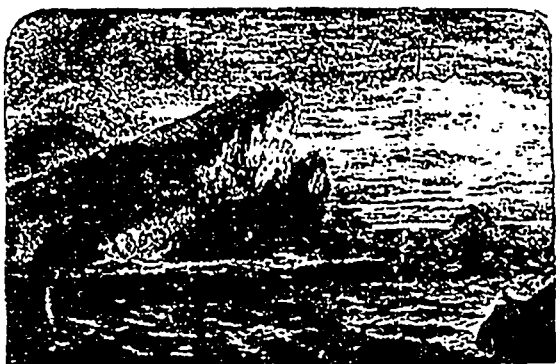


should happen to be in the neighborhood in the rainy season. And then, I suppose, the expedition would need an equipment of top-boots, oilskins, and alpenstocks!

The Maraval Waterworks, which lie in a shady valley some three miles back from the main road, are interesting for those



THE MONAS BOCA, TRINIDAD.

who care about such things. They are clean and well kept, and certainly, delightfully situated. Nor should a drive round the savanna be missed. Here the more well-to-do inhabitants have their residences, neat looking villas of modern construction, mostly after the style of the old French châteaux. The botanical gardens are well laid out, but are very similar to the majority of tropical and sub-tropical gardens. When you have seen one, you have seen all. The town itself is mainly composed of wooden buildings, which have an occasional Spanish and French touch. The streets, with the exception of the main thoroughfare—a very wide avenue, lined with tall trees—are narrow and close, and the open drains do not improve them either in appearance or odor. But, if the Blue Basin proved a disappointment, and though the town turned out to be cramped and not devoid of offense to the olfactory nerves, Port of Spain may pride itself on two very excellent institutions—an hotel, where a decent meal may be had in comfort at a moderate price, and a leper hospital, where the sublimity of charity is to be seen. To consider, first of all, the smaller subject, let me recommend the voyager to these parts to take his luncheon at the Family Hotel, which adjoins the Ice House—a similar establishment to that at Barbados, where cocktails are dispensed to the tired and thirsty traveller. No matter how good the living on board ship may be—and in this respect there is nothing but what is favorable to be said of the catering by the West India and Pacific Steamship Company—you are apt, on a long voyage, to tire of the inevitable sameness of the food and of the same style of cooking. It is a relief to get a light meal on land, with fresh salads and fruits, served without fuss, in an airy room, reminding you very much of a breakfast at the Café de la Préserve, at Marseilles.

The supersensitive may shudder at the idea of a visit to a leper asylum. Leprosy exhibits living death in its most loathsome form. The disease is horrible enough at any time, or with any race. I thought it bad enough in the Chinese lepers. It is still more terrible and sickening to contemplate in the leper of African origin. The Chinese are more resigned. They are content to let themselves be wasted through the disease by the help of opium. Not so the lepers of Trinidad who, at times, get excited to fever heat and abuse and ill-treat the sweet women who have devoted their lives to them, and who try by every possible means to make their burdens less hard to bear. The Leper Asylum at Trinidad contains over two hundred inhabitants. The entire work, menial as well as nursing, is done by a score of Dominican nuns, all French ladies by birth and education, who have nobly sacrificed all earthly joys and willingly renounced every worldly pleasure for this divine work of charity and sublime inspiration. Those who care to do so, may visit the lepers themselves, but it requires some command of self to do this. The sight is one never to be forgotten. The poor wretches, cut off from all

intercourse with the world, have no friends and few resources. In disposition they are as a rule sullen and resentful, but there are exceptional patients who display a little genuine feeling. For instance, a kind-hearted fellow passenger, formerly a resident of Trinidad, had been a frequent visitor to the asylum and had struck an acquaintance with one of its inmates to whom he had said farewell two years ago. He was the leper's only friend, from the outside world, and, when he went away, he half-promised—more to cheer the sufferer than because he thought he would be able to keep his word—to see him again on his return from England. As a matter of fact, neither of them ever, in their hearts, expected to meet again. Judge, then, of the poor sufferer's intense surprise and unbounded delight, when the good fellow who made himself a friend indeed, reappeared, after his prolonged absence, bringing with him a supply of tobacco sufficient to last for several months! The poor wretch fairly danced with joy, and you forgot the hideousness of his appearance and the loathsomeness of the disease in the deep pathos of the scene.

But all the lepers are not so tranquil in their nature as was this one. They welcome, as a rule, any attention, but they have in their midst, wild, unruly creatures who visit their misfortune on the nuns who have given up so much in their cause. Just before I arrived, one of the youngest and most gentle of the sisters—a sweet, refined lady of noble family—had been struck in the face by one of the lepers whilst attempting to bind up one of the open wounds of this depraved wretch. Such scenes are by no means rare here, but they are borne, it is needless to say, with exemplary patience by these truly saint-like women. With the exception of the Australian aboriginal, the colored people from whence these Trinidad lepers come, seem to me to be the lowest on the face of the earth. Already debased, the disease adds to their degradation. And, in direct contrast are the gentle women who have shut themselves off from the world, from friends, from their own fair country, from earthly love, and from all things beautiful for the purpose of softening sorrow and easing the process of death in its most hideous form. The sacrifice is indeed one unequalled in its divine greatness and exquisite unselfishness. Its reward must surely be more than mortal can tell. The sweet sisters at the Leper Asylum at Trinidad are completely isolated and debarred from all intercourse with civilization, for the few passengers who visit Port of Spain, either come on business or else do not care to let their pleasure be spoilt by thought of suffering people. Let me assure those who care to do so, that they will not find anything but delicacy, refinement, and that peace which comes of self-sacrifice and sublime charity. If they call on these Dominican nuns, there is no necessity to see the asylum or its inmates. The sisters have a habitation of their own where nothing but gentleness and delicacy prevail. They give such a cordial welcome to strangers that the visitor is at once put at his ease and he does not



THE FITCH LAKE, TRINIDAD.

need to be very observant to see that his presence brings a little light where there is so much darkness. The sisters tell me that their charges are very fond of fireworks and that they make a special feast for them at Christmas. So that any one coming out to the West Indies at the end of the year might

as a charitable act, by spending a few dollars on fireworks, and bring some joy to those helpless wretches, a few more moments and then we prepared to take our leave. It is with mingled feelings of peace and wonder that we receive the manifold blessings and earnest prayers for our safety from the lips of these devoted women. God rewards all such deeds of grace and charity, as assuredly he will do.

