

# THE WORKS OF FRANCIS J. GRIMKÉ

*Edited by*

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**Letters**

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cal buildings. The things that impressed me most, 80 per cent of the people are colored, ranging from the bright mulatto to the pure Simon Pure Negro, and they are in every walk of life. There is absolutely no color line in the city, and more there is no color line in any one of the South American towns or cities we have visited thus far.

A black man has the same chance to make his way here in the Republic of Colombia as a white man.

Another thing that surprises us is the great number of nude children on the streets not because they haven't clothes but because of the great heat.

Last Monday Blanche and I went on an excursion with a number of the passengers to a city of about 50,000 inhabitants. On one of the best streets stood a bevy of some half dozen of nicely dressed girls of teen age. They stood curiously at seeing the Americans. One of them held by the hand her little eight year old brother, all of them looked as innocent and as prettily behaved as the girls in any of our best regulated families, utterly oblivious of the nudity of the little brother.

Yesterday we went on our excursion to one of the United Fruit's great reservations. Some twenty miles from Santa Marta, our third stop in the Republic Colombia.

There are 5641 acres of bananas in this reservation. A white fellow from Brooklyn and I with a guide rode on mules for more than an hour.

*Matthew Anderson to Francis J. Grimké and Relatives*

United Fruit Company, Steamship Service, Sept. 16th, 1921.

Dear Friends, Frank, Archie and Nana Grimké:

Lest I may forget I will try and sketch something of our experiences since I last wrote. We are now homeward bound. Our next stop will be Kingston, Jamaica, tomorrow morning.

It is one month today since we left New York for this cruise, and, with the exception of two weeks at the Canal Zone, we have been at sea, stopping a day here, a day and a half there, and two days at another place, and what an experience! We can never forget it, and we thank the Father over and over again for enabling us to take it. Our only regret is that you were not along to enjoy the cruise with us.

Yes, I say our experience has been most interesting and wonderful, especially our travels in South America. Our first stop in South America was at Cartagena, a large sea coast city of the Republic of Colombia of some seventy-five thousand inhabitants, and said to be the only walled town in South America. The walls of the old city are 16 feet thick, enclosing some of the oldest and most historical buildings in the two Americas. The old Catholic Cathedral is over four hundred years old. It is a massive structure and everything about it looks hoary with age. The great doors are fully thirty feet high and six inches thick; instead of their swinging on hinges they rest in sockets exactly like the great gates in the Temple of David.

Four things have surprised me in all the places visited in South America, and we have visited four. First, 99 per cent of all the people are Spanish, or at least speak Spanish. Second, five-sixths of the people are colored, from the bright mulatto to the pure Simon Pure Negro. Third, the general style of architecture is Moorish. You would be struck with their beautiful appearance, large beautiful, aristocratic, comfortable. Fourth, the great number of naked children playing on the streets with no more thought of their nakedness than if they were jack rabbits, nor do they attract any attention except from strangers, and the youngsters look at them as if they thought them fools.

Last Monday we stopped to take on cargoes at Puerto Colombia. As our ship would not sail before Tuesday we concluded to take a trip by rail to Baranquilla, an inland city some twenty miles from Puerto Colombia, a city of some fifty thousand. In some respects a beautiful city, especially so are its public buildings and the private dwellings of the rich. When in one of their finest and most aristocratic, a bevy of some half dozen girls of teen age stood gazing at us, smiling and passing remarks among themselves of our queer looks just as a like number of youngsters would do in Philadelphia should they see two strange looking beings from some dumping off quarter appear suddenly among them. Now these young ladies were well dressed, modest in appearance. In their every look and act they were most refined, and we naturally concluded that they belonged to their best families.

But what I want to speak of is one of them had her little brother of ten swinging by the hand. He was as naked as a young bird. These girls were all of teen age from sixteen to nineteen, looked

like high school girls, and yet they were as oblivious to the nakedness of the youngster as they would have been had he been a China doll.

I might mention other points of interest—and will number in the same order—Fifth, there is absolutely no color line in these parts except in the Canal Zone which the Americans control. A colored man stands absolutely on the same footing with his white neighbor. They give him no less rights, and he asks for no more. Sixth, there seems to be a community of interest between the colored and white people in South America—Let me illustrate. At Cartagena I had a couple of youngsters take us a drive over the city, or at least a business gentlemen did the directing who could speak both Spanish and English. We were driven it seemed to me through every street in the city. The thing that surprised me the most was that in the new and residential part of the City we would be shown a most stylish Moorish residence, a veritable palace, and then right across the street from it would be two or three thatched cabins with dirt floors filled with the children of the very poor, who had as their playmates the children of the wealthy family. Sometimes we would see two or three palatial dwellings and immediately opposite two of the thatched cabins of the poor. Seventh, the language throughout South America is Spanish, I have been placed in a very awkward position because mainly I could not make myself understood. Eighth, the people in the republics of Panama and Colombia are all well behaved, quiet and mannerly. You never hear one speaking loud or boisterous.

Both Blanche and I are amazed at this. I have been driven all over some four or five towns and cities. I have seen at least one hundred and fifty men taking off and putting on cargoes on our boat. For instance, at Santa Marta yesterday and last night there were loaded on our boat 45 car loads of bananas, seven thousand sacks of coffee, ten tons of rubber, small cargoes of other merchandise and during all the time these men labored you could not hear a loud word.

I hope to reach Phila Sep. 22nd.

As ever,  
Matthew & Blanche Anderson

Another Installment.

Since writing the above we reached Jamaica, stopping four hours at Kingston, its capital. It was my purpose to make some

souvenir purchases there but all stores were closed for the week. The Jamaicans, like all the peoples in these parts have a penchant for rest hours. At 12 o'clock every day all places of business are closed until 2 o'clock, at 4 o'clock they are closed for the day. No work, not even the work of necessity and mercy are done upon the Sabbath. Every person in Jamaica attends church. So they do in the City of Panama, and the Catholics especially seem most devout, as was evident by an old lady in one of the great Cathedrals I was visiting the last time I was in that city. She was kneeling before an image of the Savior, praying most earnestly with her Bible in one hand, and a great bunch of lottery tickets in the other.

I don't remember whether I told you that one of the greatest curses in the Republics of Panama and Colombia is the playing of lottery. The people are saturated with it, every person plays lottery, lay and clerical, even little children. All along the main streets of their principal towns and cities old women, and young women will be seen with bundles of lottery tickets offering them to passers-by. One colored man the other day in the City of Panama purchased a ticket for 50cts. He afterwards sold it to a white man for the same, and the next Sabbath when the prizes were announced, that particular ticket drew a thousand dollars. The colored brother then wanted his ticket back, but he was kicked out. Sabbath is the day set apart for the announcing of lottery prizes, cock and bull fights in all South American countries.

But I am digressing. I started out to write about Jamaica. Yes we reached Kingston, Jamaica, yesterday afternoon about 5 o'clock and left at 9 o'clock. A number of Jamaicans came aboard. One a police judge, a mulatto, a big burly fellow of 250 lbs. I think he was quite chagrined when he found they had sent him down to the Negro table this morning to breakfast. He didn't eat much.

We are just passing Haiti. We can see only a dim outline. We expect to reach New York Thursday evening. I will mail this letter in New York on our arrival.

Matthew Anderson.

Sabbath Morning, Sep. 17th.

We have passed the Mole that cost Douglass' resignation.  
Another Page.

For over two hours we have been sailing along the island of

Cuba not more than 2½ miles from its shores. I am sure if I had a good field glass I could see the people.

O if Moses were still living what strength he would give to our cause. But he is dead, and we must fight it out alone.

At Kingston a number of Jamaicans came aboard, some were Americans who had stopped there off our steamer going down. Of the Jamaicans some are distinctly colored, others you can't tell from white. One colored woman is chaperoning a number of children, of all colors; the father looks to be white. The dining room steward is in a quandery—The father and the white father and his white children are at the white table, the mother and dark one are at the Negro table. He fears me so he changed my seat and had me sit at the head of the Negro table. I mean to see the heads in New York and give them to understand that unless they stop segregating the colored in the dining rooms of their boats I will put the law on the Company.

I spend my time at table in describing to Blanche in soto (?) tones the great inventions of powerful implements of war which are to be used in the near future against the Anglo Saxons.

But everything is couched in such blind language that no one knows, not even those at the table the nature of the conversation.

But it is coming nevertheless.

Anderson.

*Matthew Anderson to Francis J. Grimké*

On the Ocean, Sept. 22nd, 1921.

Got Even,

A number of Negroes and mulattoes got on at Kingston Jamaica, among them was a magistrate (a judge?) This Negro has been stepping very high ever since he has been on board. When he found that he was assigned to the "nigger" table he frothed at the mouth; and when I spoke to him, giving politely the time of day, he returned it with a grunt. Finally a white man from Jamaica, an acquaintance of his, invited him to his table which he has occupied ever since; neither he nor his white friend has deigned to speak nor to sit on the side of the boat if any number of blackies were there. I said to Blanche, "That nigger we must broil, then chop him up for dog feed—we have one dog aboard." This morning he and his white pal would like to meet me, but I have avoided them. Indeed