

THE  
WEST INDIES  
AND THE  
SPANISH MAIN.

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AUTHOR OF "BARCHESTER TOWERS," &c.

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CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

I AM beginning to write this book on board the brig —, trading between Kingston, in Jamaica, and Cien Fuegos, on the southern coast of Cuba. At the present moment there is not a puff of wind, neither land breeze nor sea breeze; the sails are flapping idly against the masts; there is not motion enough to give us the command of the rudder; the tropical sun is shining through upon my head into the miserable hole which they have deluded me into thinking was a cabin. The marine people — the captain and his satellites — are bound to provide me; and all that they have provided is yams, salt pork, biscuit, and bad coffee. I should be starved but for the small ham — would that it had been a large one — which I thoughtfully purchased in Kingston; and had not a kind medical friend, as he grasped me by the hand at Port Royal, stuffed a box of sardines into my pocket. He suggested two boxes. Would that I had taken them!

It is now the 25th January, 1859, and if I do not reach Cien Fuegos by the 28th, all this misery will have been in vain. I might as well in such case have gone to St. Thomas, and spared myself these experiences of the merchant navy. Let it be understood by all men that in these latitudes the respectable, comfortable, well-to-do route from every place to every other place is *viâ* the little Danish island of St. Thomas.