THE DANISH WEST INDIES.

The Proposition To Buy Them Is Now Being Considered.

Special Correspondence of THE STAR.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16.—While we are in the island business it might not be a bad idea to favorably consider the opportunity Denmark presents to the United States to acquire possession of the Danish West Indies. Germany has relinquished whatever claim she may have had upon these islands, and it is understood that we can have them for $3,000,000. If we don't take them, Denmark will try to market

BLACKBEARD'S TOWER.

them elsewhere, as she is determined to go out of the island business. The Danish West Indies are small, but might prove quite formidable if owned by an unfriendly power. They are only about 118 square miles in area, but any naval power could make a Gibraltar out of St. Thomas.

We had an opportunity about 30 years ago to purchase the Danish West Indies, but let it pass. Our growth during the last generation and the extension of our interests in recent times would seem to caution us against letting this second chance go by. Small as the islands are, they are worth having commercially. They buy over $300,000 worth of British and Danish goods each year, which we could furnish if we had them within our tariff system. But still more important would be the effect upon our shipping industry, as they would furnish the needed link in the chain of American shipping to the West Indies.

The Danish West Indies consist of St. Thomas, St. Croix or Santa Cruz and St. John. The former is the most noted of the group. Here is the principal port, Charlotte Amalie, which has a population of 10,000, and English is the prevailing language. It has been under Danish rule for 166 years, but its people have little affinity for that country, and during the past 35 years its white inhabitants have often expressed the desire that they might be taken under the starry banner.

The splendid harbor at St. Thomas is considered the best in the West Indies and its position for a coaling station is what has caused the United States to favorably consider its purchase, or so say the Washington diplomats. When the Nicaragua canal is built, St. Thomas will be still more important, as it will furnish a broad landlocked harbor, where may rest the shipping of a dozen nations.

St. Thomas is unusually picturesque and remarkable for its ruggedness. Its mountains rise 1,500 feet above the sea level and are covered to the peaks with varicolored tropical vegetation. The town of Charlotte Amalie is built on the slopes of the mountains and covers the entire shore line of the harbor. It is a substantial place and has many of the modern conveniences found in American and European cities. Its streets are straight and well kept; its drainage is excellent, and there is an ample supply of pure water. There is a big drydock in the harbor and substantial and commodious coal docks and wharfs. The old West Indian method of coaling vessels, however, still prevails, the natives carrying the coal on to the ships in baskets.

The products of St. Thomas, as of the other islands of the group, are sugar, coffee and indigo, which are cultivated [illegible] large plantations. The planters are [illegible]glishmen, Frenchmen, Danes and [illegible]ericans, and the plantations are [illegible]ducted on lines similar to those fol[illegible]ed by our own planters in the south [illegible] the civil war. There is not, how[illegible] slavery on these islands, as all [illegible]es were emancipated 15 years prior [illegible]own emancipation act. The best [illegible] prevails, and there are only 30 [illegible] employed in the town of [illegible]alie and 50 soldiers on the [illegible] Thomas to care for [illegible]

Mr. J[illegible] in town [illegible] home his [illegible]gon w[illegible] for some guests whom he [illegible] to entertain for awhile. [illegible]

[illegible]nnie E. Bullo[illegible] a Sal[illegible] most interest[illegible]rsday afterno[illegible] cured h[illegible]omething over [illegible] spent her va[illegible]arth and was a Spanis[illegible] the open[illegible] Cure gu[illegible]or was the [illegible] Wilson[illegible] of the w[illegible] may m[illegible]

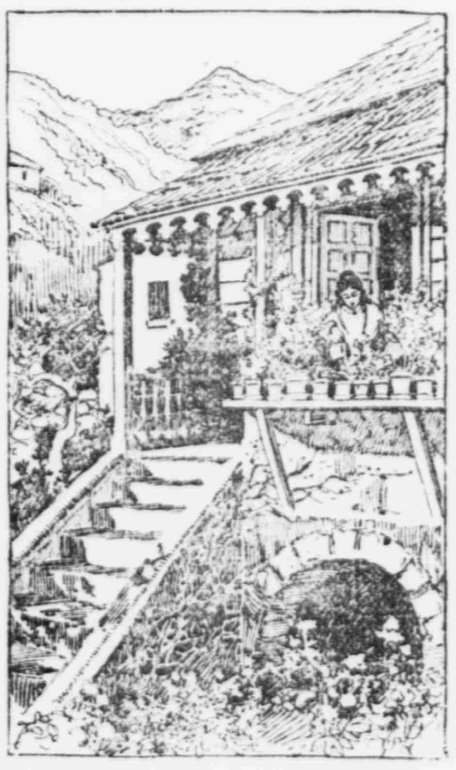
West Indies. Many reminders of that time are still extant. The most striking of these are in the town of Charlotte Amalie. They are the castles of Bluebeard and Blackbeard. Blackbeard's tower is the better preserved and is still in condition to furnish fruitful opportunity for investigation by the curious tourist.

Blackbeard was a grizzled Spanish pirate, whose bold depredations terrorized the Spanish main at that time. Notwithstanding his fierceness, in his heart he had a soft spot for the ladies, and we are told that he was a great flirt. At last he lost his heart to the prettiest senorita on the island, and they were married. In the castle with the tall tower Blackbeard installed his pretty wife and placed in her hands the keys to the castle, including one to a secret cabinet. He told her she must not open the cabinet if she valued her happiness. Of course she disobeyed him, but instead of finding skeletons and other grewsome objects in the cabinet she discovered a bundle of love letters from one of the pretty girls of the town written to Blackbeard and was in consequence made insanely jealous. She was arrested for opening the cabinet and condemned by the indignant people to be burned at the stake. Blackbeard's ship arrived opportunely in the harbor, and when the pirate chieftain saw what was afoot he fought his way to the place of execution and rescued his bride. At least this is the way they tell the story at St. Thomas.

The natives of St. Thomas are indolent and easy going. Everywhere one sees groups of lazy negroes basking in the sunshine or performing their customary tasks without rush or apparent seriousness. The dirty boys and girls and dirtier porters lazily move about, lounging in the roadways or on the sidewalks, and never apparently conscious of the flight of time. There are singing and laughing, and even the ragged seem strangers to sorrow and unhappiness. The struggle for existence is not a harassing question, and the problem of labor and capital is here unknown.

The people are all comparatively well housed, many of the peasants living in picturesque little cottages which nestle in shady nooks on the mountain slopes or overlook the placid waters of the beautiful harbor. There is an atmosphere of peace and contentment over all. Of course the whites, who are in St. Thomas for business reasons, present a striking contrast to the natives, and yet they are not entirely free from the influences breathed from the tropics on every whiff of air.

The natives are very religious, and the churches are well attended, especially on feast days. There are eight churches in Charlotte Amalie, and several denominations are represented. The church structures are unpretentious, there being no high towers or similar exterior embellishments. This



PEASANT'S COTTAGE AT ST. THOMAS.

simplicity is the rule because of the danger from earthquakes and hurricanes. The people dress simply when in attendance upon divine worship, the only attractive features of their costumes upon these occasions being the prevalence of white dresses and the gaudy turbans worn by the women. Some of the young women are decidedly comely and display considerable taste in their gowning and personal decoration.

Next to St. Thomas and about half its size is the island of St. John, ten miles distant. St. Croix or Santa Cruz is the largest of the three islands. It is located about 50 miles south of St. Thomas. It is also concededly the most fertile of the group. But, as has been said, St. Thomas is the most interesting and valuable and furnishes the principal reason for their purchase by the United States.

Representatives of the government and tourists have made such favorable reports and comments that the sentiment in diplomatic circles in this city is favorable to the proposal that the United States acquire possession of the Danish West Indies group, and it is not [illegible] use this [illegible]ee cash, if any, opposition [illegible]ty.—When time for final [illegible] This sentiment is [illegible] unqualified indorse[illegible] [illegible]ansion, pro[illegible]y can buy [illegible]ed in st[illegible] [illegible]pen of its [illegible]

the Danish West Indies are considered as an independent proposition, and while the strategic position of St. Thomas assumes additional importance because of our operations in other quarters the question of their purchase may be decided practically upon its merits. It must be remembered that the idea is not a product of our war with Spain, nor the situation in the Philippines, but has been considered on two occasions before, the latest more than 30 years ago.

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Bred in the Bone.

Gran'pa Macpherson—How many does two and two make, Donald?

Donald—Six.

Gran'pa—What are ye talking about? Two and two make four.

Donald—Yes, I know, but I thought you'd "beat me down" a bit.—Punch.

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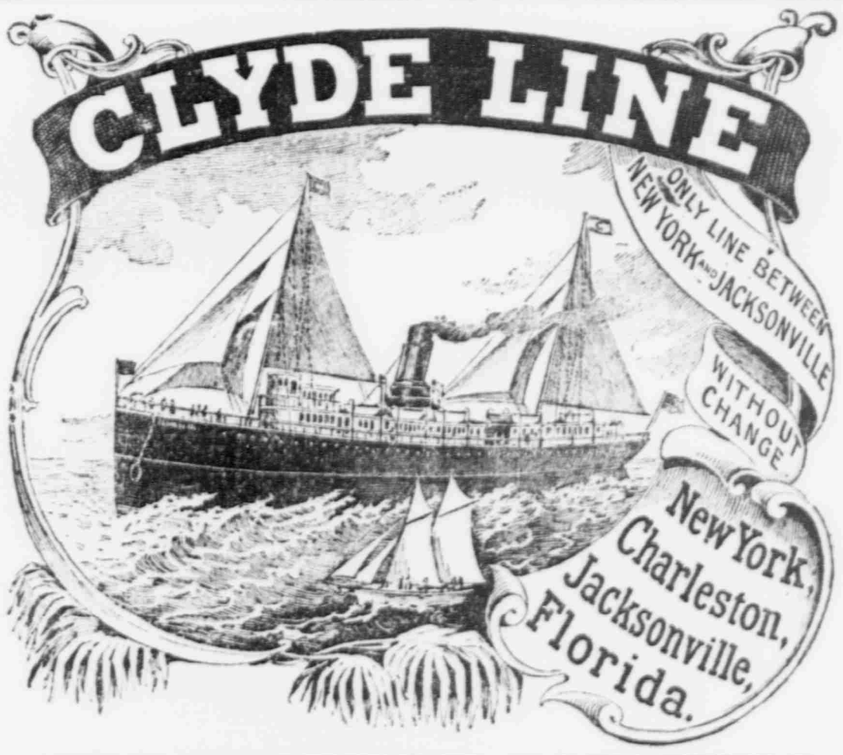

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