

IN THE WEST INDIA ISLANDS.

I HAD heard and read much, from boyhood, about these "Lesser Antilles." I had pictured them to myself a thousand times : but I was altogether unprepared for their beauty and grandeur. For hundreds of miles, day after day, the steamer carried us past a shifting diorama of scenery, which may be likened to Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples, repeated again and again, with every possible variation of the same type of delicate loveliness.

Under a cloudless sky, upon a sea, lively yet not unpleasantly rough, we thrashed and leaped along. Ahead of us, one after another, rose high on the southern horizon banks of gray cloud, from under each of which, as we neared it, descended the shoulder of a mighty mountain, dim and gray. Nearer still the gray changed to purple ; lowlands rose out of the sea, sloping upwards with those grand and simple concave curves which betoken, almost always, volcanic land. Nearer still, the purple changed to green. Tall palm trees and engine-houses stood out against the sky ; the surf gleamed white around the base of isolated rocks. A little nearer, and we were under the lee, or western side, of the island. The sea grew smooth as glass ; we entered the shade of the island-cloud, and slid along in still, unfathomable blue water, close under the shore of what should have been one of the Islands of the Blest.

It was easy, in presence of such scenery, to conceive the