

was formerly used for holding sand to sift over writing instead of blotting-paper. It was boiled in oil when gathered, and this prevented its flying asunder. The fruit I gathered went off with considerable violence when I touched it one day on board ship after it was dry, but it did not make much noise.

Another Euphorbiaceous tree, the Manchineel, grows in St. Thomas, and its juice is almost as poisonous as that of the "Sand-box" tree. The fable ran that if a man allowed rain to drop off its leaves on to his skin, his skin would be burned and inflamed by it.

I landed one day on one of the small outliers of St. Thomas, Little Saba Island, about a mile and a half distant from the main island. A puffin (*Puffinus sp.*) was nesting in holes amongst the grass, laying a single large white egg. The birds allowed themselves to be caught in the nest with the hand. Our spaniels kept bringing them to us, retrieving them with great delight. The island was covered with thorny cactuses. It was impossible to avoid their prickles, and I got covered with them when in pursuit of wild goats and pigeons. There were four kinds of cactuses, a prickly-pear (*Opuntia*) with spines three-quarters of an inch long; a quadrangular stemmed cactus, like the most familiar one in green-houses; a cactus with rounded ribbed stem, growing in candelabra-like form (*Cereus*), and a large dome-shaped cactus, a foot and a half high and bearing a crown of small red flowers (*Melocactus*).

The spines must be a most efficient protection to the cactus from being devoured by large animals. I have often noticed that if one approaches one's hand slowly towards some of the forms with closely-set long spines, doing it with especial care to try and touch the end of one of the spines lightly without getting pricked, one's hand always does receive a sharp prick before such is expected, the distance having been miscalculated. There seems to be a special arrangement in the colour of the spines in some cases, possibly intended directly to bring about an illusion, and cause animals likely to injure the plant to get pricked severely before they expect it, and thus to learn to shun the plant. Whilst the greater length of the spines next the surface of the plant is white, the tips are dark-coloured or black. The black tips are almost invisible as viewed at a good many angles against the general mass as a background. The spines look as if they ended where the white colouring ends, and the hand is advanced as if the prickles began there, and is pricked suddenly by some unseen black tip. The experiment is easily tried in any cactus house at home.

In the beach of Little Saba Island there was being formed a reddish sandstone conglomerate rock composed of the *débris*