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EVERT A. & GEORGE L. DUYCKINCK, EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION 109 NASSAU STREET.

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## MSS. OF THE PACIFIC. No. III.

TABOGA. 1849 AND '50.

The Island of Taboga is quite remote from the geography of most folks. But a few months ago it was quite out of the world, an unnoticed green spot in the wilderness of the Pacific. An occasional Thunderer, Beagle, or Bull Dog of her Majesty's Navy would show its teeth there, startle the unbreeched natives, and leave a remembrancer in the shape of some runaway dog of a sailor, a seed of Anglo-Saxon civilization, which well moistened with grog was sure to bring forth an abounding crop of drunkenness and riot. Taboga, in those days, was known to the English Admiralty and put down in their reports and charts as an island in the Gulf of Panama with a safe harbor, good water, and an abundance of tropical fruit, pigs, and fowls. Yankee enterprise, while on the California trail, has at last nosed it out, and without saying much about it, can show its fleet of a score or more of steamers and sailing vessels, snugly moored in the blue water of Taboga harbor. There is work there and Yankee work, too. Large storehouses, built of Maine lumber by Yankee carpenters, crammed full of all kinds of marine stores, and sheds widely extended over countless tons of coal. Cincinnati pork in unnumbered barrels, and American provisions and ship chandlery in endless variety. Large sea steamers are leaving there weekly with the regularity and precision of the Collins line and the Cunarders from Canal street and Jersey city. There are Aspinwall's fleet and Law's\* new steamers always on the go, starting and arriving, coaling and provisioning, in thirty days to San Francisco and back; and there are the English Company's boats that following in the wake of the Americans have made Taboga their resting-place, and ply monthly between Taboga and Valparaiso, stopping coastwise at Callao, Payta, and Guayaquil, and other ports on the Spanish Main. There is the taut little

steamer Taboga, no bigger than a fisherman's smack, that to the wonder of all old sailors, spiritedly braved the terrors of Cape Horn, and now runs daily, from under the cocoanut trees of Taboga, to the very gate of the old town of Panama. There is Aspinwall's agent building a bran-new house, of pine board and shingles, right among the wide-spreading mangos on the hill; and down below him towards the golden beach where before there was nothing but beauty, there is now his mournful-looking group of storehouses and bakehouses (with a biscuit machine, an oven, fired with orange tree wood and Welsh coal, and a brace of workmen fresh from Yankeeland) all begrimed with pitch and coal tar, of undeniable utility and ugliness. Yankee agents and Yankee lumber, with a fig for the picturesque, carry the day hollow against palm trees and orange groves. There is the little French restaurateur, Monsieur Jacques, in white apron and velvet capote, suggestive of *eau sucrée* and innocent dominoes, busy over that endless job of putting up and arranging his bijou of a café in that clump of cocoanut trees, that shuts him out from the yellow beach. Mons. Jacques is always in a fume, but in spite of his fuss and *mille tonnerres*, it will be months yet before the Café de Taboga rivals its predecessor in Mons. Jacques' good keeping at Bordeaux. There is a party of expectant diggers fresh from the States, encamped among the trees, awaiting the tardy arrival of some slow Sarah Sands, for which they have bought tickets in New York months before. They have spread their canvas tent, made their Indian rubber beds, they are sharpening their skill in cooking and their appetites, over a pot of boiling yams; they are exercising their rifles upon the torpid pelicans or the rainbow-hued macaws; and altogether what with tropical skies, tropical verdure, tropical plants, and a composing tropical atmosphere, they might be supposed to be leading a tolerably comfortable, easy kind of life; but they would give all they have and all they expect to gather of gold in a week (no small sum), for a mere foothold upon that crowded steamer that is just off for San Francisco, with its throng of hundreds stifling with the crowd, the heat, and lust for gain. Those drunken sailors, runaways, roaming about the beach and quarrelling with the natives, and those scattered equivocal looking people, neither one thing nor the other, made up from a confused medley of features, brought from Broadway, Dry Dock, down East, Kentucky, Wapping, Liverpool, and Hong Kong; gusty looking sea captains, steamer people, neither fish nor fowl; engineers, pursers, stewards, firemen, waiters, and expectant voyagers. These serve to complete a tolerably fair view of the island of Taboga, under the new dispensation.

Taboga has its traditions, in a small way; it is needless to go back to the days of plumed and painted warriors glowing with cocoanut oil, red ochre, and savage glory, or to those times of the cruel conquest of old Spain, when she sent on the trackless path of discovery her bold bands, the dare-devil youth of Barcelona and Madrid, armed to the teeth, eager for gold and adventure. These were the ancient diggers, with sword in hand.

Conquest had settled down into quiet possession. Plumed and painted warriors were bearing the cross of the new religion, and had been saddened into patient brawlers of wood and bearers of water. There were wealth and ease in Panama, cathedrals rich with golden and silver plate, monasteries abounding with treasure, sleek monks meek of aspect, with over much of this world's wealth, when Morgan, the buccaneer, with a bold pirate's crew, was coming up the river, having taken by the way the high mounted castle at Chagres. He threatened to pounce upon monk and monastery, and to bear off the rich stores of silver and of gold. Taboga was near at hand, and there monk and friar hurried, laden with their much-loved wealth. The buccaneer having laid Panama waste with fire and sword, was at their heels; and the frightened priests were fain, in order to save their lives, to disgorge their riches—precious heaps of tall candlesticks of purest silver, crosses and crucifixes, goblets and censers of virgin gold, very fair to look upon, and sore to part with. The old gossips of Taboga yet point with mysterious knowingness to buried spots of treasure. Some veteran cannon, reposing on the sunny-side of a promontory of the island, yet attests an attempt at resistance, never carried out.

The Pacific Ocean rolls in a slow, heavy swell up the Gulf of Panama, for some ninety miles, until checked by the rocky strand that stretches out seaward for half a league from Panama, a warning to sailors, and a safeguard to the town; it is worked by the resisting rock into a fury of savage breakers that go tumbling, and roaring, and dashing against the high-walled fortifications of the town, and are thrown back in cataracts of spray. The ocean monarch meets and woos his island beauties in a gentler mood, and here the course of true love does run smooth. He goes in and out among the fair groups, the verdant archipelagoes of the gulf, smiling upon them in smooth waters, gently whispering his love in a subdued murmur, and slyly kissing them with his moistened lips, in retired inlets and deeply-shaded bays. Taboga is one of a group of those islands which rise like pyramids of verdure right out of the Gulf of Panama, green with tropical growth from base to summit, from the blue sea below to the blue skies above.

On a clear noonday, looking from the high-walled fortifications of Panama, southward down a broad avenue of the gulf, formed by green islands on either side, the river closes upon Taboga some three leagues away; its pyramidal summits look purple in the distance, and their outlines marked on the blue sky, show through the clear air as sharply traced as a drawing. The smart little steamer Taboga will whisk you away there within the hour; a ship's cutter with four stout tarpaulin Jacks will pull you there in double that time; a bongo, with a fair wind and the ebb tide in its favor, may roll there in half a day; and a canoe with a quartette of paddlers, in nature's sable suit, with much screeching, hard padding, great expense of oil and sweat, and unlimited pulls at the aguardiente, will reach there some-while in the course of time. When there, time, toil, and trouble are forgotten; the

\* Aspinwall's and Law's lines have been combined under the general management of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, and form a line of 13 steamers, of the aggregate tonnage of 12,636 tons. One of these steamers leaves Taboga each fortnight for San Francisco.

senses are first gently awakened, and then lulled by the pleasant influences of the island. All the tropical delights are there in teeming, overflowing abundance. The blue sky overhead, the clear blue water sobbing audibly upon the bosom of the golden beach, the rich growth of wide-spreading trees giving shade, the tropical fruit giving abundance, and sweet odors, and the moist, warm air soothing the body and nerves like a Turkish vapor bath, all wrap you in a pleasing languor of body and soul. We are disposed to lie still upon its bosom, but let us look and stroll about.

The island of Taboga is about a mile and a half in length, and a half a mile in breadth, about large enough for a good farm or gentleman's country seat. Its length extends north and south, crescently inclosing a deep and secure harbor, sheltered from storm and wind by the promontories of the island, and the islet of Tabogilla, which lies a floating grove of green, facing the harbor. Taboga rises from the yellow beach, which frames it like a rim of gold, in several peaks, all overgrown with dark green wood and foliage, except here and there upon the slopes a field of maize or yams. Strange enough, to the distant eye, these spots of culture appear the only spots of barrenness amid the wealth of tropical nature. The ravine which divides the two loftiest of the island hills, is filled to overflowing with tropical growth, which seems to rush down in a torrent of foliage, which threatens to overwhelm with its green waves the bamboo village lying in its course at the base of the hills. The village, however, like some resisting rock, checks and divides the torrent, and it is borne on to the right and left in its flow of verdure, scattering here and there a green spray among the huts of bamboo. Down the valley, shut out from the sun by the shade of trees and entangled vines, with orange trees dropping blossoms in the water, a mountain stream flows cool and fragrant, finding its way past the very doors of the bamboo huts over the rocks, through the golden sand, into the blue sea.

*(To be continued.)*

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## ORIGINAL PAPERS.

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## MSS. OF THE PACIFIC.—No. IV.

TABOGA. 1849 AND '50.

THERE are, besides the main stream, two other smaller streams following a like course down neighboring valleys, and they all go on flowing night and day, cool and murmuring. These are perpetual fountains, shut out from the sun and hot day by an evergreen shade of tropical growth, ever ready to cool the parching heat and panting thirst of the endless summer of this torrid region. But the greater stream, which flows through the centre of the village, about which the natives have thronged like so many thirsty hounds after a hot pursuit, is the supreme fountain. This is the chief attraction of the island to foreign visitors. Saratoga and Cheltenham never drew to them a more gallant company than this trickling mountain stream of this far-off, unknown, little island of Taboga. Here, in these latter days of travel, fine old men of war, formal aristocrats, ponderous merchantmen, men of substance, hard-working and thriving mechanic steamers, master-workmen, fast-sailing clippers, fast-men and rakes, trim little cutters, pert dandies, come to take the waters. Here at the Taboga Spa they refresh, and drink in a new energy for a further voyage of life. They are not content with overflowing bumpers here, but like knowing men of the world they take in a goodly store for the future. Here about the stream may be always seen a jolly company of thirsty, big-bellied casks, tended by moist serving-men, drenched sailors; these big-bellied casks, old toppers as they are, are not to be contented with a single pull, but go on, drink after drink, to their full, and are at last sent off reeling down the beach, and go bobbing and rolling unsteadily in the water, till they are towed alongside, hoisted in by main force, and finally stowed away in the hold of the ship, and tucked in with cleets and old spurs. This will prove to be a stock of old Adam's best—the veritable Paradise brand—to be tapped, mayhap, on a stormy night off Cape Horn "when the winds do blow," or some thirsty day of a hot, stifling calm in the tropic;

or in a hot pursuit after whale, off the far away northwest coast; or homeward bound, within the sight of native earth and sky, to fill a bumper to those we love.

The natives of Taboga are like amphibious ducks, they are perpetually in and out of the water, they drink deeply of it, they bathe in it unceasingly, they absorb it at every pore, they are completely saturated with it. Most of the natives have in consequence a soft, limpid look, like a foreboding dropsy, and their children have great distended pot-bellies, and look, lying about naked, like pig-skins filled with Spanish wine, ripening in the sun.

Following the course of this main stream up the valley through the deep shade of a tropical forest, along a path worn by constant footsteps, and bordered by bright-hued flowers, scarlet and orange colored, glistening out of full-leaved thickets of the deepest green, you come upon the Taboga bath. The bed of the stream is here widened into a natural basin of rock, bordered with flowering shrubs, and overshadowed with broad-leaved trees and a verdant network of vines and parasitic plants. A fall of water comes tumbling over some rocks hanging above, and striking with a gentle sound and a sparkling spray, fills the basin below, and the stream flows on its way. The travelled Sybarite may gloat over the luxurious remembrance of the completest of the *bains complets* at the Bains Chinois of the Parisian boulevard, of the magnetic and soothing influence of a Turkish bath, and yet he is but an anchorite in his imaginings, if he cannot compass the delights of the Taboga bath. From a hot, steaming atmosphere, which dissolves the energy of the body, palsies the nerves, takes away all strength from the muscles, and loosens the joints, you go into the bath, and are at once "braced to man," muscles, nerves, body, and will are all strengthened with a force before unknown, and fitted for yeoman's service. The change of temperature from the hot air to the cool water does not strike you with a chill and a shock, but you feel at once, with a sense of refreshing enjoyment, that you are in a medium most agreeable to the senses, and conformable to the comfort of the body. You can sport like a dolphin in this glorious bath, plunge into its depth, float upon its surface, or, with the rock for a pedestal, receive like a water god the refreshing shower from the fountain above. This is the true Hydro-pathic establishment. Come hither, if you can, ye Bulwers, to cool your hot, seething, delirious brains! From your bath you can see the native laborers passing to and from their work up the valley, where their rudely cultivated field-patches lie in the sun aslant the hills. Men, women, and children go trooping by, a crowd, of Egyptian hue, in scant tropical costume—there they go—some carrying, poised on their swarthy shoulders, great palm-leaf baskets full of fruit, oranges, plantains, pine-apples, mangoes, yams, and maize; and others, women chiefly, bearing water-jars, monstrous in size, of a red earthen hue, and oriental shape and look. You can hear, too, the noisy glee of the women of Taboga washing in the stream, and catch a glance through the green trees of some coy maiden, a nut-brown Naiad, pouring from her calabash a cool and grateful

shower, which goes unreservedly all over her beautiful person, that shrinks gracefully from the embrace. Strengthened with a bath, you are prepared for a walk; stopping in the village, which is on the way, for a draught of cocoanut milk or a calabash bumper of chicha,\* poured out by the fairy hands of Dolores herself. Emerging from the village, where you have been dodging about the huts which are scattered irregularly about, and been stumbling over the rough rocky ground on which they stand, you enter upon the path which leads to the Tamarind Grove.

Tall cocoanut trees, nodding their green plumes high in the air, stretch in long array, fronting the sea, and guard, like so many feathered grenadiers, one side of the path which leads to the Tamarind Grove; while on the other side, up the hill, there crowds a vast mass of foliage. The redwood of great might and size, the spreading mango with its russet fruit, the orange tree with its glistening green leaf, its white perfumed blossom, and its golden fruit; the feathery-leaved plantain, with its heaped-up abundance; graceful vines weaved in everywhere, flowering shrubs, a thick undergrowth, the modest mimosa, the sensitive plant shrinking on the earth below, all intermingle in a confused abundance of green growth, luscious fruit, and brilliant color. The sun may be pouring down a hot blaze of light upon the blue leaden surface of the still bay and its yellow beach as hard and smooth as a pavement of Sienna marble, but its hot rays are cooled by the deep shade in which you walk, and come in trembling on the path in a subdued and glimmering green light. The pathway soon opens into a freer space, where the tamarind trees extend over a level spot of earth that forms the southern end of the island. Inviting walks stretch winding in every direction through the trees, shaded above by the close intermingling of the green foliage, and lead as it may be to some palm-thatched hut nestling in the grove, or up the green hill into the tangled growth, or to the quiet bay, or down to the roaring sea shore.

Happy, and careless as to time, we will linger and make a day of it in these ways of pleasantness and of peace. We stroll about with no object but enjoyment that comes unbidden: it comes in the warmth and softness of the atmosphere; it comes in the perfume of the air breathing the aroma of flowers and of mellow fruit; it comes in the bounty of nature that gives its rich stores with an open hand, making labor vain, and in taking away all doubt of the morrow, smoothes the wrinkles of care; it comes in the delight of the eye that looks everywhere upon the graceful forms of tree, plant, vine, and every growing thing, and upon the varied colors of leaf, flower, and fruit; and it comes in that sense of luxury that is felt by the glad guest of such a tropical feast spread by plenty and graced by beauty.

But we are human; we cannot, like the chameleon, thrive on air; or, like the butterfly, fatten on perfume. We will therefore go in search of more substantial food, and take our way through the Tamarind Grove, down that

\* Chicha, a drink made of the fermented juice of the pineapple. It is sweet and slightly stimulating, like a mild beer.

by-path that closes upon a native hut hid among the trees. In the distance it looks not unlike some huge bird's nest half covered with the leaves, and the languid native girl swaying in the hammock, and startled at our approach, suggests to the fancy the fluttering of feathers. It is in fact a native cane hut, and the hammock is swinging gently to the languid movement of a Taboga beauty. We enter, bending under the low open doorway, pushing aside the leaves, and doffing our Guayaquil sombrero and uttering our *buenas dias, Señorita*, with the most courtly air at our command. After a modest flutter and a graceful movement of light drapery that drops like a curtain over the full form and rounded limb that had been wooing the warm air in unsuspected secret dalliance, we are courteously made welcome. To our question, *hay algunas cosas para comer?* we are answered a satisfactory *si señor*, and pointed to a corner where there is heaped up against the bamboo walls an abundance of plantains, bananas, mangoes, melons, *mame* apples, pines, and yellow oranges, fragrant with their mellow odors, and gushing with ripeness. As we look, feasting our eyes on the luscious heap, we see a monster of the alligator kind, a large, black, soft, fleshy thing, that seems to crawl torpidly about the heap; it has a long head like a serpent; its black skin hangs in loose folds about its throat, looking like the shrivelled neck of an African hag; its body is thick and flaccid; the back is roughened with a bony ridge, and the belly, glistening with a slimy white, falls in folds about its spreading claws, and its viper tail coils in and out among the fruit. This we are told is an *iguano*, and an innocent and much prized item of the larder, and is urged upon us as a delicacy that an Apicius might smack his lips over. We shudder at a *nuchas gracias*, implying a very decided no, to the offer of cooking this monster for our dinner. Our host is a notable house-keeper, and while she is busy making ready our cheer, we have dropped into her grass hammock, into the very mould of her graceful form. As we swing in the hammock, we sweep the area of the whole hut, and examine the birdcage-like structure: its sides are made of canes placed upright and joined together at the top and bottom with cross-pieces, fastened by cords made of a native grass; the roof rises in a palm-leaf thatch that ascends in a central ridge and falls with a steep descent, bringing the eaves in a leafy fringe low down over the sides. The doors and windows, rudely cut out of the cane walls, open into the green grove. A great red earthen jar dripping with moisture, filled with delicious water, always kept cool by the evaporation through the porous clay of which it is made, standing in one corner with a goodly show of white calabashes arranged about, two or three hides stretched on the bare ground, some palm leaf baskets lying near, and the swinging hammock fastened to the ridge pole, moving in its breezy sweep, are all the simple contents of the palm-thatched hut. The goodly housewife, as we look about us, is in the meantime busying herself with the preparation of our feast, and although she labors with a notable zeal, all she does is done with grace of movement and a soft languid ease, that lighten all her labor. The plantains have been thrust into the orange-wood fire just outside the door in sight of the swinging hammock, and the dame as she sits beneath the shade of a spreading tamarind, is busy dropping into a calabash of rice into which has been poured the milky juice, a shower of snow-white meat which she grates with a shell from the ripe

cocoanut. The mealy plantain has burst its leathery jacket, and the rice mingled with the meat and milk of the cocoanut is done to a turn, and we feast; and our Taboga Hebe pours out for us a calabash bumper of *chicha*, in which her health and an eternity to her beauty are of course feelingly pledged. For dessert we have no choice to make; we take what is offered from the stores of fruit, and are glutted with the sweets of the orange, the melon, and the luscious pine. To crown all, all hail our good friend, the wide world's friend, Tobacco! We ask for a cigar, and our maiden plies her ready hand. She has a store of the finest leaf Taboga grown, and culling the choicest from the heaped-up palm leaf basket, sits at our feet rolling it into form. She spreads the broad moist leaves here, and there she heaps the drier fragments, and with her nimble fingers moulding the latter into shape, wraps them into the former with a cunning twirl; then she seals the envelopes with the exuding juice of the plantain, and lo, cigar after cigar rolls out before us in tempting abundance. She is proud of her skill, and throws back her unbound hair that had fallen like a thick black veil over her face as she bent to her work, and turns her dark eyes towards us in the hammock, and there is a smile of vanity in them, as she stretches out her hand grasped full of cigars, her cunning handiwork. We smoke and puff away the day in a lazy dream. We do not envy a Cuban Don.

CRITIQUE ON "THE NEW ELEMENTS OF GEOMETRY BY SEBA SMITH."

BY PROF. E. LOOMIS, N. Y. UNIVERSITY.

THE following article was prepared at the suggestion of the President of the New York Academy of Education, and was presented in the form of a lecture, before the Academy, at their meeting on the 14th ult., in the University Chapel. In compliance with a request of the Academy, it is now given to the public.

Philosophers have sometimes flattered themselves that there were some principles of science so firmly established that there was no danger of their being overthrown by the progress of discovery. The elementary principles of Geometry and the Newtonian law of gravitation may be quoted as examples of this kind. But in this age of free inquiry, no principle appears to be secure against the cavils of scientific smatterers. In a neighboring city there is published a periodical, the leading object of which is to prove that the Newtonian law of gravitation is inadequate to account for the motion of the planets in their orbits about the sun; and the object of the "New Elements of Geometry, by Seba Smith," is to prove that Euclid and Archimedes, Newton and Laplace, with the entire mathematical world, have been groping their way in a fog, entirely ignorant of the fundamental principles of their science.

In offering some remarks upon the "New Elements," I propose to state—

I. Some of the fundamental principles of Geometry, as they have been received by all mathematicians from Euclid to the present time; and

II. I will notice some particulars in which Mr. Smith differs from the mathematicians.

1. I will state some of the fundamental principles of Geometry.

The object of geometry is the measure of extension or space. Extension in its largest sense has three dimensions—length, breadth, and thickness. Pure geometry does not treat of the properties of *material* bodies, such as wood and stone, but it treats of the properties

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