?

I could but admire the facility and ease with which these South American men of affairs expressed themselves in English, and I thought, how few there were of us who could thus readily express ourselves in Spanish. It came to me forcibly that the American who is truly far-sighted, is the one who is acquiring, and having his children acquire, a good speaking knowledge of Spanish; for the time is surely coming when our need of Spanish will be far greater than to-day. The time is coming, if we guard our interests aright, when these South Americans will look to the North for a closer bond than now exists, and when that time does come, the man most potent in the new relation will be he who can, by a knowledge of the language, customs, and habits, place himself in perfect sympathy with his South American brothers. And we must remember, too, that we are dealing with men whose education is based upon the time-honoured culture of an old world, men of attainment, of polish and policy, of strength and power; however much that power may be at times misguided, there is latent great force and adaptability.

The South American is a man of marked and strong mental ability, and is already—and for that matter has for years been—modelling his laws after those of his more fortunate younger brother of the Northern continent. It is not in proper law and forms of government that he lacks, but in their proper enforcement, and back of all in the muzzling of that healthy public interest that would demand their enforcement. However much he fails in government, the time when his country will be dispassionately ruled by fixed and just legislation is hoped for by such men as the officers of this bank. For how can the country's business go on amid the turmoil of ever-impending revolution?

These West Indian Islands and South America, combined, have been used by all nations who have profited by their marvellous productiveness merely for what can be gotten out of them through one resource and another; even North Americans themselves are not above reproach in their quarrels over the Venezuelan Pitch Lake concessions, which was then a subject of keen interest. But in spite of the fact that some Americans have been feathering their nests from this foreign down, still I believe that our people will eventually lead the world in true philanthropy,—the philanthropy of development and honest business methods, and that ours should be the hand that brings to the South American the solution of his great difficulties; directed not to annexation of these Southern lands, but to helping in the evolution of a stable, self-respecting independent government.

South America is waiting for the great hand, for the great liberator of the land from the faults and follies of its own sons, and when he comes he will find a country rich to overflowing in unrealised possibilities. The curse of these countries seems to be in the love of the Spanish American for political intrigue, which periodically bears fruit in the

bogus political "liberator," throbbing with meretricious and self-seeking ambition which he bombastically labels "Patriotism."



**Cathedral and Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela**

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If you had stood face to face with two such well-poised types of conservative South Americans as we met that morning, I feel sure that you, too, might hope for a great future for this country, could it but be represented and led by its best men.

#### IV.

With courteous good wishes, we left the señors' pleasant company, and went on, still in the direction of a church-tower. The shops were far from interesting, much like others down in the islands, with the exception of a chocolate-shop, which we found to be the sales office of a factory where a great deal of prepared chocolate is made, for Caracas is a great chocolate market. After we had filled our pockets with all we could carry, of chocolate blocks and chocolate fishes and chocolate dolls, we started on again, munching the chocolate as we went, until we came at last to the Cathedral, which was in a state of mortar and lime and scaffolding, due to having the cracks from last October's earthquake doctored up in the same matter-of-fact way that we clean house in the spring.

Well, we were glad at last to have seen the inside of the Cathedral, for even without the suggestion of a guide-book, we had in a sort of way felt that we ought to do so; such a slave of "Ought" does the traveller become, in spite of utmost precaution.

By this time the sun was nearing noon, and we naturally turned in the direction of the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela* as the only available place in which to rest; that is, I thought it was the only available place, but the Spanish Student knew better. How he knew, or when he had experimented, he would not say, nor could the truth be forced or dragged from him, as he walked on toward the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*; but I had a suspicion, from the decided click to his step, and a lurking joy in his eye, that he had forsaken the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*; that he had discovered a new Arcadia, and, oh! it was so delightful to feel that it was not the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*. Then he stopped at a lattice,—I am sure there wasn't a door in the house—at the lattice of an enticing *Dulceria*, and we sat down where it was cool and quiet, and I waited to see what would happen. *El propietario* appears. At once, at the sight of the Spanish Student, the señor smiles, and disappears. They had met before. The señor enters once more,—for we are not to be left to an ordinary waiter,—this time with two tall glasses,—very tall, thin glasses.

If you could only have felt the fatigue of that moment! We had tramped about three hours, under the high, white sun, with the drowsy spell of noon creeping stealthily over the city, and even over the insatiable tourist; if you could have been with us to have seen the two tall glasses, filled to the brim, placed on the table by mine host himself, you, too, would have concluded that it was no small matter to be thus refreshed. It looked like lemonade, and yet it didn't, and it tasted,—well there's no other explanation possible; it was bewitched. Mine host had crossed his heart, looked twice over his right shoulder, turned three times on his left toe, and then pronounced the spell.

One taste convinced me that it took a lot of things to make that lemonade,—a lot of things besides limes and water, and whatever that lot of things was, it was the finest combination I had ever known. Mine host pronounced it lemonade; so did the Spanish Student, though I heard him suggest "*un poquito de Rom Imperial*" to the señor. With one taste, all fatigue took wings, everything took wings. The bent-wood table capered off with the bent-wood chair, and the long, fly-specked mirror cavorted from side to side with the parrot-cage. Everything was lovely and undulatory, and life was one long oblivion of the red-headed housekeeper at the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*.

He, the one opposite, leaned back and looked amused and satisfied, and said: "There's more coming."

"What, more lemonade?"

"No, not more lemonade, but more of something else."

And then it came. Again two tall glasses of a delicious rose-coloured ice, made of fresh wild strawberries, gathered that morning among the glistening dew of the Andes. In the centre of the ice, like the rakish masts of a fairy's ship, two richly browned, delicate tubes of sweetened pastry bore the ensign of our feast.

They reminded me of the lamplighters we children used to make at a penny a hundred, on winter evenings by the crackling coal fire.

You remember? Or have you never had the fun?

You take a bit of paper an inch wide and twelve inches long, wet your finger, give a queer kind of twist to one corner and up it rolls, in a long, neat shape. Double it over at the end, and there you are. Sometimes it unwinds, and

then it is exactly like the confectioner's roll in Caracas, only white instead of a rich, luscious brown.

From that moment on, all other attractions of Caracas, the University, the *Casa Amarilla*, the Pantheon, palled in attraction before that *Dulceria*. It became to us, and to every one we met, the loadstone of Caracas. To taste of an ice made from berries picked among the valleys of the Andes is no small matter, and to quaff a lemonade which, without suspicion, could still fashion wings at least as lasting as those of Icarus of old, is also no small matter, and may we not be forgiven and no questions asked if we confess to more than one return to the *Dulceria* shop just across the Plaza in Caracas?

## V.

Four o'clock was the hour appointed for the coming together of our diminished party, and until then the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela* was supposed to hold me in its ancient decrepitude, and it did hold me until about three o'clock; when the bells set up such a clanging, and were so zealous to get me up and out of bed and into their mid-afternoon vespers, that I finally yielded to their summons, and, making a hasty toilet, stole down the creaking stairs and out into the streets.

No Northern city at midnight is more soundly asleep than the tropical town in mid-afternoon. The heavy white blinds are down, the green lattices closed tightly, awnings dropped close before the shop-doors; while the cabby and his horse, on guard near the Plaza, doze in willing slumber. The market is empty, the little donkeys are long since browsing upon the green slopes of the foot-hills; the street criers are still, the whole world seems dead asleep, and, as I slipped along toward the Cathedral, the drowsy chanting of priests' voices was the only sound which broke the quiescence of that delicious afternoon. For delicious it was, in truth. All of God's part was in its perfectness. The air was sweetly cool and refreshing, with a flavour of mountain ozone mingled with the sunlight, and, as I came to a cross street, looking up the long narrow, white reach to the foot-hills, it was with a bit of imagining, like a glimpse through the tube of a huge kaleidoscope, with the green and purple and blue and yellow mountains an ever-changing vista of resplendent colour in the vanishing distance.

The priests' voices called out again, and I entered the high-domed, sweet place of worship. The chancel and altar were being repaired, so it was in the oblong nave that the priests, white-robed, rich with lace and embroidery, sat in ancient carved chairs, saying in responsive chants the words decreed for Ash Wednesday. The priests were old, and some were very feeble, and it seemed at times an effort for them to rise when the service demanded. A number of young men, of lesser dignity, assisted, and two little acolytes in red sat quite at the end of the row of priests. Still the chanting goes on and on, and the voices are monotonously sleepy, and long drifts of mellow, shaded light drop down on the white robes, and one of the priests yawns, and the little acolyte nods, and then goes fast asleep; and up overhead the lofty dome reëchoes the somnolent voices, and I hear the old bells telling me about four o'clock, but they seem very indistinct and sleepy and uninterested. And I feel sleepy and nod, and wonder if it's the priests' voices or the bells that put everybody to sleep, and I forget all about four o'clock until a workman way down near the altar, perched on a high ladder, mending more cracks, knocks off a piece of plaster, and I start and look around, then tiptoe out; while the bells tell me that the quarter-hour is gone with the rest of the day.

## VI.

Caracas is responsible for a decided turning about from some of my former estimates of the Spanish character. It is not necessary to say just exactly what these preconceived opinions were, but they were there, and as I supposed, a fixture. In the children's neighbourhood brawls, I have noticed frequently that, whenever vengeance was to be meted upon some offending head, he was called by one and all, "a Spaniard." That was enough to arouse all the wrath of his youthful spirit into rebellion, and until the word was recalled, war reigned. This of course is largely since our late trouble with Spain. I shall not say that the use of the word exactly represented my state of mind toward the South Americans, but, in spite of the many pleasant experiences of years gone by in Mexico, I shall confess to a somewhat allied feeling with regard to that name, and to all people who are in any way affiliated with the race, and I dare say that something of this same prejudice has existed among our people at large for some time, and not altogether without cause.

To have that impression partially removed was one of the results of an evening spent at the opera in Caracas, where General Cipriano Castro had arranged an especially fine performance to be given in honour of the North Americans then visiting his republic. The opera-house was decorated in our nation's colours, intertwined with the yellow, red, and blue of Venezuela, and every seat not taken by our party was occupied by the representative citizens of Caracas. The performance—a light, comic opera—was of excellent standard, and passed off with great applause. Much as we enjoyed the music, the Venezuelans themselves were our greatest object of interest.

The house was apportioned in the usual foreign style, with two tiers of boxes circling on either side from the President's box in the rear centre. The women, as usual, occupied the front seats in the boxes, and were thus in a position to be seen and observed very closely. And never—I make no exception, no exception whatever—have I seen such modest, womanly appearing women as were present at the opera that night. They did not giggle nor stare nor flirt. They were richly, beautifully, becomingly gowned, but, although arrayed with a desire to please, they were as modest and unassuming as a lot of little girls at a doll's tea-party. Their eyes no sooner met yours than they dropped,—not affectedly, but naturally, naively,—and it was impossible to refrain from forming an opinion of the conditions of society from the faces and actions of these women.

Women make society what it is; they make it right, high, true, and pure; they make it wrong, low, false, and vile, and the general appearance and actions of the women of a country, studied by an observer of human nature, will tell more truthfully the moral condition of a people than any book ever written.

Whatever faults the Spaniard may have bequeathed to his descendants; whatever his failings in government and kindred problems, the women, these beautiful women of Caracas, made us feel that they had set for themselves high standards of morality; that the social life was away beyond the level we had expected; that the family—the wife—is a sacred trust given the man to protect in honour and virtue so long as he lives.

There is, no doubt, much to be said against the rigid life of seclusion led by the Spanish women, but there is this to be said in its favour: it has created a race of men who honour and respect their homes, a race of men whose attitude toward women is universally respectful and deferential. With all our stiff-necked New England self-sufficiency, we have yet much to learn, we women of the North, and let it not be beneath our dignity to remember that the South American women have some lessons learned which we have yet to master; and perhaps there are none who could teach us more gently or more effectively than the modest, womanly women of Caracas.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN VENEZUELA. CARACAS TO PUERTO CABELLO

#### I.

AND now we are at the railway station, headed for Valencia and Puerto Cabello, still determined to continue unguided back to the coast.

There was to me something so extraordinary in the thought that, for once, we were really to get ahead of the professional guides, that it required repeated and oft repeated assurances to at least one of the women of our circle from the kindly official at the railway station, to relieve all doubts as to the wisdom of our plans. Of course, the men of our party had no doubts, at least, none were expressed; and yet some of us, particularly the writer, could hardly believe that the train we were to take would carry us on through Valencia, past the lovely Lake of Valencia down to Puerto Cabello, a half-hour in advance of the Special Train with the Special Courier; that we would be a half-hour earlier at luncheon in the mountains, and a half an hour earlier that evening in reaching Puerto Cabello; and this latter would be no small consideration after a long, hot ride from mountain-top to sandy beach.

But this was to be the case, so the official informed us, not only in Spanish, but in French, and very perfect French, too—for not understanding Spanish, we women of course had to hear it all over again in French; so we left the party, and boarded the regular morning train for Valencia, amidst the warnings of many, the doubts of all the timid ones, and the envy of a few jollier spirits. What would become of us, if this train should make up its mind not to go through to Puerto Cabello, and drop us at La Victoria, or San Joaquin perhaps; and what if the much-lauded Special should after all fly on and leave us in the mountains, high and dry, a half-day's journey to Puerto Cabello, with no means of reaching the ship on sailing-time; and what if our pretty boat should sail away to God's country, and leave us literally stranded, marooned for weeks, on the sun-blighted beach of Puerto Cabello, waiting for a ship?



A House beside the Sea  
Puerto Cabello, Venezuela

A thousand "ifs" are flung at us, but there stands the big, handsome South American railway official, with a rose in his buttonhole, patent leathers on his feet, and a smile on his face, and visible support in every attitude of his fine body; so we settle down, reassured, and look around to count heads, and we check off—all but one, the Doctor,—he is not at the station. Where is he? Where is the Doctor? He has sworn to stand by us to the end; in fact had been one of the prime movers in this venture, and here we are ready to start, even the men are aboard the funny little train, and the Doctor not in sight.

Ten anxious heads lean out from ten abbreviated windows; ten distressed voices ask in all available tongues, "Where is the Doctor?" We ask the official—the one with the rose—if he has seen one called the Doctor, with bland, smiling face, round and jovial; blue eyes, light hair, walking with a confident, easy swing, wearing a linen suit and East Indian pith helmet. No one answering that description had come to the station. Fully half an hour before we left the *Gran Hotel de Venezuela*, the Doctor had taken a cab, so that there should be no doubt or question as to his being on time; for the Doctor was an orderly man, of decided opinions and exact habits. He was never known to be late at an appointment. He had with him the free untrammelled air of the unmarried man. He had neither wife to detain, nor sweetheart to beguile him. He was a free-lance, and yet here it was, a moment before the time for departure, and the Doctor nowhere to be seen.

The train shivers, quivers, gives a bump or so, squeaks out a funny foreign whistle, and we are moving out of Caracas. Ten of us instead of eleven. Ten much troubled wanderers, thinking and wondering a very great deal. We pass the curious little chapel upon the hill, with its five disjointed little steeples, looking as if one more quake of the grand old Mother would topple them all over for good; pass the low *adobe* huts on the outskirts of the city, and then catch a last glimpse of the Cathedral and its dear old bells, and the trees about the Square of Bolivar; and are almost

into the rich country, outlaying the great city. But where is the Doctor! Had he been beguiled or waylaid, or had he waited for one too many a sip of the unforgettable lemonade; or had he gone to sleep with the priests under the magic of the old bells?

No, nothing seemed to fit in just right. The Doctor had reached years of discretion, he knew the wiles of women, and, as for being waylaid, that was hardly possible, for he always carried his chest high; and, as for the priests,—no, it was not the priests, for the Doctor had paid his respect to the Cathedral the day before. Hadn't we seen his white hat disappear under the big, open doorway as we were on the way to market? But the lemonade,—there was the hitch; he might have longed for one more glimpse of the *Dulceria*, and the tall glass and the indescribable nectar, —*con un poquito de Rom Imperial*,—yes, he might have done so, any normal being might have done so, and that must be the whole trouble; then, just as we had decided on the lemonade, we stop at Palo-Grande, out in the gardens beyond the town, and into the car rushed a red-faced, very mad American, with satchels and luggage and souvenirs in his hands, and rage upon his face,—the Doctor; none more—none less,—the lost wanderer!

If any one was ever welcome, he was. We figuratively threw our arms about him, and wept with joy at the return of our long-lost brother. The Doctor's face was a study. From despair, it changed to delight, and he flung himself into a seat, too happy to speak. But the Doctor was not slow in giving us an explanation. He had been experimenting on some very choice, newly acquired Spanish. That was the trouble, and instead of taking him to the city station, the cabby, probably anxious for a good fare, had driven about five miles to the first way-station on the road. I did not think the Doctor could ever have been disconcerted under any circumstances, but he was as thoroughly scared as one has need to be and live; and for the rest of the day, every few minutes, he would break out with some forceful expression about fool Americans who couldn't speak Spanish and fool Spaniards who couldn't speak English. We all then and there decided that we would learn Spanish or die. One or the other we are sure to do.

## II.

It is a difficult matter to engage the Doctor in either scenery or conversation, and, in spite of all the wonders in which we find ourselves, as the plucky little train hurries along, it is a sort of laugh and jollification all the way with the Doctor.

I shall never forget the willows at the station where our Doctor appeared. They were so exquisitely graceful and beautiful. They were tall, with somewhat of the habits of the Lombardy poplar, close-limbed, sinewy, and with the plummy grace of a bunch of feathers, bending, bowing, whirling, swishing, in the cool mountain air, and I shall always think of them as the Doctor's willows; for just as his frightened face popped into the door, in the twinkling of an eye, I glanced out of the window, and there stood that row of tall willows, like coy, young maidens, bowing their gentle heads in graceful congratulation. The Doctor's willow was to me one of the rarest, sweetest trees of that wonderful day of trees, of that wonderful world of trees, of that wonderful land of infinite beauties, known only to those whose eyes have touched the vibration of their being. This willow, modest, unassuming as it is, so unlikely to attract attention, without flower or colour, other than the richest green that sunshine ever bestowed upon a leaf, was in its way as exquisite as a dream of lace and dew-drops, as tender as the sound of a lute, as sweetly sinuous as the drop of a violet's head; and the mountain air, filtering through the thin, arrow-like leaves, was music fit for gods,—not men.

But the Doctor would not look at the willows, nor at the tall grass—tall—tall—tall—following along the bed of a limpid stream—the Guaira—tumbling along over pools and rocks and mossy beds; grasses so high that even Jack's famous giants must needs stand on tiptoe to peep over the top; grass twenty to thirty feet high, with feathery plumes gracing the tall spires in masses of waving beauty. He would not see the beauty of the picture that the Great Mother showed us, for he was still in a dazed state of combined bewilderment, anger, and joy, and you know it takes time to find one's feet after such an experience.

But did I tell you how as usual bravery was rewarded? When we boarded the train, we noticed our coach was unusually fine for a Venezuelan railway, and we wondered at it. Later the conductor explained that it was the private car of the general manager, all the common coaches being taken up to complete the Special Train; and so the Doctor was at last content.

## III.

Speeding along over the lordly plateau beyond Caracas, through a country where the faintest effort on the part of man to cultivate the earth, the least scratch with the hoe, meets with more than abundant response, where, even in the high mountain altitude, sweet fields of cane and coffee bring restful green and delicious shades in the ever-pervading sunlight, we were entertained by some of the party, who were prophesying a hard day and a hot day with a relish which was quite enviable. Why is it that there must always be those who are constantly anticipating hot weather? It seems to be out of the question to escape them; they either predict that it will be, must be, unbearably hot, or unbearably cold, according to the latitude in which they happen to be found. There seems to be no way of getting along comfortably with the present. So we listened while dire forebodings were omened for Valencia, and worse for Puerto Cabello.

In the meantime one of our friends,—Mrs. M— from Boston,—was suffering with a severe headache, and the Doctor, who had been in the seat ahead of us, was asked if, in that small, black, professional-looking valise, there was not something to relieve her pain. And then the Doctor broke forth once more:

"There's no use. I can't stand this any longer. I was called up last night for the sick man in the after-deck stateroom; after each port I am asked to prescribe for men suffering from swizzle jags, and I'm routed out at all hours, and buttonholed by nervous women I don't know. I wish I could help Mrs. M—; nothing would make me happier. But to tell the truth, I'm not a doctor. I am only a plain business man—a manufacturer. Somehow, when the passenger-list was made up, I was put in as 'Doctor S—' and the list was printed and circulated before I knew of my title. Then every one called me 'Doctor,' and it was such an easy name to catch that I thought I'd just let it go, and I've been 'Doctor' to every one ever since; but when it comes to setting a leg or curing a headache, I must put an end to it."

But the name had become fixed. It was there to stay, so the Doctor was the "Doctor" in spite of his lack of diploma, and, in one sense, by his good cheer, his readiness to join in fun, his stock of good stories, and his consideration for others, he was quite as beneficial to our sometimes weary selves, as if he carried his pockets full of bitter tonic and invigorating elixirs.

#### IV.

In front of us sat the Doctor; back of us sat a young South American from "up country," with whom we entered into conversation, and from whom we learned much to confirm our rapidly forming opinions of his great country—Venezuela. He spoke English well, having been educated partially in England, partially in New York. He came from the Province of Colombo, to me a very indefinite, remotely hidden-away place somewhere in the Andes, accessible only by two or three days' journey from Caracas, partly by mule and partly by boat up the Maracaibo River. By the way, we are told that Colombo is the native state of that peppery little dictator—the present President Castro.

This South American gentleman had been sent to Caracas to interview Castro and his ministers with regard to a loan of twenty thousand dollars in horses, cattle, and provisions made during the last revolution to the faction which had placed Castro in power; the transaction had evidently been dignified by the soothing name of "a loan" because the quondam cowboy leader Castro had ended as a self-elected President. Just what our fellow traveller's success had been, we were unable to learn or he to tell, for this same General Castro is a wily bird and keeps many an honest Venezuelan guessing. He told us what we already knew,—that Venezuela needs peace—peace—peace, and that, until she is assured of peace, her great hands must be idle. We needed no words to assure us of her greatness. It was there before us. The idle hands were clasping rich harvests unsown, rich treasures in gold and silver glittered upon her fingers, and following the sweep of her green mantle, there was a race of warm-hearted children, within whose being there was the making of great men and women. But there must be peace. For, when there is war, her great men go to the front, her brave men are killed; but in some unfortunate way her political schemers and professional revolutionists survive, and are always ready to make new trouble. "He who fights and runs away will live to fight another day."

And so they run away—the unsuccessful ones—to Curaçao, to Paris, or to some of the neighbouring South American states, but their dirty shadows ever hang imminent on the horizon.

#### V.

During the conversation with our South American friends, we had reached the end of the plateau, and the descent began into the great valley below. It was not until we reached that point that we realised the wonder of this Venezuelan railroad, or that we understood the reason of its being called the "Great Venezuelan Railway"—*Gran Ferrocarril de Venezuela*. Like the greater portion of all the business enterprises in South America and the West Indies, the railroad was built by Germans. Krupp, of gun fame, was named as the head of the company, and too much cannot be said of the courage and skill of men who undertook to build a road under such difficulties. There are railways of difficult construction all over the world, indeed, but never, in our experience, were we more impressed with the magnitude of an undertaking than we were with the construction of this masterful road; though one might well criticise the business judgment of men who would thus put millions of dollars into an enterprise that apparently can never be self-supporting. Think of it, eighty-seven tunnels through rocky mountain spurs, one hundred and twenty heavy steel bridges between Caracas and Valencia, miles of rock-cutting and costly filling, and all this to carry a handful of passengers and a few tons of freight each day—altogether not enough to load one of our "mixed trains" in the States!

It follows where cataracts leap a thousand feet, where rivers boil in thundering roar over mighty rocks; it cuts the mountain top asunder and dashes through the rock-hewn lap of earth; it drops down through the tops of giant trees, and robs the morning of her mist; it mingles with the clouds, and anon kisses the feet of the ocean—but it doesn't pay dividends.

From its heights, the earth stretches out in wonderful ridges of gigantic proportion; geography becomes real, a fact, seen in the great perspective. The air is so clear that the eye seems to have new power of vision to reach to the uttermost end of the earth; the eye imparts to the soul its larger horizon, and a great leap of joy carries the spirit into the infinite room of creation, into the infinite grandeur of created things, and the spirit grows and feels its small estimate of God's earth expanding into a newer, grander conception of creation. Mountain ridges sweep through tremendous space, one upon another, and at their base, thousands of feet below, a green pillow of sugar-cane invites the head and heart to quiescence. No word "green" can ever bring back the quivering, transparent green of those young cane-fields, far below in the valleys, watered by the careful hand of man in thousands of tiny streams of irrigation.

#### VI.

The morning was just what it should be in spite of the croakers, and the immensity of nature had imparted to our spirits much of her buoyancy; so when the train came to a halt, we jumped with alacrity from the little coach, and sought among the people for the human interest, which was as ever very great. The route was dotted with charming stations, each one flying a German and Venezuelan flag in delightful amity—for the Germans impress the South American first with their greatness and then with their friendliness; the mailed hand is shown only as the last resort.

Here were stations green and beflowered, in sweet good order, with fountains and running streams, and booths where we bought ginger cookies and Albert biscuit and *cerveza Inglesa* and all sorts of fruit; and back of the stations, hints of quaint old churches with distant bells, and gathering about the mother church, blue and white and yellow glimpses of queer old houses. And oh! the colour! The flowering trees! What artist could ever reach the



delicacy of the *Maria* tree, one mass of living pearls. Its branches so full of flower that there seemed to be no room for leaf; the branch only there by sufferance. At La Victoria, where we stop for luncheon, in a curious little café under a confident German flag, our family interpreter disappears, and in a few minutes returns in the likeness of a Thracian god, bedecked with garlands, pink and white. He covers my lap with rarest blossoms, gives them to one and all, and brings into the dusty coach a fragrance of Elysium. I long to keep the flowers for ever; I long to hold that colour in such security that it can never escape; I long to enclose that essence in some secret shrine for ever. And shall I say I have not?

## VII.

As we rush along down, nearing the Great Mother's mighty limbs, we pass drooping arbours of *Bucari*, another flowering tree of wonderful splendour, each flower like a glorious wax *Cattleya*, and millions of them at a glance. Just then, as the blaze of beauty dazzles our eyes, two brilliantly green parrots, frightened by the noisy interloper, take flight from under their beauteous canopy, and wing their way in yellow, green, and red vibrations through the scintillating landscape. We are now flying along on a level stretch, in a high, rich valley, full of luscious fruits and ripening harvests, and before the mountain opens to receive us into one of its deep tunnels, we see large fields of a low bush, growing quite in the nature of young coffee, with much the same size and general appearance; without, however, the customary shade-trees. Our friend from Colombo explained that it is tapioca; and off beyond, in this next, white-walled *hacienda* (what a world of dreams and romance of the land of *siempre mañana* comes to one in that combination of ordinary vowels and consonants—"hacienda"!), in the *Hacienda Las Palomas*,—or was it the *Hacienda La Sierra* or *La Mata*, or *Guaracarima*?—the natives gather from the green river valleys, maize and beans and yucca, in the language of the country, "*frutas menores*;" but more abundantly than all else, are gathered the coffee and the sugar in vast crops year by year.

Westward from the summit the River Tuy plays hide-and-seek with us for many a mile, darting, hurrying, beckoning, charming us, with a desire to loiter when she loiters, to leap through the cliffs with her joy, to rest under flower-spread arbours in sleepy towns with her, to dissolve ourselves at last into the deep earth as she does. Finally we see her no more, but now the larger Aragua, flowing toward the Lake of Valencia, reaches out a bold hand, and we follow the new pathfinder where she commands.

One last look into the shadowy depths before we drop to the plains. It is only a glimpse, for the passing is so swift that the eye cannot reach its entirety of beauty; but that glimpse is like the shadow of a great rock,—a lasting memory. A bird slowly sways in mighty, circling sweeps, poised upon the ether, between two green-robed mountain priests—a great bird against the hazy mountain deep, swaying, calm, eternally sure of its strength. Was there a hand outstretched beneath in the far, disappearing morning which brought the ecstasy into the soul of that lonely wanderer?

We leave the tunnels, the endless bridges, the heights, and drop down rapidly into the valley, where the heat begins and the dust flies. We follow the Aragua until she brings us to the Lake of Valencia, a long, rambling, shallow lake, much like some of our own Northern lakes, and, at the first opportunity (I think it was at Maracay), we leave the train, and stand under the wide doors of the freight depot, with the natives lying around half-asleep on sacks of coffee, and try to catch a whiff of refreshing coolness from the lake. More German flags; they are very interesting, but why should a party of Americans be so honoured? For the German officers had gone back to the ship to do the polite to General Castro. But the halt here was for a few minutes only; and we go on, down through the hot little city of Valencia into greater heat, and for a time into greater and more glorious vegetation.

It was a curious sight,—the piles of compressed coal dust made into blocks,—"*briquettes*,"—eight to ten inches square, each stamped "*Cardiff, Wales*," piled in high, orderly heaps at each station; greater supplies of which we found, as we left the timber for the low country. But I must not give the impression that the low country is untimbered; far from it. As we leave the higher levels and start the final sharp descent toward the coast on the cog-road,—a curious device in railroading to overcome the danger of such steep inclines,—we can give no conception of the forest growth through which we pass. The air is hot and still; the trees stand in their eternal beauty, in their myriads of blossoms, in their vivid colourings, with deep festoons of moss and interweaving vines in motionless repose. They seem to exhale heat and silence and darkness, even under the blaze of a still, white sun; they tell only of night in the tangled growth of nature triumphant. It might have been at Nagua-Nagua, if not there it was very near there, that the springs of water, boiling out of the earth, were hot and sulphurous, and, as we were about to move on in our roomy coach, along came the much-talked of Special, with its crowded passengers looking jaded and worn and cross, more, I imagine, from the incessant clatter of tongues than from the asperity of the Southern sun. On, on, nearer to the sea, to where the palms grow. There had been cocconut and royal palms before,—yes, from Haïti through all the islands we had seen them, but here they attain their most perfect grandeur and glory. We came upon them not singly, in isolated groups of conservative aristocracy, but in companies and regiments, miles of them, arranged by the masterful hand of Nature, now in mighty groups apart, like a conference of plumed generals, and then again in battalions of tall grenadiers on silent dress parade. Their light lofty trunks gave back from the sun a dull, grayish white pallor. They were still and grand, and unspeakably beautiful.

The heat seems to grow more intense as the sun sinks lower in the heavens, and we drop down almost to the level of the ocean. The dust becomes more blinding, and the palms disappear, and all things prickly and unapproachably dry and forbidding, shadeless and impenetrable, take their place, and change the picture from one of tropical life to tropical death.



**A South American Street  
Puerto Cabello, Venezuela**

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Long wastes of white sand spread over the desolate landscape, relieved by not one sprig of comely green or welcome shade, with great mounds and masses of gigantic and distorted cacti, more impassable than any man-made barricade. They fitted in well with the heat and the dust, and the long, low sun-rays, shooting in upon us their streaming floods of white light; and then, just as I began to think the croakers might have been right for once—there came a shout from the Doctor, from the Boston friend, from us all; and Daddy, who was on the other side of the car, jumps over to my seat and bends over my shoulder just in time to catch sight of the sea—*el Mar Caribe*—before a bristling bank of cacti shut it for the time from view. The Caribbean Sea—blue, far-reaching, sweetly cool, washing the feet of the great, good Mother;—we longed to plunge into the surf, and wash away the dust and heat and all unrest. The sight of the great sea so near us, and our trim ship at anchor in the harbour of Puerto Cabello, and the prospect of seeing the little girls, from whom we had been separated by so many hours and miles, gives us a deep joy. The day had been covered by the hand of God from dawn to setting, and to the end of time there shall no greater beauty meet our souls.

Then through the sleepy streets of hot old Puerto Cabello we wander to where a boat waits us by the rotting quay at the river's mouth. Two darling faces find our wistful searchings as we near the ship, and four sweet arms accompanied by kisses fairly weigh us down as we reach the deck.

"Oh, Mother! Just think of it, we shook hands with President Castro!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### CURAÇAO. CITY OF WILLEMSTAD

#### I.

**S**MALL wonder indeed that the early explorers, the men to whom we owe the discovery of these island gems, gave them such charmingly poetical names. Small wonder that they named them as one would a necklace of deep-sea pearls, strung as they are one upon another in a circlet about the blue Caribbean Sea, the shadow of one velvety peak throwing its dark coolness fairly to the base of sister isles, some but a few hours distant, others perhaps a day, across seas as blue and green and limpid as the ether above. It seems incredible that from these peaceful waters rise the vast, cyclonic storms which frequently make such desolation on our coasts; and that within the green and softly moulded outlines of some of these mountainous islands there lie volcanic craters which still grumble and threaten; but, as there are times and seasons for all things, so there seems to be an ordering for the giant winds to rage, when the sun is dyed its deepest, and the earth pants for want of drink to moisten her quivering lips. But that time of unrest is far away now, and, as we leave Puerto Cabello and its quiet harbour, bound for Curaçao, and drop below the horizon the cocoanut-fringed shores of the Spanish Main, it seems as if it must ever be on unruffled seas and toward peaceful havens that the islanders voyage back and forth.

Surely it is not more than the turning once over in sleep before, with the morning breeze fresh in our nostrils, we are right upon the dear little Dutch city of Willemstad, the capital of the Dutch West Indies on the island of Curaçao; and, once ashore, we long to lodge indefinitely behind the spotless white curtains that peek out from under some snug little peaked roof, shifting scenes only when the impulse to go farther comes over us; and then sailing away in one of the little packet schooners which coast along from island to island, or possibly, taking passage in a mail steamer, or anything bound anywhere, just so it does not come blundering along before we are ready.

There should be no words for days and hours in the tropics. Time should be measured by enjoyments in changeful measure, slow and fast, as one's mood demands. Rigid hours are obtrusive where the rustle of the cocoa-palm invites rest.

#### II.

The little girls and I are hurrying into our hair ribbons and our white petticoats and white waists and white hats, just as fast as our fingers can tie or button, when Curaçao jumps into our cabin windows, or maybe our ship has jumped into Curaçao; or is it Holland we have dropped upon, or is it a new stage-setting for the latest *al fresco* production of "The Flying Dutchman?"

We no sooner have our first glimpse than, for a bit, all the dressing stops, and we crowd our three heads up to the port-holes in perfect delight. As our slim ship slowly winds herself into the river-like harbour, this West Indian

Holland becomes more and more enchanting. The harbours in these islands have been an increasing wonder to us. On the Venezuelan coast Puerto Cabello (translated literally, "The Port of the Hair," because there it was said a hair would hold a ship) is a perfect example of a harbour for small vessels. Deep, natural channels—like rivers—wind circuitously until they widen into land-locked basins where ships of all nations, and of all rigs, and for all purposes, from the grim war-ship to the native dugout, come unexpectedly into sight as the channel turns and broadens into the real harbour. There the ship is left by the native pilot.

This harbour of Curaçao is no exception. We enter by a narrow, deep way protected by rocky barriers, directly into a little inner bay, encircled by the quaint town. The houses gliding by, within easy hailing distance of our decks, are preëminently Dutch, of brilliant, striking colouring, noticeably yellow, and mathematically exact as to rows and heights and proportions—most un-West-Indian. The town is certainly just recovering from a fresh coat of kalsomine. It is bright as a top and clean as a whistle.



**Across Ste. Anne Bay**  
**Harbour of Willemstad, Curaçao**  
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We are but a stone's throw from either dock, and it requires a lot of common sense, even downright logic, to persuade us that we are in the Caribbean Sea, and not far off on the other side of the globe coming out of the flat estuaries of the bleak North Sea into the Meuse or the Y.

A bit of Holland has been lost from out Mother Earth's pocket, and has fallen by the way in this Western Hemisphere; and it has managed to get along without the big Dutch mother very well. It has grown up into full stature, following the instincts of its birth, almost wholly uninfluenced by tropical environment. Here it stands, a perfect little Dutchman, an exact reproduction of its staunch progenitors. Its forms and habits have followed the traditions of its ancestors, not those of its West Indian foster-mother. There is only one racial trait lacking in Curaçao,—we saw no windmills; all the rest is there. But, to our great relief, we are told that even the windmills appear on the country places farther inland.

### III.

The arrival of our ship awakens the Yellow City early in the morning, and, before our boats are lowered, the shore is white with crowds of Curaçaoans, big and little, pushing and jostling each other for a sight of us. Our breakfast is done with in short order. A hurried bit of fruit, a quick swallow of boiling coffee, a fresh roll, and up we scramble to the deck. So it is invariably, as we near a port. Each time we come upon an island more curious, more irresistible than any we have seen before. We may be sighting it first as we refresh our bodies with a bath of the clear salt water from without, warmed into the most delicious mildness by the eternal smile of the sun. Then comes a scramble to dress, then a bolt to the dining-room, where we eat and run. Now, in pops a big "if." If we were only snoozing in a Dutch four-poster, with a frilled nightcap on, under a peaked roof in Willemstad, then we'd never need to hurry, for all we'd have to do would be to open our eyes and look around, and wait for the coffee to come with a rap at the door and a lifting of the curtain. But there is small comfort in listening to the endless schemes of that miscreant "if." We'll banish him in disgrace.



**Some of Our Friends at Willemstad**



**Where the Basket-Women Waited**  
Willemstad, Curaçao

Before we have time to readjust our impressions of one island to the anticipated pleasures of the one following, we are among a new people, speaking a strange tongue, living to us a new life,—to them a weather-worn old life; among people in densely populated cities, shut off from our world by weeks—at times by months—of silent isolation.

Then all at once a fleck of smoke lifts above the horizon, a steamer is sighted far out at sea, the pilot puts out in his little open boat, and the whole island throbs with new emotion, for a ship is coming!

From a poetical standpoint, I wish it were possible to believe that this emotion is a disinterested pleasure in welcoming strangers; in feeling once again the hand of man from the great world outside. Viewing the people, as we must, largely from an impersonal standpoint, it impressed us that the West Indian cares very little for the welcome or for the hand of man from the great continent; but that he is up early in the morning to devise new ways of reaching the pockets of the invaders, come they ever so peaceably.

The natives await the coming of strangers, as a pack of hungry wolves watch for the shorn lamb. I myself have been that shorn lamb on several occasions.



**The Landing**  
Willemstad, Curaçao

Quite undaunted by the great crowd of Curaçaoans on shore, our jackies made a cable fast to the near-lying quay, by which means our big boats are pulled back and forth, to and from the ship. Those coming to us bring the sellers of baskets; and it is here, although forewarned and forearmed, that our basket mania again breaks forth in full force. First came the famous Curaçaoan nests of baskets, of which Charles Kingsley confesses to have been beguiled into buying; and, if so wise a man as he fell victim to the wiles of the Curaçaoan basket-woman, how much more readily would we weaker mortals become her prey? Then, ranged temptingly, along the dock stood rows of Curaçaoan hampers,—great, fine, coloured affairs, which we looked at, and looked at, and looked at, and didn't buy. Then, beside the basket-women, were the men with fans and all sorts of straw weavings,—and then, oh! the work-boxes. Truly, you have seen them! Has not your grandmother stowed away in the dark attic somewhere an old mahogany box, inlaid with ivory and brass and coloured woods, with fascinating secret drawers and numerous lids for the hiding of her precious keepsakes and age-worn trinkets? Such a box is one of the chaste memories of my childhood,—Grandmother's mahogany box, with the inlaid lid and the musty odour of bygone years. When we found these same dear old boxes away down in Curaçao, the worn, hingeless, forsaken chest in the attic arose into a new dignity—into the dignity of a noble family lineage. So I have found at last its *habitat*, and these bright and gleaming creations are great-great—and no end to great—grandchildren of my far-away, lonely relic in the attic. But sentiment has to give way to reason, and we shake our heads at the box-man and the hamper-woman, who, nevertheless, follow us up to the bridge from the Otra-Banda shore over the canal, whence they watch dejectedly while we pay bridge-toll and disappear across the canal into the narrow Dutch streets, where the high roofs seem ready to topple over upon us.

#### IV.

What a picture of Dutch colonial life comes to us in that short walk! The overreaching eaves all but touch. Old lanterns swing across the narrow way, wrought-iron sign-posts reach long arms out over our heads, the shop doors are wide open, and the keepers of the shops could readily shake hands across the way.

I wonder if there is any excuse at all for the fact that my preconceived ideas about Curaçao were wholly founded upon a very indistinct memory of a certain liquid of that name, said to be distilled upon this island from the wild sour orange? I expected to find this ambrosial nectar stacked in rows in every shop, in bottles, long and slim, chunky, dumpy, and round; in nice little flat bottles,—gifts for bachelor friends; in ornamented fancy bottles for envying housewives; in thick, pudgy, squatty bottles for gouty old uncles; in every conceivable shape and size I expected to find it.

Willemstad was not to be Willemstad—city, town, burg—it was to be an inhabited flask of Curaçao, a kind of West Indian bubble blown from the lips of the Northeast Trades, sweet with the breath of wild orange. The man with the bottles was to be a more subtle tempter than the hamper-woman, and—but it didn't happen that way at all. It turned out very differently.

I, for one, did not see a single bottle of any shape or form in the whole town, but the men must have found some, for just before sailing a box was brought in, labelled "Curaçao," and I surmised it was liqueur, but I didn't open the box. Truly I did not!

Some of us cynically argued that the liqueur was all sent in from somewhere else and palmed off as a native product; others clung to the home-production fancy, and yet neither one was altogether wrong, for the famous liqueur is made both in Holland and in this little Dutch colony away off in the New World; at any rate this is its birthplace and home.

But the gold filigree, for which the islanders are famous, was true to our expectations. We are drawn up the shut-in street by the magnetism of a crowd which is gathering about a shop-door, and filling the tiny place fairly to suffocation with eager buyers of gold rings and pins, and all sorts of trinkets.

We turn from the goldsmith and the seller of corals, and the shops, and make for the tram,—a little, two-seated bandbox on wheels, drawn by a two-penny mule on a tiny track through the clean white streets of Curaçao. We are told that there is a law against the painting of the houses white, on account of the blinding glare of the sun, and no wonder, for, even after a few short hours of wandering, our eyes ache with the strain and glare of so great light. The blue houses are an exquisite rest to the eye. The whole colour scheme of Curaçao is yellow and blue, and sometimes light green, with white used sparingly as decoration. Green, the green of trees and grass, you ask? No. I said nothing of the green of nature. It's too thoroughly Dutch for that.

The bandbox car hitches along, threatening to topple over any minute on the toy donkey and stop,—at least until sundown, which would be most sensible. Let's cover up the donkey and get out of the glare until night! But, no! He has his own ideas, and experience has taught us the futility of an attempt to change them, so we settle down to the succession of yellow houses and blue houses, and white pillars and clean flights of white steps, but hardly a peep of green, not a sprig of palm, or tamarind, or orange, not a vestige of the great fundamental nature-colour—except in a well-concealed little park—everything paved and finished and whitewashed—only a few prim and well-pruned shrubs carefully set in either corner of the tiny front yards, and our eyes ache for the sight of trees and grass. Where the wild orange grows, we failed to discover, for the town itself is almost entirely bare of trees or flowers. Of course, it must be remembered that our very short stay made any long excursion into the country out of the question. Let us come again; we must find the wild oranges!

Strange, is it not? No shade whatever in latitudes where the growing of great vegetation is but the matter of a few months. As far as we could see, there were no real trees in Willemstad; still, if palms do not grow in Holland, whatever would be the sense in having them here? They would spoil the likeness.

So we jerk our hats down, readjust the dark glasses, tuck our handkerchiefs under our collars, and start up a breeze with a Curaçaoan fan, and decide to play "Jack-in-the-box" and jump out; primarily, to make straight for our ship to escape the midday sun; secondarily, to take one very impressionable member of our party away from the alarming charms of a stunning Curaçaoan woman—a woman of that noble and grandly developed type which often appears in the descendants of the Dutch—whose comely form occupies a goodly share of the bandbox seat.

The streets in this residence part of the city are still and empty. The penny donkey and "we'uns" are the only live things visible. We are seized with a desire to pound on those eternally closed doorways to see if people really do live there. This seeing things on the outside is no fun. Let's make a sensation of some kind! Upset the bandbox, roll the plump lady in a heap inside; put on the cover; stand the penny donkey on top; capture some Curaçaoan hampers, jump inside, pull down the lid and play forty thieves.



**A Jolly Dutch Port**  
Willemstad, Curaçao

But, no,—we are sworn foes to scenes, and our vain wish to pinch somebody dies unsatisfied; and finally, when the penny donkey comes to the end of the route down by the quay, we take the longest way around, through the narrow thoroughfares, following the curve of the shore, over bridges which span the canals leading from the main channel of the harbour, down past the basket-woman with her tempting wares on the Otra-Banda quay to our floating home, where the governor and all the prominent citizens of Willemstad have assembled in great numbers.

Well, we've found out one thing. The houses were empty sure enough. The people are all on our ship. What a good thing it was we left the bandbox right side up! There would have been no one to rescue the plump lady.

## V.

Our friends, Mr. and Mrs. U—, come toward us with a group of strangers—Curaçaoan—whose acquaintance happened just as the best things of life come to us—by the merest chance. They were driving about the city in company with the American consul, when, in passing one of the most attractive residences, their attention was

drawn toward two young women who were standing out on the veranda, waving a great flag—our Stars and Stripes—in utter disregard of heat and sun; waving it forth in the yellow and white glare with all the love of country and home which motion could express. Their enthusiasm at once called forth a response on the part of the visitors; the carriage stopped and forthwith all the occupants of the house, following the two girls with the flag, came to welcome the strangers. The newcomers were bidden to enter and there was no limit to their hospitable entertainment.

The flag-bearers were two homesick Southern girls, married to the sons of a leading Dutch family. They had not visited their native land since their marriage, and, oh! how they longed to see the dear old South again! When their countrymen set foot at Curaçao, all of the slumbering mother-country love broke forth again, and the old flag came out, and they feasted the strangers, and did their utmost to honour the precious sentiment of loyalty to home. And, after the ices and cooling drinks and fruits and confections, they and their friends were invited aboard ship, where it was our pleasure to make their acquaintance.

We find here, as we have in all the other islands, that the leading families—the men in power—are comparatively pure representatives of the original colonising stock; that is, pure Dutch, Dane, Castilian, French, as the case may be; but that the people are a strange mixture of all nationalities, speaking languages for the most part unwritten, handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, strangely intangible, and yet as fixed and well recognised among the people as is the old Common Law in the courts of Anglo-Saxon countries. Our friends in Curaçao tell us that the well-born natives speak Dutch, English, Spanish, and often French, with equal facility; added to this is another language which must be learned in order to deal with the common people.

This curious language—“*Papaimiento*,” it is called—has been reduced to a certain degree of form in order to facilitate its being taught in the schools. Children learn this language from their nurses, just as our Southern children acquire the negro dialect from the old “mammies.” The comparison cannot be carried out to its full extent for the reason that, while our negro dialect bears a close and intelligible likeness to English, *Papaimiento* is so unlike Dutch as to render its acquisition almost as difficult for a Dutchman as that of any other foreign language, but fortunately the Dutch are good linguists. It bears, of course, some likeness to Dutch in the fundamentals, but aside from that, it is a strange combination of speech—perhaps more Spanish than anything else—put together, it would seem, to meet the needs of as many people as possible. The meaning of the name *Papaimiento* is, in the dialect, “The talk we talk,” *i. e.*, “our language.”

Curaçao lies some fifty miles off the coast of South America, and her favourable position between Venezuela and the Windward Islands has made her free port a most desirable one for the smugglers who wish to supply cheap goods to the South American ports. Thousands of flimsy tin-covered trunks ready for Venezuelan voyagers bear evidence of her popularity as a free and unquestioning port. Here, also, many steamers touch. But, above all, Curaçao is the haunt and refuge of the disappointed or temporarily exiled Spanish American politician or revolutionist.

Here, like puppets in a show, appear from time to time many noble patriots ready to fight for their undying principles and incidentally to absorb any loose property in the track of their conquering “armies;” and here hies the deposed “President,” or the lately conquered general, with his chests of treasure, waiting for a ship to his beloved Paris. Watch our own American newspapers for the warlike notes that Willemstad, Curaçao, ever feeling the pulse of northern South America, sends out to the world. Did she not give us the earliest news of Cervera’s mysterious fleet? Does she not thrill us with the momentous gymnastics of President Castro, and the blood-curdling intentions of General Matos, General Uribe-Uribe, General Santiago O’Flanigan *et hoc genus omne*?

The date of our visit to Curaçao is about the time of the little Queen of Holland’s wedding, so that Wilhelmina and her prospects, and all the gossip attending so charming a personage, becomes with us, as we sit chatting together on the deck, a lively topic of interest. Mrs. C— tells us of a gold box which is to be sent the young queen as a bridal gift from her subjects in Curaçao; a box fashioned after the most perfect art of the native goldsmith, in filigree so rare that none but a queen were fit to open it. This box, perchance the size of Pandora’s once enchanted casket, is to be filled with the needlework of Curaçaoan women—work as far-famed as the lace of Maracaibo, the lace we expected to see everywhere in Caracas, while we were then so near the Maracaibo country, but which one can never find unless the open-sesame of the Spanish home is discovered, as impossible a task as the quest of the immortal Ponce de Leon. We did not see the Maracaibo lace, nor the Curaçaoan lace, and we are told that such a disappointment is not unusual; it is only for the elect—the Curaçaoan people themselves—that these wonderful specimens of the skill of patient women are visible.

I shall never forget hearing that unwritten page in the tragic history of Spain’s noble son, Admiral Cervera, as the Doctor in his quiet, low voice told how the great admiral touched first at Curaçao after his long and perilous voyage from Spain. It was the Doctor’s son who sent the cable message to the United States, telling that the Spanish fleet was in the offing. But it was the Doctor himself who went with the surgeons who had been sent ashore by Cervera on their humiliating errand, to all the pharmacies in Curaçao for surgical supplies. The fleet had been hurried from Spain unprepared, and in fact almost unseaworthy, with not so much as a single bandage aboard or the most ordinary necessities for the immediate succour of the wounded. They had absolutely nothing in the way of such medical and surgical equipment at hand, although they knew their imminent and terrible need for just such things. Doctor C—, with the true physician’s love for his fellow men, went from pharmacy to pharmacy with the surgeon, and bought up all the bandages and gauze and iodoform and other supplies which were to be found. Meantime detachments from the ships’ crews began to land—hungry and worn, sad with the shadow of the great coming tragedy—and they fell upon the island like a lot of starved wolves. They actually had not food enough aboard to keep body and soul together, for the corrupt and procrastinating government at Madrid had not even properly victualled this fleet of war-ships before sending them to their certain destruction. The market was cleaned of everything it could afford, and even then it was a mere drop in the bucket to that unhappy host. Later Doctor C— went out to the flag-ship with the surgeon, and spoke with Cervera, who prophetically told him that he knew he was going to his doom—but it had to be! And the twisted skeletons of those noble ships which we later saw strewn from Santiago on along the southern Cuban coast was but the fulfilment of the miserable fate he then so clearly foresaw, but which, after his unavailing pleas to the Spanish government before sailing, the staunch old admiral, with a Spaniard’s pride and bravery, would not avoid. For so it was written! Is there not a strain of the Moor’s fatalism still traceable in the true Spaniard?

Thus as we chat with our new-found friends on topics grave and gay through the noon hour and on into mid-

afternoon, the people of the city continue to crowd one another, row upon row, on the dock. A native band plays our national airs and Dutch national airs, and our decks are filled with visitors—the governor of the island and his suite and ladies, and fine little solemn-eyed and suspiciously dark-skinned Dutch children; and, in the midst of all the visiting and moving back and forth, some one asks Doctor W— how the islanders feel about absorption by the United States—apparently a possibility now present in the mind of every West Indian; and the not surprising answer is made, that, for his part, he—a Dutchman, Holland-born—would favour annexation; and from the wild enthusiasm of the people ashore, as the bugle sounds the first warning of departure, one might readily believe that so favourable, so friendly, is the feeling for the United States, that the slightest advances toward peaceable annexation would be met with universal favour. And so the merchants also talked.

The houses begin to move,—no, it's our boat herself, slowly, very slowly. We drop our shore-lines, and shout after shout rings after us. The populace moves in a mass along the quay, and the native band beats away its very loudest, and the bigger marine band aboard beats even louder, and it's a jumble of national airs in different keys, and hurrahs, and the people following along the quay. We wave our handkerchiefs until our arms are tired. One black-faced, bandannaed, Dutch conglomerate in her enthusiasm whips off her bright skirt, and in a white petticoat and red chemise she waves the fluttering skirt in the breeze.

If the United States ever seriously contemplates the annexation of any of the West Indian islands, the surest way, and the quickest way, to bring it about would be to send ship-loads of pleasure-seeking Americans, for bimonthly visits, leave their mania for buying things unrestrained, and, before diplomacy has had time to put on its dress suit, the islanders would beg for annexation.



**A Snug Harbour  
Willemstad, Curaçao**

Do not deceive yourself into the belief that you will find El Dorado in these islands, where the products of the country, food, and lodging, can be bought for a song; where one can get full value for money expended. On the contrary, values have become so distorted by the extravagance of some American tourists that to be recognised as an American is a signal for the most extortionate demands from the hotel-keeper to the market-woman. The system of extravagant feeing and still more our readiness to pay what is asked us instead of bargaining and haggling over prices as the natives do, and as is confidently expected of any sane human being, has so demoralised service and the native scale of prices that it is fairly impossible to obtain the ordinary necessities for which one expects to pay in the hotel bill, without giving needlessly large fees to the servants who happen to be in your attendance; or to find anything offered at a reasonable price in the markets.

At the sight of an American—and we are readily distinguished—the prices advance, and the unoffending tourist is obliged to suffer for the extravagance of those who have gone before him. This infection has spread through all the islands, and there has not been a port on our entire cruise wholly free from its effect. Perhaps, however, Willemstad was the pleasantest of all in this respect, for it is a free port, used to low prices and the ways of outsiders.

It might be possible to go through the islands at a reasonable expense, provided one spoke the language necessary at the various ports with ease, and had the time and patience to bargain and shop indefinitely; provided, *also*, one could beat against the tide which sweeps the American toward the "Gran Hotel." Let him but once depart from his ancestral traditions of simple habits, let him but enter the portico of the "Gran Hotel," and he at once becomes the prey of every known species of human vulture. It is the old story of Continental Europe over again.

## **CHAPTER VII.**

### **THE SOUTHERN CROSS**

**“W**AKE up! Wake up! If you want to see the Southern Cross, wake up and come on deck!” And we remember how long we had been waiting for those wonderful stars, and how Daddy, who many nights slept on deck, had told us that he often saw them, and how we had, night after night, vowed we would make the effort to awaken at two in the morning, and how, each night, we had slept along, too tired with the wonder days to move an inch until bugle-call.

But here comes this far-off voice again calling us from the Northland of dreams, and it seems to be saying, “This is your last chance. By to-morrow (whenever that uncertainty comes!) the stars will have rolled away, or you will have sailed along, and there will be no Southern Cross, and you may as well not have come away down here to the Spanish Main at all if you miss seeing it,”—and then we wake a bit more, and the figure in the doorway stands there with “come” on his face, and “wake up!” on his lips, and we try to think how sorry we shall be if we do not see the Southern Cross. And then the door closes with a rather contemptuous click, and we land in the middle of the floor,

aroused by the disappearance of the figure in pajamas and by our somewhat reawakened sense of duty.

Throwing on light wrappers, the little girls stumble along after me to where our man stands leaning against the rail, his face turned skyward.

"There it is—see? Right in the south, directly opposite the Great Bear that sunk below the northern horizon two hours ago. One star down quite low, near the horizon, and one almost in a straight line above, and one at either side equal distances apart, like an old four-cornered kite. You must imagine the cross. But it's hardly what it's cracked up to be!" And we blink at the stars, and they blink at us, and we feel strangely unreal and turned about.

What in all the world has the Southern Cross to do with the nineteenth century? It belongs to Blackbeard, and the great procession of pirates and roving buccaneers who swept these seas in tall-sparred, black-hulled craft, some hundreds of years ago. One or the other of us is out of place. The only consistent part of the night is, that, while our eyes are searching for the four luminous dots in the Southern Cross, our ship is plunging on toward Jamaica, that one-time Mecca of the bandit rover of the sea. There he found safe harbour and friends in the same profession; there it was that the hoards of Spanish gold and plate and all conceivable sorts of plunder, taken from the hapless merchantmen, were bought and sold and gambled away. But, without the accompaniment of roystering pirates and swaggering buccaneers, the Southern Cross seems out of joint. Jamaica may do as she is, but, as we look out across the scurrying waters, there's a malicious twinkle to the top star in the Southern Cross and that makes us all the more determined to give it an opportunity to renew old acquaintance. We'll have a pirate—we must have a pirate, if not a real one, bloody and black and altogether fascinating, we must conjure one by magic! Pirates there must be! So, to pacify our insatiable desire to resuscitate the ghostly heroes of the long-dead past, the Spanish Student offers a yarn.

Four bells of the second night watch rings out, and "All's well!" floats above our heads, and the witching hour of two in the morning brings the proper flavour to the story. We cuddle down on some stray ship chairs, and the story begins:

"Once upon a time—"

"Oh, dear! Is it to be a 'once upon a time' story, Dad? Then it won't be real," breaks in the Wee One.

"Yes, it is real, Chick; at least, so far as I know. But you must not interrupt me again. If you do, I might forget, and then the Cross up there would put out its lights and go to bed."

"No, Dad, I'll be good."

"Well, once upon a time, there was a doughty old French Corsair, who was one of the most daring pirates on the Spanish Main. Morals were in a topsyturvy state in those days, and in none were they more wrong-side-to than in this famous old Frenchman. He had a long, low, topsail schooner, painted black, with sharp clipper stem, clean flush decks and tall and raking masts, and—"

"I know all about him, Dad. He had a black beard, and he used to braid it in lots of pigtails, and tie it with ribbons," says Wee One, again.

"Now, Toddlekins, what did I say? I shall certainly bundle you off to bed. No, it wasn't Blackbeard, but it was a pirate just as fierce and fully as bad mannered. This old fellow had been rampaging around here, there, and everywhere, all about this Caribbean Sea and along the Spanish Main, in search of ships and gold and prisoners, and occasionally even food, and in fact anything of value he might come across; when not very far from where we are now—yes, just about this latitude, it was, but a few leagues more to the west—by the light of the stars—yes, by the light of this very Southern Cross, he makes out the land, and soon after spies a tidy, prosperous little village handy to the shore of a palm-fringed inlet. Like the provident pirate that he was, he at once decides that he is both hungry and thirsty and that his lusty followers are short of rations. Here is a likely port from which to supply.

"So off goes a long-boat filled with his precious cutthroats, carrying a pressing invitation to the village priest and some of his friends to come aboard. The fat priest is routed out and escorted to the waiting boat; he understands his mission, he has seen such men before. So, taking along a few chosen friends, he makes the best of a bad business and is rowed off to the ship in short order. The citizens, meanwhile, are requisitioned for all sorts of food and drink, and the priest and his friends have a jolly time of it as hostages. But as his wit grows with the wine it occurs to our Corsair that, with a priest aboard, Holy Church should have due reverence, and roars out his imperative suggestion that mass would be in order. An altar is rigged up on the quarter-deck, holy vestments and vessels are quickly brought from the village church, and the ship's crew are summoned to assemble and warned to take hearty part in the service. In place of music, broadsides are ordered fired from the pirate's cannon after the *Credo*, after the *Elevation*, and after the *Benediction*. At the *Elevation of the Host*, the captain finds occasion to reprove a sailor for lack of reverence. But at a second offence from the same trifler, out comes his cutlass—a swift, shining circle follows the Corsair's blade, and off flies the still grinning head and the blood spurts high from the jumping trunk. The poor priest is startled, but the captain reassures him with kind words, for, says he, it is only his duty and always his pleasure to protect the sanctity of holy things; he would do the same thing again—and a thousand times!—to any one who was disrespectful to the Holy Sacrament. For why is there a great God above and his Holy Church on earth except to be honoured? Then the service continues as if nothing had happened and again comes the whine of the Latin chants and the thunder of the reverent guns.

"After mass, the body is heaved overboard and no burial rites are said, for who shall try to save a heretic's soul? The priest is put ashore with many a smile and oath and many a pious crossing, and our Corsair and his pack of thieves go their way, having paid their respects to Holy Church."

"Oh, Dad!" says Toddlekins, "that was lovely; is it true? Tell us another! Just one more! Don't you remember about Captain Kidd?"

"My name was Captain Kidd, as I sailed, as I sailed,  
My name was Robert Kidd, as I sailed.  
My name was Robert Kidd,  
God's laws I did forbid,  
And wickedly I did, as I sailed."

"Don't you remember the other verses? You used to sing them to us on the yacht before we ever thought of



seeing the real Southern Cross."

And just as the indulgent parent begins to waver, and the little girls are sure they have won another story, down—down—down—drops a big star, the foot of the Cross, millions of miles away, and the three lonely wanderers still hanging low in the heavens reach out their great shadowy arms in ghostly warning to those unthinking children of Adam who defy time and sleep and all things reasonable, just for the sake of a few old memories of a very questionable past.

Then those three deserted stars quiver and shiver and hide behind the wandering company of torch-bearers, and silently disappear, and a tired moon gives a vague uncertainty to sea and air.

In spite of the early morning mystery, all our efforts to reinstate the French Corsair, the black-hulled phantom, and the headless sailor, fail.

The decks of the ship are damp and empty and long. The ungainly deck chairs are locked together in gruesome lines like monstrous grasshoppers dying in winrows, and the great engines below beat and throb, and the water rolls past us in giant breathings, full of the sighs of dead men lying fathoms deep beneath our keel, and the stars sink lower and lower, and we are hurrying on toward the morning. Our eyes are still longing for sleep, and the little girls flutter down below, and we two after them. In the morning, after some strange dreams, we lie at anchor off the Blue Mountains of Jamaica.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### KINGSTON, JAMAICA

#### I.

**H**AD he not come aboard, it is doubtful if even the "kirk-ganging habit" inherited from a long line of devout ancestors could have dragged us to the service. But there was an unforgettable something in his face which compelled us, in spite of the intense heat, to leave ship by a shore-boat on Sunday morning and inquire the way to the Parish Church.



Kingston, Jamaica, from the Bay

Shortly after we had dropped anchor in Kingston Harbour, early on Saturday, we saw the rector of the English Church being rowed through the crowd of fruit-boats, which were bobbing about us like so many brilliant birds; but it was with considerable difficulty that he was finally enabled to reach the ship, so strenuous were the black fruiterers to give their wares the best possible showing. They were well worth the showing, too, for such masses and varieties and colours were a marvel indeed, even in the tropics. The shaddocks were as big as melons, and the tangerines, measuring some fifteen inches in circumference, were dyed as deep a yellow as the colour sense could grasp, and piled in great, heaping baskets, were watched over by beflowered negresses, who sat motionless in the boats, except for their great rolling eyes.

The oranges of Mandeville, Jamaica, were well known to us through the accounts of former travellers, but no description had ever brought a suggestion of the true radiance of the Jamaican fruit as it shone forth that brilliant morning. After one look, the little girls ran down to the stateroom for the St. Thomas basket, to fill it to the very handle-tip with luscious tangerines. And while they scampered off with the basket brimful, the lid pressed back by piles of tender, yellow beauties, a strange boat-load of new passengers blocked the way once more for the good priest, and he leaned patiently back in his boat, as if he knew that to protest would be of no avail.

The newcomers were two enormous live sea-turtles which the fishermen hauled up the gangway by a stout cable. The turtles groaned and puffed and flapped, and the little girls wanted them turned on their legs just to see what would happen; it would be such fun to ride a-turtle-back. And Wee One says, "Why, Mother! They are just like 'John the Baptist,' our pet turtle at home, only lots and lots bigger. I wish they'd turn over." But the sailors had evidently handled turtles before, for they were left on their backs and were—after having been duly wondered at—dragged down the deck out of sight, to reappear again in stew and *fricassee*, not in steak as the Jamaicans serve them. But Sister laments. She and Little Blue Ribbons wanted to see the turtles run. "Mother, if they had only been right side up we could have helped turn them on their backs just like the 'Foreign Children' Stevenson tells about,—

"You have seen the scarlet trees  
And the lions over seas;  
You have eaten ostrich eggs,  
And turned the turtles off their legs."



**Rio Cobre, near Spanish Town  
Jamaica**

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Meanwhile, as the way clears, the priest reaches the ship, and is soon lost among the crowd of passengers who are waiting for the first boat ashore.

All of Saturday, we wandered about the dusty, uninteresting streets of Kingston, waiting for the great impression. But it didn't come. We were ready and willing to admire the beautiful, but it did not appear. Kingston was even more unattractive than Port of Spain, Trinidad; dirtier, hotter, and in every way dull and uninteresting. Had it not been for the Blue Mountains, against which Kingston leans, and the glorious old Northeast Trades which fan her wayworn features, and for the sea at her feet, we could not have forgiven her frowsy appearance. The whole place had a "has been" air, with unkempt streets, and low, square, dumpy-looking houses, facing each other like tired old tramps.

## II.

In order to form a just estimate of the Englishman's work and methods in Jamaica, one must leave Kingston, and take to the roads outside, for example that one along the Rio Cobre which winds in and out among the mountains in a most enchanting course. This particular drive of eleven miles, called the "Bog Walk Drive," leads to a little settlement called "Bog Walk." It is to be hoped that there was at one time some excuse for this name, but as bogs do not disappear in a day, it must have been in quite a distant past that the name had any real significance. We saw no suggestion of a Bog Walk, although actively on the alert for it. We had uncertain anticipations of having to scramble over wet and oozing turf, and one of us, without saying a word to any one else, tucked a pair of rubbers into a capacious basket. But the rubbers stayed right there, for there was no bog, nor any suggestion of one,—funny way these English have of naming things!

And speaking of names,—well, there never was a place—except other English colonial towns—where the good old British custom of naming houses is more rampant than in Kingston. Had the houses of some pretension been so labelled, it might not have seemed so strange; but, no, every little cottage had a name painted somewhere on its gate-post, and very grandiloquent ones they were, I assure you. No two-penny affairs for them! There was "Ivy Lodge" and "Myrtle Villa" and "Ferndale" and "Oakmere" and "The Hall," tacked on to the wobbly fence-posts of the merest shanties. And yet, in spite of their apparent incongruity, there was a sort of pitiful fitness in those names. It was a holding-on, in a crude way, to some half-forgotten ideal of the old English life. It might have been a memory of the far-away mother country, left as the only legacy to a Creole generation; it might have been the last reaching for gentility; who can tell what "The Hall" meant to the inmates of that shambling roof. But for the "Bog Walk" there was no reason apparent, and we did not waste a bit of sympathy on the supposititious man who first sank to his armpits in what may have been a bog.

The Bog Walk road is wide enough for the passing of vehicles, and as solid as a rock. The English in the West Indies—as elsewhere—have ever been great road-builders. Now this bit of road—eleven miles long, as smooth as a floor, as firmly built as the ancient roads of Rome—is part of a great system of roads which extends for hundreds of miles throughout the island, and these roads have been constructed with so much care that, in spite of the torrents of tropical rain which must at times flood them, they remain as firm and enduring as the mountains themselves, seemingly the only man-made device in the West Indies which has been able to withstand the ravages of the tropical elements.

Jamaica is one hundred and forty-four miles long and fifty miles wide, and its entire area is a network of these wonderful roads. Roads which would grace a Roman Empire, here wind through vast lonely forests and plantations of coffee and cacao, past towns whose ramshackle houses are giving the last gasps of dissolution. Jamaica has evidently suffered under the affliction of road-making governors, whose single purpose has been to build roads though all else go untouched, and they have held to that ambition with bulldog pertinacity. No one can deny the wonder of the Jamaican highway. But whither, and to what, does it lead? Good roads are truly civilisers, and essential to the good of a country, but there must be a reason for their existence which is mightier than the way itself. Had there been half as many forest roads in Jamaica as there are now, and the money which has been buried in practically unused paths put into good schools and the encouragement of agriculture, Jamaica might to-day show a very different face. The most casual observation tells us of vast, unreasoning waste of money on the beautiful island, and one cannot but pity the patient blacks who have suffered so much from the poor administration of their white brothers.



**A Native Hut  
Jamaica**

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It was our pleasure to drive some distance on these hard turnpikes, and in miles we met but one conveyance of any kind, and that was a rickety old box on wheels, carrying a family of coolies to Spanish Town.

This place out-Spanished any Spanish town we had ever seen in filth and general dilapidation. It was simply a lot of rambling old shacks, huddled together under the long-suffering palms—dirty, forlorn, forsaken, never good for much when young, and beyond redemption in its puerile old age. Down through these haunts of the half-naked blacks, there sweeps a road fit for a chariot and four. Diamond necklaces are queenly prerogatives, and the proper setting for a royal feast; but, thrown about the neck of a starving child, they are, to say the least, out of place. Nothing can be more entrancing, when perfect of its kind, than either diamonds or children, but they do not belong together. It may be, that, when the child is grown, circumstances will make the wearing of such a necklace a graceful adornment, but, until that time does come, the child's belongings should be those of simple necessity, all else being sacrificed to the normal growth of body and mind; let this be once well under way and adornments may follow. Jamaica has given her children a diamond necklace, and, although magnificent and wonderful, it is out of place, and the worst of it is, the children have had to pay dearly for it.

What Jamaica would have been under wise and prudent management, and with a different racial problem, no one can say. She has certainly never been lacking in resources, nor has she lacked amenable—though not always desirable—subjects. But there is a hitch somewhere, and to find that hitch would take a long unravelling of a torn and broken skein, the kind of work few care to undertake; but it is the work which must be done if Jamaica is ever to have a future.



**The Bog Walk Road, near Spanish Town  
Jamaica**

Dusty and hot and still wondering where the "Bog Walk" would appear, we left the carriages for an inn which stood close to the road. It was somewhat—no, I should say much—above the average Jamaican house, passably clean, just passably, and in a way rather inviting to the traveller who is glad enough to go anywhere, where he can be satisfied, if he is hungry and tired. But the house was not what I wanted to tell you about; it was the *grande dame* within, who played the indifferent hostess. We did not see her as we ran up-stairs to the upper balcony; it was well after we had sipped our rum and lemonade—for we did sip it; we not only sipped it, but we drank it, and it was fine, and we felt so comfortable that, when she—*la grande dame*—appeared, it never occurred to us to express our disappointment over the Bog Walk; we just agreed with her in everything she said, and felt beatific. I think we would have agreed with her even without the rum and lemonade, for she had an air about her that made one feel acquiescent. She was tall and angular. Her features were as clean-cut as though chiselled in marble; she was clearly Caucasian in type. Her lips were thin, her nose was aquiline, and her mouth had a haughty, indifferent curve, suggesting a race of masters, not slaves. But her skin was like a smoke-browned pipe, and her hair was glossy, and waved in quick little curves in spite of the tightly drawn coil at the back of her stately neck. She was dressed in the fashion of long ago, with a full flounced skirt and a silk shawl. She sent her menials to wait upon us, although I noticed that, in spite of herself, she was taking an interest in the strangers.

The Madame went before, and we followed, through the ever-open door of the West Indian home. The Madame's skirts swept over the uneven threshold, over the bare, creaky floors, and her noiseless feet led the way into a past, rich in romance and disaster. The Madame had little to say; she just glided on before us like a black memory. Here on the bare, untidy floors were the Madame's treasures; treasures she used daily, for the table was spread (the Madame served dinner there just the hour before). Here was a table of Dominican mahogany with carved legs and

oval top, and there on the sideboard was rare old plate, and quaintest pieces of Dresden china and Italian glass glistened as it once had done near the lips of its lordly master. The side-table of mahogany gave out a dull, rich lustre of venerable age, and there was a punch-bowl—silver, and much used—and curious candlesticks with glass shades. Ah! The Madame was rich. What a place, I thought, for a lover of the antique!

In her bedroom hard-by, a massive four-poster reached to the ceiling, and off in a dark corner there was an old chest, richly ornamented with brass. In every room there were chairs and davenports in quaintest fashion, all dull and worn and beautiful, while the billiard-room outside was well filled by a massive old-fashioned rosewood billiard-table whose woodwork, undermined by the extensive ravages of ants, was fast falling in pieces. "Where has it come from?" we ask; and she replies, with a lofty air, that her grandfather brought all these over from England long, long ago. No doubt the Madame would have sold any and all of it, and we caught ourselves wondering how we could get one of those old pieces home. It really seemed as if we ought to buy something, for the black Madame, towering above us, certainly expected to make a sale. But we didn't buy; we just admired it all, and particularly the Madame, and then we began again to try and think out the dreary tangle.

There was just one thing the Madame had which she would not sell, and that was the one thing we wanted most: the story of that grandfather. She was the *grande dame*; his history was sealed behind those unfathomable eyes. She admitted only the patrician in her blood, not the savage. The grandfather had left his stamp upon that face, but there was that other stamp! Alas, the Englishman has sold his birthright in Jamaica; he is selling it to-day, and what more hopeless future could rest over a people than does this day over the island of Jamaica?

### III.

And now we are back in Kingston, the city. "How would it be for us to leave Daddy here—he wants to be measured at the military tailor's for some khaki suits—and run off down the street on the shady side, to what seems to be a 'Woman's Exchange?'" The little girls, always ready for a new expedition, take the lead, and for once we found a sign which was not misleading. It proved to be a veritable Woman's Exchange, filled with no end of curious specimens of native workmanship which had been brought there for sale. Among the natural curios—to us the most wonderful—was a branch of what is known as the lacebark-tree. The botanist will have to tell you its real unpronounceable name. For us "lacebark" answers very well, because we don't know the other, and have no way of finding it out just now. Who ever thought of carrying an encyclopedia in a steamer-trunk? I am sadly conscious that we even forgot the pocket-dictionary. Please forgive us this time! But it was the tree that interested us, not its name. Its fibrous inner bark (much like the bark of our Northern moosewood) is made of endless layers of lacelike network, which can be opened and stretched a great width, even in the bark of a bit of wood an inch and a half in diameter. These layers of lace are separated and opened into flowerlike cups, with rim upon rim of lacy edge, all coming from the one solid stick of wood, or carefully unrolled into filmy sheets of net-like tissue. The native whips are made by taking long branches of this tree, scraping off the brittle outer bark, opening the inner fibrous bark, and braiding the ends into a tapering lash as long as one wishes. Hats are trimmed with scarfs of this dainty woodland lace, and even dresses are said to be made from this cloth of the forest, which rivals in loveliness the fairest weaving of Penelope.

The gracious woman in charge told us that, while the Exchange was self-supporting, it owed its existence to the liberality of an American girl, who had many years ago married an English nobleman. And it made me glad to think that our glorious American women had, with all their foolish love for titles, a generous hand for woman the world over, and that, wherever they wandered, their ways could be followed by the light of their liberality. In a way, the Exchange—founded by an American woman—made us forgive much in Kingston; so, when we took the street up to the Myrtle Bank Hotel, expecting from its name to find a sweet, delicious caravansary, embowered in myrtle green and magnolia, and found the "Myrtle Bank" an arid sand beach, with a large, self-sufficient modern hotel built therein, we still forgave, because we said we would for the sake of that dear American girl who couldn't quite forget.

And then, too, the Doctor met us straight in the doorway; not the newly made Philadelphia doctor. No, not that one; it was the other one, the Northeast Trade, the million-year-old West Indian Doctor. Do you suppose he is as old as that? Yes, even older. But, for all that, he's as faithful to his trust as though but yesterday he had slipped from out the wrangling of chaos. So we kiss the Doctor, and run up after him into the big, spacious parlour of the Myrtle Bank Hotel, drop down into a delightful rocker, and think it all over.

Here we are in Kingston, owned by the English, governed by the English, bullyragged by the English,—but where is he, the Englishman, where the Englishwoman? To be sure, we found some white faces in the shops, and we remembered seeing a few fair-haired, sallow little girls. And we saw on the street, just as we left the Exchange, an Englishman with a golf-bag on his shoulder; but these were the landmarks only—the exception. The people we saw were of all shades of a negro admixture, and some very black ones at that.

But the Myrtle Bank Hotel was not the place for such reflections. At least, so the good Doctor seemed to think, for he had no sooner brought us under the magic of his presence, than we were carried into the most affable state of contentment with all things visible, and it was not until the next morning that the question fully dawned upon us in its true significance.

### IV.



**Where We Landed  
Kingston, Jamaica**

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I suppose we might have walked from the boat-landing to the Parish Church embowered in its palms a few blocks away, but even that short distance was exaggerated by the early hot glare of the sun. The Northeast Trade was taking his morning nap, and the air was utterly motionless. So Daddy hails a cab, and we rumble off in the direction of some ringing bells. The town, as we drove along, had the dead look of an English Sunday morning; there were few people visible, and those we saw were evidently following the bells, as we were. Back of our desire to go where the face of the priest was leading us, there was a hope that, in attending an English church, presided over by a white, English priest, we should there see the representative people of Kingston, the white owners of the island. This church was one of the few beautiful sights in Kingston. Truly, some good priest of the olden time must have planned with lingering touch the graceful garden which so lovingly enshrined the venerable spot. An avenue of palms, singing their silvery song all the long day, skirted on either side the wide stone walk to the entrance, and bent their long, waving arms very close to our heads as we stepped within the doorway. The church, as an ancient tablet indicated, was built in the latter part of the seventeenth century. It followed the sweet lines of the English cathedral, built from time to time, as one could readily observe from the varying indications of age in the structure itself.

We were early for the service, for the second bell had not rung. The priest met us at the door. He was a man of ripe years, with close-cut whitening hair, and a face that one would always remember. It was framed in strength and moulded by the love of God. There was in it that indefinable beauty which comes from a sacrificial life, from a life breathed upon by the spirit of holiness and quiet. There were no lines of unrest there; the poise of divine equilibrium was his living benediction, and we followed him down the stone aisle, over the memorial slabs of the departed great buried beneath, to a seat just the other side of a massive white pillar, midway between open windows on one side and an open door on the other, where the grateful breeze, now faintly rustling the palms without, swept in upon us in delicious waves.

We were placed quite well in front of the transept, and as we waited there in the quiet old building, I began to make a mental estimate of just where the different classes of Jamaican society would find themselves. Here, where we were, would be the whites, and back beyond the transept, the negroes, and in the choir, of course, the fair-haired English boys. Then the old bell began to ring again, and a few of our fellow voyagers came in and took seats in front of us,—notably Mr. and Mrs. F—, who had been the guests of the priest the day before. The church was filling. The owners of the seat in which the priest had placed us arrived, and we were requested by a silent language, which speaks more forcibly than words, to move along and make room. In the meantime, the pew was also filled from the other side, and in the same dumb language we were requested to move back the other way. Thus we were wedged in closely between the two respective owners of the seat. And they were not white owners,—they were black, brown, yellow—but not white. The church filled rapidly. It filled to the uttermost. Mr. and Mrs. F—, in front of us, were obliged to separate, for, when the owners of their seat arrived, they simply stood there until Mr. F— was forced to leave his wife and crowd in somewhere else. The pew-owners were the rightful possessors, and the white man or the stranger apparently of little consequence. There was every conceivable shade of the African mixture. The choir was made up partially of black negresses, partially of yellow girls, with men of all hues besides, and the whole congregation in this Church of England was similarly mixed, with the black blood strongly predominant. I saw, outside of our party, only one Englishwoman and one Englishman, and a few about whom I was doubtful, and those were all. The blacks were very far from being the true type of African. In some cases, there would be the negro face in all its characteristics, with one exception, and that would be the oblique eyes of the Chinese. There were Japanese negroes, and Chinese negroes, and English and French negroes. It was a horrible mixture of negro with every other people found in the island, with the negro in the ascendant.

I saw no marks of deference paid to the white strangers; they were placed in the same position in which a negro would find himself in a Mississippi gathering of white people. If you have ever witnessed the enthusiasm with which the negro is welcomed in such places, you can understand our position that day in Jamaica. We had been told of the contempt in which the white man is held in Haiti, and, not having experienced it, were disinclined to believe such an abnormal state of things. But, here in Jamaica, without ever having been informed of the state of society, we felt it as plainly as if it had been emblazoned on the sign-boards. We were not welcome and we felt it. We were out of our element.



**El Morro, Entrance to Harbour  
Santiago de Cuba**

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The people were all well clothed,—many in elegance. The most of them in white and black; court mourning for the queen.

And then the grand old service began,—that wonderful world-encircling service of our old English Mother Church—always the same and always sufficient—and it was all so strange,—the feeling I had about that word “we.” There was a slow dawning in my soul that never before had the word “humanity” meant anything but a white humanity to me—a universal love for black, yellow, chocolate, brown, saffron humanity had never come fully into my consciousness. And, while I sat there in that vast, black assemblage, the long, terrible past of Jamaica arose before me, and, too, the doubtful future loomed up in gloomy outlines, and I wondered what would be the outcome of it all. Where would the Englishman be in another century in Jamaica? Would Jamaica revert back to the Haïtien type, or is some hand coming to uphold the island? It is far from my intention to touch upon the political situation in Jamaica,—especially as I don’t know anything about it. I can only tell you what I saw, and you can draw your own conclusions. All I can say is, where is the white man in Jamaica? What is his position, and what has brought him into his present deplorable condition? Has the white blood after all so little potency?

One needs but to glance at James Anthony Froude’s masterful book, “The English in the West Indies,” in order to see the why and wherefore of it all. His words have greater force to-day than even at the time of his writing, for the course of events has more than justified his predictions.

Our opinions of the situation were wholly unbiased, for we did not read Froude’s account until long after, so that our sensations, our surprises, at the Jamaican English Church service, were wholly original.



**The Plaza  
Cienfuegos, Cuba**

The service proceeded through the prayers—our prayers—and then came the sermon. I shall never forget the text. It was taken from that masterpiece of Biblical literature, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

The priest had been there for over thirty years, and he began:

“Beloved in the Lord, my children!” And we, white and black, were all his children. We were in a strangely reversed situation, for even the good priest had the tawny hue of Africa faintly shining in his fine face. No mention of colour distinction was made: but which of us was to have the charity? Did it not seem that he pleaded for the white man—that the stronger black should have more charity? Or was it for us as well? And it seemed to me I realised for the first time the position of our well-bred Southerner; and everything was jumbled and queer in my mind as the priest spoke. And his beautiful strong face shone over the people, and his voice quivered with a deep love, touching the raiment of one who said, “Come unto me all ye”—all—all—all! The white arches echoed back the pleadings, the commands, the love, while in quiet eloquence he told of One who set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem.

The church emptied itself, and we were left with the priest, and the old sunken tombs, and the sleeping organ, and the white light streaming through the windows. And we wondered if we had yet learned what the Master meant when he said:

“Come unto me all ye—”



**The Grave of Cervera's Fleet  
West of Santiago de Cuba**

## CHAPTER IX.

### "CUANDO SALIDE LA HABANA"

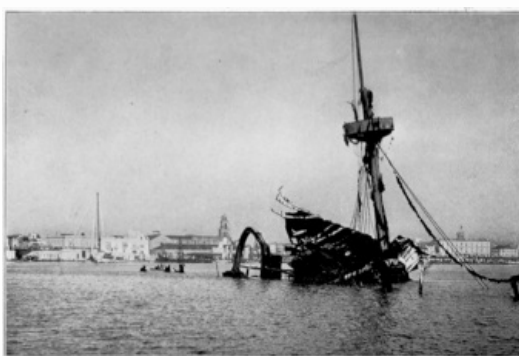
"I sometimes think that never blows so red  
The rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;  
That every hyacinth the garden wears  
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely head."

THE dream days have come and gone. We have left historic Santiago with its forts and battle-fields, and the beautiful harbour of busy commercial Cienfuegos; we have skirted along the southern coast of Cuba, Pearl of the Antilles, through the Yucatan Channel, into the Gulf of Mexico, and now we are come to Havana, where countless voices call us in every direction both day and night.

And yet it is not of Santiago, the old *Merrimac* lying in midchannel, El Caney, or San Juan Hill that I am writing to-day—no, nor of the wrecks of Cervera's fleet strewn in rocking skeletons along the coast. No, those stories have long since been well told you—those tragic stories of battle and death, gone now into the past with the echoes of muffled drums and the shuffling feet of sick soldier boys, dragging themselves home when the day of vengeance was over. No, it is not of that I am writing, but of a day which I gave to you, O mothers of our glorious marines! and I take it now from out the memories of those sunny isles, a precious keepsake, that it may be yours for ever.

You are known to me, yet I cannot speak your names. You are near to me, yet the continent divides us. Your eyes speak to me, and yet, should we meet, you would pass unrecognised. A universal love, a universal memory has called you to me, and space cannot separate us.

In this city of beauty, though alluring at every turn, there was one pilgrimage, come what may, I would not fail to make. The Morro and Cabañas might be slighted, but not that patch of green earth away over the hill where the boys of the *Maine* lie buried so near the waters that engulfed them.



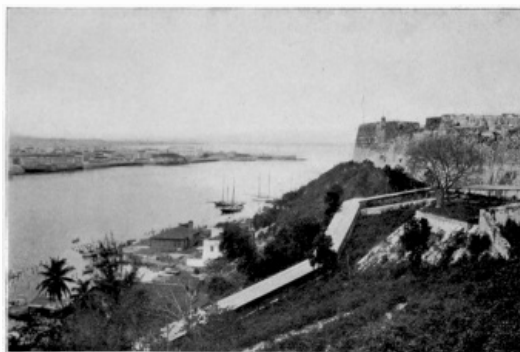
**Wreck of the Maine  
Havana Harbour, Cuba**

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Far from the city they rest, where none may trouble their deep slumbers. Their only monument a bare worn path where thousands of those who loved your boys and honoured their memory have trodden down the grass about the lowly bed.

It was a day as still as heaven, when in the City of the Dead I silently took my way; and coming to their long home I knelt down in the moist coverlet of grass and folding my hands looked up into the infinite depth of the blue sky, which dropped its peaceful curtain so tenderly over them. I seemed to stand upon a sun-kissed summit, from which I might scan the whole earth. And it was from there, afar off, I felt the yearning of your tears. I reached down to the earth and gathered some humble little flowers which pitying had throbbled out their sweet souls over the blessed dead; and I held them lovingly in my hands, and then placed them within the leaves of a book, thinking that some day when we should meet I would give them to you. And now they wait for your coming, O mothers! I could give you naught more precious.

Yes, the days have come and gone as all days must, and we shall soon have left the Isles of Endless Summer. But so long as life lasts, their radiance will enfold us, and when the day is done, we shall draw the curtain well content, knowing that no greater beauty can await us than this fair earth has brought.



**Cabañas, La Punta, and Harbour Entrance  
Havana, Cuba**

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## CHAPTER X.

### A MEMORY OF MARTINIQUE

“La façon d’être du pays est si agréable, la température si bonne, et l’on y vit dans une liberté si honnête, que je n’aye pas vu un seul homme, ny une seule femme, qui en soient revenus, en qui je n’aye remarqué une grande passion d’y retourner.”—LE PÈRE DUTERTRE, *writing in 1667*.

A FEW insignificant little photographs are lying on the desk before me. Some of them are blurred; some of them are out of focus. They have been for many months packed away among bundles of other photographs of a similar character, moved from their corner in the library amongst the books of travel, only to be occasionally dusted by the indifferent housemaid and packed away again out of sight.

Days come and days go, and things move on in uniform measure, and life glides silently away from us, and one day passes much as does the day before; and we plan and work and hope, and we build to-day upon the assurances of yesterday and to-morrow; and, although we know that there are times when love can be crushed out of a life, yet we base our hope upon the eternal fixedness of love; and, although constantly face to face with the mutability of all created things, we build upon the eternal stability of matter. We hope by reason of an undying faith in those we love; we build upon a belief in the immutability of the everlasting hills; and we go on building and hoping until, with some, there comes a day when the soul burns out, and the everlasting hills crumble to ashes, and loving and building is no more, and there is never loving or building again in the same way.

.....

Much as we touch the sacred belongings of the beloved dead, do I now bring forth from their lonely hiding-place the few photographs of St. Pierre and the fascinating shores of Martinique, which we took last winter, as we cruised through the Windward Islands.



**St. Pierre and Mt. Pelée before the Eruption  
Martinique**

Courtesy of Professor T. A. Jaggar, of the Geological Department of Harvard University

Having but just read the terrible tidings from Martinique that St. Pierre has been utterly destroyed by volcanic eruption, and the fair island left an ash-heap, these one-time insignificant little pictures become at once inexpressibly dear to me; and I have been sitting here for a long, long time, looking first at one and then at another, with a tenderness born of sorrow and love.

Say what you may of the futility of a love which clings to places, it is nevertheless a passion so deeply rooted in



some natures that neither life nor death seem able to cause its destruction. There is no reasoning with love; it is born to be, to exist, and why we love there is no finding out. Strange, this wonderful loving which comes to you and me! Not alone the love we lavish upon God's creatures; upon father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, and children, and the whole world of humankind; but upon all of God's handiwork: His trees, His flowers, His dear brown soil, His hills, His valleys, His broad, sweeping plains, His high, loftily crested peaks, His lonely byways, where shy birds and soft-footed beasts hold high carnival the livelong day.

Beloved as are all of God's creatures, there are for each one of us a few, a very few, souls without whom loving would seem to pass away. Beautiful as is the great earth, there are chosen spots upon it for you and for me, to which our thoughts revert with an infinite tenderness; and were such sweet abiding-places suddenly to be blotted from the earth, it would seem to us as though beauty had died for ever.

Such a treasure-house was St. Pierre to me. In the midst of islands, each rivalling the other in loveliness, Martinique had a claim for homage which none other possessed. Its charm was felt even far out to sea, as its lofty headlands, with terrible *Pelée* looking over, struck a bold pace for the lesser isles to follow.

As we approached the still, deep harbour,—although the hour was late for landing,—we were so permeated by the puissant fascination of the place, that, against the protests of old wiseacres aboard, we nevertheless took the first available small boat, lured into the arms of St. Pierre by her irresistible summons.

And what was that summons? Who can tell?



**St. Pierre and Mt. Pelée after the Eruption  
Martinique**

**Courtesy of Professor T. A. Jaggar, of the Geological Department of Harvard University**

The same hand beckoned us which has for generations been beckoning other children of men; other children who have gone there to live and die content; the same that beckoned old Father Dutertre hundreds of years ago. Children's children have been born there, and have grown old and withered, and have gone the way of all the earth, and *La Pelée*, the giantess, has slept for generations, and the children had quite forgotten that the day might come when she would awaken. *La Pelée* was slumbering, oh! so gently—so peacefully, that far-away night, when we first wondered at her beauty—and we, too, forgot! For did not her children say that she would never waken more?

The soft, blue hills said, "Come!" The lonely peaks, beyond, said, "Come!" And the little city waved its pretty white hand to us with "Come!" in every motion; and the sweet-voiced creole lads, who rowed us in, smiled, "Come!" and what could we do?

And then, when we entered the little city, it was so snug and clean, and it was all so different, so different. How can I explain it to you? There was, as it were, a homogeneousness about the people which was not apparent in the other islands. Here was a people whose sires had sprung from the best blood of France, from a race of great men and women; here the question of colour had been more harmoniously worked out; and we felt at once that we were amongst those whose ancestors had learned, through the streaming blood of kings and princes, the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Justice.

The people said, "Come!" and we answered, and long, long into the night we were following the summons.

Then it was that *La Pelée* was fair, and she lay so still, so still, that the children forgot—if they ever really knew—that very beautiful women can sometimes be very wicked—only "sometimes," for there are so many beautiful good women.

But the children loved *La Pelée*; she was beautiful, and she took her bath so gently, away amongst the clouds and mist of the morning.

.....

As I look again in the unchanging photograph at the dark mountains and the tiny white city, cuddled down by the sea, with its quaint lighthouse and its old church, there rises a strange mist over my soul, and a blur comes into my eyes, and I feel myself pressing the cold bit of cardboard against my lips as I would the face of a beloved.



**Rue Victor Hugo before the Eruption  
St. Pierre, Martinique**

**Courtesy of Professor T. A. Jaggar, of the Geological Department of Harvard University**

It comes to me that once again there has gone from my life for eternity that which can never return; just as the whole bright world can be changed into darkness by the passing out of a soul we love; and we know that, however much we long for its return, it can never come back; that from that hour we tread the way alone. The silent spirit takes up the light, falters a moment at the door, turning, smiles sweetly upon us, and is gone, and we are left in a dark room. Oh! the love that we mortals lavish in this world of ours!

There was about Martinique a sweetness, a translucent loveliness, an unforgettability which crept into the innermost fibre of my being. It even seemed to creep into my blood and pulsate through my body with every beat of my heart.

I listen now to the memories of my soul, and hear again the sweet, soft voices of the creole girls and the quick, noiseless tread of the carriers of water, fruits, and cacao coming down from Morne Rouge, coming from the tender shadows which droop caressingly about the feet of slumbering *Pelée*. And I can hear the cool trickle of the water from the half-hidden fountain in a cranny of the wall; and I hear the rush of the stream down from the mountainside, over stones as white as milk. And sweet, shy flowers hang over high walls and nod to me; and from green blinds in low, white mansions, I hear soft young voices, whispering and laughing. A youth passes, as the blind opens, and he laughs and goes to the other side of the street to beckon, and, oh! there it is again—the old story.

And I go on and on, and I come to the *Rivière Roxelane* where the women are spreading their clothes to dry on the great rocks, and the river tumbles along, and twists in and out with gentle murmurs, and the women are washing and laughing.



**Rue Victor Hugo after the Eruption  
St. Pierre, Martinique**

**Courtesy of Professor T. A. Jaggar, of the Geological Department of Harvard University**

And I go on to the palms, higher up, and some one brings me wild strawberries from the cool mountains, and I sit down and pick them from the basket and eat to my heart's delight; and I rest on the bridge, so old, all covered with moss and flowers, and I look down into the valley, where the city lies, and beyond where it dabbles its feet into the blue sea. And the picture is framed in an oval of green, drooping trees, and whispering vines, and deep-scented flowers.

.....  
It must have come—*the end*—just as the good priest was saying mass down in the white church by the sea, and the creole girls had come from the mountains with their sticks of palm—for salad—and had sold their fruits in the market, and had gone with the fishermen to the good priest; and the white church was crowded to the doors,—for the priest was beloved, and the church had broad arms,—and the boys were chanting, when—my God! where should the children escape? The fiery mountain back of them and the deep sea before them and the air about them a sweeping furnace!

“Children! Children!” I seem to hear the clear, ringing voice of the old priest. “I commit your souls to God. Amen, amen.”

The beautiful *Pelée* burned out her wicked soul, the River Roxelane ran dry, the dear, blue sky of morning was turned to hideous night, the white city fell in blazing ruins, and now the everlasting hills lift their scarred sides in grim desolation.

THE END

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