

hours. Evidently it is as hard for you to get to the West Indies in my letters, as it was to get away from Bermuda—an unconscionably long and tedious epistolary excursion, I admit. Let us sail on, then, by St. Eustatius, like Saba, a Dutch island, with a frowning fortress and a governor. The fortress is an excuse for a governor, and what would a governor be without a fortress. It is different in New York. There the governor is strongly entrenched in the hearts of a grateful and admiring people. No cards! There is but one small town on St. Eustatius—Orangetown—named probably after the Prince of Oranges. We could hear no dreadful note of preparation for the approaching anniversary of Ireland's patron saint, and could see no stove-pipe hats acquiring festal polish for the occasion. They must be all Orangemen there.

We reached St. Kitt's, despite the philosophic headwinds of the Commissioner. I observe that, as Voltaire said, "Providence always favors the heaviest battalions," so the winds and waves have a philosophy of their own, and pay no attention to the profound vaticinations of a New York politician. After sailing along the shore for a long time, apparently near and yet afar, we at length made the red light of St. Kitt's, described in the books as visible fifteen miles, but which we ascertained, when daylight came, was merely a red lantern, hung out of the second story of the Custom-house, not much more brilliant than the light borne by the leader of his gang in an election procession. Feeling our way, cautiously as a chap behind the garden wall who knew that the old man was on the lookout for him with a blunderbuss loaded with rock-salt, we were enabled to cast anchor in the roadstead, at ten o'clock at night. The optical effect as we sailed by the mountainous shore was remarkable. The dark, beetling masses, streaked with white where sugar-cane

fields belt the mountain-side, seemed as if they were but a stone's throw distant, and yet they were four or five miles away. Sometimes the hills looked as if they were coming down to meet us, and we felt as if we could almost step ashore. I don't know how to account for this. It is some atmospheric condition, but I am not well enough versed in physics to have sufficient knowledge of these phenomena to explain them. Uncle John tried to account for the purity of the air by a surmise that the monkeys habitually used James' pills, but I couldn't understand how they procured them. Felix Hornung has no trade here. Otherwise I might have acquiesced, for I stand by home production on all occasions. We had alternate bright skies, with the moon shining mildly, and sudden showers of rain, which came unannounced, and burst in on us like fellows who invite themselves to luncheon. Sometimes the fleeting showers hardly showed the cloud from which they dripped, and the celerity with which they came and went could only be excelled by the alacrity of an office-seeking patriot, adapting himself to the fluctuating principles of a successful party.

But we were in the West Indies at last, and we turned in, all to dream of the vernal freshness that would adorn our own fair land when we came sailing back again; and my companions, of the fond welcome that awaited them when they returned to their loved ones at home.

The scene which met our eyes as we came on deck this morning was peculiarly grateful, succeeding a week at sea, with its unrelieved glare of waters, not a sail appearing to vary the monotony of view. It is remarkable that during all our voyage from New York we have seen but one sail by daylight, although several were reported passing at night. But they may have been spectral shapes of ships, foundered at sea and never heard from, still haunting the wave in

ghostly anxiety to send messages to expectant homes. Perhaps the Flying Dutchman is cruising in endless expiation hereabouts, but we are not fated to meet the blasphemous Vanderdecken. As the gifted John Boyle O'Reilly says in his poem :

"They'll never reach their destined port, they'll see their homes no more :

They who see the Flying Dutchman never, never reach the shore."

The Montauk was launched under an auspicious star, and christened by a hand that could not fail to bring the good-fortune which has already made her a proverbially lucky boat.

The town of Basse Terre, the principal settlement of St. Kitt's, is situated on the sea-shore, from which rise, at a short distance, high mountains, in verdure clad ; the encircling fields of sugar-cane looking like bands of pale green velvet swathing the swelling sides ; while the lofty peak is enveloped by a translucent veil of filmy vapor, gracefully undulating in the fresh morning breeze, which fans into coolness the sunshiny air. The red roofs of low houses, standing out in the village against a background of green fields, has a most picturesque effect (it is always grateful to see "the green above the red") ; while the groups of negroes, in variegated dress, gathered, in observant, chattering conclave, along the wharf, give animation to the picture. On a promontory, commanding the anchorage ground (there is no harbor, but a roadstead, partially land-locked) is the site of a battery, once a formidable menace to the incoming mariner, now abandoned, and, like an old veteran who has been used and set aside, of no consequence ; a mere signal-station to guide, in peaceful routes, the trading merchantman, enriched by the profits of past wars. Brimstone Hill, fifteen miles distant, on

the Caribbean side, is another point formerly fortified. It is now dismantled, and, being remote from the settlement, is garrisoned by hordes of monkeys, who swarm in the surrounding forests. What a commentary on the mutability of affairs ! This erstwhile frowning fortress, bristling with destructive armament, defended by impregnable works, so strong as to cause it to be named "The Gibraltar of the West Indies," is now abandoned to capering monkeys, who gibber in its paralytic bomb-proofs, and swing prehensile, in mocking gambols, through its toothless casements. In our own country the knavish ape sometimes invades the War Department, and "plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven as make the angels weep," even while the land is yet perilous in the grapple of internecine conflict.

We were rowed ashore in the gig of the Commodore, and called first at the Custom-house (simply a matter of courtesy, for a special permit from the Secretary of the Treasury makes this a United States vessel, exempt from entry and clearance), and then at the office of the American Consul, Mr. De Lile, whom we found to be a pleasant gentleman, a native of the island, of French descent. He has succeeded his late father as Consul, and is thus a diplomat by inheritance. In his office we saw a familiar object which betrayed the American presence, and showed the freedom of mutilation enjoyed under the starry banner of our own country. It was a desk, carved in the well-known style that gave evidence that the Yankee jack-knife had been there. The desk was a reminder of home ; it was like the *rang-des-vaches* of the Swiss, or the Irish shamrock. We at once felt at home in the Consul's office ; the flag of the free floated over our heads, and we sat at the friendly, whittled board of our native land.

Mr. De Lile accompanied us to the telegraph office, where we sent a cipher message to New York. Including address

and signature, it contained four words, and cost \$9.60. I fancy that the march of cheap telegraphy is not in this direction, and that there is not much business done at that office. One day's busy work would absorb the yearly revenues of St. Kitt's.

Passing through the public square, we saw the Berkeley fountain, a handsome and useful memorial to a former President of the island. The President, it may be stated, derives his title from presiding over the Council, clothed with certain executive functions. He is appointed by the Crown. So is the Council. It is a mere shadow of representative government. We called upon the acting President, Mr. Eldridge, who gave us much valuable information regarding St. Kitt's, and the neighboring islands of Nevis and Antigua, at the latter of which is stationed the Governor who controls the three colonies confederated under one administration. Mr. Eldridge showed us at the Government House a piece of board which demonstrated the tremendous force of a hurricane. It had been torn off the Catholic church, during the tornado of 1871, carried a long distance, and driven through four thicknesses of heavy plank, intruding about two feet within the building wall. It had been left there as a curiosity. This showed the power of a Church Board—in a hurricane.

St. Kitt's has enjoyed its share of afflictions. In 1880, a sudden night flood from the mountains—a cloud-burst, probably—swept away a portion of the town, and drowned two hundred and forty persons. Judge Semper told us of a young man, occupying a fine house in the devastated district, who was awakened in the night by a friend of his, captain of a vessel lying at anchor, who insisted upon his accompanying him aboard, to take a glass of grog in the cool moonlight. The gentleman was loath to go, and it was only on the captain declaring that he would beat the door in if he

refused, that he at length reluctantly consented, leaving his servant in the house. When he returned in the morning, not a vestige of the edifice was to be seen on its foundation; but some distance off he recognized the iron gate of his fence, the only article recovered. His servant was never heard of again. Those who believe in special providences might find in this incident a moral of some kind. Perhaps an occult influence (I fancy it was rum) compelled the captain to persist in his importunity, after his friend had manifested a strong disinclination to accompany him, and thus saved a life by his pertinacity. Here is an anecdote to offset the Sunday-school story of the bad little boy drowned while fishing on the American Sabbath. I hope, however, that drummers for new books, and insurance brokers, will not take advantage of this recital and use it against me professionally hereafter, insisting upon my taking something for luck.

A few years ago the island suffered a loss of about five thousand from cholera. The bodies of the victims were buried in great trenches near the sea-shore, and the action of the waves is gradually uncovering the remains, skulls and bones being washed out occasionally by the encroaching waters. There is no assortment of plagues, hurricanes, or floods on hand at present, but there is a large supply of measles, epidemic, but not particularly virulent. Antigua presents superior claims to distinction, having some two thousand five hundred cases in stock. St. Kitt's, too, is behind in the matter of earthquakes. Its efforts in this line have been weakly unsuccessful.

Of the twenty-eight thousand inhabitants, about two thousand are white, and if it should enter the heads of the blacks to get up a strike some time, they could make it unpleasant for the poor white trash. I rise to remark that this is not in-

tended for a hint to meddling agitators to come down to this island and kick up a row in the interest of reform. There are no regular troops here, and but one company of volunteer cavalry; consisting of a few men, too widely scattered to be available in an emergency. The police force is all black, and the men are clean and well dressed, civil and intelligent enough. They receive \$12 a month pay. Taking into consideration its many attractions, St. Kitt's is beyond question a most delightful place to live away from.



## CHAPTER IX.

### ST. KITT'S.

Iced-water—Teeth—Tonsorial—Sharks—Roses—Pelicans—A Drive—  
Religions—St. Patrick's Day—Wonderful Adventures with  
Monkeys.

BASSE TERRE, ST. KITT'S, March 18, 1884.

THERE is a small park in the upper part of the town, containing handsome palm-trees, flowering white-cedars, and tropical plants. A cactus tree, twenty-five feet high, is curious, but not so much so as a banyan, which already overshadows a large space, and is gradually spreading its roots so as to interfere with the fountain in the middle of the park. It has but one trunk, however, as the pendants, which reach down from the limbs and take root, becoming trunks in turn, and putting forth fresh offshoots, are cut off as they appear. Otherwise the tree would in time engross the whole park—a sort of mother-in-law, bringing in other members of the family. The trunk would be invaluable during the fashionable season at Saratoga.

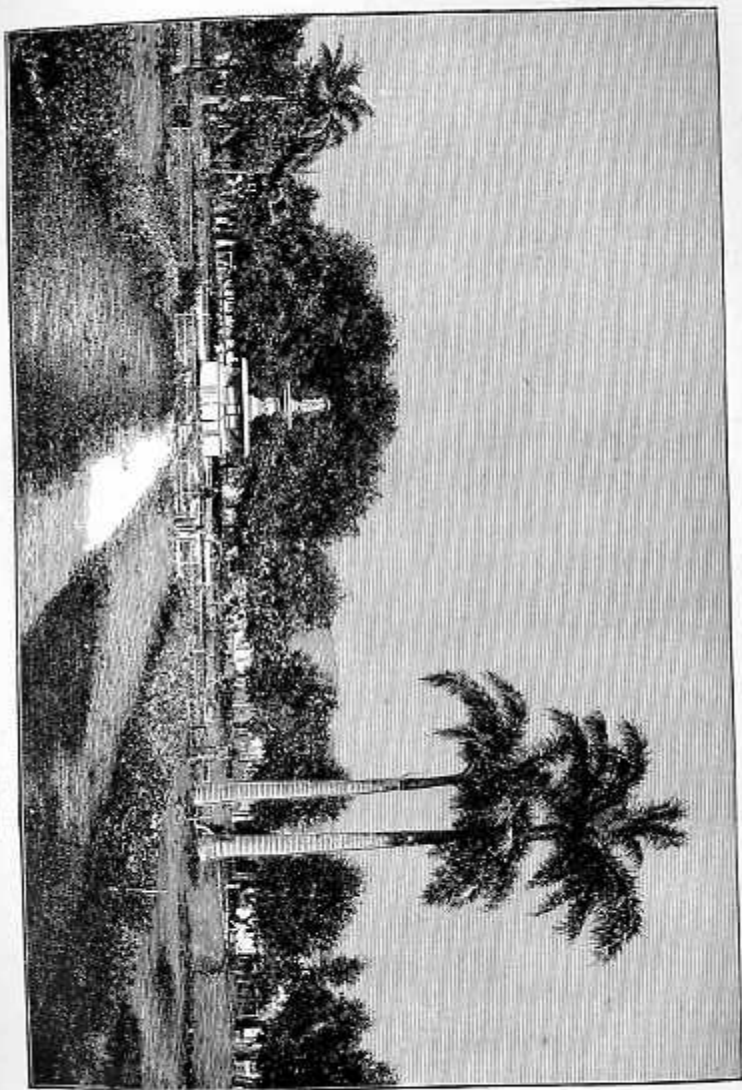
Basse Terre is copiously supplied with water from the mountain springs; with a superabundance at times, as before stated. It is carried through pipes with hydrant attachments, and there are sewers, which we saw them flushing as we passed through Cayon Street. The fire department is a simple organization. The hose carriages are men's shoulders, the reels of hose being borne on the head. I have known



firemen to carry reels inside their heads, but this is an outside conveyance—a water carriage. The other kind of reel was not. No ice is used here. It doesn't grow, and the demand will not warrant importation. Water for drinking purposes is kept in porous earthen vessels, like the old Spanish jars—or Egyptian, for that matter—and is cool enough. Drinking iced-water profusely is a vicious American habit. It impairs digestion and injures the teeth. Hence we have worse stomachs and teeth than any other people. A Bermudian gentleman, speaking of this dental inferiority, said that he attributed it to iced-water and confectionery. He told how he was in New York, a few years ago, during the cold winter when the East River was frozen over, and persons crossed on the ice to Brooklyn. The morning after his arrival, he was shivering in bed and rang the bell. A servant answered outside his chamber-door, and he heard the tinkle of ice. Opening the door, a pitcher of iced-water was thrust at him. "What the ~~hell~~ do I want of this?" said he, "I'm nearly frozen already. Bring me some hot water for shaving." The idea of iced-water when the thermometer ranged in the vicinity of zero was to him ludicrous. He was compelled to bribe the hall-boys not to bring it to him when he rang the bell. We use too much ice. We ice everything, freeze vegetables, and destroy the delicate perfume of fruit by over-icing. The hod carrier drinks iced-water as he mounts the ladder; and some stupid persons, who regard every novelty as a reform, conceived the idea of distributing it in pails to the poor of New York, to keep them from squandering their money on champagne *frappé*.

The teeth of the negroes are good, here as everywhere. I jocosely offered a young dusky, with a magnificent set of teeth, a thousand pounds for them. He declined, saying that the money would be no good to him without his teeth. Thus

PARK IN HASSE TERRE. FOUNTAIN AND BANYAN TREE.



do the improvident negroes reject the golden opportunities within their reach of becoming millionaires.

A little barber's shop, at which the Commodore (who is justly vain of his personal appearance) stopped to have his hair cut, was the most diminutive tonsorial emporium and sanctum of the artist in capillarity I have ever seen. It held but two persons besides the *impresario perrucchiere*. It was such a shop as one sees in Pompeii. I wasn't permitted to enter, because—as the Commodore bald out at me when he assumed the sacrificial chair of denudation—there was too little hair in the small room already. The barber gave him a careful cut, parting the herbage in a thin line behind, which, expanding near the crown into a spherical baldness, looked like a palm-tree—a slender trunk and spreading upper development. Uncle John styled it the tropical palm-tree cut. It will soon become familiar to the Fifth Avenue Sunday promenade, where it will surely achieve great social conquests. During the August cruise of the New York Yacht Club it will be irresistible.

The negro women seem to greatly outnumber the men. We saw no white women in the streets, but plenty of black, who are coarse, repulsive creatures. They speak English in a sort of gibberish, difficult to be understood by those unfamiliar with the *patois*. The Basse Terre dialect is a sort of Basseterred English. As we walked along amid the multitude of fruit hucksters, we were addressed as "werry purty gentlemen," whereupon it was observed that the portly Commissioner carried his head a trifle higher, with the consciousness that striking manly beauty was not unappreciated by the fair sex of Basse Terre.

We had provided an extensive supply of elaborate fishing tackle, intending to capture quantities of the speckled beauties (I believe that is the usual description of fish—dried cod

and such—in the newspapers), to eke out the provision of salted fish in our ship's stores, but thus far had been unable to lure any of the inhabitants of the briny deep (another favorite rural-journalistic expression). The wary dolphin shunned our seductive squid, trawling astern, and the flying-fish only came aboard when he blundered in his flight, like a bank president ignorant of extradition treaties with foreign lands. But we were rewarded at last for our piscatorial investment. We caught a big fish—a shark. He was an ugly-looking fellow, about six feet long, and, when hauled on deck, seized a belaying-pin thrust in his jaws, with the muscular action of a Frankfort Hill charcoal-man munching peanuts at a circus. The sailors put a slip-noose around his tail and hoisted him to the boat-davits, where the Commodore administered a dose of pellets from his revolver which soon settled the shark's hash, and made him matter for a negro chowder. The negroes eat stewed shark, but roasted monkey is their great delicacy. Uncle John claimed that the pistol was loaded with Cackle's pills, which are sure death. There is a strong rivalry between them and James' pills among us, both medicines having determined advocates.

Sharks are numerous hereabouts. They are as thick as shyster lawyers around a Police Court. A few weeks ago, a dead mule was towed out for bait, and a shark eighteen feet long captured. If this success attended an ordinary St. Kitt's animal, what would have been the result if one of our renowned *post-bellum* army mules had been employed? With some braying examples of this kind for bait, a shark a hundred feet long at least ought to be taken. Yet I suppose it ought to be a dead bait—the army mule is, for that matter.

Sunday morning, mellow sounds of the church-going bell came out over the water, waving invitation, before we had breakfasted. We let them wave. M. DeLile sent aboard a

great basket of roses, among them some fine specimens of the *Maréchal Niel*. They were large and fragrant, but seemed to lack the dewy freshness of our exquisite flowers at home. Abraham Brooks, gardener in charge of the public park, also sent us some choice products of floriculture. Brooks does not sneer at the gardener's "claims of long descent." Although a black man, he is a lineal descendant of "the gardener Adam and his wife," and a blood relation of Baron Tennyson D'Eyncourt. With these flowers, we replaced the lilies that had adorned the saloon, our Lily Bower, from Bermuda. We were loath to part with these souvenirs, but they had withered. Though the tangible flower may wither, the lily emblem will never fade from memory.

Skimming over the roadstead surface, glistening in silvery flashes under the sunbeams, were numerous pelicans, diving beneath the waves as some unwary fish approached the surface, and arresting the malefactor for violating the Sunday law. The pelicans are strong-winged, aquatic birds, with bills as long as those of attorneys in a contested will case, and they were evidently foraging for their breakfast. I suppose, as this is a sabbatical region, the pelicans do no cooking on Sunday, but eat cold victuals. 'Tis the early bird that catches the worm, and, as these prowlers were up betimes, it is probable that they had already caught the too previous worm, and were using it for fish bait. A cormorant receiver couldn't gobble a wrecked corporation with greater ease, by allowance of the Court, than these sea-hawks swallowed the fish whole. They must be favored with powerful digestive organs, unimpaired by the habitual use of Cockle's pills, the gourmand's after-dinner persuader.

In the afternoon, we drove out among the mountains, passing several extensive sugar estates. The principal export of St. Kitt's is sugar, though there is considerable pro-

duction, and some consumption, of shocking bad rum. The roads are excellent, but the scenery not particularly interesting. The drive along the crest, overlooking the sea-coast to windward, affords a view of the ocean, spread out as far as the eye can reach—and farther—but we have become familiar with that appearance, and it is no novelty. Fruit trees are plenty. At one place, out in a settlement among the mountains, near the Moravian church, from the steeple of which a flag was flying, we saw cocoa-palm, orange, lime, mango, and bread-fruit trees growing side by side. We met a few whites, in carriages, and a great many negro pedestrians on the road. The negroes appeared to be clean, generally well dressed—white being the favorite color—and they were cheerful and polite, invariably touching their hats when we met. There was an assortment of head-coverings, as varied as layers of boarding-house butter. We encountered but one regulation black silk hat, a venerable tile, about contemporaneous with the style of the ex-mayor's funeral hat—vintage of 1804. The younger children were clad in garments too abbreviated for adaptation to the latitude of Paris Hill in December; but all wore a holiday look, and some nothing else. Many were, no doubt, going to, or returning from church.

The population of St. Kitt's is Protestant, the whites (except a few Catholics, of French and Portuguese blood) attending the Church of England, while the blacks are Wesleyans and Moravians. There are not a hundred Catholic negroes on the island. The growth of Peter's pence here must be stunted and unproductive, and the drippings of the sanctuary flaccid. Much religious enthusiasm prevails among the negroes, and to this is due the prevalence of the Methodistical form of worship. Talking back is permitted in the Episcopal Church, it is true, but the response is limited by irksome re-

