

## White Nassau

There is fog upon the river, there is mirk upon the town;  
You can hear the groping ferries as they hoot each other down;  
From the Battery to Harlem there's seven miles of slush,  
Through looming granite canyons of glitter, noise, and rush.  
Are you sick of phones and tickers and crazing cable gongs,  
Of the theatres, the hansoms, and the breathless Broadway throngs,  
Of Flouret's and the Waldorf and the chilly, drizzly Park,  
When there's hardly any morning and five o'clock is dark?  
I know where there's a city, whose streets are white and clean,  
And sea-blue morning loiters by walls where roses lean,  
And quiet dwells; that's Nassau, beside her creaming key,  
The queen of the Lucayas in the blue Bahaman sea.

She's ringed with surf and coral, she's crowned with sun and palm;  
She has the old-world leisure, the regal tropic calm;  
The trade winds fan her forehead; in everlasting June  
She reigns from deep verandas above her blue lagoon.

She has had many suitors,--Spaniard and Buccaneer,--  
Who roistered for her beauty and spilt their blood for her;  
But none has dared molest her, since the Loyalist Deveaux  
Went down from Carolina a hundred years ago.

Unmodern, undistracted, by grassy ramp and fort,  
In decency and order she holds her modest court;  
She seems to have forgotten rapine and greed and strife,  
In that unaging gladness and dignity of life.

Through streets as smooth as asphalt and white as bleaching shell,  
Where the slip-shod heel is happy and the naked foot goes well,  
In their gaudy cotton kerchiefs, with swaying hips and free,  
Go her black folk in the morning to the market of the sea.

Into her bright sea-gardens the flushing tide-gates lead,  
Where fins of chrome and scarlet loll in the lifting weed;  
With the long sea-draft behind them, through luring coral groves  
The shiny water-people go by in painted droves.

Under her old pink gateways, where Time a moment turns,  
Where hang the orange lanterns and the red hibiscus burns,  
Live the harmless merry lizards, quicksilver in the sun,  
Or still as any image with their shadow on a stone.

Through the lemon-trees at leisure a tiny olive bird  
Moves all day long and utters his wise assuring word;  
While up in their blue chantry murmur the solemn palms.  
At their litanies of joyance, their ancient ceaseless psalms.

There in the endless sunlight, within the surf's low sound,  
Peace tarries for a lifetime at doorways unrenowned;  
And a velvet air goes breathing across the sea-girt land,  
Till the sense begins to waken and the soul to understand.

There's a pier in the East River, where a black Ward Liner lies,  
With her wheezy donkey-engines taking cargo and supplies;  
She will clear the Hook to-morrow for the Indies of the West,  
For the lovely white girl city in the Islands of the Blest.

She'll front the riding winter on the gray Atlantic seas,  
And thunder through the surf-heads till her funnels crust and freeze;  
She'll grapple the Southeaster, the Thing without a Mind,  
Till she drops him, mad and monstrous, with the light ship far behind.

Then out into a morning all summer warmth and blue!  
By the breathing of her pistons, by the purring of the screw,  
By the springy dip and tremor as she rises, you can tell  
Her heart is light and easy as she meets the lazy swell.

With the flying fish before her, and the white wake running aft,  
Her smoke-wreath hanging idle, without breeze enough for draft,  
She will travel fair and steady, and in the afternoon  
Run down the floating palm-tops where lift the Isles of June.

With the low boom of breakers for her only signal gun,  
She will anchor off the harbor when her thousand miles are done,  
And there's my love, white Nassau, girt with her foaming key,  
The queen of the Lucayas in the blue Bahaman sea!

### About the Author

Bliss Carman (1861 - 1929) Born April 15, 1861 in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Son of William Carman and Sophia Mary Bliss (Sophia Mary Bliss was a descendent of Daniel Bliss of Concord, Massachusetts, the great-grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson; and was the aunt of...

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