

A FIVE MONTHS TRIP TO THE SUNNY SOUTH.

(CONTINUED.)

On the morning of the 7th of March, about 9 o'clock, we sighted the first of the Bahama Islands, and about 1 o'clock, the Island of New Providence. As the regular pilot did not make his appearance we were obliged to stand off from the island again. After waiting for about an hour, and the pilot not appearing, the captain determined to enter the harbour without one, so the ship was once more headed for the land. As the steamer was not very heavily laden we were able to cross the bar without any difficulty.

The harbour of Nassau is formed by Hog Island, a beautiful coral islet about three miles long. As we approached the wharf great numbers of blacks jumped off, and swimming towards the steamer, shouted to the passengers to throw them small pieces of silver, which they caught before they reached the bottom.

The only hotel in the Island of New Providence is the Royal Victoria, about one-third of a mile from the wharf, where we accordingly put up. The Royal Victoria hotel was erected in 1862 by the Bahama Government at a cost of \$125,000, and when you take into consideration the cheapness of labour and material—carpenters, painters and masons at from seventy-five cents to \$1 a day—the same building would cost about four times that sum in the United States or Canada. The building is substantially built of the native stone, has four floors, and three piazzas ten feet wide, the two upper ones affording invalids and those unable to bear much fatigue sufficient out-door exercise without leaving the house. It is situated at the head of Parliament street at an elevation of about ninety feet above the sea, and from its piazzas you have a fine view of the ocean, the harbour, the city and the adjacent islands. Next day with several of my fellow passengers I took quite a long walk to the different objects of interest. The first place we visited was Fort Fincastle which took its name from Fincastle, (Lord Dumore,) who, when he left Virginia at the time of the Revolution settled in the Bahamas of which he was appointed Governor. The country seat where he resided is still standing by the water, admirably situated, surrounded by a noble grove of oaks and cocoa palms. Royal Island, having a snug little harbour easy of access, was a rendezvous where arms and stores were concealed. 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. Fort Fincastle is about 100 years old and is curiously shaped, somewhat resembling a paddle-box steamer. It has three guns and two howitzers. The fort contains one bed-room, a guard-room and a powder magazine. The only entrance is a small door about two feet six inches by six feet in height. Our next visit was to the Queen's staircase, a curious cutting in the hill on which Fort Fincastle stands and about fifty feet beyond the fort. It is about 300 yards in length, forty feet wide and about seventy feet in depth at the deepest part; at the southern end a staircase has been built. As we were walking through it we met a colored boy who told us a story of a man on horse-back that was trying to catch a goat on the hill above. The man was so engrossed in his endeavour to catch the goat that he did not notice how near he was to the

precipice, and the result was that goat, man and horse all went over the edge together. While the boy was waiting for the customary sixpence one of our party enquired whether the man hurt himself, which remark so tickled the boy that forgetting the load he carried on his head he lay down on the ground and rolled over and over, thus losing the load of ashes which he carried. Whether this was an artifice to extort more money or not I am unable to say, if it was, he succeeded admirably. We saw great numbers of cocoa-palms bearing ripe and green fruit. It is estimated that from one tree of ordinary size a man can have a cocoanut a day every day in the year.

Fort Charlotte, which I visited on the 9th of March, forms one of the numerous points of interest in and about Nassau. It is situated on the top of a high hill about half a mile from the town of Nassau. It is surrounded by a moat about fifteen feet broad and ten feet deep. The fort is approached by means of a draw-bridge which is still in good working order. When it is to be raised two men turn the fastenings that lock it down, while a third gives it a blow with an axe which loosens the catch. Underneath are very strong springs which force it shut. In the eastern end of the fort is a spiral staircase hewn out of the solid rock. The steps, thirty-two in number, descend for about twenty-five feet to a subterranean passage under the moat which opens in a chamber pierced for about fifteen riflemen so as to command the draw-bridge and entrance. In one of the underground chambers is a well about six feet in diameter and 100 in depth to the water. The water is not good to drink, as toads, etc., fall in, and, being unable to get out, die and pollute the water. There are three different stairways which lead to the dungeons and different passages. The guide-book to Nassau says that any one unable to visit the fort can have as much pleasure, by following a nigger with a torch round a dark cellar. The fort has not been occupied, except as a signal station, since 1865, when the troops were removed to a barracks in the town either because the fort was too far from town for the officers or because it was too unhealthy for the men, probably both.

On Friday, the 10th March, I paid a visit to the sea gardens, in the yacht "Ida," in charge of Captain Will Major, (colored). The sea gardens are about six miles to the east of Nassau, between the main land and a couple of small islands. The water is about fifteen feet deep, and by looking through a square box with a pane of glass in the bottom to keep the water smooth, called a water-glass, all sorts of sponges, sea-fern, brain-coral, sea weed, etc., can be seen growing in their natural element. We had on board two divers, who taking a large hammer in their hands to detach the different specimens, soon brought up as many as we wanted, and some of which I still have in my possession. On Saturday, I went to the northern side of Hog Island, for a bathe; the day was fine, the thermometer was about seventy-five degrees, and the water was warmer than it is in any river in New Brunswick in the middle of summer. The same evening, in accordance with the time-honored custom of the hotel, all the youthful and middle-aged portion of the guests who were so inclined, held a dance in the ladies parlor. The music was furnished by three of the towns-people who played piano, fiddle, and cornopean, each one trying to play the loudest and out-do the other. The cornopean was deafening, the screech-