

**A CRUISE AMONG THE
WINDWARD ISLANDS: BEING
TEN LETTERS PUBLISHED IN
THE FRIEND, 1885**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649346561

A cruise among the Windward Islands: being ten letters published in The Friend, 1885 by
Thomas Elkinton

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Cover @ 2017

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THOMAS ELKINTON

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A CRUISE

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1885.



THE FRIEND:

No. 116 N. FOURTH STREET,
PHILADELPHIA.

A Cruise Among the Windward Islands.

LETTER I.

STEAMSHIP BARRACOUTA.

Lon. 64° 3'. Lat. 23°. Second Month 24th, 1885.

DEAR FRIEND.—In response to thy piece of pleasantry in appointing us as “special correspondents for ‘The Friend,’” I commence a few lines from the region of the trade winds, something over 1000 miles from Philadelphia, in the centre of a perfect and well defined circle of the deep blue waters of the sea, whose depths are ten thousand feet and thousands more, and whose little peaks the passing breeze adorns with the purest white.

Our party consists of my wife, whose motive in going is rather that she may be with her husband than for a love of the voyage, our friend S. R. H. from Greenwich, who hopes that a warmer clime may the better agree with her health, our niece M. P. E., who came because invited, and is ever ready for new scenes of nature, and lastly thy correspondent, whose errand has a partial basis in commercial interests, and the remainder in an enjoyment of viewing new countries and varied nationalities.

About noon of the 19th we backed into the East

river, ran under Brooklyn bridge, left the little band, who, with tearful eyes, and shivering frames in the icy air, waved our companions farewell, rapidly receding from the snow-clad streets and houses of New York, and parting with the pilot, our last connecting link with our homes, we were "off."

The "evil of the sea," as the French term it, overtook most of the women passengers by the time the shades of evening came, and reduced their enjoyment, but did not prevent reasonable sleeping; the night was clear, but the morning came with an easterly snow storm, and the dread of the mariner, foggy weather, reduced the engine to the "dead slow;" increasing the lookout force on bridge and wheel and bow, as the cool winds of the storm drove the vapor from the warm waters of the Gulf-stream and thickened the atmosphere more or less through the day. The wind rose in the afternoon, and the fog cleared, but the seas also rose, and soon we had a heavy storm behind us as the storm went round first to the north and later to west of north. We have seen the sea in its grandeur, and our ideas of the Gulf stream being always mild, proved very erroneous, as we had all the waves we wanted, but it would have been far more serious and inconvenient, had the direction been reversed.

The *Barracouta* is a staunch vessel of steel, built especially for the West India and Demerara trade, and carries 1600 tons of sugar. The motion of the ship in the heavy seas is very easy, without jerking or "kicking," as it is sometimes termed.

The Windward Islands or lesser Antilles, lie about

13 degrees east of Philadelphia; and St. Christopher, or, as generally termed for brevity, "St. Kitts," is about $23\frac{1}{2}$ degrees south; the southing however is in much greater proportion than these figures, the degrees measured on the 40th parallel being much shorter than those on a meridian line. On leaving Sandy Hook, the ship was pointed directly for Sombrero Light, an island light house about 90 miles due north of St. Kitts, the course being south 18 degrees East. The captain, however, preferred running before the heavy north-wester, and in a day or two changed for a more southern course.

After the Gulf stream, we reached the Doldrums, the space between the north Atlantic winds and the trades, a region less enjoyed by sailing-ships than steamers, because of the winds being more important for the progress of the former. A flying fish was seen by one of our company on the 22nd, they were quite plentiful yesterday, and one landed on board to-day. A beautiful little creature 7 inches long in body, 5 inches in wings, deep blue on back, shading down at the side, and white underneath. We fished for Gulf weed with a twine string, a tenpenny nail, and a few pieces of wire, and secured some specimens of interest.

We have passed no vessels on our route so far, excepting one steamer, which replied to our white and red light by throwing up red, white, and red balls, showing that it was a steamer of the Lamport and Holt line from Rio to New York.

Alone on the trackless waters, it seems an act of temerity to attempt to find a specific point fifteen hun-

dred miles in the distance; and well did the poet put in the prayer of the Breton sailor—

“For my little barque is so very small,
And thy ocean is so great.”

It is in accord with the Divine harmony that all nations should be of a common brotherhood; peaceful intercourse is a promotive of this, and by the wonderful gift of the Creator of the instinct of the magnetic iron, and the unfailing motions of the heavenly bodies, man is enabled to pass from sea to sea, and to visit the isles that are afar off.

A fellow passenger, as she looked out upon the ocean, said she wondered how any one could view it, and doubt the existence of a Creator; and truly it must be a low type of intellect and religious feeling, which can traverse the mighty waters, and fail to realize that day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

Dear Thomas Chalkley, that “Gentlest of skippers; rare sea saint,” as Whittier terms him, made some nine voyages in these waters; first as passenger in 1701, in the “Abraham,” on the errand of his Divine Master, and afterward as passenger, purser, and master, through the constraints of business, that he might provide for his family things honest in the sight of all men, and in the love of the gospel, which was ever uppermost with him. There were no swift-going steamships in that generation, with luxurious conveniences for ocean travel, and he had but little enthusiasm for a life on the ocean wave, for, he says: “crossing the seas was

always troublesome to me, being sickly, especially in windy and stormy weather. The confinement was worse to me for the time than a prison, for it would be much easier to me to be in prison on land, on good account, than in prison at sea. I always looking on a ship to be a perilous prison, though it was my lot to be much therein."

In his very instructive and enjoyable journal he recites many trials and afflictions of various kinds, above which his Christian life enabled him to rise; and to the perils of the sea were added, in those days, the terrors of privateers, which went about seeking whom they might devour, a peril from which we are, at present, happily exempt, though how soon the wickedness of the nations will let loose this scourge again, is only known to Him who will allow the vices of man to reap their own harvest of death, as He chooses to permit.

Thy friend,

T. E.

LETTER II.

AT ANCHOR OFF BASSE TERRE, ST. CHRISTOPHER'S ISLAND.

Second Month 26th, 1885.

LATE in the evening, with a company of enthusiastic lovers of plants and flowers, who have converted our dining saloon into a sort of "Botany Bay," adorned the tables with exquisite roses, including the beautiful Marechal Niel, filling the air with the sweetest of odors, and who are busily filling book and press with the other trophies of the day, I resume my account of the "Cruise."

The twenty-fifth dawned upon us with a clear sky, and a fine breeze prevailing all day, the sailing was of the most delightful character, and was greatly enjoyed, for though there was considerable motion of the vessel, it was in regular sweeps, and the passengers were little, if any, disturbed by it, and the moonlight in the evening made it difficult to leave the deck when bed-time came, so great was the pleasure of sailing. Temperature 75° throughout the day. We passed Sombrero Island, a lonely, desolate rock, a mile, more or less, across, utilized only for the soft veins of the rock, which are valuable for the Phosphate of Lime contained in them; since then we have been sailing on the Caribbean Sea.

Some time in the night the ship came to anchor in the harbor of Basse Terre, St. Christopher, and when