

# HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

No. CCXCIV.—NOVEMBER, 1874.—VOL. XLIX.

## THE BAHAMAS.



HOPETOWN HARBOR, ABACO, FROM THE LIGHT-HOUSE.

WE had been steaming south in the fine steamer *City of Merida* for two days, followed by raw northerly winds, when the wind suddenly shifted to the south. The change in the temperature was magical. Overcoats were thrown aside at once, and all hands were called aft to spread the awning; the waves went down, the clouds disappeared, the cold gray color of the sea turned to azure, and every breath of the "sweet south" seemed to sing a welcome to enchanted isles where reigns perpetual summer. On the fourth night we passed the Elbow Light, on the northeast angle of Abaco, and sighted Hole-in-the-Wall at midnight. Many of us also now saw for the first time the Southern Cross gleaming over the bow, while the North Star and the Bear were still visible on the quarter. At dawn a long, low line of green keys lay abeam, and soon we saw the graceful groves of cocoa and the spires of Nassau gleaming in the sun, now rising in a cloudless sky. The steamer drew too much water to go over the bar, and therefore came to anchor outside of the light-house at the western end of Hog Island, a beautiful coral islet three miles long, which, by furnishing a breakwater cheaper and safer than that of Plymouth or Cherbourg,

enables Nassau to claim the best port in the Bahamas. Boats of all descriptions darted from the shore, manned by negroes, presenting sometimes a diverting variety of raggedness in the slender wardrobe prescribed by conventional propriety rather than by any need of protection against the weather. As we rowed in over the bar the first object to attract our attention was the absolute clearness of the water—hyaline, as a poet might truthfully call it—which enables the eye to see every thing on the white sand bottom, and the vivid, almost dazzling, green hue of the surface, mottled with varied tints of the same color, giving exactly the appearance of polished malachite. On landing, amidst a hubbub of negroes, we found the streets of almost snowy whiteness, intensified by the glare of the white walls, so that straw hats and shade umbrellas were at once called into requisition. One very soon gets accustomed to this, however, and the effect could be greatly modified if the worthy citizens would only content themselves with lower walls around their gardens, or would color those they have with some sober gray. This is evident when one rides out beyond the city, where the roads are of precisely the same character, but much more tolerable,

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Vol. XLIX.—No. 294.—51

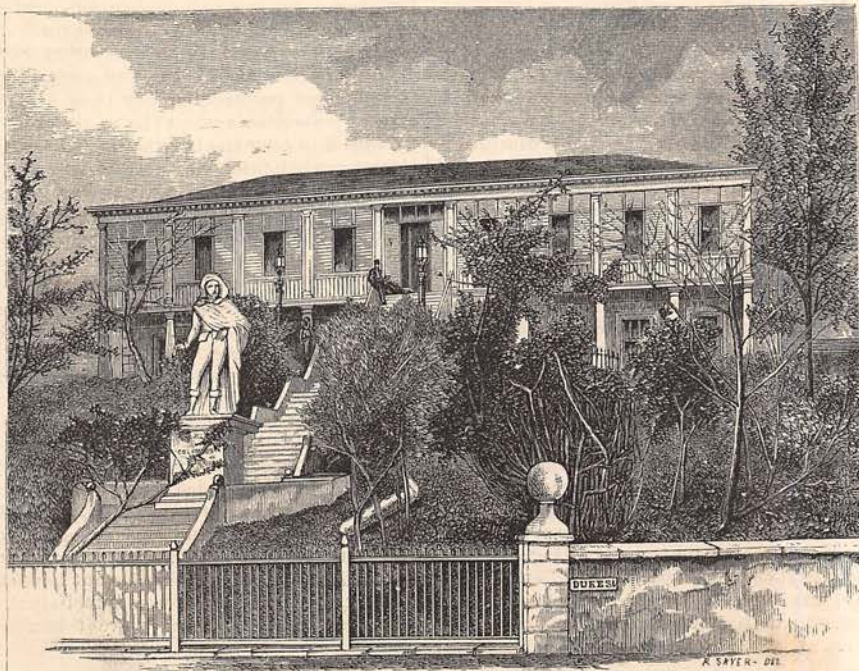
because lined with verdure instead of staring white walls.

It was a charming transition from the glare of the streets to the cool, spacious verandas of the Royal Victoria Hotel, which occupies noble grounds on an elevated position commanding a superb prospect over the city, the harbor, and the ocean beyond, and a breakfast of turtle steak, chocolate, and tropical fruits freshly plucked reminded us again that for a while at least we were free from the furnace-heated prison-houses of the North, and the icy, capricious, penetrating winds of our Northern spring, if it is not a misnomer to call it spring.

Nassau, as is generally known, is not only the chief town of the island of New Providence, but also the capital of the Bahamas. There the Legislature meets and the Governor resides. The Government House is pleasantly situated, and the approach to it is appropriately adorned by a colossal statue of Christopher Columbus. Governor Hennessy, the present incumbent, is a courteous and intelligent gentleman, with enlightened views regarding what can promote the welfare of the islands, and those who have attended the elegant entertainments at the government mansion can testify to the kind and graceful hospitality of Mrs. Hennessy. The Legislature is elected once in seven years, and generally includes several colored members. The black population largely predominates, for not only did the early set-

tlers own slaves, but many cargoes of captured slavers were taken to Nassau and left there to shift for themselves. They are generally tall and well formed, and very civil in their demeanor, and great crimes are very uncommon among them. Theft and licentiousness are their chief "irregularities;" but these vices are not confined to the Bahamas, "the more's the pity," and it is creditable to the people that the spacious and handsome prison recently constructed at high cost is half empty, which gave the jailer a curious uneasiness, because, as he said to me, he had a piece of road-mending to be done in the broiling sun of mid-day, and the number of criminals under his charge was not equal to completing it within a given time! The old prison, a rather picturesque building resembling a mosque, is now turned into a public library; the cells, once filled with pirates and boozy blockade-runners, now form the alcoves of a very well arranged library, stocked with some six thousand volumes, generally well selected, and open to the use of the public. As this institution is near the hotel, it is of great advantage to strangers sojourning on the island.

Some of the mulattoes display considerable talent as artisans. The shell-work they produce shows exquisite taste and skill; and Bethel, the best ship-builder of the group—and a very clever man he is, too—is of the colored persuasion. Captain Stuart, who commands the light-house and revenue



GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

schooner, is a man of commanding appearance and marked intelligence, and is regarded by the negroes of Nassau as "a sort of god round heah," as they phrase it, because he foretold the great hurricane of 1866. The colored people of Nassau are much addicted to church-going, and it is pleasant of a calm evening to hear the singing from the churches all over the town. Poppy Rumer, as he is familiarly called, a quaint, unique character, is their most noted preacher, and many of his curious sayings and eccentricities are current. He is in addition a man possessed of intellectual power, and is thoroughly in earnest. Old Gunnybags is another noted character of Nassau, a modern Diogenes, who takes up his residence in Grantstown, the suburb affected by the black gentry. The old fellow, not to speak disrespectfully of him, was crossed in love in his earlier days, it is said, since which melancholy event he has worn a suit of gunny bags of a fashion not borrowed from Paris, and has slept in a hogshead laid on its side under a wall by the way-side; owing to the narrowness of his quarters and the heat of the climate, he cooks his meals in the open air. A little beyond are the places called Jericho and Jerichobeyond-Jordan, which show what thrift the negro can display on occasion.

As a class, however, the negroes of the Bahamas are far more superstitious than religious. They are great cowards at night, shutting up their cabins tight as a drum to keep out the wandering powers of darkness, and their belief in fetichism is almost incredible. The obeah men drive a thriving business, and it is seldom a sponging boat goes to sea without first enlisting the valuable aid of the man-witch or warlock. They are said to be lazy, and certainly they seem to take life very easily, lying on the ground sometimes for hours under the full blaze of the noonday sun, chewing the end of a sugar-cane, or brawling in grandiloquent and often meaningless rodomontade at the street corners. But there is little need of exertion when it takes so little to supply their immediate wants. The pastoral of one of the ritualistic priests, giving directions for the observance of Lent, created "inextinguishable laughter" in Nassau last spring, for among other follies he forbade the eating of sugar. As sugar-cane forms the staple article of food with the negroes, a strict observance of his directions would have been followed by lamentable results. But I think the charge of laziness unfounded, if one but considers the severe labor the negroes often accomplish, as, for example, in the sponge fishery, which gives employment to the owners and crews of five hundred licensed craft of ten to twenty-five tons burden, and is carried on with some risk from the weather, and much hardship, for the sponges are two or three fathoms below the surface, and must be torn



OLD GUNNYBAGS.

from the rocks with hooks attached to long poles. The position of the sponges is ascertained by means of a water-glass, which is a simple oblong box a foot square, open at the upper end, and containing a pane of glass at the other; on holding this perpendicularly over the water one can see every thing through it as clearly as in an aquarium—fish, sponges, coral, or shells. The Bahama sponges are chiefly of four sorts, sheep-wool, which is the most valuable, reef, velvet, and glove, and although inferior to the finest Mediterranean sponges, are very strong, and serviceable for washing carriages, surgery, and the like. The sponge boats usually get in on Saturday, and the sponges are assorted in the markets, each boat-load and variety by itself. On Monday they are disposed of at auction, only members of the sponge guild and those making genuine offers being permitted to bid, which is done by written tenders.

Wrecking is another branch of business for which the Bahamas have long been famous, owing to their intricate navigation. At one time this was very lucrative, but it has been falling off of late years. Formerly every thing saved from a wreck was sold at auction in Nassau; now all goods not of a perishable nature, and undamaged, are reshipped to the port of destination. Collusion between ship-masters and the pilots was also frequent, but increased vigilance on the part of the insurance companies has interfered with this nefarious business, while



SPONGE YARD.

the numerous light-houses recently erected by the government, with noble self-sacrifice, have operated in the same direction. The uncertainties attending money-making in this precarious way have their effect on the character of the people, as is the case when the element of chance enters largely into business; the prizes in the lottery are few, but are occasionally so large as to excite undue expectations, and thus unfit many for any pursuit more steady but less exciting. For months they will cruise about, watching and hoping, and barely kept alive on a scant supply of sugar-cane and conchs; then they fall in with a wreck, and make enough from it, perhaps, to keep them going another year. It is not a healthy or desirable state of affairs.

One Sunday morning a commotion arose quite unusual in the uncommonly quiet and orderly streets of Nassau. There was hurrying to and fro, and the sound of voices shrill and rapid, caused by some sudden and extraordinary excitement. The wharves of the little port were thronged and positively black with eager negroes, and great activity was noticeable among the sloops and schooners. Some were discharging their cargoes of sponges, shells, fish, and cattle in hot haste; others were provisioning or setting up their rigging; others again were expeditiously hoisting their sails and heaving up their anchors; while the crews, black and white, sang songs in merry chorus, as if under the influence of great and good tidings. What could it all mean? It meant



ENTRANCE TO PORT NASSAU.



BLACKBEARD, THE PIRATE.

this: another vein in the Bahama gold mines had been struck, another lead discovered, and the miners were off to develop it, each hoping to be the lucky one to turn out the largest nugget, and retire on it for life. In other words, news had just been brought of the wreck of a Spanish vessel on the Lavadeiros Shoal, one hundred and fifty miles away. She was none of your wretched colliers or fruiterers, with a cargo valueless to wreckers, but a ship whose hold from keelson to deck beams was packed with a thousand tons of choice silks and stuffs for the black-eyed brunettes of Havana, just enough damaged to oblige them to be sold at auction in Nassau, where all wrecked goods must be brought for adjudication. Verily, we thought, "it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good;" the misfortune which has wrung the soul and perhaps ruined the happiness of one or two in far lands has made glad the hearts of several thousand darkies, mulattoes, and whites in the Bahamas. Here is a text for La Rochefoucauld, the modern cynic.

The manufacture and exportation of salt has also been one of the most lucrative pursuits of the islands. With the single exception of Andros Island, which seems to be still in a formative state, there is not a freshwater lake or stream in the whole group; but lakes of some size, containing more or less salt, are found on many of the islands. Vast quantities of salt have been made at Exuma, Long Island, Rose Island, Inagua, and Turk's Island. The latter is now under the jurisdiction of Jamaica, and the production of salt at the other islands is at present in a very languishing condition, the result of the high duties imposed by our government on the article, which act in two ways,

like a two-edged sword, forcing our people to pay a higher price than they otherwise would for what salt they consume, and effectually crippling one of the most important trades of the West Indies.

But the branches of business which in past years have brought most wealth into Nassau have been buccaneering, privateering, and blockade-running. The buccaneers were at one time in high feather there; they bought up or captured the governors, toasted and roasted the people when recalcitrant, and hiding behind the low keys in their little vessels, sprang out, spider-like, on any unwary trader quietly sailing by. Blackbeard, who is represented in the accompanying cut from an old print, was the most celebrated of the ruffian chiefs who at various times ruled over these islands. An immense silk-cotton-tree stood until within a few years on Bay Street, in Nassau, under the broad branches of which he administered high-handed justice, and caroused with his harridan dames. He was finally killed off the coast of South Carolina in a desperate fight, and the land had rest for certain years, the escutcheon of the colony bearing since that time the significant legend, "*Expulsis piratis, restituta commercia.*"

After the pirates came the privateers of the Revolution. Fincastle, Lord Dunmore, when he left Virginia came to the Bahamas, of which he was appointed Governor, and he was followed by many Tories. Although not a great man, his is one of the most noted names connected with the history of the Bahamas. Traces of his administration still exist in many places. There is a quaint fort named Fincastle behind the hotel, curiously resembling a paddle-box steamer, and the country-seat where he resided, now called the Hermitage, is still standing by the water, admirably situated, surrounded by a noble grove of oaks and cocoa-palms. Royal Island, having a snug little harbor easy of



FORT FINCASTLE, NASSAU.



THE HERMITAGE, COUNTRY-SEAT OF LORD DUNMORE, AT NASSAU.

access, was a rendezvous where arms and stores were concealed, and royalist privateers made it a common resort during the American Revolution. An old stone house still remains there which has doubtless witnessed many wild, mysterious scenes in days gone by.

We may add in passing that one of the most noted characters who ever figured in Nassau was Blennerhasset, notorious for his relations with Aaron Burr. It will be remembered that after the excitement produced by the trial had blown over, Blennerhasset passed off the scene; but Blennerhasset still lived. There is excellent authority for stating that the Bahamas, a refuge for so many rovers and adventurers, gave him a shelter during the closing years of his life. Leaving his wife, whom the classic oration of Wirt has made famous, to care for herself, he there assumed the name of Carr, and received the position of Attorney-General. The secret was known to but few. Another wife consoled him for the absence of Mrs. Blennerhasset, who once discovered his retreat, but was spirited out of the island, and maintained elsewhere on a separate allowance. Those were roistering days, when gentlemen drank hard, played high, and fought duels like devils—days now fortunately passed, it is hoped, forever, at least in Nassau—and Blennerhasset acted his rôle well, by no means a looker-on in Vienna.

And now we come to the most remarkable episode in the history of the Bahamas, the part they played in the Southern rebellion, about which a volume of entertaining information could be written. On the 5th of December, 1861, the first Confederate vessel arrived from Charleston, with 144 bales of cotton; and between that time and the close of the war 397 vessels entered Nassau from Confederate ports, and 588 sailed thence for Southern ports. Of these the steamers were to the sailing vessels in the ratio of three

to one. Of the clearances 432 were ostensibly for St. John, New Brunswick, and of the total number only thirty-two carried the Confederate flag—a pretty fair indication of the amount of complicity and lying practiced about that time by her Majesty's subjects and officials in Nassau, and of the value of the British capital engaged in this unjustifiable traffic. In nothing is this connivance on the part of a neutral power more evident than in the case of the *Florida*, or *Oreto*, which was three times seized by the commander of the British man-of-war *Bull-dog*, and three times released by the decision of the insular Admiralty Court on grounds afterward prudently disavowed by the home government. The plea of Mr. Anderson, the counsel for the prosecution, was culpably weak, and it is a well-established fact that \$80,000 were brought from England and divided between the late Chief Justice Lees (who received \$20,000) and other parties in Nassau engaged in this iniquitous transaction, a legal luxury for which England has since paid several millions.

During the Confederate years the little town actually swarmed with Southern refugees, the captains and crews of blockade-runners, cotton brokers, rum-sellers, Jews and Gentiles of high and low degree, coining money and squandering it as if they owned the secret of the transmutation of metals. They played toss-penny in the verandas of the Royal Victoria Hotel with gold eagles! The shops were packed to the ceilings; the streets were crowded with bales, boxes, and barrels—cotton coming in, Confederate uniforms and pills of lead and quinine, to pepper patriots and patients, going out. Semmes and his bold boys twisted their mustaches at every corner, danced involuntary reels and hornpipes from groggery to groggery, and from the waxed floors of the Government House, where they were

always sure of a cordial reception, to the decks of the *Banshee* and *Alabama*, or brandished their revolvers in the faces of Union men, whose lives were too uncertain to insure thereabouts in those roistering days. A spicy little paper called the *Young Punch*, edited by a witty Confederate in Nassau, gives a glimpse of the state of things then existing, and shows that there was some real fun connected with blockade - running. A rather grim joke was played at the expense of the rebels *via* Nassau. A large invoice of prayer-books was brought from England and reshipped

to Charleston with the express understanding that they were suited to the devotional wants of the Confederacy. Quite a number had been distributed before it was discovered that the prayers for the President and Congress of the United States had not been altered!

It is to the disgrace of our country that some of the goods smuggled into the Confederacy *via* Nassau were from Northern ports, as, for example, ship-loads of pistols brought from Boston in barrels of lard. On the other hand, there are many instances of noble patriotism on record. The name of Timothy Darling, Esq., is deserving the honor and respect of every true American. A native of Maine, but long a resident of Nassau, a British subject, and one of the principal merchants and politicians of the Bahamas, he was more than once offered the agency of the Confederacy, and always firmly declined—a proposal which, as the event proved, would have been worth many hundred thousand dollars to him.

During the continuance of the war the weather was exceptionally fine even for the West Indies; no hurricanes and but few gales of any violence occurred. Every thing went on merry as a marriage-bell, and the policies of vessels clearing for Nassau might well have omitted the words "wind and weather permitting." But in the year succeeding the fall of Richmond, 1866, occurred the most terrible hurricane experienced in those waters during this century. The



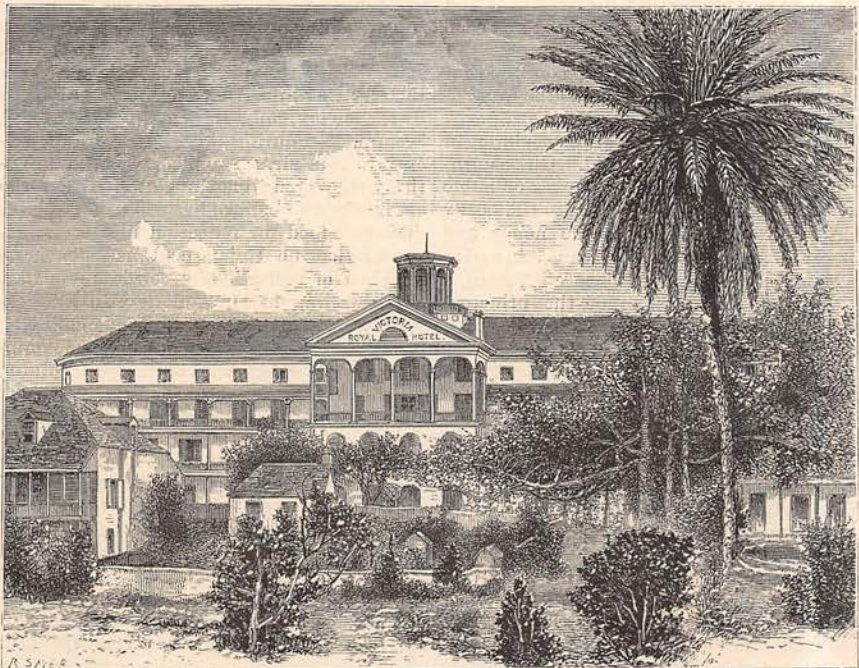
PUBLIC LIBRARY, NASSAU.

ocean rolled completely over Hog Island into the harbor in surges so enormous that the crest was even with the gallery of the lighthouse, sixty feet above the sea. Houses and forests went down before the wind like reeds; many which withstood its force when it blew from northeast collapsed when it shifted to southwest. In twenty-four hours the city was like a town sacked and burned by the enemy, and a large part of the wealth accumulated during the war had disappeared into thin air. The island has never entirely recovered from the blow. Those who are inclined to believe in special providences may find food for reflection in the circumstance that no Union man had his house wrecked or suffered any considerable loss. The dwelling of Mr. Adderley, an Englishman, whose principles forbade his engaging in any Confederate business, stood uninjured, while substantial buildings adjoining on either side were leveled to the ground. This is, at least, a curious coincidence. It is not to be supposed, however, that hurricanes or violent weather are frequent in the Bahamas. Formerly they occurred once in two or three years, in August or October, but now blow at longer intervals. There has been no hurricane since the one of 1866. The prevailing winds are north to south, round by east, taking the form of trade-winds from the eastward during a large part of the year, and it is rarely that the heat of mid-day is not cooled by a breeze from the sea. Great and sudden changes in the

weather are unknown; the rainy season begins in May, and during the summer a moderate quantity of rain falls, but from October to May the climate is dry and the temperature equable, ranging from seventy-three to eighty-five, and the invalid who goes there for consumption or neuralgic and rheumatic complaints always breathes a pure and health-inspiring air, free from either excessive moisture or malaria. For those flying the rigors of the North we can imagine no climate offering greater attractions and advantages within easy distance than that of Nassau, even the famed charms of Florida suffering in comparison, owing to its excessive rains and changeable temperature at the season most desirable for invalids, which, other things being equal, are always greater on the main-land than on a small island, where the air is equalized by the surrounding sea. It is fortunate for those who unhappily need such a resort that they can find in Nassau ample accommodations, and almost every essential comfort. The Royal Victoria Hotel, already alluded to, was erected by the colonial government in 1861 at an expense of \$130,000, and has since then been visited by many of our first people. The rooms are cheerful and neatly kept, and it is the aim of the government that it should be all that invalids, tourists, and pleasure-seekers could desire. The facilities for yachting and fishing at Nassau are admirable, fast yachts being al-

ways on hand, while the neighboring keys present charming resorts for picnic parties, and the variety, beauty, and savage character of many of the fish render fishing a sport of more than ordinary interest. The beautiful Lakes of Killarney, in the interior of New Providence, abound with wild duck, and those who care to cruise as far as Green Key will find lots of pigeon-shooting.

The drives around Nassau are also very charming, often leading by the sea-side. There are few scenes more replete with quiet but exquisite and satisfying beauty than the drive to Fort Montague toward sunset; on one side, groves of palms, lithe and graceful as nymphs, gently swaying their undulating plumage in the evening wind; on the other side, the sea murmuring on the yellow sand; in the distance, the city and the port limed against a sky ablaze with the glory of the tropics. The roads are always excellent, and of such a nature that the horses, when shod at all, are only shod on the fore-feet. With a few exceptions, they are small and meagre to a degree that renders Rosinante corpulent in comparison, being fed chiefly on sugar-cane stalks. It is curious that on islands generally the equine race, while exceptionally hardy, has a tendency to dwindle in size. But while appearances would lead one to expect a similar condition in the vegetation of the Bahamas, the reverse seems to hold good. With but one or two exceptions the islands are low calcareous



ROYAL VICTORIA HOTEL.





SILK-COTTON-TREE, NASSAU.

rocks, probably the summits of peaks once rising far above the sea, and enlarged and re-elevated by coral insects since their submergence. The limestone is gray, and so hard as to strike fire when exposed to the weather, but soft enough below to be shaped with saw and hatchet, while the layer of soil scattered over it is so thin as to make it impossible to understand how any thing but scrub and goats could flourish upon it. Any Yankee so enterprising or hare-brained as to introduce the latest improved plow into Nassau would be considered a fit candidate for the Insane Asylum behind the bishop's residence. And yet there is not a plant of the tropics that may not be made to grow there, and many of the temperate zone. The mahogany is common, chiefly on Andros Island, and might be made a lucrative branch of commerce if there were roads to transport it to the sea. The variety called the horse-flesh is exceedingly durable, and is exclusively used for the frames of Bahama vessels. It seems to rival oak for this purpose. The pine reaches a good size in the interior of New Providence, where the palmetto is so intermingled with it as to present a suggestive blending of the vegetation of two zones. The wild pine-apple or air-plant, which lives in the branches of forest trees, holding sometimes a quart of dew in its silver-gray bowl of spiky leaves, is also an interesting object. The satin-wood, *lignum-vitæ*, yellow-wood, fustic, and cedar grow every where,

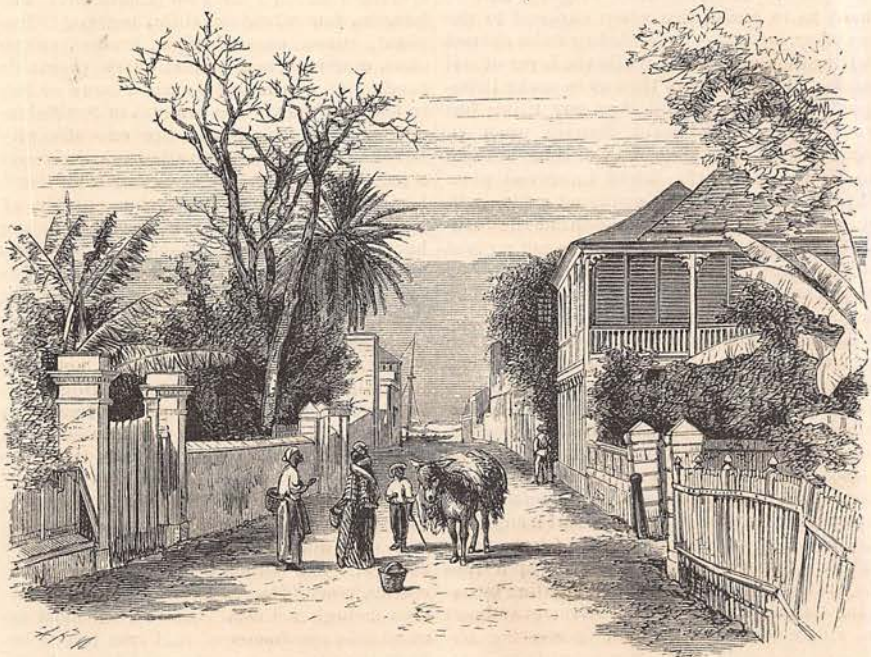
and cocoa and date palms abound, together with the *Ficus indicus*, a species of banyan. Of the East Indian banyan a very perfect specimen exists near Fort Montague. The banana, tamarind, sapodilla, mango, coffee-plant, guava, custard-apple, orange, sugarcane, mammee, and almost every vegetable production of the tropics grow more or less in the Bahamas. The oranges of San Salvador or Watling's Island are exceptionally sweet. How such vegetation can thrive on a mere basis of rock is a perpetual mystery. I visited an orange plantation outside of Nassau where the gray rock was completely honey-combed with depressions called cave-holes. On the bottom of these was a little soil, and there the trees grew and flourished in clumps of eight or ten. One of the most singular trees in the Bahamas is the silk-cotton, which attains a large size, not only reaching a good height, but spreading laterally over a wide surface, and buttressed at the base like a Gothic tower, evidently an adaptation by nature to support it in the absence of any perpendicular hold it might have in a deeper soil. The roots also extend to a great distance, creeping over the rock like vast anacondas, and clinging to every crevice. The bolls are full of a soft brown cotton, resembling floss silk, but not adhesive enough for use. One of the most remarkable specimens of this tree is one behind the Government House. Its roots extend nearly the eighth of a mile, and then

shoot up into another magnificent specimen in the grounds of the Royal Victoria Hotel, in whose branches a large platform has been constructed.

The cactus and aloe are, of course, common, and especially the Sisal aloe, from which manilla rope might very well be manufactured with a little enterprise, as might also be added regarding the production of castor-oil, as the plant grows abundantly on the islands. The pine-apple flourishes in San Salvador and Eleuthera, and the chief supplies of that delicious fruit which reach our markets are from the latter island.

The cruise to Harbor Island and Eleuthera is one of the most interesting within easy distance of Nassau. It can be made in a yacht or in one of the many little schooners constantly plying to and fro; keys are always in sight, and a lee can be made at any time; while one can return by way of Abaco, where a cruise in the sounds on either side of that island, and a visit to the curious little settlement called Hopetown, inhabited by descendants of the buccaneers, present various attractions. Spanish Wells, on the island of that name, is a singular place. Planted on the low beach, the houses are huddled together in inconceivable disorder, and built on posts to raise them above the sea waves, and also to keep them free from the incursions of the hermit-crabs, which live in the rocks in vast numbers, and often come

out at night and prowl over the land. Before every house is an oven—it was baking-day when we touched there—and the smell of fresh bread could be observed before we got to land. It was also ironing-day, and before every cabin flat-irons were ranged on coals. The women wear the peculiar oblong paste-board sun-bonnet which was common years ago in our rural districts, called in some places "rantarnskoots," and their appearance is not especially attractive; but then I did not see them in their best bibs and tuckers, and dress does make a difference. The school-house is thatched with palm leaves, and is a quaint little building. The school-master told me they lived on conchs and fish, and he had not tasted meat for two months. If fish makes brain, the Bahamians ought to be intellectual to a degree; but facts do sometimes conflict with theories. From Spanish Wells the track lies over a succession of coral reefs, through which the passage is of the most intricate character; one of the worst places, a long zigzag reef, is called the Devil's Backbone. Were it not for the extraordinary clearness and vivid malachite tints of the water, and that wherever a reef rises near the surface it is indicated by a complementary color of green, it would be next to impossible for a vessel to work into the port. The brilliance of these tints at mid-day also causes the deep water beyond to appear purple; and this tint, in a milder form, is carried into the sky,



STREET IN NASSAU.



HARBOR ISLAND.

which is rosy to the zenith on a bright day. The port of Harbor Island is spacious, and so protected by reefs and bars at each entrance as to be the safest in the world for vessels not drawing over nine feet of water, after they once get inside of it. It is formed by a low island stretching across a bight at the northeastern end of Eleuthera. On the inner slope of this isle is situated Dunmore Town, containing 2500 inhabitants, next to Nassau the largest settlement in the Bahamas. A very pleasing little place it is, encircled by beautiful cocoa-nut groves, and dreaming by the green water in an air of solitude and peace which is very bewitching to one who is weary of the rush and giddy whirl of the nineteenth century, while the cool trade-winds always moderate the heat. On the ocean side of Harbor Island is the finest beach I have seen, of very fine, delicate pinkish sand, hard as a floor, a glorious galloping ground for the half dozen ponies in the place. The people depend for fresh-water chiefly on wells sunk in the drifted sand immediately back of the beach. When the well is dug it is protected from falling in by three or four barrels, one over the other, and the rude curb is guarded with a padlock. The sea-water filters through the sand into these wells, and becomes sweet as ordinary spring water. A gale of wind destroys the wells once in three or four years, and excavating new ones is a dangerous process. The inhabitants gain a livelihood cultivating pine-apples on Eleuthera. A fleet of two hundred boats is owned in the settlement. Every morning at sunrise this little fleet spreads its wings to the trade-wind, and wafts eight hundred men and boys, black and white, to the lovely beach and cocoa-nut groves on Eleuthera, two miles away; every night they return. The pine-apples begin to ripen in April, and only grow to advantage on a peculiar red soil that is always thin, and is found in but few dis-

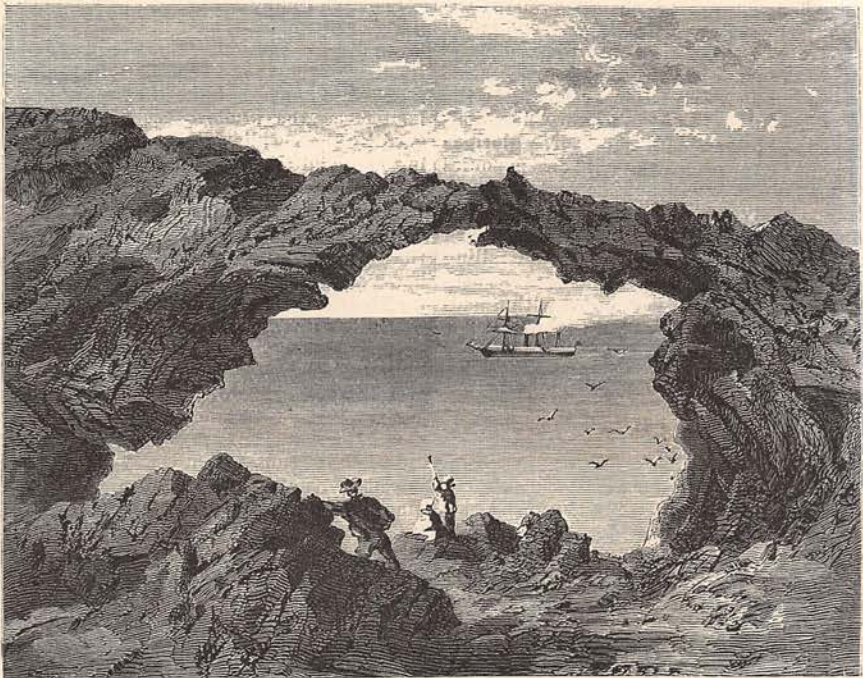
tricts. The plantations are on undulating ground, the highest in the Bahamas, and are skirted by mahogany, logwood, and cocoa-nut groves, overgrown with the brown love vine, and abounding in scarlet-flowered hop, clitoria or wild pea, and various other flowers, while the song of the brown thrush resounds in every thicket. A pine field when the pines are ripe looks as if it were on fire, the scarlet of the spiked leaves forming a flame-color with the vivid orange-yellow of the fruit. There are two principal varieties of the pine-apple, the scarlet and the sugar-loaf, the latter of which is the best.

Some charming excursions may be made from Harbor Island: one to the Glass Windows, a limestone arch eighty-five feet above the sea. The walk from Bottom Cove to the arch is remarkable for the beauty of the land forms, the whole effect being heightened by the peculiar stalks of the aloe rising here and there, like solitary bronze columns, lifting a massy coronal of golden flowers against the sky, while on one side, owing to the narrowness of Eleuthera at that spot, the green water of the coral reefs is close at hand, and on the other actually blue water, for Eleuthera is on the extreme edge of the Banks, serving for some seventy miles as a breakwater for the rest of the group against the vast surges of the Atlantic, which rise there suddenly sometimes without any wind, and last for several hours. The natives call these windless risings of the sea rages; they are probably caused by a heavy storm blowing at a distance. In 1872 a very extraordinary tidal wave rose without warning at the Glass Windows, washing under the arch and entirely over the island, carrying away several young people who were enjoying a picnic there. The account of the rescue of one of them is a thrilling and remarkable story, too long for narration here; but those who visit Harbor Island will find Mr. Cole, the intelligent and courteous school-master,

quite willing to repeat the narrative of an astonishing adventure, of which he was himself an eye-witness. Near Gregory's Harbor is a cave extending 1100 feet under-ground, enriched with stalactites of a brilliant brown hue. It is really worth visiting. There is also a large cave at Long Island, besides several smaller ones on other islands of the group. We may add before leaving Harbor Island that the traveler can find tolerable accommodations there at the house of Mrs. Stirrup. The cuisine is by no means elaborate, and the rooms are not sumptuous, but they will do for a week or two. South by east of Eleuthera is Cat Island, or Guanahani, celebrated as the land first seen by Columbus, and called by him San Salvador. Most of our readers must here be prepared, however, for a surprise, when it is stated that in all probability it was not Cat Island which Columbus named San Salvador, but Watling's Island—a smaller isle a little more to the southward and eastward. The facts in the case are these: contrary, probably, to the general opinion, it has never been definitely known which was the island entitled to the honor; but about fifty years ago, when historians were busy with the voyage of Columbus, they undertook to settle the question by comparing his journal with the imperfect charts of the Bahamas then existing. Navarette fixed on Turk's Island, which later investigation has proved to be erroneous, while Irving, supported by the strong

authority of Humboldt, argued for Cat Island, and since then this has been generally accepted as San Salvador, and it is so designated on our charts to this day. But the English reversed their opinion some time ago, and transferred the name of San Salvador to Watling's Island, and it will be so found on their latest charts. The reasons for this change seem conclusive. Lieutenant Beecher, of the English navy, proves conclusively that Cat Island can not be San Salvador, and that Watling's Island answers the conditions required better than any other island lying in the track of Columbus. His two strongest reasons against Cat Island are that Columbus states that he rowed around the northern end in one day. The size of Cat Island makes this physically impossible there, while it is quite feasible at the other island. He also speaks of a large lake in the interior. There is no such water on Cat Island, while such a lake does exist on Watling's Island.

The lamented Agassiz contemplated an exploration of the Bahamas; and that there is abundant room for scientific investigation in the botany, shells, fauna, and perhaps the geology, of the group is evident at a glance, for they have never been thoroughly investigated. Catesby's work on the fauna of the Bahamas is valuable as far as it goes, but can hardly be called complete. Nassau, as a sanitarium for invalids, can not be too highly recommended.



GLASS WINDOWS.