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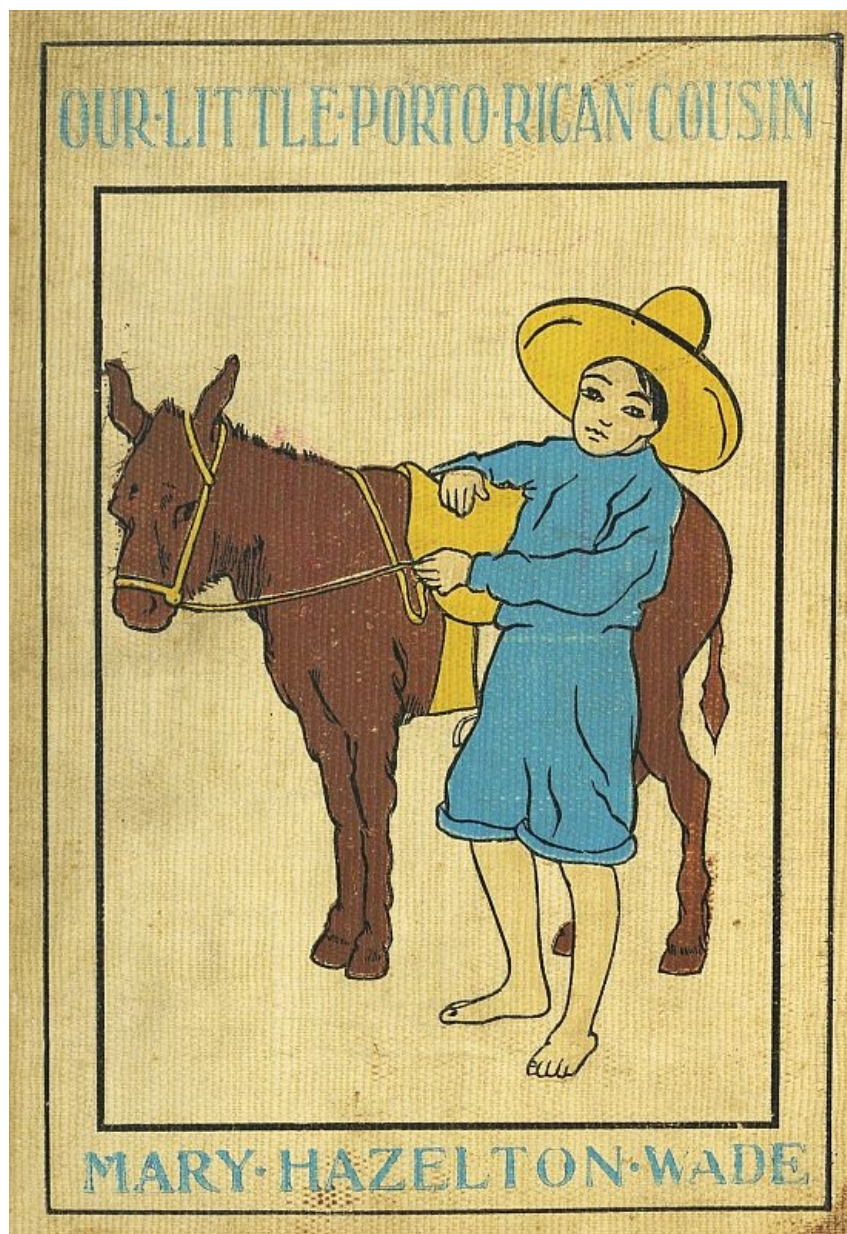
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The Little Cousin Series



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per volume, 60 cents.



LIST OF TITLES

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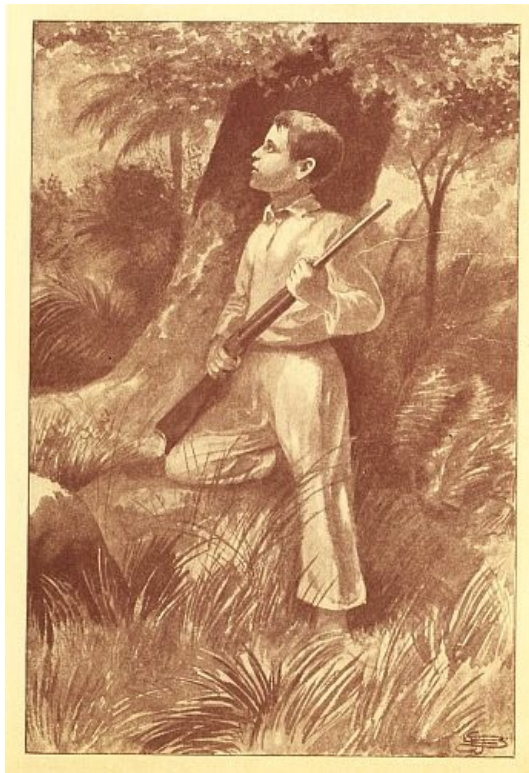
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MANUEL

[iii]

Our Little Porto Rican Cousin

By
Mary Hazelton Wade

Illustrated by
L. J. Bridgman



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Preface

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THE beautiful island of Porto Rico lies, as you will see by looking at the map, near that great open doorway to North America and the United States which we call the Gulf of Mexico. Very near it looks, does it not?

So the little cousin with whom we are going to become acquainted to-day is our near neighbour as well. To be sure, a schoolboy or girl from Massachusetts would have to travel a thousand miles or so to see his Porto Rican cousin; and even a child from Florida could not say good morning to his Porto Rican neighbour unless he were to take a sail of several hundred miles.

However, we, who are used to taking little excursions over the world (between the covers of a book), so that we may learn to know our tiny Eskimo cousins who live near the icy pole, and our little African cousins south of the equator, as well as our Japanese cousins on the other side of the globe, think nothing of the distance between here and Porto Rico. We should expect to feel very much at home after we arrived there, especially now that Porto Rico has become part of our own country.

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We shall find our Porto Rican cousins and neighbours, with their dark skins, black hair, and soft black eyes, somewhat different in appearance, indeed, from ourselves; and we shall not be able to understand what they say unless we have learned the Spanish language; for, as we know, the parents or forefathers of our Porto Rican cousins came from Spain to Porto Rico, just as the parents and forefathers of most of us who speak English came from England.

However, these are slight differences; and the Spanish people, from whom our black-eyed Porto Rican cousin is descended, belong to the same branch of the great human family as we do, who are descended, most of us, from English people. That is, the Spanish people and their descendants, the Porto Ricans, belong to the white race. Manuel is thus a nearer relative than the little black cousin, who belongs to the negro race; or the little Japanese cousin, who belongs to the yellow or Mongolian race; or the little Indian cousin, who belongs to the red race; or the little Malayan cousin, who belongs to the brown race. So we shall welcome the Porto Rican neighbours near our doorway into our nation's family. They were already our cousins by descent; they have become our adopted brothers in our nation.

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Our Little Porto Rican Cousin

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CHAPTER I. MANUEL.

IT is a beautiful May day. The air is still, yet clear; the sun is shining brightly, but it is not too warm for comfort. There is not a cloud in the sky.

And yet lazy little Manuel lies curled up in his comfortable bed, sound asleep at eight o'clock in the morning. See! A smile lights up his face. Perhaps he is dreaming of his newly adopted American brothers.

Of the things he has read about, he longs to see a real New England snow-storm most of all. To build a snow fort, to make balls of snow and have a mock battle, what fun it must be! To slide down the icy hills, to ride over the snowy roads to the jingle of the sleigh-bells,—surely there is nothing in his island home to equal sport like that. And so in his dreams our little Manuel takes part in games he cannot play while awake, until they at last become quite real to him.

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But now the door opens, and old black Juana, Manuel's nurse ever since he was born, comes softly into the dark room, bringing a tray in her hand. She steps toward a little stand beside the bed, and sets down the tray. Then she goes to the casement and opens wide the wooden shutter. The sunlight pours into the room, and Manuel slowly opens his big black eyes.

"Oh, it is you, mammy dear, is it?" he says, sleepily, and slowly stretches himself and sits up in bed.

Juana brings a basin of fresh water and a towel for the boy to bathe his hands and face, then draws the stand closer to his side and hands him a cup of steaming chocolate and a roll. What thick, rich chocolate it is, and what a dainty little roll! This is all the boy ever cares to eat in the

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morning, for he is seldom hungry when first roused. His father and mother are having coffee in their own bedroom at the same time Manuel is drinking his chocolate. This is the way every one in the family takes the first meal of the day.

Manuel is a creole. Many, many years ago his great-great-great (indeed I cannot tell you how many times great) grandfather left Spain and crossed the wide Atlantic Ocean. He came to this beautiful island of Porto Rico to live, and his children and grandchildren liked the place so well they never cared to go back to the mother country. Such people are called creoles; that is, people born in the West Indies of European parents. They set out great plantations of tobacco and sugar and became very rich. [12]

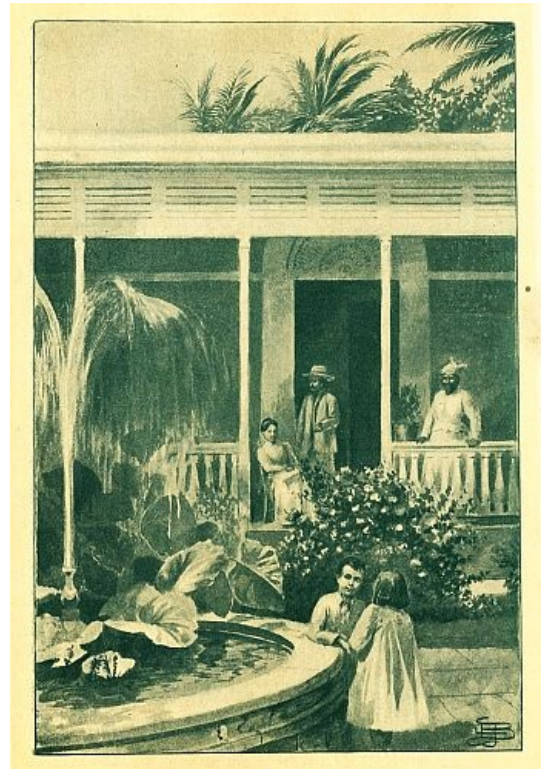
Manuel's father has many acres of their land still, but the fortune of the family has been slowly lost; and, although there are many servants, and a large, comfortable home, there is not much money to spend.

The house is at least a hundred years old. It is made of blocks of stone, built around the four sides of a square courtyard, where orange-trees and magnolias stand in immense pots. A fountain is playing in the centre of the paved yard and making soft music as the spray falls upon the stones. There is a large aquarium at one side, where Manuel's mother cares for many beautiful fishes.

Vines climb up over the wide verandas; the stone work is nearly hidden by mosses which have made their home here; and, over all, the tall, graceful trees of the tropics sway gently to and fro.

There are water-lemon and banana, cocoanut and tamarind trees growing close to the house, and underneath in the rose-bushes and acacias hundreds of brilliant humming-birds are glancing in and out.

At first thought, it may seem strange to us that there are no windows fitted with glass in this old mansion. Our window is an opening in the wall of a building to let in or keep out light and air, as needed. In Porto Rico, where it is summer all the time, people need to have all the air possible in the house; they have no use for panes of glass such as we use. These are rarely seen anywhere in the island, but instead of them bars of iron are fastened across the casements, or else there are wooden shutters, as in Manuel's home. The slats of these shutters can be set open as much as one likes, or closed tightly when the heavy rains come.



"A FOUNTAIN IS PLAYING IN THE CENTRE OF THE PAVED YARD" [13]

When Manuel has finished drinking his chocolate, old Juana prepares a bath for him. She does not bring any soap, for his mother believes it spoils the skin; but the bath is scented with Florida-water, and the sweet perfume fills the room. [14]

Manuel is soon dressed, for he wears only a little shirt and loose white trousers during the daytime at home. His feet are left bare, so he may be as cool as possible.

What a handsome fellow he is now that he is wide awake! He is a little smaller than his American brothers of his own age, but he is well-shaped and graceful. People say he looks very much like his beautiful mother. His black eyes are tender and loving, his hair is black, but fine and soft; his skin is dark, yet clear; and his teeth are even and white. Yes, he is not only good-looking, but kind and lovable, we feel sure.

CHAPTER II. DOLORES.

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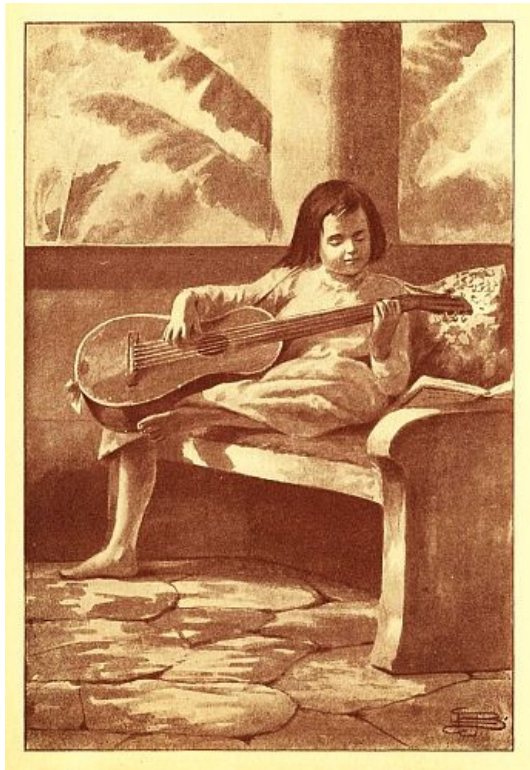
AND NOW he goes from his room out into the courtyard, for the house is only one story high. His sister Dolores is there already, and runs to kiss him good morning.

"Oh, Dolores," says Manuel, "do you think we have time before our lessons begin to go over to Salvador's and see if he got those fireflies yet? He was to bring them to me last night."

"It's only nine o'clock now, we have an hour yet," answers Dolores, in her sweet voice. "I'm all ready, so let's go."

Both children put on their broad white hats and take a shady path through the fields. They soon reach the huts of the coloured workmen, clustered together in a grove of pimento-trees. A "pimento-walk" such a grove is sometimes called, and it would be hard to find anything more [16]

beautiful. The trees are of nearly the same height, reaching up about thirty feet from the ground. The branches are covered with glossy green leaves. The berries are not yet ready to pick, but when they are still green the coloured boys on the place must climb the trees and break off the twigs; they will throw them down to their sisters on the ground, who will pick off the berries and store them in bags for their master to send to the United States mainland. We call these berries "allspice," and after they have been dried we buy them under that name.



DOLORES

The huts of the workmen are scarcely more than sheds with roofs of thatched palm leaves. Some have sides and doorways, while others are quite open. What do these poor people care for that in this land of summer? If they have plantains enough to satisfy their hunger, plenty of cigars to smoke, and hammocks of the bark of the palm-tree to swing in, they are happy and contented. [17]

Within the huts one can see a few earthen pots and gourds; that is all that is needed in their simple housekeeping, whether they belong to the black race or are "jibaros," as the poor whites are called. And most of the people are poor in this beautiful land, although Mother Nature is so generous here in her gifts to men.

But we must go back to Manuel and Dolores, who are quickly surrounded by a group of little children. They are of all colours: some black as jet, the whites of their eyes looking like windows; others of shades running from dark brown to pale yellow. But they are all noisy, all happy, all talking at the same time, and all naked.

As for Dolores, herself, the dainty little maiden wears only a cotton slip at her play. Many another white child on the island goes about her home with no clothing, and feels very comfortable, too. It is only when the children get to be nine or ten years old that their parents make them dress; and that is a sad time [18]

for them, you may be sure.

But Dolores lives in quite a grand way, you know, so she and Manuel were never allowed to go about naked since they were old enough to walk.

But look! one of the little black boys is handing something to Manuel. It is a net filled with the fireflies or beetles he wished to get.

"Come to the house to-night, Salvador," says Manuel, as he takes his treasures, "and I will pay you."

Now what do you suppose Manuel cares for these beetles? They are not beautiful in the daytime. We would far rather watch those lovely green and blue butterflies flitting among the bushes. But Manuel is going to make pets of them. He will put them in a little wicker cage, feed them with sugar, and they will grow quite tame. At night they will be more beautiful than any precious gems owned by his mother. [19]

Let us examine them. They are of a dull drab colour, except around the eyes and underneath, where there are rings or bands that glow brightly in the dark, giving forth red and green lights. They gleam like diamonds. Manuel can read by their light, should he choose to do so. The fireflies of Porto Rico are the largest and most brilliant in the whole world.

After the children have finished their lessons to-day, perhaps they will take some calabashes and bore holes in them. Then when night comes they can put the beetles inside and play outdoors with them for lanterns. Some of the poor people in Porto Rico use no other light at night, except these little creatures.

Manuel carries the net very carefully as he and his sister return to the house. He does not wish a single beetle to be injured or frightened. [20]

"Mamma dear!" he calls as he sees his mother on the veranda, "you shall wear the most beautiful one I have in your lace dress to-night."

What a strange idea this seems to us! but the smiling lady in her white wrapper does not seem at all surprised. She often fastens the living gems under the thin net of her evening gown; perhaps they will glisten on her shoulders, perhaps at her throat, or in her hair. She certainly could not wear more beautiful jewels than these.

"Thank you, my precious child," she answers, "you are very thoughtful; but now your teacher is waiting for you in the schoolroom. Go to her, and give your studies good attention this morning."

CHAPTER III. LESSONS.

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DOLORES and Manuel are soon busy with their lessons. Although Manuel is twelve years old and his sister ten, they are both learning to speak French and a little Italian. I fear you would think them rather backward in arithmetic and other grammar-school studies, but their parents do not see the need of knowing as much of such things as do American fathers and mothers.

The children have always had a governess, and have never been in a public schoolroom in their lives. In fact, these are only now becoming common since our people have taken Porto Rico under their care. Think of it, children! In this beautiful island, only one person out of five can read and write at present. Most of these have been brought up in the towns and cities. Those who live out in the country seldom have had a chance to go to school. If they were too poor to hire a governess or study with the nuns in the convents, they grew up ignorant indeed.

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Dolores is taught to embroider and to play a little on the guitar, so her mother thinks her daughter is quite accomplished. Besides, both Manuel and his sister are very graceful dancers and can sing well. These are quite important studies, for wherever one goes in Porto Rico, there he will find music and dancing.

At half-past eleven the books are closed, and the children join their parents for the first regular meal of the day. This is the real breakfast.

It is served in the large, low dining-room, where for the first time we see the children's grown-up sister, Teresa. She is a lovely young lady of sixteen, slight and graceful. She has the same black eyes as Manuel and Dolores, soft and beautiful.

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She wears no stockings, but her feet are encased in dainty blue kid slippers. They are embroidered with pearl beads, and, no doubt, came from Paris.

An ugly-looking woman takes her place beside Teresa at the table. This is her "duenna." It is her duty to go everywhere with the young girl. It would not be considered at all proper for Teresa to go driving, or even walking, alone. It would not do for her to go shopping to the town only three miles away unless her duenna were with her; and as for a party or any evening entertainment whatever, if Teresa were to go without her parents or this same duenna, every one in the country around would be terribly shocked.

But now all are busy eating the breakfast the coloured waiter is serving. First, there is a nice omelet, cooked in olive oil. Then come pineapple jam, fish fried a delicate brown, fried bananas, fried chicken, and a salad made of many kinds of vegetables. We must not forget to mention the apricots stewed in honey, nor the tea steeped with the leaves of lemon verbena. It has a delicious odour, and Manuel's father and mother are very fond of it.

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There is no butter to eat on the rolls, but the fact is, almost all the butter in Porto Rico comes in tin cans from other countries. On account of the hot climate, it is often rancid, so it is seldom used in Manuel's home. The cooking is done with olive oil. Nearly everything is fried, instead of being broiled or roasted, and no one feels the need of butter.

Manuel and Dolores, like some other boys and girls we know, are very fond of sweet things, so they eat a great deal of the cooked fruits on the table. But they also seem to like the salad very much, even though it is so hot with Cayenne pepper as to burn the mouth of any one not used to it. But the children are accustomed to highly spiced dishes. Our cooking would seem tasteless to them. Perhaps it is the hot climate all the year round that makes it necessary to have strongly flavoured foods to excite the appetite.

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After this second breakfast is over, cigarettes are served, and, would you believe it! our little Manuel, as well as his mother and older sister, joins in a smoke. Such is the custom of his country that even children of three or four years use tobacco. It is no wonder, then, that as the boys and girls grow up, they have so little strength. We are no longer surprised that Manuel does not care much for active play.

It is now the hottest part of the day. The boy and his sister play a few games of dominoes and cards out on the veranda, and then sleepily stretch themselves in hammocks under the palms for an afternoon nap. Manuel's little dog, Ponce, lies on the ground by his side, ready to bark if any stranger should come near his master.

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But what do the poor children of Porto Rico do, while Manuel is taking his "siesta," as the afternoon nap is called? They, too, are probably having their siestas, for all classes of people rest during the hottest part of the day. Very little business is done in the cities; the time for work is in the early morning and late afternoon.

The coloured children of the plantation would think it a perfect feast to have a breakfast like Manuel's. A bit of salt fish, with some breadfruit, plantains, and coffee,—these satisfy their hunger day after day. But in the sugar season, when the canes are ripe and full of juice, then indeed it is hard to make the people work, whether they are white or black. Oh, the delicious sugar-cane! there is nothing like the pleasure of sucking it. Here and there, in every nook and corner, one sees boys and girls, men and women, with joints of the cane in their hands, sucking away for dear life. Then is the time to stop all worry and grow fat.

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CHAPTER IV. THROUGH THE WOODS.

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WHEN Manuel and Dolores finish their siesta, it is nearly three o'clock. Old Juana appears on the veranda with a pitcher of limeade, made with fresh limes, and Manuel drinks glass after glass. It is very refreshing, and he begins to feel like moving about, so he orders his pet donkey to be brought. He says to Dolores:

"I think I will ride through the woods and around the plantation. I will take my gun, as we may see some rabbits. Please come with me, Dolores."

The little girl is always ready to oblige her brother, so she sends for her own donkey, and the children start for the woods, with Ponce following close behind. [29]

Dear little patient, long-eared donkeys! Just as slow and stupid and stubborn as other donkeys in other parts of the world. Manuel loves his Pedro, as he is called. Pedro has been his friend and companion ever since the boy was big enough to sit up straight.

Pedro is not obliged to work very hard, and is now quite willing to set off on a gentle trot.

Dolores holds a dainty little parasol over her head, but as they reach the deep shadow of the woods, she shuts it down; then in some magical way changes it into a fan, with which she brushes away the mosquitoes.

What beautiful woods these are! Coccoanut, banana, sago, and palmetto trees grow here, as well as cedar, India-rubber, guava, and many other tall and stately trees belonging to the tropics. More than five hundred different kinds of trees are found on the one island of Porto Rico, every one of them growing over fifteen feet high. [30]

Just think of it, children! Manuel can pick lemons, oranges, bananas, limes, plantains, peaches, apricots, olives, tamarinds, and—dear me! I can't tell you how many other fruits, without stepping off the land owned by his father.

"Listen!" says Dolores to her brother, "don't you hear that grinding, buzzing noise? It sounds like some one grinding a knife. I wonder what it can be."

The children make the donkeys stop, and look all around them. No one is to be seen. Then turning their eyes up into the branches of a tree close by, they see a strange sight. It is a beetle at least six inches long. He is very busy sawing off a small branch.

"Oh, I know what that is," says Manuel. "Father has told me all about him. Some people call him a razor-grinder because he makes a noise like the grinding of a razor. He is the largest beetle in the world. So come along, Dolores, I want to shoot some pigeons." [31]

"Aren't you afraid, Manuel, to go any farther into the woods?" whispers his sister. "I just heard a queer, rustling noise. Perhaps it is a wild dog. It may spring at us before we can get away."

The children of Porto Rico have more fear of wild dogs than of anything else. They imagine all kinds of terrible things about them, and whenever they come to a dark place in the woods, they begin to fear an attack. The fact is that dogs, as well as cats, often leave their homes and run wild on account of the good times they can have in the woods. There are so many mice and birds to be caught that they need never go hungry, but there is little to fear from them.

That is what Manuel thinks, sensible little fellow that he is, so he answers: [32]

"Oh, pshaw, Dolores, you never yet saw a wild dog in your life. So come along; I'll take care of you. You know I have my gun."

Just at this moment Manuel spies a brown object behind a rock. Look! now a sharp-pointed nose is thrust straight up in the air, and a pair of bright eyes can be seen.

"That is a dear little agouti. Please don't shoot him. See how shy he looks; he is too scared to run. Oh, what a beautiful glossy coat he has!" says Dolores. "I wish we had one to tame for a pet. Don't you, Manuel?"

At first thought, Manuel was going to shoot the agouti, but he quickly thinks better of it. Any one would indeed be hard-hearted to wish to kill such a pretty, timid little creature. The agouti is a cousin of the hare and the rabbit, but lives in warmer lands than they.

The children ride slowly along. Manuel shoots a couple of pigeons, and they are about to turn out of the woods when they spy a big hole in the ground near them. The appearance of the earth shows that it must have been freshly dug. [33]

"I know what that means," exclaims Manuel, "an armadillo is hiding from us. He heard us coming and at once burrowed under ground. I don't see how they can dig so fast. Do you? Now let's make our donkeys rest, and see if he will come out when all is quiet."

The children get off and tie their donkeys to some trees, while they themselves sit down at quite a little distance from the hole.

It is not long before Mr. Armadillo appears, reaching his head out from his shell as he climbs. He does not come very far, however, before Ponce spies him. The dog begins to bark furiously, and tries to get away from Manuel, who holds him by his collar. The armadillo flees back into his hole "as quick as a flash," as the saying is, and does not make his appearance again, although the children wait quite a while longer.

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What a curious looking animal it is, with its shell of horny plates, and a white horn on its back through which it blows and makes a loud noise! When in danger, it draws itself completely within its shell. The flesh is a great dainty, but the little animal is hard to catch. The negroes on some of the West Indian islands belonging to England call the armadillo "hog-in-armour." Not a bad name, is it?

Manuel and Dolores, still mounted on their patient little donkeys, leave the woods, and come out upon a path leading through their father's coffee plantation.

CHAPTER V. THE COFFEE-TREE.

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WHEN the first white people came to Porto Rico they did not find any coffee among the other tropical fruits. To-day it is the most valuable product of the island, yet all the trees growing now came from a few plants brought here nearly two hundred years ago. Perhaps you would like to hear the story.

In the year 1714, all the coffee used in the civilised world was under the control of the Dutch. They were very jealous of other people growing it, but one of the governors of Amsterdam gave a single plant to the King of France. From this plant a few others were raised and sent across the ocean to Martinique, an island of the West Indies belonging to France.

The voyage was long. The fresh water on board the ship nearly gave out, but the man who had the plants in his care shared his allowance with them. They were thus kept alive, and from them have come the coffee-trees that cover thousands of acres of land to-day in Porto Rico, Martinique, and the other islands.

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Manuel and Dolores delight in riding through the plantation at this season of the year; the rows of small, evenly trimmed trees, with their glossy green leaves, are always a pretty sight. But just now they are more beautiful than at other times, for each tree is a mass of snow-white blossoms, filling the air with their fragrance.

Dolores's mother hires some of the coloured children to collect petals of the coffee flowers as they drop upon the ground. She will fill jars with them to scent her drawing-room with their perfume; but no one is allowed to pick the blossoms from the trees, for each flower means a berry later on in the season.

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As the fruit forms, it is first green, then a pale pink, and at last a bright red. Not all the berries ripen at the same time, as cherries do, so the autumn picking lasts several weeks.

After they have been gathered, the berries are first washed and then hulled by machinery. Even then, however, they are not ready for market, for they must still be dried. At Manuel's home this is done by spreading them on floors paved with stones, where the sun can shine upon them; but on larger plantations it is usually done by steam or hot air.

The men and women who work for Manuel's father are always busy, for there are many things to do besides attending to the coffee-trees. These stand in rows about fifteen feet apart, and between the rows there are "catch crops," as they are called. One can see sweet potatoes, pigeon pease, eddoes, and other vegetables.

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Coffee-trees are quite tender, and need a good deal of shade when they are young, so banana and plantain trees have been planted between the rows to protect them from the hot sun.

Manuel's father does not pay his workmen in money; he gives them a certain number of plantains for each day's labour. They keep enough of this fruit to feed their families, and sell the rest in the towns near by.

The children stop for a chat with the overseer, then ride onward to the house, for dinner must be ready.

Just as the meal is over, and the family leave the dining-room, the convent bells begin to ring. It is six o'clock, the time for evening prayer, and all bow their heads in silence. Although Manuel is a little boy, he likes these quiet moments in the day. The air is filled with peace; it seems as though he feels God's love more fully than at any other time.

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CHAPTER VI.

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SONGS AND STORIES.

NIGHT falls suddenly on this beautiful home. There is no long twilight as in northern lands; and soon the stars are shining, myriads of them. They do not twinkle, but give a strong, steady light.

This is the best part of the day. The planter sits on the veranda, smoking; his wife, in her delicate evening dress, keeps him company. Teresa plays some sweet tunes on her guitar and sings, while her duenna sits back in a rattan chair and dozes. Manuel and Dolores dance together along the garden paths or play with their fireflies.

Hark! listen to that lively music coming from the homes of the workmen. We know there are mandolins among the instruments they are playing, but what is that strange, swishing noise we hear, keeping time with the other instruments? It is somewhat like the sound of shuffling feet. It is made upon gourds notched in many places, with holes in the shape of triangles cut in the necks.

A few nights ago Manuel and Dolores begged their father to take them over to the "quarters," as the cabins of the coloured farm labourers are called. Manuel said:

"We want to see the sport. They have such good times over there when their work is done, and do tell such funny stories. But, after all, papa, it's the way they tell them that I like best. Their black eyes are so solemn and look as though they believed every word that is said."

When the planter and his children drew near, they found the coloured people squatting in a big circle in front of one of the huts. The sun was just setting in a great round ball in the west. There was still light enough in the sky to show the shining dark faces ranged around. Two rows of glistening ivory teeth could be plainly seen in each face as the workmen jumped up to bow and smile before "Massa, little Massa, and little Missus." They were quite proud to be honoured by a visit from these great people. And now the sun suddenly dropped below the horizon, and the air seemed filled with the darkness.

It was the sign to begin, and the blacks, at a motion from their leader, started in with an old, old song not learned from books; it had been handed down from the time when their people lived in their native land of Africa. It was a song about a beautiful star, and before it was ended Dolores and Manuel felt as if the star itself were a living friend and helper of these ignorant, earnest people.

Sing! The word does not begin to describe the music they not only heard but saw and felt. The voices of the singers were sweet and rich; their bodies swayed back and forth, keeping perfect time. Their great round eyes rolled from side to side, and as they sang verse after verse, they seemed to forget their company as well as themselves. Their faces shone with a smile of perfect happiness.

When the song was ended a story was called for, and an old gray-haired man began to tell this tale of the elephant and the whale.

"Once upon a time an elephant was walking on the shore. He saw a whale in the water. He spoke to the whale and said:

"'Brother Whale, I can pull you up on to the shore.'

"'Indeed you can't,' cried the whale.

"'I bet three thousand dollars that I can,' the elephant answered.

"'All right, let me see you try,' the whale said, quickly, and went away.

"'Soon afterward they met again. The whale spoke this time, and said:

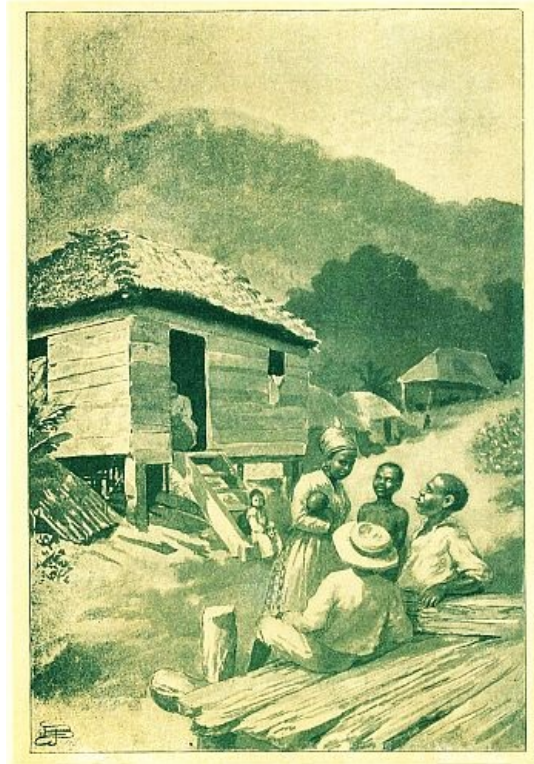
"'Brother Elephant, I can pull you into the sea.'

"'What an idea!' said the elephant. 'No man in the world could pull me into the sea.'

"'Brother Rabbit heard the two talking, and said:

"'I'll try it to-morrow at twelve o'clock.'

"He went away and got a piece of rope. He tied one end of it around the whale's neck and the other around the elephant's neck. Then he said:



"THE HOMES OF THE WORKMEN"

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"When I speak the word you must both pull hard.'

"Now when the whale pulled, he dragged the elephant into the sea. He said:

"You, Brother Elephant, think the little rabbit is doing all this.'

"Then the elephant pulled hard, and brought the whale into the surf. The whale caught underneath a shelf of rock and the elephant found himself fastened to a big tree. [45]

"These two mightiest of creatures pulled and pulled, till at last the rope broke, and the elephant was jerked way back into the forest and the whale was jerked way out to sea. That is why you always see the whale in the ocean and the elephant in the woods."

There was a great clapping of hands when the tale was ended. After that, there were other songs and stories, while the faces of the people grew more earnest and eager after each one.

It was growing late, and Manuel's father said:

"Come, children, we must go now. Your mother will be watching for you. It is long past your bedtime."

As they walked homeward, Manuel was quiet for some time. Then he said:

"Father, what nonsense many of these stories are! Yet I like them, too, because they seem to bring one so near all living things. Even the rabbit and the elephant are brothers to them. It's a little odd, though, that in their animal stories they always make the rabbit the wisest." [46]

Sometimes Manuel's father walks over to the "quarters" with his boy to see the dancing. It is wild and exciting; it fairly makes Manuel dizzy to watch the people twist and turn themselves about. It is so different from the slow, graceful steps he and Dolores have been taught.

One wonders if the children are not afraid of snakes in the long grass at night. No, for in all Porto Rico, it is said, a poisonous serpent has never been seen. In two other islands of the West Indies the most deadly snake of the Western world is found. This is the terrible fer-de-lance whose bite is so much dreaded; but this serpent has never made its way into Porto Rico. It probably drifted on limbs of forest trees from South America to the other islands, but never reached Manuel's home. The boy should be very grateful that it did not. [47]

But there are other things for him to fear. When he goes to bed to-night, he will get Juana to look under his bed and in every corner of the room before he can settle himself to sleep. Is he afraid of burglars, do you suppose? He never thinks of them; but he knows that scorpions and centipedes can creep into the house, and even into his bed, without being seen. And oh! their sting means very great suffering. Manuel's mother was once stung by a scorpion's fiery tail, and the wound was very painful for a long time.

It was only a few nights ago that Juana found a centipede snuggled away under a cushion in the sitting-room. Suppose some one had sat down upon it unawares and been bitten! It makes the shivers creep up and down Manuel's back to think of it. [48]

The word centipede, perhaps you know, means hundred-footed. These little insects travel quite rapidly, and although they do not cause death, they may make very painful wounds.

There are other things, too, to trouble Manuel and Dolores, for mosquitoes and fleas are always plentiful, and sometimes the children are awakened at night by an attack from a small regiment of cruel little ants, and sleep no more till morning.

There is a certain insect in the West Indies known as a "chico," "chigoe," or "jigger," and woe to the toes of the person whom it visits. It gets under the skin, and there lays many eggs and prepares to make itself very much at home. So if any person's toe begins to itch, he needs to have it examined at once, or there may be trouble. People have sometimes been obliged to have the toe, and even the foot and leg, cut off on account of the inflammation caused by a chico and her family. [49]

But the curious thing about it is that this insect seems to prefer the toes of white strangers, so that Manuel and Dolores, who were born on the island, are pretty safe in going barefooted.

CHAPTER VII. A CRUEL SPORT.

 [50]

TO-MORROW there will be "lots of fun," as Manuel says. After the morning service in the church (for it will be Sunday) his father will take him and Dolores to a cock-fight. Manuel has been brought up to think there is no pleasure like it.

When our government took charge of the island, after the war with Spain, they forbade any more cock-fighting. But all the people, black and white, loved the sport so dearly, and felt so bad on account of the new law, that it has been set aside for the present.

Yes, Manuel, our gentle, kind-hearted little cousin, has seen many cock-fights. Sunday is the

day his people take for the cruel pleasure. The boy's father has a very handsome cock he has been training for to-morrow's fight. He has bet quite a large sum on him, and is even more anxious than his little son for the next day to come. Why, this game-cock of his has been getting as much care and attention as a fine horse or pony generally receives from a loving master!

[51]

And now it is Sunday. Not even a flea has disturbed Manuel's dreams all night. Late in the afternoon a carriage comes to the door, and the planter drives away to the town with his two younger children. His wife and Teresa do not go, as it is not considered proper; but it is thought to be all right for Manuel and Dolores, as it is the fashion of this country for boys and little girls to go.

What a crowd there is around the entrance! Men and children, both black and white, are jostling each other, talking loudly, and quarrelling together. See that man elbow his way along! He has a cock under his arm, probably a contribution to the entertainment.

[52]

Manuel's father beckons to a servant who has followed him on horseback with his precious game-cock in charge, and together they pass inside. Every one must pay for admission to the show. And what does one see within? There is a large cleared space covered with sawdust. This is for the cocks; all around are seats for the people who look on.

Over at one side of the pit a man is lifting the cocks, one by one, and weighing them to find their fighting weight. See the care with which each skinny fowl is tied in a bandanna and handled; one would think it something very precious. And, indeed, they are precious, and cost their owners many dollars.

Look! the men are fastening sharp knives to the spurs of the poor fowls, whose necks and backs are bare of feathers. These knives are sharper than the natural spurs, and will help to make the battle a deadly one. They are not always used, however.

[53]

And now, in the midst of shouts and yells, the first battle begins. It means death to one or both of the birds. The two cocks enter into the fight as though they delight in it. See the feathers fly from their heads and sides!

Ah! one of them is blinded by the dust. His owner rushes up and squirts alum water in his eyes. The fight goes on till one cock lies breathing his last on the ground, and the other stands beside him dizzy and tottering, yet hanging to him still.

There is silence while the bets are paid; then the noise begins again, and two more cocks are brought in. Battle after battle is fought till night falls upon the cruel sport.

There is no doubt that these game-cocks enjoy fighting, yet this is no reason they should be pitted against each other by human beings; nor that people should think it sport to watch suffering and bloodshed even among stupid fowls.

[54]

It is hoped that Manuel and Dolores will learn better as they grow older. We cannot blame them now, for the customs of their country have made it seem quite right and proper.

A still more cruel sport was brought by the Spaniards to Porto Rico, but it is now forbidden by American law. This is bull-fighting. It is not long, however, since the finest ladies in the land dressed themselves in their handsomest gowns, and with their husbands attended a bull-fight. You would have thought to see the rich jewels and fans, the fine silks and satins, that they were in a ballroom.

Do not let us think of such sad things any longer, however. Those days are gone by for ever, let us hope.

[55]

While Manuel and Dolores are giving their mother an exciting account of the Sunday's pleasure, let us go back to the Porto Rico of long, long ago.

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY TIMES.

[56]

WE find Columbus sailing into one of its harbours after his second trip across the great Atlantic Ocean. The trees and plants look very beautiful to him. But he notices other things; he sees rivers flowing down into the sea, and the natives tell him of stores of gold to be found in the beds of these streams. For this reason he calls it "Puerto Rico," or the "Rich Port," and so it has been called to this day.

He and his men are full of interest in the strange sights around them. In the waters about Porto Rico are wonderful creatures they have never seen before. Among these is the manatee, which, rising up out of the water, looks at a distance somewhat like a human being.

[57]

"It is a mermaid," cries Columbus, "but, alas! it is not as beautiful as I expected." He wrote of it in this way in the account of his voyage.

In those days of long ago people had many queer ideas. One of these notions was that beings lived in the sea who had heads and arms like men and women, but the lower parts of their bodies

were shaped like fishes. They were, therefore, half human and half fish. Their home was far down in cool groves at the bottom of the sea. A diver once said he had visited the very place. He found the water perfectly clear, and lighted up by crystal pyramids. There were gardens of beautiful sea-weeds, furniture all made of precious stones, and the strange beings dwelling there wore ornaments and combs of shining gold.

They believed that these beings of the sea rose sometimes to the surface of the water. There they would sing sweet songs as they combed their long yellow hair. But they sang only to make the sailors forget their own homes and to lead them into harm. [58]

It was no wonder that Columbus was disappointed when he discovered the manatee, and believed he had at last seen the mermaids of whom he had read so many stories. The sea-cow is certainly not a beautiful creature. It looks somewhat like a small whale; it has a fat body, with small eyes and ears. It is very timid, and probably swam off as fast as it could when it found the vessels of Columbus near. Of course, the great sailor did not get a good view of it or he could not have believed it to be the mermaid described in song and story.

Not many years after Columbus discovered Porto Rico, Ponce de Leon led a company of Spaniards to its shores and settled there. The Indian chief of the country was very kind to the strangers. He gave them provisions and rich presents, and showed them the fruits and vegetables which grew there. He shared his treasures with them, and, most important of all, he led them to a river where stores of gold could be found in its bed. [59]

Gold! It filled the Spaniards' hearts with greed. This was what they had longed for; now they could go back to their own country with great fortunes.

How did they return the kindness of the gentle, trusting natives? By treating them like slaves! By making them do the hardest labour, and then rewarding them with cruelties.

When they first came to the shores of the island they had said to the Indians: "We are immortal; we cannot die; we will live on for ever."

But when the poor Indians had suffered for a long time at their hands, and when many of their kindred had died from the ill-treatment of the Spaniards, they said: [60]

"We will prove what these cruel strangers have told us."

They seized a Spanish soldier and held his head under water for two hours. Then they carried his body to the shore of the river, and sat down beside it for two whole days. But it showed no signs of life. At the end of that time they took the body to their chief, who said:

"They have deceived us, for this man has died, even as we would die."

You can easily imagine what followed. There was war between the natives and the strangers. But the poor Indians had little chance. They had only bows and arrows, rough spears of wood, and battle-axes of stone. The Spaniards were armed with swords and guns. Those Indians who were not killed were made prisoners and set to work in the gold mines and sugar fields, where they rapidly died from their hard labour. [61]

Years passed by. Ponce de Leon was growing old. His hair was gray; his face was wrinkled; the top of his head was bald. He had many pains in his body and was often ill.

Then he thought of the stories told by his Indian slaves of a wonderful fountain not far away. They declared that its waters were always fresh and pure; not only this, but each draught that a person swallowed would make him younger and happier.

"Ah!" sighed the old man, "I wish I might find this spring of living water, and rid myself of stiff joints and rheumatism. I will start out in search of it at once. If I can only reach it, I shall become young and handsome again, and shall never die."

This was the reason the conqueror of Porto Rico sailed away to find the wonderful Fountain of Eternal Youth of which the Indians had told him. [62]

You probably know the story of the coming of Ponce de Leon to Florida one beautiful Easter Sunday, which in the Spanish language is called *Pascua Florida*. So he called the country Florida, saying:

"In this beautiful land must be the wondrous fountain."

Soon afterward, while searching for it, he was shot with a poisoned arrow, and died on the voyage back to the island.

CHAPTER IX. THE CARIBS.

THE Indians whom Ponce de Leon and his followers treated so unkindly were gentle and generous, as I have said. They were not eager for war, like many of the tribes on the continent, nor savage in their habits. They wore short girdles of cotton cloth, raised crops of corn and

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manioc, and built large canoes in which they took quite long voyages. They wrought the gold found in the streams into ornaments.

This tribe of Indians was very numerous at the time the Spaniards first came to the West Indies, but now there is not a single trace of them left. War with the Spaniards, hard work for their masters in the mines and fields,—these made the race die out rapidly. [64]

It is sad to think that the Spaniards tortured them also.

Is it any wonder that the natives did not care to share the Spaniards' heaven, but died hating them with all their hearts?

Long before Ponce de Leon came to Porto Rico, the poor Indians were attacked from time to time by other enemies; but although they suffered much, they were never conquered. These enemies were the Caribs, who seemed to love war better than anything else in the world.

Sometimes the people would be strolling along the shores of the island when they would see something out on the ocean which looked like a mass of floating palm leaves. That did not frighten them, of course, and they would go on with their sports.

When it was too late to give the alarm, they discovered that the mass of palm leaves was the covering of a boat-load of fierce warriors who were all ready to attack them. [65]

Or perhaps their foes would hide themselves from sight in some other clever way until they were all ready to spring out of their boats and take the peaceful islanders by surprise.

You wonder, perhaps, where was the Caribs' home. They told legends of a far-distant land in the north, from which their own people had come. They had fought their way from Florida to South America, and feared no one in the world. They believed that their tribe had grown up out of the stones which had been planted in the soil.

They belonged to the great Indian, or red, race, as did the natives of Porto Rico, but their customs and natures were very different. They painted their faces to make themselves look as fierce as they felt. They were trained to fight from the time when they were little children. They loved to sail upon the ocean, and guided their boats by studying the stars. [66]

When the Spaniards had settled in Porto Rico, the Caribs thought it would be an easy thing to master them in fight, and trouble them as they had troubled the poor natives. But the white men were a match for them, and, when they landed on the shores of the island, the Spaniards entrapped them and drove them over the side of a cliff down into the water below. Not one Carib lived to tell the story of that fearful day.

Time passed by and many workers were needed, and as the natives became fewer the Spaniards sent ships to the coast of Africa and brought away the black people to be their slaves. To-day the negroes are all free and seem to be happy in their island home; but most of them are very, very poor, as are the greater part of the whites of Porto Rico. The rule of Spain has kept them so; and it was a glorious thing for these people when our soldiers, under General Miles, marched in triumph through the land. [67]

CHAPTER X. A SEASIDE PICNIC.

 [68]

SEVERAL weeks have passed since Manuel and Dolores went with their father to the cock-fight. It is a beautiful June evening, and the children are walking through the garden, planning a picnic at the seashore for to-morrow. Their mother comes out hastily on the veranda, and calls:

"Manuel! Dolores! come in at once out of the moonlight! You know well enough that animals will never lie with the moon shining upon them; they are too wise. Oh, the evil I have seen that has come from the moon! Don't you remember poor little Sancho? He is feeble-minded because his careless nurse let him sleep in the moonlight when he was a baby. Come quickly, my darlings, to the shade of the veranda." [69]

Manuel and Dolores are a little frightened, and hurry toward the house, where they join the family in Spanish songs before going to rest.

When Juana wakes them, early the next morning, they hear the rain falling in torrents outside. That will not prevent the picnic, however, for they feel sure it will not last long. It is the beginning of the spring rains, and there are showers every day, but they seldom continue more than an hour. But, oh, how the rain falls when it does come! It seems as though the heavens opened and all the water in the sky fell at once.

By eight o'clock the shower is over, and Teresa, her duenna, Manuel, and Dolores are ready to start. The planter must be busy to-day, and his wife does not care to go.

A low, comfortable carriage is drawn up in front, the lunch is packed away under the seats, and the coachman is told to start. Ponce tries to follow, but Manuel orders him back. They will drive at least ten miles, but the roads are fine, it is down-hill all the way, and the views are [70]

beautiful.

The party soon cross a bridge over a little stream. There they see two women standing nearly knee-deep in the water. They are washing clothes and having a sociable chat at the same time. Two large, flat stones serve as scrubbing boards, and each one of the women holds a club in her hands.

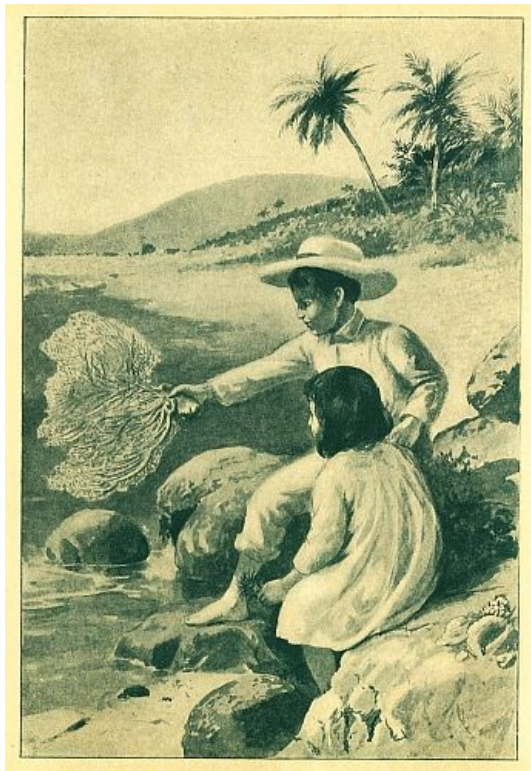
"What is that for?" one asks. To beat the dirt out of the clothes! The garments are spread on the stones, rubbed with some native berries (instead of soap), then pounded with the clubs. Not a delicate way to handle fine linen, to be sure; but the women seem to enjoy their work, and stop every few minutes to sit on the banks and smoke their pipes.

When the party have nearly reached the seashore, the road leads through thick woods. Suddenly they hear a great scuttling among the trees. The driver stops his horses, and every one looks to see what is the matter. [71]

It is nothing more nor less than an army of land-crabs on their yearly journey from the mountains to the sea. The children have often found one of them in the garden or the woods near the house, but such a number as this, they have never seen or heard before.

These land-crabs can fight, and can frighten the horses greatly, if they should choose to take the road. So Pedro very wisely uses the whip, and the party soon leave this queer army behind them. The crabs make a dainty dish when served with lime-juice and Cayenne pepper, and Manuel and Dolores are very fond of them served in this way.

A turn in the road brings the ocean in view. Dolores claps her hands in delight, and cries:



**"ONE IS QUITE LARGE, AND IS FORMED
IN THE SHAPE OF A FAN"**

are red, some black, and others white. One is quite large, and is formed in the shape of a fan, while another spray looks like a mushroom.

After luncheon is over, Manuel says:

"Dolores, let's try to find some sea-anemones. Do you see that rocky cliff at the end of the beach? Perhaps if we go there we can see some."

The children start off once more, and soon are climbing up over the rock. They creep along till they are able to look over its edge as it juts out over the water. [74]

What a wonderful sight meets their eyes! It is the flower garden of the sea. Deep down under the clear waters they see many things living and growing that look for all the world like roses and marigolds, pinks and buttercups. What wonderful colours they have! Coral is indeed beautiful, but it cannot compare with the sea-anemones.

Manuel and his sister fairly hold their breath with delight.

"Oh, Dolores, isn't it strange that those lovely things are animals and not plants! There they stay in one place for ever, yet they are alive like the coral polyps. We must get Teresa to come and see them, too. She never saw them growing; I've heard her say so."

"Oh, what a lovely time we will have! I wonder who will find the most curiosities, Manuel, you or I." [72]

Even the sober-faced duenna looks pleased as they drive out upon a smooth beach. How beautiful the ocean looks to-day! It is such a wonderful blue; much like the colour of the sapphire, and not at all like the waters of the northern seas.

The children take little baskets on their arms and trot about barefooted to see what they can find. It is a perfect paradise among beaches. Their American brothers and sisters would dance for joy at the sight of so many kinds of beautiful shells. And the starfish! Manuel finds one big fellow as much as ten inches across. It is not flat like those seen in the temperate zone, but at least six inches through the middle of his horny body. The little boy cannot get him off the rock to which he has fastened, but Pedro comes, and even he has to use all his strength to pull him away. A New York merchant is to visit the children's father very soon, and Manuel wants to send this starfish to his little son. [73]

But there are other kinds of starfish here that are pretty and delicate. Dolores finds a dear little daisy-star only half an inch across, with fringes on its sides, and, a moment after, her sister picks up a fern-star.

What delights the children most of all are the bits of coral washed up by the waves. Some of the pieces

Manuel whispers these words as though he fears the anemones may hear him and hide themselves from his sight. Dolores answers, in her soft voice:

[75]

"Manuel, did you ever think about what our teacher told us, that the bottom of the ocean is like the land, with hills and valleys, mountains and caves? Many kinds of creatures live there, just as other kinds live on the earth; but it seems to me that the coral polyps and the sea-anemones are the strangest of all."

When the children get back to the others, they beg Alfonso to get a boat and row them around to where the anemones are growing. Perhaps they can reach some of them. But he tells them that their father has forbidden him to take them out on the water, for the terrible blue shark dares to come quite close to the shore, and, even in a row-boat, they could not be sure of safety if a shark should follow them.

He then tells them of adventures with sharks by people living near their own home.

[76]

After these stories Manuel and Dolores are quite willing to give up a row after anemones, nor do they care to go in bathing, even close to the shore.

The time comes all too soon to go home, and all enjoy the ride in the cool evening air. They have not travelled far before the moon rises and sends its light down through the tree-tops.

Dolores happens to be looking out of the carriage, when she sees an ugly-looking animal peering out from behind a bush. It is an iguana, with jaws and mouth like an alligator. He looks fierce enough to devour any one, but Alfonso assures the party that he is really a very timid creature, and will not fight unless he is cornered and cannot get away. He likes to live quietly by himself in the trees and bushes, and no doubt is afraid of the horses.

After awhile the children grow sleepy and doze in each other's arms till home is reached. Their father and mother are watching, and the dinner has been kept waiting until they should arrive.

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CHAPTER XI. THE WONDERFUL CAVE.

[78]

THEY have so much to tell, it seems as though they had been gone a week. Their mother is most interested in hearing about the anemones, while their father wishes he could have been with them when they saw the land-crabs.

"It makes me think," says he, "of a wonderful trip I made when I was quite a young man. I met land-crabs that day in a much stranger place than you ever saw them, Manuel. Did I ever tell you children about my visit to the 'Great Caves'?"

Manuel and Dolores draw close to their father's side and exclaim together:

"Why, no, papa. Oh, do tell us, please. I never even heard of them."

[79]

The planter smiles and answers: "It is not strange, my dears, for there are people living within a much shorter distance of these caves who have never heard of them, as well as yourselves. It is, indeed, odd; but you will yet see the day when travellers from distant lands will visit our island for the sake of seeing the wonderful things hidden away in those very caverns.

"When I was younger, I was always looking for adventures. My father was a rich man, and I was allowed to do very much as I liked. So when some friends of mine asked me to join them in a trip to the caves, I was much pleased. They told me the ride would be tiresome and perhaps dangerous, but I liked the idea far better for that very reason.

"We started out early one morning. Two guides went with us. They were men who had been in the caves many times. They knew the best way to reach them. We carried coils of rope and a roll of pitch lights, as well as a good luncheon.

[80]

"If we could have gone straight up the side of the mountain, it would have been a short trip; but the trail led up and down, in and out. Now we had to climb a narrow ridge, and then descend again into a valley. One of these ridges was so steep that I had to hold on to the pommel of the saddle with all my might. I shut my eyes at the same time. I feared I would grow dizzy and slip from the back of the horse down the side of the precipice.

"But this was for only a short distance. Most of the road was very beautiful and lined with fruit-trees. Sometimes we could have picked great ripe oranges without dismounting; in many a narrow pass the clusters of bananas hung down so near us we had to bend our heads to keep from being knocked from the saddles.

[81]

"At last we had climbed so high we found ourselves with mountain tops on every side. Far below lay an immense coffee plantation. We could see the great drying-pans near the buildings. Only a short distance ahead of us was a white cliff of limestone. Here lay the caves we had come to visit.

"We tied our horses to some trees, and crept, hand and foot, up through a narrow gorge. Its

sides were walls of rock, and its roof was made of vines, ferns, and overhanging fruit-trees. How sweet and cool the air seemed!

"Yes, straight in front of us we could just see two great black holes. These were the doorways of the caves. And now the guides handed each one of us a lighted torch. The burning gum made a sweet incense as it sputtered. It gave the only light we should have for many hours.

"The guides slowly led the way into the dark cavern ahead. The floor was wet and muddy, and we had to take care not to slip. [82]

"Ugh! there were numbers of great black spiders here. Their bite might be poisonous, and we took care not to lay our hands against the walls where they travelled up and down. The place was damp and slippery. There was certainly nothing beautiful to be seen yet.

"Hark! There was a rustling sound over our heads. It grew louder and louder, until we could not hear each other's voices. As we looked up into the darkness, we could see we had startled an army of bats. There were thousands of them. Yes, surely, many thousands. You wouldn't have enjoyed their flying around you one bit, Manuel, good little huntsman even as you are. And as for you, my precious Dolores, I fear you would have screamed and begged to be taken home.

"Over our heads we could hear the sound of running water all the time. We kept bravely on. It began to grow lighter, and we could see several openings in front of us. Choosing one of these, we crept through a narrow passage and found ourselves at once in a vast hall. It was like Aladdin's palace, which, you remember, was brilliant with beautiful gems. [83]

"I looked up to the high roof and saw hundreds of sparkling white pendants. Some of them were quite small, but others reached down so far that I could touch them. They shone like the finest marble. They were made by the water trickling through the roof and leaving particles of lime as it slowly made its way downward. Such pendants are called stalactites. Some of them were tinted a beautiful blue or green. This was because the water had passed through some mineral substance of those colours.

"And the walls of that hall! Sparkling white columns reached from the floor to the very dome. They were fluted and worked in the most delicate patterns. I can never forget that wonderful picture. [84]

"But what ugly creatures made their home in this wonderful palace of Mother Nature? They were land-crabs, to be sure, that tried to get out of our way as fast as their clumsy feet would permit. It was your story of the crabs, Manuel, that made me think of that day's tramp.

"You can hardly believe it, children, but we passed from one such hall to another until we had travelled at least a mile underground. Here and there were dark holes leading farther down yet. We could look over the edge sometimes and see other great hallways directly under where we were. The guides said:

"No, no, you must not try to reach them. You may never get back.'

"But I insisted on going into one, at least. A stout rope was fastened about my waist; two men held it tightly, and gradually let me go. Down I went, down, down, down. Would I never reach the bottom? I was growing a little scared, when I found myself on the floor of another great hall, much like the one above it. I groped about and relighted my torch, which had gone out as I was lowered through the damp air. [85]

"I found myself beside a stream of running water. It was flowing right by the doorway into the cave. I had heard there was just such an entrance as this,—that down on the side of the mountain a person could get into the cavern by first passing through the water.

"I had read a legend of this very place. It was about a young girl who had hidden herself from her enemies by swimming into the cave through the secret entrance below the surface of the river.

"By this time my friends were getting worried about me. I felt a gentle pull at the rope and I heard them calling. Their voices seemed strange and far away. And now I was slowly lifted upward to find myself in the midst of my friends. [86]

"It was time to turn again toward the daylight. We said good-bye to the cave and its city of palaces. In another hour we were again in open air, looking at mountain tops. We asked ourselves if the day's wonderful sights really had been a dream or not."

CHAPTER XII. THE HURRICANE. [87]

WEEKS pass by; it is August, and the midst of the rainy season. This is the time to be ready for hurricanes. No one feels safe, for at any moment he may be taken by surprise, and his home, with its massive stone walls, may be dashed to the ground.

Such a thing never yet has happened to Manuel's family, but that does not keep fear away.

Does not Manuel remember the story of Josephine, afterward the beautiful wife of Napoleon? She spent her young days on an island not far from Porto Rico. In a few hours the plantation on which she lived was wrecked by a hurricane and hardly a trace of her home was left. It is fearful to think of what she and her family suffered, but Manuel and Dolores cannot keep the story out of their minds when the midsummer storms arrive.

[88]

They are kept in terror at least three months of the year, for the hurricane season begins the latter part of July, and the great winds may come at any moment from that time on to the end of October.

If the children should visit the shore now, they would find all the boats drawn up high and dry in sheltered nooks. The fishermen are afraid to venture out to any distance for fear of sudden danger.

This very morning Manuel's father looked at the barometer before he left the house, for that is the first thing to tell him a storm is approaching. Then he directed Alfonso to see if the iron bars were in good order for fastening the casements; everything must be in readiness for a sudden departure.

After his ride around the plantation, he stopped at the hill-cave, or hurricane house, and directed one of the workmen to leave the door open for awhile, to air it.

[89]

This cave was dug out of the side of a hill near the house when Manuel and Dolores were still babies. It is lined with a thick wall of stones; it has no windows or other opening except a low, narrow doorway. At the first sign of a hurricane, the whole family flee to this cave, and stay there till the storm is over.

Look! the sky is overcast. And now it has become the colour of lead. How sultry it is! Not a leaf moves, except when a sudden gust of wind takes it by surprise. The barometer is falling rapidly. See the lightning flashing over the sky, with no sound of thunder to follow it.

Dolores begins to tremble and cry. Even her mother grows pale, and often crosses herself in silent prayer. The planter moves quickly around, giving orders to the overseer about the workmen and the cattle. Stout-hearted little Manuel is very busy. He must not let Dolores think he is afraid. No, not for anything! He helps Alfonso carry the food and cushions out to the hurricane house, while the doors and shutters of the mansion are being locked and barred.

[90]

There is no time to be lost. A man has just ridden by, telling of the strange appearance of the ocean.

"It was perfectly still," he said, "but far out on the water long, quiet, sweeping waves rolled in toward the shore, then broke suddenly at a fearful height close to land."

And now all hasten out to the cave. There is no laughing; every one is still and sober. The door is shut and made fast. It is as dark as a tomb within. The air is heavy. But no one thinks of fretting; all are too busy listening to the howling of the wind and the noise of falling trees.

The planter steadily watches the barometer by the dim light of a lantern. Manuel and Dolores cling to their mother, one on each side. Teresa strives to appear calm, and her duenna is the only one who tries to talk.

[91]

Hours upon hours pass by. Ah! what does that trembling of the ground mean? It makes one feel dizzy and strange. It is the shock of a slight earthquake. It is over now, and at the same time it becomes quiet outside. Papa once more looks at the barometer, and says it is rising, and it will soon be safe to venture out.

When the door is opened, and they feel the fresh air on their faces once more, they look out on the darkness of night. But the stars are shining with their usual brightness, and the air is filled with peace and quiet.

Was it all a dream? Oh, no! for broken trees and branches bar the pathway to the house, while pools of water are everywhere about. The dear old home is safe except that a part of the veranda has been torn away.

[92]

The sunlight next morning shows that many of the roofs at the quarters have been blown off, while much damage was done to the coffee-trees. No human being or animal on the place has been injured, and all give thanks that the hurricane has passed.

"Let us hope," says Manuel's father, "we shall not see another such storm this year. One bad storm is quite enough for a season, I am sure."

The time of danger passes by, and although there are many severe storms, not one of them is so bad that the family are obliged to hide themselves in the hill-cave. The autumn rains are very heavy, and Manuel and Dolores spend much time in the house or on the verandas.

CHAPTER XIII. THE NEW BABY.

[93]

NOVEMBER comes, and early one morning Juana enters the children's rooms very much excited. She wakes them with the news that a little sister was born to them last night.

"A baby! a dear, darling little baby in the house!" cries Dolores. "Oh! I have begged mother for one so often! Now we shall always have something to amuse us. Manuel, aren't you glad?"

The children do not care for chocolate and rolls in bed this morning; that is certain. They must see the precious baby as soon as possible.

It is such a dear little mite. It fills all hearts with joy. But it must be christened without delay. Who shall be godfather? The planter and his wife consider very carefully. At last they decide to ask a great friend of theirs, who is the owner of a sugar plantation not far from them. He is very wealthy, and will no doubt celebrate the christening in grand style. [94]

In the next place, what shall be the baby's name? Of course, she must be called "Maria" to begin with. Every girl-baby is named Maria, and if there are no girls in the family, the boy receives that name as his first. I suppose the name is in honour of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

But what others must be added? Manuel suggests Christina, while Dolores begs that her baby sister be called Lucia. At length it is decided that this tiny tot shall bear the dignified name of Maria Francesca Christina Lucia, and every one is pleased.

When the baby is just one week old, the christening takes place. Several beautiful carriages drive up to the house, and the friends and relatives take their places inside. The godfather is a fine-looking gentleman with piercing black eyes and black moustache. He has made Manuel and Dolores happy by presenting each of them with a gold piece strung on a ribbon. He has also given each one of the house servants a piece of silver. [95]

The children are dressed in white and look very pretty. The baby wears a beautiful robe, embroidered by the nuns. As she lies sleeping in her nurse's arms, she does not dream that this celebration is all in her honour.

The christening party drives away to the church, while the mother lies in her chamber, quietly resting. She is not well enough to go with them.

After the service is over, the godfather invites the guests to attend a dinner party in honour of his little godchild, at his own home; but the baby must now go back to her loving mother. She could scarcely appreciate the feast, and is much safer at home. So the nurse is driven off in one of the carriages with her precious charge, while the rest of the party go to the godfather's beautiful house. [96]

Such a feast as is spread before them! Such a display of silver and china! What a richly embroidered table cover! Course after course is served.

First there is a rich soup, followed by fried chicken and rice coloured with tomato; there are salads, stews of game, fruits hot and cold, a dainty dessert, cheese and coffee.

Soon after the feast is over, the children return home, for their dear mother must not get lonesome.

The baby grows rapidly, and when she is two months old the planter proposes to take the whole family to San Juan, the capital of the island. Teresa is perhaps more joyful than any one else, for now she will have a chance to wear some lovely new dresses at the evening parties she will attend there. [97]

Manuel and Dolores are most pleased because they are to travel in a sailing vessel. They will, at last, have a chance to see live sharks as well as other strange creatures of the sea, of which they have heard.

CHAPTER XIV. THE CITY.

 [98]

It is a delightful trip. The weather is just cool enough for comfort, and no one is seasick. The children are never tired of sitting on deck and watching the views, changing hour by hour.

They are never out of sight of land, but sail along the shores of their loved island. Here is a little village of palm-thatched huts, there a grove of breadfruit or cocoanut trees; again one meets another sailing vessel with all its men busy shark-fishing. The skin of the ugly monster is valuable, as well as its fins and tail, which are prized as food by many of the people of Porto Rico.

Looking down beneath the clear blue waters Dolores descries the rainbow fish and claps her hands at its beauty. It is so called because of its many beautiful colours. [99]

And see! Here is a shoal of flying-fish darting over the waters. They do not really fly, as some people think, but dart up out of the water, with their long fins spread in such a way that they are carried through the air for quite a distance.

Deep down in the water the children see a beautiful object. It is moving rapidly, and its back

shines like burnished gold, then changes in the sunlight into many shades and tints of colour.

"Papa, do please come quickly, and tell me what this is," calls Manuel.

"That is a dolphin, my dear, one of the most beautiful of all creatures living in the sea," says his father, as he looks over the ship's side. "But he is always hungry, and if he sees those flying-fish ahead of him it will be a sad day for them."

At this very moment the dolphin seems to get a view of his favourite prey. He darts to the surface of the water and leaps forward at the flying-fish with the speed of a bullet; at least it seems so to the watching children, who pity the little fellows with all their hearts. When they discover their foe it is too late for them to escape, for, although they flee with all their might, now in one direction, then in another, the dolphin gains upon them and snaps them up one by one in his great jaws. In their fright many of them throw themselves clear out of the water with their fins spread, and are carried many feet on the air. It is this that gives them the appearance of flying.

[100]

The voyage seems only too short to Manuel and Dolores. When they arrive at San Juan there are so many new things to see that the days pass only too quickly. They have never been in the city before.

The narrow streets, with the still narrower sidewalks, seem odd indeed to these children used to plantation life. Sometimes they cannot even walk side by side without one being pushed into the street. And the houses, although many of them are built of stone like their own, are so close together that Manuel says to his sister:

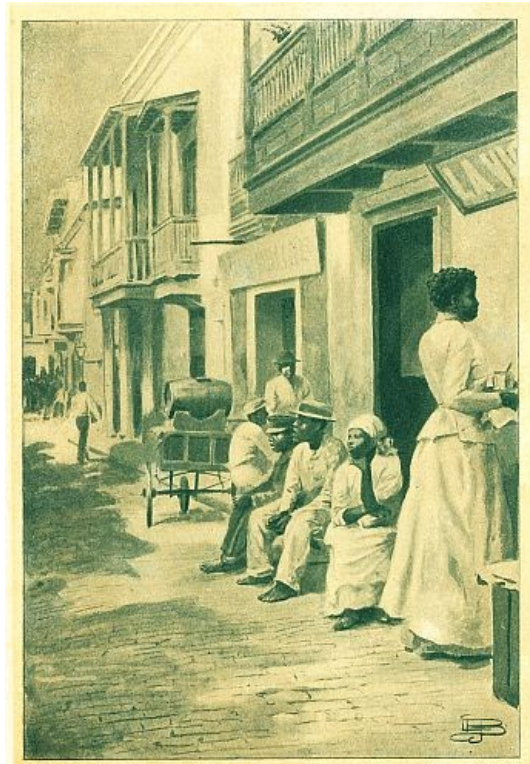
[101]

"I wonder how people can like being so crowded together. I should think they would feel choked."

The friends whom they visit live on the upper floor of their house. Although they are quite wealthy, they let the lower floor to a poor, dirty, and ignorant family with many children. Such an arrangement is often made in San Juan; but the two families do not mingle at all, although living in the same house.

Balconies jut out from the upper story, and Manuel and Dolores like to sit here and watch the passers-by.

It is so odd to see the milkman ride up to the house astride of his donkey, with his milk cans jostling against each other between his legs. Sometimes a cow is led through the streets, and her owner stops at neighbouring doorways to draw the milk as the people wish. Dolores thinks the milk must be much nicer when obtained in this way.



[102]

A STREET IN SAN JUAN

"But look, now, Manuel," she says, "at that poor mule! He is almost smothered under an immense bundle of fodder; and, as though that were not enough for the poor beastie, his master is riding on top of the load."

Sometimes the children rise as early as five o'clock in the morning. They like to go to the market held in a public square of the city. They see people of all shades of colour selling their goods.

There is the baker with his bags of freshly baked bread and oddly twisted rolls; there is the poultry man with wicker cages full of live fowls hanging to the sides of his half-starved donkey; there, too, is the butcher with sides of beef hanging by hooks from his horse's harness; while crowded together are those who have brought their fruits and vegetables afoot many a long mile in early morning.

[103]

There are great piles of yellow oranges; plantains, green, brown, and yellow; pineapples, melons, onions, guavas, and lemons; while behind them sit their owners, who laugh and joke and make love, and at the same time are busy shouting their wares and making bargains.

Oh, but one must not forget the game-cocks fastened to stakes here and there in the midst of the busy crowd. Many a trade is made, many a bet laid on these ugly, skinny, but greatly admired cocks as they pull at their stakes.

Later in the day no sign of this busy scene is left in the public square. One notices for the first time that there is a band stand, and when the evening comes, Manuel's father and mother are driven with their hosts to this square. Many other carriages, filled with richly dressed ladies and gentlemen, also arrive and take their places at one side of the band stand. Here they sit laughing and chatting or listening to the music; the ladies' black eyes sparkle as a favourite tune is played, and they keep time by gentle taps of their fans.

[104]

Many of these fans are very beautiful. Manuel's mother has one made of the feathers of humming-birds. It is brilliant, even in the soft light of evening, and the dear lady herself looks very charming with a lace mantilla drawn over her head, its point reaching down over the forehead almost to her nose. To be sure, her cheeks are heavily powdered, but that is the fashion of all the ladies in her land, and so it seems quite natural.

The rest of the square is filled with the crowd of poorer people who cannot afford to ride. They walk slowly about, and seem to enjoy the music and each other's company as much as those who sit in the carriages. [105]

There are many street processions in San Juan, and the children are on the lookout not to miss them. These processions are in honour of some saint. Dolores is out on the balcony one morning when she hears music. It is the voices of children singing.

"O Manuel, Teresa, mamma, do come and see the pretty sight," she calls, as a procession draws near.

People dressed in the costumes of different lands come marching by; then follows a cart, decked gaily with flowers, and in it stands a little girl dressed to represent the virgin mother of Jesus. There is a band of music playing sacred airs.

The children take their hats and follow the procession to the public square, where the little girl in the flower-decked carriage recites a poem written in honour of the day. All business stops in the stores near by. All vehicles give way to the procession, and the passers-by stand still to admire and listen. [106]

It seems strange to the children to see the red, white, and blue of the American flag floating over the city, instead of the colours of Spain—the red and yellow they were formerly taught to love.

"But this new flag means friendship, you know, Dolores," says her brother. "The poor will not be taxed so much as they used to be, and the good Americans will not allow any other people to harm us. At least father says so, and he is very wise. Dolores, he has promised to take us sometime to that wonderful city, New York, where we shall see so much we have never even dreamed of. I hope the time will come soon, for I want to get acquainted with my American cousins in their own land, our own land, now."

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Transcriber's Note:

Page vii, Table of Contents, Chapter VII's page number was misprinted. "30" has been changed to "50" to match the text.

Page 33, "themseves" changed to "themselves" (they themselves sit)

Page 42, "hall" changed to "ball" (great round ball)

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