

STEAMING SOUTHWARD

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THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF
ARTICLES ON SOUTH AMERICA

During his visit to South America Mr. Roosevelt is preparing a number of articles on the countries through which he passes and their peoples and problems. The subjoined article is preliminary in character, describing a part of the voyage and a visit to Barbados. Though connected by a common subject, these articles will not be dependent on one another, but each will have independent interest.—THE EDITORS.

ON October 4 we left New York on the Lamport & Holt steamer Vanduyck. It is astonishing how comparatively few of our people realize that it is now as easy and comfortable to go to South America as to Europe; and it is no less astonishing for those of us who are past middle age to realize how very easy and very comfortable traveling has become. On such a steamer as the one on which we took our passage, clean, roomy, with everything to add to the mechanical attractiveness of life on the steamer, I rather hesitate as to whether "luxury" is not a more appropriate word than "comfort." One thing is certain. Not only are second-class passengers infinitely better off than were the first-class passengers in the days, forty-odd years ago, when I first crossed the Atlantic on the old Cunarders Scotia and Russia, but the improvement has been even more marked for the third-class passengers, and on most ships quite as marked for the crew themselves.

The direct trip from New York to Buenos Aires or Rio de Janeiro is delightful. Not only is this route bound to become a great traffic route in the near future, but it is bound to become a great passenger route. It is a delightful trip. Of course terrible storms are sometimes encountered on the southward trip, and now and then a hurricane more violent than anything outside the tropics. But as a rule the seas are smoother and the passage far less tempestuous in the low latitudes than in the roaring forties. Throughout our trip there was no more motion than would have been pleasant on a summer yachting cruise, and no excuse for anybody feeling under the weather. Day after day we steamed steadily through the sapphire seas, while the trade winds blew no less

steadily in our faces. Now and then we saw flying-fish or dolphins; now and then some great sea-bird, an albatross or booby, came near the ship. On the fifth day after leaving New York we steamed past the beautiful Lesser Antilles, leaving them on our left hand. We were close to them, and in the brilliant air we seemed even closer than we were. Island after island, we raised them out of the sea ahead, saw their outlines grow clear and their coloring change from dim blue to brilliant green, studied the details of palm and cane-field, of wooded mountain and low white town, as we leaned on the port railing; and then saw them sink astern. St. Kitts, Nevis, Grenada, Martinique, one by one they slipped past us; little dots of sea-girt land where the lives are curiously isolated and lonely, yet each with a past that at one time or another has been full not only of interest but of romance.

In passing through the West Indies, any one who is sensitive to the storied interest of the past must feel something of the thrill that he feels in so many parts of the Old World. For over four centuries the region across which the great passenger steamers now ply their uneventful course has seen drama after drama, often of terrible and tragic interest, often of vast importance to the future of mankind. The Spanish Main—why, the very words suggest romance and mystery and fierce adventure! The islands were discovered and the waters first furrowed by ships of Mediterranean admirals, and they were followed by other ships bearing the steel-tempered *conquistadores* of the days when the sun of Spanish glory towered to its zenith. After a stretch of time crowded with brilliant happenings, but brief as it was brilliant, this same sun entered on its period

of long decline. The descendants of the conquerors grew inert, peace and ease and sloth ate into their warlike fiber, and new conquerors appeared to do to them as their forefathers had done to others.

The rise of the English power began with, and the world-wide dominion of the English-speaking peoples was heralded by, the feats of Drake and his fellow-freebooters against the Spanish galleons in the Spanish Main. To the corsairs who flew the flag of a great power succeeded other corsairs who warred openly for their own hand. The buccaneers, French, English, and Dutch, sacked the Spanish cities, ravaged the Spanish coasts, took possession of Spanish islands, in this rich harvest-field of their exploits. To them succeeded the pirates who preyed on the ships of all nations, whose hand was against every man, who were hunted down by the regular forces of all nations, and who made their last stand in these seas only some eighty years ago.

Then, as Spain grew decrepit, the nations that had once warred against her turned their swords against one another. By this time the islands had become divided among many European Powers—Spanish, French, Dutch, English, even Danish. Every time that war broke out among the kings and peoples of Europe the shock was felt in the West Indies. Hither came the great fleets of France and England, the cruising ships of the line, with their tiers of heavy guns and their towering pyramids of sheeted canvas. Some of the fiercest and most important sea fights of history were fought in these waters; some of the greatest tragedies of seafaring life took place here. The ships of the war fleets of those days were crammed with men, fierce, hardy, brutal, utterly ignorant of what we would now regard as the elementary rules of health. Great though the loss of life was in the bloody conflicts they waged with each other, it was as nothing to what happened when pestilence smote them, when scurvy or yellow-jack or some putrid fever bred in their own foul hulls smote them and ravaged till the few disease-worn survivors could hardly work the ship to port. Here too the slave ships thronged. The darkest horrors of the sea were those of the middle passage, when the ruthless slaving captains fed the sharks with the bodies of the men and women who to them were but black human cattle.

Man, plague, and tornado, all took their

toll of life. And under and through it all the slave trade was working blindly for a future of which the haughty races who contended for the mastery of the islands little dreamed. The whites had exterminated the Indians; then they fought for centuries among themselves; and all the while the African slaves, whom they had brought over for their own pleasure and profit, were, by their mere presence, preparing a day of evil reckoning for the remote descendants of the wrong-doers. There has never been more terrible retribution on any race for any wrongdoing than the retribution that fell upon the white men of tropical America for their misdeeds towards the blacks. The whites brought the blacks to the West Indies so that the whites might live softly; and the blacks have stayed in the land, have multiplied, and have driven out or are driving out the whites. Most of the islands are becoming, and some have already become, a black man's country. It is a perilous thing for a race to practice selfish indulgence at the cost of others. The price that their children's children pay may be the price of race extinction itself.

The history of this island-dotted sea has been one of slumberous, sensuous calm, torn now and then by the fiercest hurricanes of human wrath and wrong-doing. Just as is true of nature itself in these lands that lie in their hot, drowsy beauty under the golden sunshine, the earth, the water, and the air warm with a treacherous friendliness, broken at times by the direst plagues, by volcanic outbursts, or by the mad fury of the whirlwinds.

At Barbados we stopped for some hours, and were most hospitably received by the Governor, who motored us over the island. We lunched at the Governor's house in cool, bare, attractive rooms, and strolled into the beautiful garden with its many strange trees. The Chief Justice of the island had come down with us on the boat from New York, and had told me much that was of peculiar interest to an American. What I saw added to the interest. Barbados has been an English island for nearly three centuries. It is very healthy. For some reason the Anopheles mosquito will not live on it, so that there is no fever, and the whites whose families have been here for more than two hundred years are a peculiarly fine set physically and mentally. The Spaniards never settled on the island, which, by the way, takes its

name from the bearded fig tree. The first English adventurers who landed found only Caribs. In the Government House there is a quaint old map of the island as at first discovered, a map containing those delightful pictures which, alas! the severe precision of modern cartography has eliminated. The settlers themselves appear here and there on this map, and pictures of wild cattle and swine which they hunted, and of laden camels. In one place stands a Carib chief, with his canoe, which it is mentioned is thirty feet long—it must have been a seagoing canoe, for there is certainly no water in the island in which to float it. A more ominous touch, characteristic of the age, and marking its utter unlikeness to our own, is a picture of a mounted man following and firing on two runaway Negroes. Slavery was rife here, as all through the West Indies; and, as everywhere else, when it was abolished the Negro was found to outnumber the white man many times over. In no other island of the West Indies, and indeed nowhere else in the New or the Old World, has the problem of the Negro's presence been better solved than here in Barbados, and in very few places has it been as well solved.

Although a small island, Barbados is densely populated. Every foot of fertile soil is tilled. There are nearly two hundred thousand inhabitants. Of these only twelve thousand are pure white. The overwhelming majority are nearly pure black. There is complete equality of treatment of the two races. Each man is treated on his individual worth. The Assembly, or lower house, is elected by the people. The suffrage is limited in various ways, but it includes all who earn \$250 a year, so that every respectable mechanic has a vote. Of the voters probably two-thirds are black, or colored, yet nine-tenths of the members chosen to the Assembly are whites, and the others are colored men or black men of good character who have prospered in business and possess standing in the community. Evidently the voters have the sense to treat their representatives with more wisdom than our own voters sometimes show. Education is free to all. There is but little crime of the more serious type, almost no crime of the type of murder, rape, or robbery under arms; although now and then there will be an epidemic of sneak-thievery or housebreaking. There is no political discontent. Black men and white are entirely satisfied that they receive justice

and that the Government is administered in their interest.

Of course wide differences appear among the non-whites, the colored people. There are any number of the lower class who, although honest and industrious, are still in a primitive state of culture. These included the men and women (as many women as men) whom we saw industriously breaking stones or working on the roads. We saw men digging earth and loading coal, and women carrying the coal or earth in baskets. I was informed, and can well believe it, that if some one beats a tin can, which makes an admirable substitute for a tom-tom, near a group of the huts in which these men and women live, in a few moments they are all out dancing a regular African dance.

From these black peasants there is a steady gradation upwards without a break to the fine-looking colored men whom I saw both as professors and students in the college, and to some of the public officials. The Chief Justice prior to the present incumbent of the office was a black man. The newspaper reporters were all colored. The present Solicitor-General is a colored man, and is accepted by his white colleagues frankly on his own merit. When I saw the college boys, I was met by the whites and those of color intermixed on terms of entire equality. This equality extends to both sports and scholarship. There is a Barbados scholarship like the Rhodes scholarship, the winner of which goes to one of the great English universities, and while this winner is ordinarily a white boy, on several occasions he has been a colored boy. In short, it certainly seemed to me as if the effort had been made with good faith and success to treat everybody on a footing of justice and fair play, giving to every colored man who showed the power to rise the chance to do so, and the reward for rising, but not doing anything for him merely because he was a man of color. I was informed that there was little or no intermarriage now between the races.

Around the ship, in addition to the swart boatmen who were anxious to carry passengers and luggage ashore, there were tiny, cranky craft each with two or three boys eager to dive for any coins that were thrown overboard. Most of these boys were Negroes, but in several of the canoes there were one or two white boys, not to mention light mulattoes. Not only did they dive and swim with easy proficiency, but the precision and

poise of movement that enabled them on leaving the water to climb into their unstable craft without so much as rocking them made the onlooker marvel.

The Panama Canal has had a marked effect upon the island. Barbados has such a teeming population that the people are of necessity industrious, and in spite of their industry sometimes find the problem of living serious. They have furnished many thousands of first-class laboring men to the Canal Zone. Some of these have risen to good positions, chiefly on the colored police force, but the great majority have been ordi-

nary laborers. They have sent back in savings half a million dollars or thereabouts, to the great benefit of the banks. Some apprehension, however, was expressed to me lest, when the work on the Canal was completed, the men who returned to the island, with a larger outlook, new wants, and increased ambitions, might add a new problem. One thing that interested me, by the way, was the number of small landowners on the island, there being from one to two thousand of these landowners who own from an acre upwards. Altogether, the impression left by Barbados was very pleasant.