

# Obeah







# OBEAH;

*WITCHCRAFT IN THE WEST INDIES*

BY

Henry HESKETH J. BELL

Folk-lore



LONDON

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE following sketches of West Indian negro life and character were written and strung together during a sojourn of some years in the colonies, and treat principally of Grenada, which may be taken as a fairly representative type of a West Indian colony.

For the benefit of those (and their name is legion) to whom the name West Indies only vaguely recalls mixed ideas on yellow fever, rum, slaves and buccaneers, I will remind them that Grenada is an English colony, forming one of the Windward group, that it is a small place about the size of the Isle of Wight, and that it contains some fifty thousand inhabitants in all shades, who collectively think no small amount of themselves.

Should this little volume succeed in altering some of the erroneous ideas so prevalent "at home" about the climate and state of the West Indies, and induce a desire in lovers of travel and of beautiful scenery to visit these charming colonies, and so contribute to their prosperity, the author will be very pleased.



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# O B E A H.



## CHAPTER I.

Dressing a garden—Potent spells—Guardian serpents—Superstition and credulity of West Indian negroes—Obeah—Serpent worship—Obeah men—Poison—Defective laws relating to registration of deaths in Grenada.

“It’s really too bad,” quoth my planter friend, as we sat dawdling over the remains of a copious West Indian breakfast. “Last year, we planted over two thousand plantains, and yet, now, have to buy three or four bunches every week for the kitchen! Not a bunch will the wretched niggers allow me to cut, for long before they are even half ripe, they disappear from the field, as by magic—I’ve tried everything, from constantly changing the watchmen, to setting spring guns; but still the thieving goes on. I’m going to have ‘the garden dressed,’ as a last resort!”

“The garden dressed,” said I; “what on earth do you mean?”

“Well, perhaps you are going to laugh at the

remedy," returned my friend; "but I'll tell you that dressing a garden means setting Obeah for the thieves, and you will see what that means in a few minutes, as I see the Obeah man has arrived and is out there waiting for us."

Going out into the verandah, we found a wizened-up old African, attended by a small black boy carrying a large covered basket.

"Well, Mokombo," began the planter, "are you quite ready to work Obeah properly for me, this morning?"

"Oh, yes, Massa, me hear all de people tell how dey tiefing all your plantain, but me go set strong strong Obeah for dem and dey nebber go tief your plantain again."

"That's right, Mokombo, and you had better set about it at once," said my friend, as he led the way down towards the plantain field.

Taking up his basket, the old sorcerer followed us out of the courtyard, apparently much to the relief of the black servants, who kept dodging about out of sight of the old man, so long as he remained in the yard. Picking our way along a muddy little path, through a cocoa piece, we soon arrived at the scene of operations and found ourselves in a large field, well planted out in long rows of plantain trees. There were tremendous numbers of them and all seemed bearing remarkably well. The plantain is almost exactly like a banana and the fruit grows in enormous

bunches out of a soft fleshy trunk, bearing very long and broad leaves, disposed something like those of a palm.

“I shall get a fearful hauling over the coals from the parson, if he hear of this,” remarked my host, “he will say it is encouraging the people in their ignorant superstitions and so forth, but I really can’t help it, and I’m driven to desperation about these plantains! Do you see how well they are bearing? Just notice those fine bunches on that row yonder. Ten to one, they will disappear by to-morrow, in company with half a dozen more! It is so difficult to get trustworthy watchmen, and the people are robbing me so scandalously that I am going to try what Obeah will do as a *dernier ressort*.”

In the meantime, Mokombo had been making his preparations. From out of his basket he produced a number of small and large medicine bottles, each filled with some mysterious liquid; then taking up a position in front of a plantain, he tied one of the vials on to a bunch of fruit and then began muttering a sort of incantation in what seemed a most uncouth African lingo, accompanying his spell the while, by frequently waving his arms and constant genuflexions. He would then pass on to another row of trees and perform the same ceremony. Having hung up all his stock of bottles, Mokombo next produced from his basket a tiny little black wooden coffin, apparently empty. This he placed with much ceremony in the branches of a

cocoa-tree, and on the top of it put a saucer, containing a little water and a common hen's egg floating in it. Then after walking right round the field, muttering and waving his arms continually, Mokombo finally came up and declared that he had put an effectual stop to the robbery, and that not another bunch of plantains would be missed.

“Me let go plenty cribo, Massa, and now, if any one da go and tief dem plantains, he must go swell up and bust!”

Having received the price of his spells, Mokombo took his departure.

“But what on earth does all this mean; do you really consider you have had full value for the five dollars I saw you give that old humbug?”

“I think so,” returned my friend, “but let me tell you all about it.”

Going to one of the trees, he untied one of the mysterious bottles and opened it. “Just look! this vial contains nothing but sea-water, with a little laundry blue in it, and, as you see, a dead cockroach floating on the top. They nearly all contain almost exactly the same things, some may have besides the cockroach, a few rusty nails and a bit of red flannel or such like rubbish. Well, I assure you, that not one negro in ten would dare to steal or come near these plantains, knowing that one of these bottles are hung up in the place, and nothing would ever dissuade them from believing that if any one of them were

foolhardy enough to disregard the potent spell cast on these trees by the Obeah man, the unfortunate thief would inevitably come to a bad end, very shortly ; in fact, 'swell up and bust,' as Mokombo told us.

"You heard him say that he had let go plenty 'criboes' in the field. Criboes are large black serpents, very common in the island, and notwithstanding their size, quite harmless : in fact, we planters protect them as much as we can, as they wage continual war on our worst enemies, the rats. Somehow or other, these criboes are supposed to be powerful instruments in the hands of an Obeah man, and the blacks firmly believe that when one of these sorcerers 'dresses' a garden or field, he lets go in it, by means of his spells and incantations, a large number of most ferocious criboes, which would infallibly destroy any one venturing into the place for the purpose of stealing. Although well knowing that no venomous serpents exist in the island, the blacks hold anything like a snake in the greatest dread ; this fear and veneration, I dare say, is owing to a remnant of the ideas inculcated into them by the serpent worship of their fathers and mothers in Africa.

"As you are fresh from England and consequently know but little of the character of the negro, you can hardly realize the depth and extent of their superstition, or their unreasoning belief and dread of anything coming under the head of what they call 'Obeah' or 'Wanga.' All these dark superstitions and beliefs

in the occult power, were undoubtedly brought over from Africa by the cargoes of slaves formerly imported into the West Indies, and it is astonishing to see how firm a hold these same superstitions have over the minds of these people, notwithstanding the teaching and influence of Christian clergymen constantly brought to bear on the subject for the last fifty years.

“The term ‘*Obeah*’ is most probably derived from the substantive, ‘*Obi*,’ a word used on the East coast of Africa to denote witchcraft, sorcery and fetishism in general. The etymology of *Obi* has been traced to a very antique source, stretching far back into Egyptian mythology. A serpent in the Egyptian language was called ‘*Ob*’ or ‘*Aub*’—‘*Obion*’ is still the Egyptian name for a serpent. Moses, in the name of God, forbade the Israelites ever to enquire of the demon ‘*Ob*,’ which is translated in our Bible: charmer or wizard, divinator or sorcerer. The witch of Endor is called ‘*Oub*’ or ‘*Ob*,’ translated Pythonissa; and ‘*Oubois*’ was the name of the basilisk or royal serpent, emblem of the Sun and an ancient oracular deity of Africa. In a very old and interesting work on the West Indies, written by a French dominican, nearly two hundred years ago, there is a curious account of a ceremony of serpent worship in Africa. He relates how :—

“The Chevalier Damon was once at Juda (a town on the coast of Guinea) during the season appointed

for a great ceremony connected with serpent worship and was invited by the king to be present at the ceremony, together with some of his officers. The place set apart for it was about three or four leagues distant from the town where the king generally resided. It was a spacious field around which numerous thatched huts had been erected to shelter the king and suite. A large space in the centre was enclosed by a palisade.

“The king and his household set out about mid-day—in fact, you might say, his “house,” for all his women carried with them every article of furniture and piece of goods belonging to him, leaving nothing but the bare walls behind. Loaded in this manner, they set out two by two, escorted by the king’s guards; next came his children, then his favourite wives, and lastly the king himself, borne along in a sort of palanquin. It was rather late when they arrived at their destination, so it was resolved to postpone the ceremony until the next day. Accordingly, on the morrow, the Chevalier Damon and his suite were led to places near the palisade; the rest of the people kneeling down all round. The king and a priest alone entered the enclosure and after numerous prostrations, prayers and ceremonies, the priest advanced towards a hole in a tree, where a serpent was supposed to be lying. He then began to address it on the part of the king, asking how many slave-ships might be expected to call during the ensuing year—whether they should

have war or good crops, &c. The priest would then convey each of the serpent's answers to the king, and this business having lasted a good time and the answers being all considered satisfactory, the ceremony ended amid great rejoicing of the people and much noise.'

"Naturally the hundreds of thousands of African slaves imported during two centuries into the West Indies, brought with them, into their new homes, the same superstitions as were rife in Guinea and on the Congo, and although receiving every discouragement at the hands of the white planters and clergymen, the negroes clung desperately to their deeply-rooted notions and, no doubt, many years must still elapse before the last traces of Obeah and Wanga disappear from these islands.

"Of late years, with the progress of education among the negroes, they have become a little ashamed of their belief in Obeah, but still cling tenaciously in secret to the mysteries they were taught in their youth to dread and venerate, and any man with the reputation of 'working Obeah' is looked on by all with the greatest fear and treated with the utmost deference. The lower classes, all over the world, are fascinated by anything wrapped up in mystery, and negroes especially endue with terrible powers anything which they fail to understand and which appeals to their imagination.

"Before the emancipation, however, the practice of

Obeah was rampant in all the West Indian colonies, and laws and ordinances had to be framed to put it down, and combat its baneful influence. There were few of the large estates having African slaves, which had not one or more Obeah men in the number. They were usually the oldest and most crafty of the blacks, those whose hoary heads and somewhat harsh and forbidding aspect, together with some skill in plants of the medicinal and poisonous species, qualified them for successful imposition on the weak and credulous. In these days, an Obeah man would be hard to distinguish from other blacks, and might only be known by wearing his hair long, or some other peculiarity, or else by possessing a good substantial house, built out of the money obtained from his credulous countrymen, in exchange for rubbishing simples or worthless love-spells. The trade which these impostors carry on is extremely lucrative. A negro would not hesitate to give an Obeah man four or five dollars for a love-spell, when he would grudge three shillings for a bottle of medicine, to relieve some painful sickness. A veil of mystery is cast over their incantations, which generally take place at the midnight hour, and every precaution is taken to conceal these ceremonies from the knowledge of the whites. The deluded negroes, who thoroughly believe in the supernatural power of these sorcerers, screen them as much as possible, and the bravest among them tremble at the very sight of the ragged bundle, the egg-shells

or Obeah bottle stuck in the thatch of a hut, or in the branches of a plantain-tree to deter thieves.

“ The darker and more dangerous side of Obeah is that portion under cover of which poison is used to a fearful extent, and the dangerous and often fatal effects of many a magic draught are simply set down, by the superstitious black, to the working of the spells of Obeah, and never to the more simple effects of the scores of poisonous herbs growing in every pasture, and which may have formed the ingredients of the Obeah mixture. Owing to the defective state of the laws relating to declaration of deaths and inquests, it is to be feared that very many deaths occur from poisoning, which are set down to a cold or other simple malady.

“ Frequently I have heard a negro report a death at the registrar’s office, and on being asked the cause, answer ‘ Oh, he catch a cold, Sah ! ’—or ‘ he belly cut him, Sah, ’ &c. The doctor may have been called once or twice, perhaps a month before the decease, and of course is unable to give a certificate. If it be considered necessary to make inquiries, it will, perhaps, be found that the deceased withered away ; very often owing to neglect and want of medical care. Nothing more can be discovered, the death is entered in the registrar’s book, and there the matter ends. A death need not be reported till seven days after the occurrence, and only the very strongest suspicions of foul play would induce a registrar to report the matter to

the coroner, in view of an inquest ; and even then, a post-mortem in the tropics, on a body exhumed after seven days, would hardly be reliable.

“ It is excessively difficult to get information out of a West Indian negro. The bump of caution should be extraordinarily developed. On being questioned, Quashie will invariably give a misleading answer ; he may not see the drift of your question, but, for fear of incriminating himself or others, will always put one off the scent as much as possible. I remember once going into a village, and asking the first woman I met for a certain man. ‘ No,’ she did not know any one of the name. That woman, I afterwards found out was his wife, but not knowing what I wanted him for, and fearing that it might be for something to his disadvantage, unblushingly declared she had never seen such a man. There is also another great obstacle in finding out any person in some of the islands, Grenada especially, owing to each man having a number of names. Say a man was baptized John Jones. This he will call his Sunday name, only to be used on grand occasions, and for daily use he will be known by some nickname, such as ‘ Coalpot,’ ‘ Lovely,’ ‘ Braveboy,’ &c. Then again, they constantly mix up Christian with surname. If the man named John Jones have a son, the boy will be baptized ‘ Jones James,’ his son will be baptized ‘ James Robert,’ and so on ; the surname of the father will be taken for the Christian name of the son.

“ Fifty or sixty years ago, the practice of Obeah being the cause of so much loss of slave property by poisoning, it was found necessary to enact the most stringent laws for its repression, and an important ordinance was passed in all the West Indian colonies imposing heavy penalties on any person found guilty of dealing in Obeah. Unfortunately, through the knowledge possessed by some of the old negroes of numerous poisonous bushes and plants, unknown to medicine, but found in every tropical wood, it is to be feared that numerous deaths might still be traced to the agency of these Obeah men. The secret and insidious manner in which this crime is generally perpetrated makes detection exceedingly difficult.”

## CHAPTER II.

Christmas in the Caribbees—Death of a sorcerer—Obeah stock in trade—Profitable business—Mysterious *déménagement*—Wholesale poisoning—Père Labat's antidote—Marvelous result.

CHRISTMAS morning! yet trees are green, and butterflies are fluttering in the air. As I ride along the winding path, returning from a refreshing dip in the sea, I can hardly realize that this is winter! that on the other side of the Atlantic it is miserably cold, perhaps snow on the ground, and probably most people indoors, shivering round a fire; while here—a lovely, cool, spice-laden breeze is wafted down from the mountains yonder—the sun shines down out of a bright blue sky, and humming-birds of gorgeous colouring flit over the scented black sage bushes. The path, now and then shaded with clumps of feathery bamboos or bushy tufted gru-gru palms, skirts a hillside covered with waving sugar-canes, while in the distance, I can see the deep blue ocean, stretching away till sea and sky melt in a haze.

My companion, a genial French Roman Catholic

priest, rides a few paces ahead, his bathing towel slung round his neck, and in his mouth a never missing cigarette. An "Obeah bottle" hanging to a mango-tree draws my attention to the subject which interests me so much, and riding up, I ask my companion what he can tell me about the superstitions of the country.

"Ah, my dear fellow, I can't remember half I hear and notice on these ever-present superstitions of the people, but I assure you that it is one of the greatest obstacles I meet with in my work among my parishioners; these foolish but so deeply rooted beliefs of theirs in the power of Obeah and witchcraft meet me at every turn, and after talking for hours, and trying to prove to them how ridiculous and senseless all these ideas are, I only obtain a seeming acquiescence, and make no lasting impression. I have tried everything to combat the baneful influence, and endeavoured to make them ashamed of their ignorance and credulity, but with precious little effect. I have even adopted the Japanese custom of punishing a whole street for the misdeeds of one criminal living in it, by refusing the sacraments for a time to a whole family, if a member of it be known to be dabbling in Obeah—all to small purpose.

"This reminds me that, only the other day, I was riding to see a sick person living on the other side of the parish, when I happened to pass a small wooden house, before which a number of people were con-

gregated, all talking together and evidently much exercised in their minds about something inexplicable. On asking what was the matter, I was told that the owner of the house was lying dead, and that he was an Obeah man who had lived quite alone in the place for many years, and that there was consequently no one willing to undertake the job of looking after the corpse and burying it. In fact, no one would go inside the hut at all, as it was affirmed that his Satanic Majesty was there in person looking after the body of the Obeah man, which now undoubtedly belonged to him. To allay their alarm, I got off my horse, and with the assistance of a couple of men broke open the door and entered the hut. Lying on a wooden stretcher was the body of the unfortunate individual, whose death must have occurred a good many hours before, and the body was in urgent need of burial, so after scolding the people for their cowardice I prevailed on them to see about a coffin and other details as quickly as possible. It was, however, only in evident fear and trembling that any of them would enter the room, and the slightest noise would make them start and look towards the door, in the expectation of seeing *le diable en personne* coming to claim his property.

“The dirty little room was littered with the Obeah man’s stock in trade. A number of vials containing some sort of unholy liquor were lying ready to be handed over to some foolish negro in exchange for their weight in silver. In every corner were found

the implements of his trade, rags, feathers, bones of cats, parrots' beaks, dogs' teeth, broken bottles, grave dirt, rum, and egg-shells. Examining further, we found under the bed a large *conarie* or earthen jar containing an immense number of round balls of earth or clay of various dimensions, large and small, whitened on the outside and fearfully and wonderfully compounded. Some seemed to contain hair and rags and were strongly bound round with twine; others were made with skulls of cats, stuck round with human or dogs' teeth and glass beads, there were also a lot of egg-shells and numbers of little bags filled with a farrago of rubbish. In a little tin canister I found the most valuable of the sorcerer's stock, namely, seven bones belonging to a rattlesnake's tail—these I have known sell for five dollars each, so highly valued are they as amulets or charms—in the same box was about a yard of rope, no doubt intended to be sold for hangman's cord, which is highly prized by the negroes, the owner of a piece being supposed to be able to defy bad luck.

“Rummaging further, I pulled out from under the thatch of the roof an old preserved-salmon tin, the contents of which showed how profitable was the trade of Obeah man. It was stuffed full of five-dollar bank-notes, besides a number of handsome twenty-dollar gold pieces, the whole amounting to a considerable sum, which I confess I felt very reluctant to seal up and hand over to the Government, the

Obeah man not being known to have heirs. I then ordered the people to gather up all the rubbish, which was soon kindled and blazing away merrily in front of the hut, to the evident satisfaction of the bystanders, who could hardly be persuaded to handle the mysterious tools of Obeah.

“The man, I heard, had a great reputation for sorcery, and I was assured that even persons who would never be suspected of encouraging witchcraft had been known to come from a distance to consult him or purchase some love-spell.

“The secret of their reputation and frequent success in finding out robberies, which is also a part of their profession, is most likely due to a good memory and a system of cross-questioning all those who come to consult them, and it is also very probable that they possess a knowledge of numerous tricks and deceits handed down to them by their African progenitors, with which they astonish even educated persons and perform wonders which would almost convert one to a belief in magic.

“I will give you an instance which happened to me, and which I have never been able to explain satisfactorily.

“Some years ago I was in Trinidad and had been sent by the Archbishop to take charge of a parish far into the interior of the island, and at that time but very little known and developed. There being no presbytery, I had to make shift, until I could build

one, with part of a small wooden house, of which one room was occupied by an old coloured woman, who lived there with a little girl. This woman was looked on with a good deal of dread by the people, being supposed to possess a knowledge of a good many unholy tricks, and it was confidently hoped that my near neighbourhood would do her good, and at all events induce her to be seen now and then at church, which is here a great sign of respectability. When taking possession of my part of the house, I was shown her room, and noticed particularly that it contained some really handsome pieces of the massive furniture so much esteemed by Creoles. A tremendous family four-poster, with heavy, handsomely turned pillars, stood in one corner near a ponderous mahogany wardrobe, and various other heavy bits of furniture pretty well filled the little room. The door of her apartment opened on to my room, which she had to pass through every time she went out of the house. This was an unpleasant arrangement, but was shortly to be remedied by having another door made in her room leading outside. However, the night after my taking possession, I heard a monotonous sound through the partition, as of some one crooning a sing-song chant. This continued for over an hour, and more than once I felt inclined to rap at the partition and beg the old dame to shut up her incantations, but it finally acted as a lullaby and I soon dropped asleep. The next morning, having got up and dressed, I noticed that all was per-

fectly silent next door and on listening attentively failed to hear a sound. I feared something had gone wrong, but noticed that the door leading outside had not been opened, as a chair I had placed against it was in precisely the same position as I had left it. I then knocked at her door several times, but obtained no answer; fearing an accident had happened, I opened the door, and as it swung back on its hinges I was astounded to see the room perfectly empty and evidently swept clean. On examining the room carefully I found it only had two small windows besides the door leading into my room. From that day to this, neither I nor any one living in that district have ever seen or heard anything of that woman or of her little girl. How she moved all her heavy furniture out of that little room, has ever remained an inexplicable mystery. I would have defied any man to move the wardrobe alone, and even if the old woman had had strength enough to carry the furniture away, she never could have dragged it through my room without disturbing me. However, these are the facts of the case, and I have never been able to explain them."

"It is certainly astonishing," I rejoined, "and it is a pity the old lady did not let you into the secret of her mysterious *déménagement*. Pickford's vans and the miseries of packing would be things of the past."

"Be that as it may," returned my friend, "this is a case which happened to me personally, and which I

have never been able to explain satisfactorily, and I daresay many an instance just as puzzling has happened to many others. Half the stories the negroes will tell you about Obeah are just exaggerations, produced by their fear of anything which they cannot explain at once, and their unreasoning belief in the powers of the Obeah or Wanga man.

“This terror of witchcraft is no doubt fostered by the stories handed down to them by their fathers and mothers of what happened in slavery time, when the slaves of an estate would sometimes be decimated by the machinations of an Obeah man or woman, who, under the name of working Obeah, would simply make away with their victims by the use of poisonous plants only known to Africans, and the effects of which, being unknown to medical science, prevented the crime from being brought home to its author.”

Père Labat, in his old work on the West Indies, “*Nouveau Voyage aux Iles d’Amérique*,” published in 1712, gives an instance of wholesale poisoning by an African slave on a plantation in Martinique. He relates how an African being once on the point of death, sent for his master and confessed himself guilty of the deaths of more than thirty slaves, who had died, from an unaccountable disease, on the estate during the previous two years. He explained that to attain his ends, he used to obtain the juice of a plant found commonly on the windward coasts of these islands; he would always keep the nail of one of his fingers

longer than the others, and, when intending to poison any one, would scrape the bark of the plant in question with it until a certain quantity of the deadly juice had collected beneath it. Then returning home, he invited his victim to have a drink of rum with him. Drinking first, he would then pour out some of the same rum into the same calabash which he had used, but holding it in such a manner that his finger would be soaking in it and the poison transferred to the liquor. Scarce two hours would elapse before the unfortunate victim would be writhing in frightful convulsions, and death ensued in a few minutes. On being asked if there was any antidote to this dreadful poison, he answered that it would be found in the thorny sensitive plant, pounded and moistened with wine.

Père Labat's experience of the working of this antidote is too curious to be omitted. He goes on to say how he was once called in December, 1696, to hear the confession of a slave belonging to M. de Lacquant, captain in the Martinique militia. The poor man was in the throes of frightful convulsions and was apparently poisoned.

Père Labat decided to try as a last resource the antidote indicated by the poisoner.

The root having been scraped, stripped of its brown skin, washed and dried, was then placed in a mortar and reduced to a paste, of which as much was taken as would cover a fifteen sol piece. This was replaced in the mortar and dissolved in some red wine poured on

it by degrees. When the paste was entirely dissolved in the wine, it was administered to the patient—a good glass full. The man was placed on a mattress, on the ground, between two fires and carefully covered up. In less time than it takes to recite a Miserere, the remedy began to act by provoking an intense perspiration and most severe convulsions, accompanied by such violent retching as made one fear he would bring up some of his intestines. In the midst of this, he brought up an animal of the thickness of a man's thumb, about four inches long, having four legs, each an inch in length, furnished with three joints and terminating in little claws like those of a rat. The head was only distinguishable from the rest of the body by the movement of the neck, it had two minute eyes and a mouth armed with teeth. The back was furnished with two wings, in shape and texture resembling those of a bat, and the rest of the body was covered with short, sparse, bristly red hair. The patient threw up a good deal of blood and some blue matter after ejecting the insect, and then fell in a dead faint which lasted a long time and from which he was only brought to by administering cordials. A moment after having been ejected the animal began to move its wings and hopped off the table on which it had been placed, but on attempting to fly, fell to the ground. It was placed in a bottle of spirits and preserved. This, it appears, was the fourth time that the root of the thorny sensitive had been found efficacious as an antidote in cases of poison-

ing, but a similar effect to the one above related had never before been observed. This negro had only been ailing four or five days, but old Père Labat seems to think that the poison must have been administered a long time before, for, he says, "it seems to me, that it would require a lengthened period to allow poison to breed a similar corruption in the body of a man."

## CHAPTER III.

A mountain-road—The Grand Etang—Twilight in the West—Procession to the “Mamadjo”—The everlasting tom-tom—Negro dances—The “calenda”—A “belair”—Quashie improvisatore—A quadrille party—The very light fantastic toe.

ONE of the loveliest spots in Grenada is a small lake situated up in the mountains, at an altitude of near two thousand feet. Being a remarkable natural curiosity, it is the show place of the island, and a great resort for pic-nics and shooting parties.

The “Grand Etang,” as it is called, is situated almost exactly in the centre of the island, and is reached by following the road which traverses the island from east to west, and connects the capital, St. George’s, with the next town of importance, Grenville, on the windward coast.

A couple of hours’ easy riding from St. George’s brings one to the vicinity of the Grand Etang. The mountain-road, a remarkable piece of engineering, winds its way through smiling valleys, and skirts the sides of lovely fern-clad cliffs. Graceful tree-ferns bend their lace-like fronds over the road, and meet the feathery bamboos growing on the other side, form-

ing a canopy of lace-like texture, through which the rays of the beaming sun are filtered with shaded light. As one ascends the winding path, the sultry heavy atmosphere is exchanged for a delightfully cool scented breeze, wafted down from the mountain tops, getting cooler and cooler, until the road turns into the hollow near the Grand Etang, where the breeze is as exhilarating as a whiff of the sea air, in June, is at home.

The little lake, about a mile and a half in circumference, lies in a hollow, evidently once forming the crater of a volcano, extinct for centuries ago. The placid waters, hardly rippled by the evening breeze, lie calm and quiet in the shadow of the surrounding mountains. The dark blue shaded surface, ruffled here and there by the lazy movement of a duck or coot, while on the banks of the rising amphitheatre, tall mountain-palms rear their plumed heads from out the mass of dark green vegetation growing at their feet; their waving spathes gilded by the fading rays of the sun, now setting in the crimson western sky. I do not think that in any part of the world can finer sunsets be seen than in these Western Isles of the Caribbean sea. The glorious orb of day, its daily duty done, sinks gradually and majestically into the western ocean. The sky becomes one resplendent surface of brilliant colour, where every tint is to be admired from the palest sea-green to the gorgeous crimson of the clouds

nearest the setting orb, while gradually, but all too soon, a curtain of transparent azure steals over the heavens; the gorgeous colours pale and fade, and in a few minutes the space, which a moment ago seemed a fiery mass of crimson light, is now a soft tender blue, from out the depths of which bright jewelled stars are twinkling gaily, and the day is done once more.

The shadows thicken, and night will soon be on me, so, remounting my pony, once more I pursue the road which now goes down-hill, towards the coral coast of the windward shore. The birds overhead are twittering their evening chat, and the glistening fireflies hover over the little silver streamlets, which from time to time I have to ford. A glorious full moon now sheds its cool weird beams over the scene, and replaces the faded rays of the setting sun. The pure white light soon reigns supreme, and the shadows cast by the feathery bamboos skirting the road seem almost as dark as those made by the midday sun. Everything is still and quiet; not a house nor a hut for miles around. The weird cry of the owl is heard echoing through the virgin forest on either side of the path, and the cling-clang of the blacksmith frog joins in the mournful croak of the toad in his swampy home.

Suddenly a curious sound strikes my ear! my pony hears it too, and pricks his ears forward, as if in apprehension of something uncanny; gradually, the sound grows louder and nearer, and I have to calm my

restive nag, which snorts, and now and then makes a frightened little shy. I soon recognize the sound of human voices, and presently, on turning a corner, come in view of a curious procession. Reining in my pony, I stand in the gutter so as to allow the people to pass.

First came four or five stalwart negroes carrying pink, red and white flags, followed by a group of old women, dressed up in red cotton frocks, with veils of the same material covering their heads, and topped with a chaplet of some green feathery creeping plant, which grows in profusion in the high woods. Then came more elderly females, similarly clad in blue cotton, all dancing frantically to the sound of most barbarous music, which followed them. Three or four men carried in their hands large empty gourds, covered over with a loose network of small porcelain shirt-buttons, which they kept continually shaking, thus making a loud rustling sound, serving as an accompaniment to a wild sort of song or refrain, yelled out in the most minor of minor keys by the whole of the assistants. The rear was brought up by an indiscriminate gathering of negroes, all dancing away furiously, and all decked with sprays of the same green creeper. Questioning one of these followers, I learnt that the procession was on its way to the Grand Etang, the supposed home of a "Mamadjo" or siren, whom they were going to propitiate by sundry sacrifices of goats and fowls, in order to obtain from

her a few showers of rain, which were sadly needed for the young corn just planted.

Most of these people were old Africans, who although nominally Christians, and perhaps communicants, still clung to the old superstitions of the land of their birth, and, notwithstanding the lessons taught them for the last fifty years by priests and parsons of all denominations, evidently reposed more trust in the power of their old Congo divinities than in the God of the "Buckras," or white people. They believe that the little mountain lake, as well as some of the mineral springs found in the island, are the haunts of a mermaid, or as they call her in Creole "Patois," "Mother of Water," in whose power it is to grant them welcome showers of rain in due season, or, if offended, to withhold these bounties, and, unless propitiated, ruin the prospects of a good crop of corn or other produce, on which they depend.

Arrived at the Grand Etang, the old women of the procession would commence an endless prayer or incantation, addressed to the Mamadjo, accompanied, no doubt by the sacrifice of a black goat and some white fowls, and the siren, once considered satisfied, the ceremony would conclude by an African dance to the inspiring sound of the tom-tom, lasting till daylight, when all would peaceably return to their avocations, and would, most likely, be seen next Sunday hurrying to their church, dressed out in their best toggery.

Rhea, goddess of the dance, has no more enthusiastic votaries than the negroes. Dancing, with them, seems as natural as walking or eating, and not one can resist the sound of anything approaching to music without breaking out in a fantastic *pas seul*. Dancing is one of the most ancient of the arts, and might almost be called a passion among the uncivilized races. Joy or sorrow, birth or death, defeat or victory, all form pretexts with Africans for a dance of some sort, and many of these fantastic measures were introduced into the West Indies by the slaves imported from Africa. Notwithstanding the progress made by many of them in manners and education, their old African dances die hard, and, in their opinion, are but inadequately replaced by the more civilized quadrille parties, taken up by the upper class of negroes. Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast, it is generally believed, but certainly the breasts of these blacks can hardly be very savage to be soothed by the music in which they delight. Once the daily task is done and the evening meal of salt fish and plantain disposed of, the music-loving negro brings out his tom-tom, sits in front of his little hut, and right through the small hours of the night will the monotonous thump-thump of that untiring performer resound over hill and dale.

Notwithstanding what old planters will say, it must be acknowledged that there is something very pleasing in the sound of the tom-tom beaten about half a mile

off. When everything else is still and quiet and the sound of the rippling river close by mingles with the hum of countless insects, the thump-thump of the tom-tom, mellowed by distance, seems to furnish a fit accompaniment to the music of nature, and lulls one to sleep in a charming manner. But alas! for the unfortunate being whose nearest neighbour is a performer on the drum; loud and deep are the curses called down upon that persevering negro's head as the small hours of the night find the weary planter tossing restlessly on his sleepless couch, forced to listen to the untiring efforts of his musical neighbour. It is puzzling to know what the mysterious charm can be which encourages the not over-energetic Quashie, so far as work is concerned, to beat for hours and hours the piece of goat's skin stretched across a small empty barrel which constitutes the instrument he is so proficient a performer on. I once had as near neighbour an old African named Moses, whose particular forte was the tom-tom, and every night from dewy eve to early morn did my dusky friend wake the hours of the night with his doleful performance. Often and often would I expostulate with him, and beg him to let me into the secret of the charm lying in the tom-tom. "Ah, massa, it so, we da do in Congo," was all I could extract from him, and perhaps, on my representing to him that he would finally be the death of me through the sleepless nights he caused me, the tom-tom would be silent for a night or two; but alas!

human nature is weak, and perhaps Moses found he could not exist without his nightly performance, and as I would be settling off comfortably on my left side for a good snooze till morning, that woeful thump-thump once more would wake the echoes of the valley and sleep would not be coaxed back for many a long hour. Finally Moses died. I did not mourn for him nor did I think his death untimely.

In former years, when African slaves were still being imported into these islands, the negroes used to indulge in a great variety of dances, some of which were, unfortunately, so indecent and voluptuous that laws were enacted to forbid their practice. The Government of the colonies repressed these dances, no doubt as much on account of the danger consequent on the gathering together of so many slaves in one place, as for the moral damage it did the negroes. In the time of slavery, if the owner of a plantation did not allow his slaves to dance on his estate, they would think nothing of walking eight or ten miles on Saturday nights to some place where a dance was to be given, and many of the outbreaks and rebellions of the slaves were no doubt concocted under cover of these gatherings.

One of their favourite dances was called the "calenda," and was supposed to have been introduced from Arda, a country on the coast of Guinea. Although its figures and postures were very improper, it became a great favourite, especially in the Spanish

colonies, and was much patronized even by the upper classes.

The old Congo negroes used to be very fond of a most solemn sort of a dance, and one in which even the most violent opponents of the ballet could find but little fault. The performers, men and women, stood round in a ring and without moving from their places just lifted one foot from the ground bringing it down again with a stamp in a sort of cadence, continually bowing to each other, and muttering some refrain started by one of them, clapping their hands the while. This dance had certainly nothing in it to shock decency, but unfortunately did not seem to amuse them much, and they all by far preferred the objectionable "calenda."

The favourite dance in the negro houses, at present, is one called a "belair." The music for it is furnished by two drums, fashioned out of pieces of the trunks of trees hollowed out in different depths, or small empty barrels. One of the ends is open and the other covered with a goat's or sheep's skin, scraped like parchment and tightly stretched across. The largest is generally three or four feet in length, with a diameter of fifteen or sixteen inches. The smaller one, called baboula, is about the same length, but only eight or nine inches in diameter. These drums are held between the legs of the performers, and are struck with the tips of the fore-fingers of each hand. The player on the larger drum beats in time

and slowly, while the performer on the baboula beats away as fast as he can and hardly in time, but as its sound is much less powerful, though sharper than that of the big drum, it only serves to make a noise, without marking the cadence of the time or the movement of the dancers.

These place themselves in two lines or sometimes in a circle, and dance and jump and pirouette to their hearts' content. Meanwhile, one of them is chosen to sing a song, which he improvises as he goes along, on a given subject; each line ending with a short refrain taken up by all the dancers. The song generally has some sort of melody, if it might be called so, but the tune is always in such a very minor key as to be very difficult to catch by an unaccustomed ear. The subject of the improvisatore is very often some person known to them all, such as the manager of the plantation or overseer, and the chant varies from extreme adulation, especially if provoked by a donation of rum or gin, to the very reverse of complimentary if the manager has had cause to cut down or deprive them of their wages. As a belair frequently lasts from nightfall to next morning, one would imagine they would have soon exhausted every subject since the deluge; but still they go on, and apparently the minstrel must be gifted with marvellous originality, to judge by the *entrain* and spirit with which the refrain is taken up.

The negro has a remarkable capacity for observing

and taking note of any laughable peculiarity or oddity noticeable in their employers or others of the upper classes, and any one listening to these belairs would be surprised to find what trifles attract their notice, and how mercilessly they lay bare the little *faiblesses* of their superiors.

To replace these barbarous dances the blacks were taught how to dance European steps, and many of them are very good waltzers. The upper class of black and coloured people now give what are called quadrille parties, and invitation cards are sent to their friends and acquaintances something in the style of one I came across in the kitchen the other day :—

“Mister Cudjoe request the pleasure and company of Mister and Mistress John Bull, Esq., to a quadrille party on the 19th ultimo.

“Gentlemen, a candle; ladies, a dish.”

This meant that the gentlemen were supposed to supply the light, while the fair partners were expected to bring with them a contribution to the supper-table.

In the ball-room, which is generally an empty cocoa store or good-sized negro house, the host or one of the guests is appointed Master of the Ceremonies and is endowed with supreme authority, which he sometimes exercises with the utmost disregard of *les conventions*. I have seen one of these gallant personages, like Beau Nash of old in the Pump Room at Bath,

suddenly stop the music while a quadrille was going on, merely, as he said, to "show his 'tority." The music generally consists of a fiddle, scraped with the utmost disregard to tune or time, in conjunction with a tambourine, beaten *con furore*, and accompanied by a performer on the triangle, chosen, I believe, on account of the size and weight of his feet, with which he thumps the time on the floor, and which is really the *motif* to which the assembly cuts the fantastic toe, and a very fantastic toe it is too. At the wedding of a man who was working for me, I was requested to open the ball in the first quadrille with the bride, an immense and most maternal-looking lady. But, alas, for my presumption! I had always considered the first figure simple enough, and flattered myself I would get through it without much bungling; I, however, gave myself up for lost when I saw our *vis-à-vis* going through such an amount of "chassez" and "balancez," fancy steps, pirouetting and flying up and down the room, as would distract even a ballet master. This *pas de deux* must have lasted full ten minutes, when I found I was expected to perform the same antics with my blooming partner. Summoning up all my courage, I endeavoured to put a bold face on it, and tried my best to imitate some of the contortions I had once seen at a Bal de l'Opera, but with small success, as could be seen by the hardly concealed contempt entertained for my dancing by the assistants, who plainly thought but little of my energetic

performance. Hastily resigning the bride to some partner more worthy of her, I looked on to admire the wondrous mazes of this interminable quadrille, which must have lasted full an hour; not more to the enjoyment of the performers than to the delight of the lookers-on, who testified to their approval and admiration of any extra complicated step by loud cries of "Superior, superior," or "First class," until reduced to more subdued approbation by the stentorian "Silence" of the Master of the Ceremonies.

The dresses of the feminine portion of the assembly would attract notice anywhere. Such startling combinations of chocolate and blue, orange and green, violet and red, compelled one's attention. The black woolly locks, carefully greased and plaited into a top knot, ornamented by an aggressive-looking bunch of poppies or more refined-looking silver wedding-cake flowers; whereas the men were "all there," in correct though ill-fitting black coats and indispensables of the bluest of bluish-grey cloth. While looking on at all this finery and elegance, it was hard to realize that Miss Arabella Montmorenci over there, in the blue frock with orange flowers and those massive silver bracelets borrowed from her mistress, would to-morrow be, Cinderella like, investigating the state of her saucepans, in tattered garments and bare feet; while that elegant "cavalier" over there, with gorgeous trousers and cut-away coat, masher collar and green tie, would be carrying manure from the cattle-

pen to the cane piece. However, the sons and daughters of all these are now most of them at school, and if the present generation are only just getting into the customs and habits of civilization, the next generation will make the same progress in ten years as our forefathers took as many centuries to get accustomed to.

## CHAPTER IV.

The "Mamadjo"—A Wanga temple—Votive offerings—A mineral spring—The siren's assistant—Quashie's ideas on religion—Protestants *versus* Roman Catholics—Coolies—Compère and Macomé—Churches in Grenada—Creole patois.

ANYTHING which Quashie fails to understand and which appeals to his imagination is at once endued by him with much mystery and looked upon with awe and veneration. Accordingly, warm mineral springs, of which there are several in Grenada, are looked upon with a certain proportion of dread, and supposed by the negroes to be the haunts of certain naiads or water nymphs called by them "Mamadjo" or "mother of water." Some of these mineral springs are very curious and well worthy of attention. They are mostly saline or chalybeate waters and are highly esteemed by the people living in their vicinity for the treatment of skin diseases. Besides some warm chalybeates, there is also a spring resembling in its properties the Grotto del Cane near Naples. A strong current of carbonic acid gas percolates through its waters and is powerful enough to extinguish life in any animal exposed to its effects.

This "Mephitic Spring," as it is called, is considered very uncanny and its vicinity shunned by the blacks. These medicinal springs, although undoubtedly possessing beneficial qualities for the alleviation of certain diseases, are but little known, and no qualified person has as yet undertaken a correct analysis of their waters. So little indeed are they known even in their own vicinity that it was with difficulty I could find them out. Hearing of a curious spring forming the source of a small river the water of which cattle would not drink, I rode to the place, and only after much inquiry did I find an old woman who said she could show me the spring I wished to see. Engaging her as my *cicerone*, we soon arrived at a clump of bush and calabash trees, in the midst of which had been erected a small thatched shed, surrounded by bamboos stuck into the ground and bearing long flag-like strips of red or white cotton stuff. From the queer-looking odds and ends disposed about the place, I made sure that I was in a temple dedicated to some mysterious rites and ceremonies, and, in fact, my guide informed me that frequently Africans, old Creoles and sometimes coolies, came here to pray and dance. Around the shed were bamboos, disposed so as to form seats, and at the upper end was erected a sort of small altar, on which was placed a most mysterious collection of objects. A broken cutlass was stuck into the ground between a thick tumbler and an empty oil bottle, while in front of it were two earthenware native-made jugs, one

filled with flowers, the other with kola nuts ; and next to this, presenting a striking incongruity, was erected a rough wooden cross, looking anything but at home in that outlandish company. The most remarkable object, however, was at the other end of the shed, and was a low mound of hard gravelly clay, bearing on its surface a thick incrustation of salt and silicious matter. In the centre of the mound was a round hole nearly two feet in diameter and about four feet deep, half filled with clear water, which bubbled up with a gurgling noise at intervals of about half a minute. Taking a bamboo about eight feet long, I was able to thrust its whole length down through the sandy bottom of the spring. On withdrawing the stick, the water bubbled up two or three inches higher than its previous level.

On examining the water, I found it a saline acidulous chalybeate, very disagreeable to the taste, like brackish sea-water, with a strong smell and flavour of iron. The temperature was very little above that of ordinary water, being  $83^{\circ}$ , and from an examination of a portion, which I took with me, I found it contained chiefly iron held in solution by carbonic acid, common salt, manganese, and fixed alkali in different proportions. Its specific gravity was 10.107.

Around the orifice of the spring were disposed bunches of oleander flowers and small heaps of kola nuts, evidently votive offerings, laid there to pro-

pitiate some presiding spirit. Small bags containing a most heterogeneous lot of articles, rusty nails, feathers and fish-bones, and such like "Obeah," were suspended on the branches of the bushes all around. The old woman who acted as my guide informed me that Africans and old Creoles came here frequently to pray to the "Mamadjo" or siren, who was supposed to preside over the spring; indeed, not later than the night before, a party of negroes had stayed there several hours, and after sundry rites and ceremonies, during which a black cock and a white goat had been sacrificed, and copious draughts of the water imbibed, tempered, no doubt, by a little drop of the "cratur," had finished up with an African dance, to the sound of the tom-tom, in front of the spring.

I understood from the old woman, that the water taken internally was highly considered as a tonic, and that a course of baths was very efficacious in rheumatism, scrofula and other cutaneous diseases; in fact, she assured me that she had even known cases of "yaws" cured by the external and internal use of this water. This was, doubtless, an exaggeration, for this loathsome disease, one of the scourges of a West Indian population, has hitherto defied every attempt to restrict the number of its victims, and no speedy cure has yet been found for it. Originally an African disease, it was imported into the West Indies with the slaves, and, notwithstanding strenuous efforts to circumscribe its ravages by the isolation of its victims

in hospitals erected for the purpose, this dreadful ailment seems every year rather to increase than to abate.

Continuing my examination of the spring, the old lady was careful to warn me that the water would be of no avail unless I were to repeat a grace nine times, and throw a shilling, or even a "sixpence self," into the spring. This money was for the "Mamadjo" or spirit of the well, and on my noticing to her that I failed to see any of these pecuniary offerings lying at the bottom of the spring, the old hag assured me that the presiding goddess mysteriously collected her revenues at night. Connecting in my mind this invisible siren with the evil, rum-smelling old dame at my side, I was almost convinced that the mysterious nymph of the fountain was ably assisted in picking out the sixpences by the aforesaid venerable dame.

It is interesting to note the tenacity with which the West Indian negroes cling to the remnants of the superstitions of their African fathers; notwithstanding the edifying spectacle of the whole population, dressed out in their best, filling the churches every Sunday, it is to be feared that a great deal of this outward show of piety and religion is but very superficial, and the church-going and communion is rather practised as a sign of respectability than for the moral benefit they expect to gain thereby. Grenada, a century ago, was a French colony, and, most of its inhabitants being Roman Catholics, brought up to a certain

degree their slaves in that faith. Accordingly, although the colony has been English since 1783, and the established church the Anglican, two-thirds of the black and coloured population are still Roman Catholics. Every year, however, the numbers are becoming more equal, as Quashie, seeing that the upper classes are nearly all Protestants, has come to the conclusion that it is more respectable to belong to the Anglican Church; so, as soon as he owns a pair of boots, which in his opinion gives him a right to the title of esquire, he forsakes his good *padre* and the church of his youth, and appears next Sunday as a member of the Anglican or Methodist community.

It is amusing to see the disdain and superiority the blacks affect in their dealings with the coolie immigrants imported from Calcutta and Madras. Most of them are Hindoos or Mohammedans, and as such are very much looked down upon by their black fellow-labourers. Sambo's distinction between the human being and the animal creation is that one is a Christian and the other a beast, so poor coolie, until he is baptized, is only considered to belong to the latter category. The coolies, however, not having any very well-defined opinions on their religion, very shortly after their arrival allow themselves to be baptized, and frequently become the god-children of the Creoles.

The connection between sponsor and god-child in the West Indies is very much more important than in

other countries. The Creoles have an idea that a relationship is thereby established, and would not think of allowing marriage between children having the same god-father and god-mother. They are considered almost as brothers and sisters, and two persons having stood as sponsors for the same child are also bound to help each other in every way, and a Creole will frequently put himself to great inconvenience to come to the assistance of his "compère" or "macomé." Parents never think of allowing their children to marry without having first obtained the consent of the god-parents, which is considered as necessary as their own.

There is, unfortunately, a good deal of antagonism between the rival churches. The Roman Catholics can hardly be expected to look on with a complacent eye at the efforts of the Anglican clergy, who try to increase their congregations at the expense of the original church of the country, while both make common cause against the Methodist, Presbyterian and Wesleyan parsons, who also must needs poach on the preserves of the two larger communities, in order to fill the churches and chapels being erected by them all over the country.

Outwardly, most religious are these good people, and very edifying it is to see, on Sunday mornings, the roads leading to the towns lined with devout church-goers. Julius Hannibal, who owns a half acre

patch of cocoa, may then be seen mounted on a fiery, twelve-hands-high pony ; his long legs, with extremities clad in number thirteens, dangling almost to the ground ; his upper man arrayed in shiny felt hat and greasy black coat, as he caracoles on his way to his devotions. Half a mile behind comes Mrs. Hannibal, his faithful spouse, trudging along with her boots in her hand, and clad in a cool white frock, with a smart handkerchief round her neck. On her head she is most likely wearing a man's soft, black felt hat, with a stone laid on the top to keep it from being blown away by the wind. Quashie carries everything on his head, from a bag of cocoa to a tin mug, and to this habit of carrying heavy weights on the head must be ascribed the straight flat backs and firm tread so noticeable in the negroes.

At the entrance of the town, the sides of the road are bordered with the pedestrian church-goers, who may now be seen sitting down, and putting on the boots which they have hitherto carried in their hands or on their heads ; their feet, accustomed to perfect freedom, are only encased in boots on grand occasions, and more for show than comfort.

Soon the churches are filled to overflowing, and large numbers, who have come too late to get seats, kneel on the green sward outside, where they can catch the sound of the priest's or parson's voice. The Protestants will listen with admirable attention to an

impressive lecture of high-sounding polysyllables, carefully prepared by the rector for the benefit of the dozen or so educated persons sprinkled in the mass of the congregation, while the majority of devout Quashies might just as well be listening to a Greek recitation for all they catch or understand of the parson's resonant discourse.

The Protestants preach in English, while the Roman Catholic priests, who are mostly French or Spanish, treat their humble congregations to homely lessons in the Creole patois of the island.

This patois is a most barbarous lingo, and is formed of a jumble of French most vilely corrupted, mixed up with a few words of broken English. Grenada, up to the end of the last century, was a French settlement, and consequently the slaves were taught to speak as much as they could learn of that language.

With the English occupation came a lot of English colonists, who gradually ousted the original French settlers from their possessions, and took their places. At present there are hardly more than two or three French families in the island, retaining the estates granted to their ancestors. The negro and coloured population, however, remained much more French than English, and have stuck to the old "patois" they had been taught on their importation into the island. A good many efforts have been made by the Government to put it down and encourage the negroes in speaking English; but these attempts will hardly be

attended with much success so long as the majority of the population are Roman Catholics, and the priests sent to the island Frenchmen or Spaniards, who find it much easier to pick up the “patois” than to learn the English language, so difficult to foreign ears.

## CHAPTER V.

Slavery in the West Indies—Laws protecting slaves—Exaggerated reports of cruelties—Ineradicable fondness of the negro for bush life—Example given by Aniaba—State of Hayti—Revolts of the slaves—The King Christophe.

NOTWITHSTANDING the evident desire to improve themselves, so conspicuous in the lower classes of the inhabitants of the West Indies, and their eager imitation of anything, good or bad, affected by the "Béké," as they call the whites, it has been nevertheless averred that were the upper and educated classes to abandon the islands, five years would not have elapsed before every Quashie left would have as speedily divested himself of the name and attributes of a Christian as of the clothes he had hitherto worn, and would be found dancing in the most primitive state round a fire in the high woods and virgin forests. This is possibly an exaggeration, and, let us hope, most improbable; yet in the days of slavery, the Africans imported as slaves, though in general most amenable to civilization, and apparently eager to learn all they could and to profit by the lessons taught them, nevertheless only persevered in the forms of

life encouraged by their masters so long as they found it to their advantage, and secretly preferred the old bush life of their African childhood.

St. Vincent, one of the Windward Islands, was one of the last to be colonized, and in the last century was a thorn in the sides of the neighbouring colonies. Runaway slaves from the adjacent islands would escape thither, and, notwithstanding all they had seen of civilization while in captivity, would return with glee to their old wild life of freedom in the woods. I will certainly not say that, while in the bonds of slavery, they were in a favourable position to observe and value the attendant benefits of civilization, but on the other hand any one can see, by reading old works on the West Indies written a century ago during the time of slavery, that, apart from some instances where owners abused their power over their fellow-creatures, the state of the negro slaves on a plantation was very little worse than the condition of the labouring classes of to-day. The comparison is especially favourable to the state of slavery in the case of an island like Barbados, where peasant proprietorship is comparatively very rare, and at the present time the low and unremunerative price of the staple produce, sugar, renders life extremely hard and painful to the teeming population of that colony.

Old authors, such as Père Labat, Bryan Edwards, Rochefort, Du Tertre, Oviedo and others, writing on the West Indies, describe the habits and condition of

the African slaves on the estates, and, as I said before, barring instances where brutal planters were guilty of abusing their power over their slaves, it will be seen that the life of the negro was almost exactly similar to that of the black labourer of the present day. Heaven forbid that I should for one moment seem to defend the unholy cause of slavery, or depreciate the blessings of freedom; but still, any one residing in the West Indies who has taken the trouble to question the negroes still living, who were born and worked as slaves fifty years ago, will hear from their lips that slavery was not such a horror to them after all, and that if they were occasionally flogged for laziness or theft, they were generally otherwise well treated; and as poor, childless old black people will often say, "Ah, me massa, if we da been slave now, we no been left to starve like this." The old slaves on plantations were generally well looked after and frequently kindly treated by their masters and mistresses.

It must accordingly be confessed that Wilberforce and others, in their noble efforts to procure the freedom of their fellow-creatures, carried away by their enthusiasm, must often unwittingly have been led to exaggerate the horrors of slavery. It is strange to note that, although by far the majority of West Indians have so distinctly profited by the untiring efforts and unflagging zeal of William Wilberforce, yet not a stone nor monument exists at the present moment in

the West Indies, to bear witness to the love and gratitude owing to the memory of their great benefactor.

Most stringent laws were enacted to restrict the powers of slave-owners and protect the negroes from a brutal master. The provisions of some of these ordinances were so exhaustive, that the slaves must, in most cases, have been effectually protected from the unwarrantable powers of their masters, and any complaint of cruelty on the part of their owners towards them was bound to be heard and investigated. Although some instances are, unfortunately, proved to have occurred where slaves died under the lash, yet the laws of the period distinctly enacted that a planter or any one else guilty of the murder of a slave would pay the same penalty as exacted in the case of the murder of a free man. Any person convicted of cruelly beating a slave was punished by fine and imprisonment. It must be remembered that a slave was valuable property, frequently worth fifty to a hundred pounds sterling, which value would be materially affected by the condition of the man or woman, and it is about as probable that, for the sake of gratifying a thirst for blood, a planter would deliberately torture his slave to death, as that a farmer of the present day would cut down a valuable horse or other animal for the pleasure of the thing.

There will, no doubt, be a great difference between the lower classes of the present generation and the

population of these islands twenty years hence. The present masses are still mostly very ignorant, and though generally apt to disregard the laws of *meum* and *tuum*, are yet a most law-abiding and peaceable race, and indeed, in that respect as well as many others, would compare very favourably with the lower classes of any nation in Europe. Grenada is a very fair sample of a West Indian island, and the coloured inhabitants are progressing as rapidly as in any other colony. The decline and fall of the sugar industry in the competition with the European beet threw many a fine estate into the market, which, not finding a purchaser in its entirety, was cut up into acre lots, and eagerly bought up by the negro population. These lots they planted with cocoa, which now gives such a fine return as to enable them to purchase luxuries to which they were never accustomed, and to give their children not only primary education, but such advantages as will fit them for becoming an enlightened community worthy to receive the increased privileges gradually being given to them.

In the "Nouveaux Voyages aux Iles d'Amerique" old Père Labat gives an amusing instance of the ineradicable fondness of the negro for his African life. He says, talking of the population of the western coast of Africa: "As for the black and coloured inhabitants of these countries, unfortunately their warm temperament, their libertine and inconstant character, the facility and impunity with which they can

commit crime, renders them very unfit to embrace a religion, the foundations of which are justice, mortification of the flesh, continence, forgiveness, and charity. On the other hand they are easily converted when out of their native land, and persevere in Christianity so long as they see the example set before their eyes by those with whom they live, or, if they find no advantage in doing otherwise; but if these conditions be wanting, they speedily forget the promises they made at baptism, the obligations they have contracted, and the convincing truths they have been taught; all quickly fades from their memory like a dream, so that if they were to return to their own country, they would as quickly divest themselves of the name of Christian as they would of the clothes in which they had returned.

“There was once a famous example of what I have just said given by Aniaba, son of a king of Juda, a country on the west coast of Africa. The Guinea Company had sent him to France, where he was presented to the king, who caused him to be instructed in religion, and taught everything suitable to a man of rank. His Majesty even stood sponsor for him at the baptismal font and gave him his name. He maintained him with magnificence at college and at the academy, and finally gave him a commission in the army as captain of a cavalry regiment, so as to perfect himself in the science of arms, as well as in the other branches of his education. At last the

Guinea Company made known to the king that the people of Juda were calling on the prince to fill his father's throne, which had been usurped by his uncle in his absence; his Majesty accordingly allowed his *protégé* to return to his country. The king required that the prince, as a token of the religious sentiments with which he had been imbued, should institute the order of the Star, in honour of the Holy Virgin, and a large picture representing this event was placed in the Cathedral of Nôtre Dame in Paris as a mark of his faith and devotion. His Majesty also gave him an escort of two ships of war and sent him back to his dominions in a magnificent vessel, with officers, furniture, provisos, and everything which might tend to make the people respect their new king.

“ But the sequel clearly proved the proverb that the Ethiopian cannot change his hue, wash how he may; for hardly had the prince landed in his dominions, than he stripped himself of the fine French clothes which he wore, and went about stark naked, with the exception of a small cloth round his loins, like the other negroes. He divested himself at the same time of the sentiments of a Christian and honest man, which had been instilled into him during so many years. He forgot the promises he had made at his baptism, and no longer performed any of the forms of his religion; he took five or six idolatrous women as wives, and abandoned himself to the most shameful excesses. To crown his apostacy by a crime almost as great, he

was ungrateful enough to make every effort to excite a rising against the French, in favour of the Dutch and English, who saw with their accustomed jealousy the profit which we made in our transactions with that country.

“His uncle, a more honest man than he, was disgusted at such ingratitude, and judged that if his nephew were capable of treating his benefactors in such a manner, he would not scruple to play him some bad trick, if he found it in his power. He accordingly caused him to be watched, and having discovered that he was forming plots against his authority, he would have put the prince to death, or sold him as a slave to the Europeans, if the French had not, with their accustomed generosity, begged his acquittal.

“He is now, however, no more than the meanest of his uncle’s subjects, but it is still much for him to be allowed to enjoy life and liberty, after such shameful crimes.

“It might be said that this apostacy does not prove that all negroes would change their religion as easily, more especially as the kingdoms of Angola and Congo have persevered in the true faith ever since their princes were baptized by some missionaries sent there by the kings of Portugal, and who have remained there to the present day. I would answer, however, that if the example of Aniaba were solitary, it would prove nothing; but I defy any one to find in the whole of the Gold Coast, negroes who, after having returned

to their country, have persevered in the faith which had been taught them, and which they had professed in slavery.”

Quaint old Père Labat is perhaps severe on the people he knew so well, but later events have proved that his assertions were pretty correct, as may be seen in the case of “Hayti” or “San Domingo.”

This island, one of the most beautiful of the West Indies, possessing an area nearly equal to that of France, and eminently fitted to yield every tropical produce in abundance, has been, ever since its first colonization in the fifteenth century, the scene of almost constant anarchy and bloodshed.

When Columbus discovered the island, which he named Hispaniola, in 1492, he found it thickly inhabited by a race of Indians, of which he writes to his royal masters in no measured terms : “So loving, tractable, and free from covetousness, they are, that I swear to your Highnesses, there are no better people, nor a better country in the world.” Having been wrecked on their coast, Columbus received every kindness and hospitality from this gentle race, and on his departure left a small colony of Spaniards on the island. These repaid the generous conduct of the Indians so infamously, that the latter became exasperated and exterminated the worthless settlers. A second settlement was formed, and the Spaniards gained the upper hand, and so ruthlessly did they use their power, that in the middle of the six-

teenth century scarcely 150 Indians remained alive of the hundreds of thousands found there by the Spaniards. For 120 years this lovely island remained almost abandoned, and became the haunt of those ferocious corsairs who for so long were the terror of the New World. Gradually the French obtained a footing in the island and gained possession of the whole of the north-western portion of the colony, which was finally ceded to them by the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, the remaining half being still in the possession of the Spaniards. From the year 1722, when the French colony was freed from the yoke of exclusive trading companies, it rapidly rose in prosperity, while the Spanish settlement declined in population. In 1765 the French colony amounted to 40,000 whites and over 200,000 slaves, and exported immense quantities of sugar, rum, indigo and cotton.

The immense superiority in number of the slaves over the whites, encouraged the former to revolt against their masters, and for several years a bloody and ferocious war, distinguished by scarcely credible enormities, raged between the negroes and the French, with various success. In 1803 the French were finally forced to evacuate the island, and the negroes elected as their chief their leader Dassallines, who assumed the title of Emperor under the name of James I. James did not long enjoy the imperial purple, being shortly after his accession assassinated in a popular tumult, and the supreme authority was then assumed

by one Christophe, with the less pretentious title of king. Christophe having reduced his subjects to a certain degree of order, built himself a handsome palace, and created an aristocracy composed of princes, dukes, barons, &c., some of them possessing most ludicrous titles. The monarchy did not last long, and was soon replaced by a republic; tumults and bloodshed were of constant recurrence. The negroes, jealous of the mulattoes, massacred or banished all the latter, and up to the present moment this beautiful island is constantly the scene of revolution and bloodshed, and the Haytians are frequently being called on to pay heavy indemnities to foreign traders and others for the damage done to their property in these constantly recurring riots.

As may be expected, civilization among the lower classes of Haytians is not very advanced, especially in the interior, where the authority of the Government is even less than nominal. Dreadful accounts reach us of thousands of negroes having gone back to a perfectly savage life in the woods, going about stark naked, and having replaced the Christian religion by Voodooism and fetish worship. Cases of cannibalism have even been reported, and nowhere in the West Indies has Obeah a more tenacious hold over high and low than in Hayti. Such a shocking state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue long, and covetous eyes are cast towards Hayti by more than one of the great powers.

## CHAPTER VI.

Wonderful power of a blessed candle—The ordeal by eau-de-Cologne—Quashie's love for litigation—Scenes in police-court—Fortune-telling—"Pique Imitation!"—Buried treasure—Captain Kidd's hoard—Washing of heads—Credulity of the Middle Ages.

It must really be most discouraging to clergymen who have laboured during the best part of their lives in the West Indies, and done their best in trying to inculcate into Quashie some idea of religion and the meaning of its forms, to find, after all, how little has been understood of his constant teaching, and how sadly and grotesquely the negroes mix up religion with the black art. The simple forms of Protestant worship do not appeal so forcibly to the negroes' imagination as the more impressive if mysterious ceremonial of the Roman Catholic Church, and I feel sure it would grieve the heart of many a worthy Roman Catholic priest if he knew, in the majority of cases, the reasons that prompted so many of his congregation to make offerings of lighted tapers at the foot of the statues of favourite saints, sprinkled round the church.

I was once the victim of a burglary, a very rare

occurrence in Grenada, where a negro might think nothing of appropriating anything lying outside a house, but would require great temptation to induce him to commit a burglary. At all events I woke up one morning, to find a small box containing twelve pounds missing, and a window which I had carefully closed the night before was found wide open, showing the mode of ingress of the blackguard who had stolen my money. The servants vowed they had heard no sound in the night, and knew nothing of the theft. I was naturally much annoyed, and could only report the matter at the nearest police station, whose black sergeant in charge could only tell me, "Well, sah, what we to do?" Reluctantly giving up the matter as a bad job, I had already gone into mourning for the money, when my groom, a silly, honest black boy, astonished me by promising to find the money if I gave him five shillings. His confident look caused my hopes to beat high, and I willingly promised to give him half the twelve pounds if he could bring me back the other half, and then asked him how he was going to set about finding the stolen money. "I am going to put a candle on the thief's head, sah, and he must bring the money back." "You stupid idiot," cried I, my new hopes dashed to the ground, "what on earth do you mean?" "Oh yes, sah, I going to Father Caroni, and I go put a lighted three-shilling candle before St. John's statue, and de man dat tief de money must bring it back to you or he going mad, right off."

Nothing I could say would shake the fellow's belief in the power of the lighted candle, and I was amused to find that some priests enjoyed a higher reputation than others with regard to the mysterious powers of the lighted candles blessed by them. These simple people will even go as far as Carriacou, a small island thirty miles from Grenada, to obtain a candle from an old priest possessing much renown for the efficacy of his candles in the case of a theft. Unfortunately, the matter does not rest there, but a negro having a spite against another will deliberately go to the church, buy a candle, and having lighted it, will kneel down and pray in front of it in order to bring down a curse on his opponent's head. This, I fear, is quite a common thing, and frequently have I heard the threat used, "I go put a candle on your head." I don't know if they ever try to counteract the evil influence of a candle on their heads by setting up an opposition one against their opponent's, but I dare say they do. The only class of people not to be affected by lighted candles, it appears, are twins, who enjoy also many other immunities from Obeah, as will be seen further on.

Lighted candles are only resorted to on great occasions, however, and I found that there were many other minor tests for the discovery of thieves, each one more ridiculous than the last.

One day, finding that a bottle of whisky had suddenly disappeared, I taxed both cook and boy with

the theft. Boisterous protestations on both sides. Says the cook, "Me Barbadian, me never take nor tief nothing in me life. You no know me Barbadian, sah?" This I did not consider as a good point in her case at all, as my experience of "Badians" had been frequently associated with loss of property. Nor was the boy, a Grenadian, behindhand in his protestations, not only did he declare to a pious horror of strong liquor of any kind, but seemed much grieved at the very idea of being suspected, every one of his phrases ending or beginning with an appeal to his Maker. These forcible ejaculations rather startle a stranger at first, and he is apt to complain that the notice of the Almighty is called on for subjects most trivial. Little nigger boys receiving chastisement at the hands of their parents will accompany each whack with a piteous "Oh, God," pronounced "Gahd." The slightest effect of astonishment is invariably prefixed by the inevitable "Oh, me God." They, however, no doubt, use the expression much as French people say "Mon Dieu," and with as little intent of blasphemy. To hear the reverent way in which Quashie prefixes every plan and project, however trivial, by the conditional "Please God," a stranger would be led to think him the pink of piety. He would soon get weary, however, of hearing that "Please God" he would get his clean shirts to-morrow, or "Please God" the dinner would be ready only an hour after the time ordered, &c., *ad infinitum*. A nigger begins a

phrase with "Please God" in the same spirit as he generally ends up with a "Damn it!" and I should not wonder if when passing an especially tempting bunch of plantains within reach, he might find himself saying, "Please God, I go tief dat plantain to-night!"

However, to return to my missing whisky: after endless protestations of innocence which presently led to mutual accusations on the part of cook and boy, I was giving up the matter as *classé*, when the boy, who evidently did not like to be accounted responsible for the delinquency, even together with the cook, begged that I should administer to each of them a dose of eau-de-Cologne. On my asking what for, he assured me that it was an infallible test in the case of robbery, and that after drinking a dose during a peculiar ceremony the thief would be forced thereupon to declare himself, or else "swell up and bust," the invariable ending of any one acted on by "Obeah." Seeing the cook getting evidently troubled, and feverishly expressing anxiety as to the soup in the kitchen, which would be certainly spoilt if not attended to, I entered into the boy's plan and pretended to believe firmly in the efficacy of the "ordeal by eau-de-Cologne," especially as regarded the swelling up and busting of the hardened culprit, so produced a bottle of Maria Farina, of which I administered a small dose to the pair; the cook getting more and more agitated, but spasmodically

protesting her innocence. The boy then crossed his two first fingers and begging us to do likewise, he then in a loud tone began a sort of exorcism—"By St. Peter and St. Paul, who stole the whisky? By St. Peter and St. —" Alas! the unfortunate cook could hold out no longer against this solemn inquisition, and falling on her knees, piteously acknowledged the theft, and assured me, though in vain, that she had only taken the whisky to rub her knee with, which was troubling her with rheumatism. Sammy, the boy, was exceedingly elated at the success of his test, which he had never doubted for an instant, and strutted about the place the whole of the day with a most amusing air of injured innocence, tempered with a conscious pride in the successful working of his "Obeah."

It is generally most difficult to get at the bottom of anything where darkies are concerned. They will aver and swear to the very contrary of what they know, with such an air of trusting simplicity, that you are bound to believe what they say. The place to hear good up-and-down lying is in a police court, and many an amusing hour have I passed in them. One sable lady brings up another for using language which certainly requires inventive genius to string together, and in giving her evidence will repeat to the court, with infinite gusto, the long list of this remarkable vituperation. Both ladies are dressed out in their best frocks, orange with green spots, or violet with

blue bows, and handsomely painted handkerchiefs on their heads. Numerous witnesses will be called, each giving most varied accounts, and at each statement the injured complainant or defendant will cast up her eyes to the ceiling, and audibly ejaculate, "Oh me God, hear how she lie," until sternly repressed by the magistrate. Finally, the defendant may be awarded a month's gaol without option of a fine, and the unfortunate dame will, on her way to the cell downstairs, express her conviction to her sympathizing friends, that the magistrate is only sending her down to gaol because a woman is required there, just now, to wash the prisoners' clothes. Her character will in no way suffer in the estimation of her friends by her month's imprisonment, and on her return to the bosom of her family, her temporary absence will only be referred to as, "when she was staying with her friends in town."

But a gala day for Quashie is the occasion on which he is summoned to give his evidence in favour of a neighbour. All the friends and relatives of those interested in the case will attend the court, dressed in their Sunday best, and will listen with admiration to the answers and speeches of their friends "en evidence." So fond of litigation is the Grenadian, that he would spend his last farthing in the courts and lawyer's hands, for the sake of having a case and the notice it attracts to him from his friends and neighbours. They will willingly bring up a trumpery case,

and pay the fees, to have the occasion of making a speech in court, and will not rest satisfied unless there is an appeal to a superior court, which would give them another chance in town. So full are they of this idea of appeal, that I once saw a man, who was certainly going to gain his case, jump up, and before the magistrate had even summed up and given his verdict, excitedly give notice of appeal against the decision, whatever it might be!

Darkies are just as fond as their ignorant white brethren of peering into futurity, or of hearing their fortunes told. Besides Obeah men and women, to whom they refer for spells and philtres, there are others, who have great reputations for the discovery of thieves and other malefactors. I am sure good, pious o'd Thomas à Kempis little dreamt to what use his admirable book "*Imitation de Jesus Christ*" would be one day put. Say Quashie loses a bunch of plantains or a basket of yams, and is not quite sure on whom to fix the theft; he forthwith goes to some old woman, who has a little more education than the rest of her neighbours, and enjoys a profitable reputation for ferreting out thieves and robberies. This sybil will have provided herself with a copy of Thomas à Kempis's book, and, presenting a pin to the person consulting, will ask him or her to thrust it into any place between the pages of the closed book. The volume is then opened at the place marked by the pin, and she will proceed to read out the verse indicated;

this she will, somewhat after the manner of the priests of the oracles of old, twist and turn so as to be brought to bear on the case, and having previously extracted from the person the names of the men or women suspected of the larceny, and also knowing a great deal about the doings of her neighbours, she will persuade him that so-and-so is the culprit. Quashie will thereupon make a charge in the police court against the person indicated, and if the case be dismissed, the sybil will assure him that his opponent must have set Obeah for the magistrate, and thus prevented him giving a correct judgment. This business is called in Patois “*Pique Imitation,*” and pays the interpreter of Thomas à Kempis remarkably well.

This admirable little book also figures in another manner in the detection of thieves. A key is thrust into the volume ; the names of all the neighbours of the person consulting are then called out, and the one at which the key drops out is fixed on as the person sought for. I believe this system of key divination is known in many parts of Europe among the lower classes.

There is also another profession, connected in a certain degree with Obeah, and which has a great fascination for Quashie. Certain men give themselves out as knowing the whereabouts of buried treasure, which they cannot get at without the assistance of another person, with whom they are willing to share the booty, when found, in consideration of certain

advances in cash, needed before beginning operations. Buried treasure has, certainly, frequently been found in these islands, but I should think that long ere this the supply must have run out, and certainly is very unequal to the demand.

In the days of the bold buccaneers, the early colonists were frequently forced to fly from their settlements, and no doubt often buried the money and valuables they were unable to carry away with them in their flight. Pots and large jars full of gold doubloons and "plug joes," have from time to time been discovered in digging among old ruins, and no doubt twice as many more hoards have been found of which the lucky finders were wise enough to say nothing. The notorious Captain Kidd, the terror of these islands in the eighteenth century, being pursued by a cruiser, was once forced to run his ship ashore at Barbados, and a paper was found among his things, after his death, describing a spot in a small wood near Bridgetown, where he had buried an immense amount of treasure. For acres round the spot indicated, the soil has been perfectly honey-combed by the excavations of treasure-seekers; whether the booty was secured or not, no one knows, as the finder would in all probability have been most careful to keep his success a secret, so as not to have to share with the Government and the owner of the land besides. Even now, when any one is noticed to become suddenly well off, and flush of money, he is at once set down to have dis-

covered a buried jar of gold, when, perhaps, the reason of his affluence may be much more questionable.

I have frequently noticed large holes excavated in a piece of ground, apparently to no purpose, and, on inquiring the reason of them, have been told that they had been made by people digging for hidden money. Quashie will hardly ever set about digging for treasure of his own accord, but is generally inspired by some unprincipled sharper or Obeah man, who will tell him that in days of old, when the treasure was buried, the owner of it must have employed a slave to dig the hole for him, and on the principle of dead men telling no tales, the slave was invariably butchered on the spot, and his spirit would be found guarding the treasure. Accordingly an Obeah man, or some one gifted with the power of treating with the inhabitants of the shadow world, was needed to square the spirit, or else the ghost of the murdered slave would keep on sinking the money deeper and deeper into the earth, as the seeker dug for it.

A West Indian negro will believe anything, except that which is really true, and his credulity of the inexplicable and mysterious, gives a wide field for the dishonest rogues who trade on his simplicity. The more improbable, incongruous and absurd a thing is, the greater hold it takes on his mind, and nothing will shake his conviction that the most utter nonsense is perfectly true, so long as it is wrapped up in mystery, and has a tinge of Obeah about it.

A little village, near which I was once living, was much excited by the visit of an old African woman going about beating a tom-tom, and giving out that she could endue any one with wondrous good luck, simply by washing their heads with a preparation of which she had the secret. Numbers underwent the treatment, and I was astounded to find that even coloured men who knew how to read and write, and considered themselves intelligent, placed themselves under the witch's hands, and were exceeding comforted at the idea that they were in future to be proof against the attacks of bad luck. The operation was performed in public, and be it well understood, the sorceress only went through the luck-giving process "contre especes sonnantes," and must have made a good haul out of her simple, foolish countrymen, before she was treated to an interview with the magistrate on a charge of swindling.

All the same, we must not say too much of the credulity of negroes if we compare them with our lower classes, or turn to some of the current beliefs and ideas so rampant among the most civilized people of Europe during the middle ages. We read in old books on fascination, dæmonology, and the mysteries of the evil eye, that some of the infallible remedies against divers baneful influences were as follows. "An invocation of Nemesis; the kernel of the fruit of a palm tree; spitting on the right shoe before putting it on; washings in river water, provided silence be kept;

licking a child's forehead, first upward, next across, and lastly up again, and then spitting behind its back; laying turf dug from a boy's grave under a boy's pillow, from a girl's under a girl's; silently placing near a child the clothes in which it was baptized; if, as is sometimes the case, a child appears to derive no benefit from washing, take three scrapings from the plaster of each of the four walls of its bedroom, and sprinkle them on its linen; three *lavemens* of three spoonfuls of milk; giving in a drink the ashes of a rope in which a man has been hanged; drawing water silently and throwing a lighted candle into it in the name of the Holy Trinity, then washing the patient's legs in this water, and throwing the remainder behind its back, in the form of a cross; (N.B. This has been known to cure both a woman and a hen!); hanging up the key of the house over a child's cradle; laying on it crumbs of bread, a lock with the bolt shot, a looking-glass or some coral bathed in the font in which it was baptized; hanging round its neck fennel seeds or bread and cheese, &c., &c. All these charms, and many others besides, are recommended by worthy Frommann, and some of them are traced to Pliny.

## CHAPTER VII.

A chapter of horrors—Insect pests—Mosquitoes—Bêtes rouges  
—Chigoes — Cockroaches — Hardbacks—Lizards—Ants—  
Plague of ants in 1770—Centipedes—Scorpions—Serpents.

A GREAT trial to a new-comer in the tropics are the insects of all sorts and descriptions, which worry the life out of a stranger until he becomes in a degree accustomed to the swarms of creeping things found in every corner. His experience of these nuisances begins on board ship, with the huge, repulsive-looking cockroaches, which come out in swarms on a close night and nibble his toes. Then, as he lands, his battles with the worrying mosquitoes begin. To these wretches a nice fresh Englishman is a treat indeed, and, as they seem to scent a stranger from afar, they come down in swarms on the luckless adventurer, and by next morning have generally managed to alter the appearance of his face pretty considerably. One gets accustomed to them in time, however, and after a few months these little buzzing plagues seem to despise their late victim and turn their attention to fresher spoil. His next experience will generally be an acquaintance with "bêtes rouges." These are the

most minute little insects, almost invisible to the naked eye. They are mostly found in short grass, and a walk round the garden will usually result in intolerable itching on one's legs. These "bêtes rouges" swarm up one's ankles and cause a horrid irritation, which only becomes worse as the victim scratches. Another most annoying and at the same time most wonderful insect is also generally picked up in a walk round the garden. This is the Chigoe, or more commonly called "jigger" (*pulex penetrans*), a tiny little creature about the size of a bête rouge. It insinuates itself into your shoes, makes its way through your sock, and finally burrows in your skin and ensconces itself permanently in your toe or other part of your foot. Its presence will generally be discovered by the experience of a most delightful itching sensation, and the intruder should at once be sought out and ejected. If left undisturbed the itching subsides, and in two or three weeks a whitish spot will be noticeable under the skin. This becomes larger and larger until the spot feels soft. The skin all round should then be carefully broken with a needle, and a little grey bag, the size of a pea, will be pulled out, leaving a good sized hole in the foot. This hole should be filled with tobacco ash and will soon heal up. The bag taken out is the full grown chigoe, which, had it been left in the foot, would have proceeded to lay its eggs, and in a short time would have made a bad sore. Black children are often seen quite lame

from the number of neglected chigoes in their feet, and their sores festering soon turn to ulcers and all sorts of disgusting diseases. That pest of the kitchen the English blackbeetle is not found in the West Indies, but might advantageously be taken in exchange for the tropical cockroach. These disgusting insects are simply formidable, and the despair of any one inhabiting an old house. Phosphorus paste seems to afford them a luxurious meal, and insect powder a perfect treat. Mosquito curtains are more needed as a protection against these repulsive creatures than as a safeguard against mosquitoes. They are not so very troublesome so long as they keep to the floor, but when a shower of rain falls, and these immense clumsy things begin to fly about and flop in your face, a stranger to the tropics generally begins to swear audibly.

Next to cockroaches as a nuisance, comes the little hardback; a small oval beetle, perfectly black, with thorny little legs; it becomes almost a plague as the rainy season begins, flying in at the open windows as soon as the lamps are lighted and flopping into all the dishes and plates on the dinner table. Barbados is a great place for them, and I have frequently seen a finger basin almost half-full of the beetles picked off the table during dinner.

Next on the list of creeping things comes the lizard. Although perfectly harmless and of gorgeous colouring, this lively little reptile is generally the

terror of ladies, from the suddenness of its movements, and its aptitude for getting mixed up in their drapery. These bright little green lizards are wonderfully numerous and often very tame, frequently taking up their abodes in window curtains or among the ferns. They are almost exactly similar to the green lizard found in the South of England, and, if caught by their caudal appendage, possess the same property of leaving their tails behind them. I was once sitting in the veranda, watching a little green lizard darting about after the flies: it became very bold, and in one of his chases jumped on my foot; I made a grab at him, and caught the little fellow by the tail. Giving a good wriggle, he darted off, leaving that portion of his property in my hands. Having no use for it, I dropped it on the floor and resumed my book. Presently, on looking down, I saw that a lot of ants had found the piece of tail and were hurrying off with their "trouvaille" as quickly as they could. When they had dragged it almost to their hole, I noticed my little green friend a few inches off, intently eyeing his missing property. The ants were just giving a final pull towards their nest, when the little lizard suddenly made a dart upon them, seized his bit of tail, shook off the ants, and there and then swallowed it with evident gusto. I don't know what this act might be called in scientific language, but I know of no other animal which would make a meal off a part of itself.

These little green lizards are most irascible and fight like gamecocks. Naughty little boys in the West Indies frequently fasten a noose round the middle of their bodies and make them fight to the death. It is sufficient to place two cock lizards in front of each other to make them enemies "jusqu'à à la mort."

A much more objectionable reptile is the house lizard, or wood-slave. It only comes out at night, and lives in very old wooden buildings. It is a most repulsive object, being a bilious yellowish grey, and covered all over with pimply-looking knobs and excrescences; add to this that it is cold and slimy, and that it has the property of sticking like glue to anything it falls on, and you may guess what a favourite it is with ladies. It makes a loud clucking noise at night, and wages war on cockroaches.

Another household pest is the infinite army of ants. Black ants, sugar ants, stinging ants, wood-ants, and crazy ants swarm in every house, and everything sweet or edible has to be isolated, with pans of oil, to be safe from the attacks of these pests. They swarm in the sugar basin; they float on the top of your coffee; they struggle in the butter; ants everywhere, ants in everything. They have also their advantages, and keep a house wonderfully clean; acting as scavengers in carrying away to their nests every scrap of refuse. Not a trace can be seen next morning of the corpses of cockroaches and beetles slain the night before, and

nothing is too large for them to tackle. If European ants are intelligent, their tropical cousins are sagacious in the extreme, and frequently have I been astounded at the marvellous sagacity of these tiny little insects.

A plague of ants once fell on Grenada, and nearly ruined the colony. These were a small species, called sugar ants, from their ruinous effects on the sugar-cane, and appeared first in the colony about the year 1770.

They were first noticed on the Western coast, and were supposed to have been imported from Martinique. They spread on all sides with wonderful rapidity, destroying in succession every sugar plantation between St. George's and St. John's, a space of about twelve miles. At the same time, numbers of these same ants were also noticed on the northern and southern coasts. All attempts to put an effectual stop to the ravages of these insects were of no avail, and finally the Assembly offered a reward of twenty thousand pounds to any one who should discover a remedy against these ruinous pests. Many experiments were tried, but none found to be a radical cure.

The numbers of these ants were incredible. The roads were covered with them for miles together, and so crowded were they in many places, that the print of a horse's hoof would appear for a moment or two, and then be almost immediately filled up by the surrounding multitude. Poison in large quantities was tried, but though destroying large numbers, seemed to make no perceptible difference in the swarms. Fire was

then tried, and it was found that the ants seemed irresistibly attracted to the blaze, and crowding round the spot in myriads, perished in large numbers. Still the plague seemed to increase rather than diminish, and ruin stared the sugar planters in the face.

Finally this calamity, which had baffled all the attempts of the colonists, was at length removed by another, namely, the hurricane of 1770. How the hurricane produced this effect is a matter for wonder, but the fact remains, that after the storm had expended its fury, an amazing decrease in the numbers of the ants was observed everywhere, and they finally ceased to be an obstacle to cultivation.

Next on our list of household horrors comes the centipede or "forty leg." Happily rare, and seldom found save in very old wooden buildings, its sting is most painful and frequently brings on an attack of fever. Some of them attain a large size, and I have frequently seen centipedes nearly a foot long.

After the centipede, in stinging powers, comes the scorpion. Sponges and bath towels are favourite hiding places of this unwelcome intruder, and in the West Indies one soon gets into the habit of narrowly examining the bath before getting in, for fear of falling foul of a lurking centipede or scorpion, to say nothing of snakes, which often show great partiality for the cool dampness of a shower bath. Grenada is happily quite free from venomous serpents, and it is a great comfort to be able to sit down anywhere on

the ground or in the bush, without being worried by the feeling that you may be just disturbing a rattlesnake or deadly "tête de chien." Some of the adjacent islands, however, are unhappily renowned for their deadly snakes. In St. Lucia, where venomous serpents abound, between twenty and thirty persons fall victims to their deadly bite every year. In Trinidad, not only is the rattlesnake anything but a rare sight, but a most fatal little serpent, called the coral snake, is frequently found lurking in the garden beds. A most beautiful little reptile, hardly a foot long, and of the most vivid red colour, its bite causes death in a couple of hours.

Another most aggravating household pest is the wood-ant. Very much like an ant, but provided with wings, these insects build most wonderful nests in the most inconvenient places; the corner of a ceiling or top of a window are favourite building sites of theirs, and to and from these nests radiate long covered passages wonderfully made by the wood-ants of clay and mud. With the most aggravating perseverance will these pests rebuild their nests in the same spot, and the only way to get rid of them is by sprinkling the nests at the full moon with good doses of calomel or arsenic. At other times the poison seems of no avail, but at the full moon the little insects seem ravenous, and, devouring the bodies of the ants killed by the poison, become poisoned in their turn and are soon entirely exterminated.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Lovely scenery in the West Indies—A “trouville”—Carib implements—The Caribs of the Windward Islands—A fading race—A dream.

WITH the exception of Barbados, the Windward and Leeward Islands are most accidented in their surface, and present a most charming appearance when viewed from the sea; each surrounded by a dazzling white strip of sand, which separates the deep azure of the ocean from the tender green of the vegetation growing down almost to the water's edge, the land shelves up almost immediately, and soon green forest-clad hills overtop each other like gigantic billows, till they finally culminate in two or three lofty peaks, around the summits of which hover the fleecy morning clouds, preparatory to disappearing in the bright blue sky above.

Of all these lovely islands, which stud the Caribbean Sea like immense emeralds set in a gigantic turquoise shield, none presents so diversified a surface as Grenada. Hill and dale, mountain and valley, and rarely a plain of any extent. Each hill has its miniature peak, and every sheltered valley its rippling

mountain stream, noisily rushing and tumbling its crystal waters in tiny cascades over the obstacles in its course as it hurries down to contribute its mite to the greedy ocean. Widening and increasing as they descend, some of these little mountain streamlets, ere they reach the shore, assume almost respectable proportions, and require causeways and bridges even in the dry season.

One of my favourite spots is a shady nook on the banks of one of these streams, which flows just below the house which forms my temporary home, and as I lazily lie swinging there in a hammock slung in the shade of a spreading cocoanut palm, a book in my lap and the rippling stream at my feet, I think it would be hard to find anywhere a more charming spot. The sun shines so brightly, bathing every object in a gilded light—the trees and palms around me so clearly defined against the cloudless blue sky. The dark green mountains in the distance, clad in virgin forest growth, rise one above the other in every tint of green, and seem ever trying to pierce the calm blue sky above them.

The gaudy dragon-flies skim above the dancing little river and seem to delight in tantalizing the greedy mullet which now and then jump almost out of the water in their frantic attempts to reach the tempting morsels buzzing along just out of their reach, while a jewelled humming-bird, with emerald throat, darts here and there and utters a cry of joy as he

flutters around a blossoming creeper growing on the cliff on the opposite side of the stream. The pale yellow blossoms cluster thickly and form lovely festoons across the mouth of a cave which burrows in the cliff. I have often wished to explore this cave, but the difficulty of getting across the stream at this spot has always induced me to put off my investigations for another moment. As my eyes wander back to my side of the stream, my notice is attracted to a queer-looking little stone embedded in the mud and sand, quite close to my feet. On loosening it and washing the stone in the water, I find that I have come across quite a "trouvaille," and am delighted to see that my treasure evidently once formed part of a Carib idol.

What a funny little object it is! with its greedy-looking little mouth and heavy round jaws, wicked-looking round eyes, and ears shaped like those of a monkey. At first, its dark red sandy appearance inclined me to believe that it had been fashioned by the potter's art, but a closer examination showed me that it had been cut or carved out of a red sandstone, very common in some parts of the island. The little head evidently originally belonged to a body, but had been broken off, by some accident, at the neck, just behind the large oblong human-shaped ears.

I was very pleased with my find, as not only was I deeply interested in all the relics I could find of that now almost extinct race, the Carib; but, although their

stone implements were occasionally found in ploughing up fields or in the shallow beds of the mountain streams, such a thing as a Carib idol or Zemi was a rarity.

As I examine the little carved head, I think over and wonder what sights that little red piece of fashioned stone has seen—what years have rolled over it, and what changes it has witnessed—I wonder to whose hand it owes its shape, and what were the thoughts of the tawny savage as he cut and carved the stone which, when completed, was to be believed a divinity and destined to preside over the cruel sacrifices of his religion. I wonder if he really believed that the quaint little object of his own fashioning was able to punish him for his misdeeds or reward him for his virtue!

I try to picture to myself how different is now the fair scene before me, stretching away towards the blue ocean, with its bright green fields of waving cane, substantial sugar factories and broad white roads glistening in the sunlight, the regular posts of the telephone wires planted all along. Brightly painted villas peep out on every hill side, from clumps of cocoanut palms or towering palmistes, and the shouts of the negro carters, driving their team of oxen, falls faintly on my ear. Scarce more than two hundred years ago, this same fair scene existed not. In the place of those handsome sugar works grew the virgin forest, those fair green fields never saw the sunlight,

but furnished cool retreats to countless troops of monkeys, while here and there, along the sea shore, groups of Carib huts may have existed and served as homes to the warlike and formidable savages which populated these Windward Islands. I try to realize that the glistening white sail now shining on the horizon, is the *Pinta* or the *St. Maria* with Columbus and the Pinzons on board, and the astonishment and wonder of the primitive islanders on seeing for the first time what seemed to them gigantic birds calmly sailing on the ocean.

Columbus tells us that these savages were very different in temperament to the mild and trusting Indians of Hispaniola and Cuba, and that instead of the warm and hospitable welcome the confiding natives of the larger islands always gave the Spaniards—in these smaller colonies they were always attacked and their advances and presents rejected with scorn by the ferocious savages.

In fact, the islands of the Leeward and Windward groups were peopled by a most independent and warlike race of Caribs, who were cannibals and the terror of the mild and peaceful Indians of the larger islands.

The island of Tobago lays claim to being the genuine Robinson Crusoe's island, and probably the mild "Man Friday" was a luckless Arrowack, captured from one of the larger islands by the cannibal Caribs of the Windward Islands, who feared

not to undertake immense voyages of a warlike nature in their frail canoes.

The island of Grenada was first colonized by the French in the middle of the seventeenth century, and old French historians gravely aver that the island was duly and legally purchased from the Caribs. We find, however, that the price paid was two or three bottles of rum and a few knives, so we can easily understand that the unfortunate natives hardly considered themselves sufficiently compensated for their loss of independence and consequent misery, and we can scarcely blame them for repelling the invaders by all the means in their power. Might, as usual, overcame Right, and the unfortunate Indians were hunted into the woods like wild animals, and mercilessly destroyed wherever met with. They defended their soil, however, with the utmost bravery, and, unlike the Indians of the larger islands, preferred death to slavery. The last of the Grenada Caribs perished by throwing themselves off a precipitous cliff into the ocean, and the rock was thenceforward known as "le Morne des Sauteurs."

Up to the end of the last century, the Caribs remained in possession of St. Vincent and practised cannibalism. They were finally subjugated on the island becoming an English colony ; but, revolts and rebellions continually breaking out among them and thus endangering the safety of the settlement, the major portion of this indomitable race was trans-

ported to an island off Honduras, and a small tract of land, called the Carib country, was reserved for those remaining in St. Vincent. They have since dwindled away with great rapidity and, at present, I believe, there are not more than three or four pure Caribs in the island. Dominica still possesses a few individuals of this interesting race, but in a few years there will be nothing left to remind the world of this vanished people, save the stone hatchets and other implements found occasionally in the fields, which were in use among the Caribs before the advent of the white man in these lovely islands.

As I lie in my swaying hammock in the cool, drowsy shade, lulled by the sighing of the scented breeze playing among the gilded spathes of the cocoanut palm above me, my eyes wander over the little idol head, and gradually, it seems to me, its shape is becoming more and more distinct—lines, which I never noticed before, seem to be clearly defined on the face, and now, as I look again, it seems to me the head is resting on a mass, which resembles a body of some sort—the legs and arms are there, crossed and queerly twined around the body, which now seems to loom clear and distinct out of the surrounding gloom. Gradually other objects take shape and form, and on the walls of what seems to me a spacious rock-hewn cavern, I see hanging a multitude of curious objects: spears, with rudely-fashioned tips of bone or sharpened stones, gathered together in a sheaf, with hatchets and other

implements, carved out of some kind of greenish or light grey stone; curious necklaces of coloured pebbles, and ivory teeth of some sort are festooned about what appears to be a crown or circlet of gold, ornamented with feathers of brilliant hue. Similar trophies are disposed on the walls around the cavern, while beneath each a weird and ghastly object is displayed. Erect on a slab of polished stone, covered with curious carvings, sits, cross-legged, a rigid and shrivelled mummy—its sightless eyes sunken in the skull, the thin dry lips receding from the teeth, gleaming white and regular in some, missing in others; strands of coarse black hair hang down from the skulls of most, while others are gashed and scarred from countless wounds, telling of warfare and carnage, and of the death the dearest to a Carib.

Twelve or thirteen of these ghastly objects are ranged regularly round the sides of the cavern; while near the altar I see a deep black hole, seemingly hollowed out of the rock, and close by lies a square slab of carved stone, similar to all those on which the shrivelled mummies rest.

Presently, as my eyes, with wonder, grasp the details of the cavern, I seem to hear a soft footfall, and from the gloom of the end of the cave I see advancing towards the altar a tall, tawny and almost naked figure. Were it not for the piercing black eyes, restlessly glistening in their orbits, I might almost have taken him for one of the mummies come back to

life, so shrivelled was his skin and shrunken was his frame. His coarse black hair, tightly dragged off his temples and neck, was tied in a bunch on the crown of his head, and mixed with a few sombre-coloured feathers; a string of glistening human teeth hung round his neck, and round his emaciated hips a girdle of coal black feathers.

With slow yet firm and steady steps, he advances nearer, and as he passes along, his eyes fall on the deep square pit which seems gaping for a victim; for an instant his pitiless eyes seem to gleam yet brighter, and his thin blue lips for a moment part in a cruel smile, disclosing a row of blackened teeth, each filed to a point sharp as a needle. "All is ready," he mutters in guttural tones, and advancing to the entrance of the cave, he puts aside the curtain of tangled lianes and leaves which masks the entrance, and looks out over the thickly-wooded valley for an instant.

"Ah! here she comes—I thought so," he mutters again; "no doubt to ask some boon of the Zemi. What will she ask? I wonder; the great Zorozatek loved her well, methinks, and put no maid above her; yet, certain am I 'twill be some paltry woman's jealousy to wreak upon some luckless girl!"

At that moment, the curtain at the entrance was hurriedly pushed aside, and a woman with hasty and agitated steps advances towards the altar, but, seeing the priest apparently absorbed in prayer before the

Zemi or idol, she stands a moment, and respectfully awaits the conclusion of his devotions.

A tall, handsome, muscular woman, with raven tresses falling in profusion almost down to her ankles, and clad in a small petticoat of some coarse cotton tissue; her eyes roam over the cavern hurriedly, and glisten as she marks the gaping pit, lying uncovered near the altar. A cruel, vengeful gleam passes over her features, and her hands clutch each other in suppressed emotion.

As the priest rises from the prayerful attitude he had assumed on her entrance, she hurriedly and in excited and pressing accents, seems to entreat some boon of the priest.

“Oh, hasten, hasten, father, or they will be impatient of waiting for me; and see, I bring you a small offering for the service of the mighty Zemi, and should my prayer be granted, I promise a still greater gift.”

“But, my daughter,” interrupted the priest, as he received from her two small square plates of virgin gold, “I can only intercede for you with the mighty Zemi; yet, if my prayers avail, your wish shall be granted. Her name is Ariaxa, you say?”

“Yes, yes, father—I ask that she be chosen for his companion in the world of shadows, as he loved her so, and smiled on her so fondly as he died: none other would be so acceptable to him as Ariaxa. I cared for and cherished him with all the love I could

bestow, yet, when she was near, his glances would ever stray to her, and could he have spoken, I feel certain he would have directed her to be his hand-maiden when he should pass into the happy land beyond the seas."

A sound of wailing and lamentation is wafted on the breeze, and seems gradually approaching.

"Hasten back, my daughter, or the tribe will be weary of seeking for thee. If my prayers avail, the Zemi will grant the Cacique's wish."

With grateful smile and triumphant glance, the jealous woman hurried from the cave, leaving the priest to prepare for the approaching ceremony. As he arranges the altar, he mutters and whispers to himself the while, and seems to be arranging and concealing under trails of blossoming vines, a long pliant tube, which appears to twine round in tortuous rings, and finally disappears behind the little cruel-faced idol.

The sounds of mourning approach, and become more and more distinct as the tramp of numerous feet resounds through the glen. Soon the curtain of lianes and tangled vines is put aside, and the advancing procession is met at the entrance by the solemn silent priest, who waves his arms above the multitude. Slowly and reverently the procession enters the spacious cavern. Six stalwart, brawny chiefs bear between them a wooden stage, on which sits, cross-legged, the mummied, wizened frame of the dead

Cacique. His hair is gathered in a bunch on the crown of his head, and decorated with feathers of gorgeous colouring. His shrivelled face is painted bright with scarlet roucou and rings of black and white paint, while through his nose a crimson feather has been thrust. His olive chest, almost covered with curious devices in brilliant colours, is further decorated with ghastly necklaces of human teeth, mingled with thin plates of purest gold, while in his hands are placed the spear and heavy wooden sword he wielded with such might but a short while ago.

Behind the mummied corpse stands the tall, handsome woman who had but a few moments before left the cave, and now her shrieks and lamentations make the vaulted roof resound. Her eyes seem to seek those of the Zemi priest, as if already looking for an answer to her prayer; but he, with frantic leaps and gleaming eyes, seems worked into a frenzy, and cuts and gashes his tawny skin with a sharp ivory instrument, until his blood drips from countless wounds.

The cave is filled with Carib warriors and women, while just behind the dead Cacique stands a group of young and handsome maidens, their long raven tresses have been severed from their heads, and are now laid as an offering on the bier of the Carib chief. Their shrieks and lamentations fill the air, and one amongst them, with a form of classic beauty and eyes of liquid purity, seems to tremble and shudder with convulsive starts, and appears unable to withdraw her

glance from the cruel-faced idol enshrined on the altar. An old Carib woman, with mournful chant, recites the brave deeds of the dead Cacique, and after singing of all his acts of valour, finishes by imploring the Zemi to indicate by word or sign which one of the young maidens there assembled had been chosen by the dead Cacique for his companion in the shadow world. A ghastly stillness now reigns through the silent cave, and the cluster of maidens round the bier convulsively clutch each other's arms, and tremble with deathly fear. While every man and woman breathlessly awaits the answer of the Zemi, the stealthy priest has, unobserved, placed the end of the pliant tube between his teeth, and with a hissing sound the idol's lips seemed filled with life, and the sound of words seems flowing from them. Amid the deathly silence, the single word "Ariaxa" falls from the Zemi's lips, and as the cavern rings with the warriors' shouts and the women's cries, the hapless Carib maiden is seized by two stalwart savages and dragged before the altar. The Zemi's priest, with glistening eyes, for a moment poises his ivory dagger in the air; the lovely maiden's lips part in one long despairing shriek, and . . . . I open my eyes, and stretch myself in my lazy hammock, and seem still to see the agony of the hapless victim, as I hear the piercing cry of a mountain hawk, planing in the still atmosphere just above me.

## CHAPTER IX.

Marvellous occurrences—Miraculous shower of stones—Wonderful showers of water in St. Lucia—The electric girl—Medicine-men and rain-producers.

Not in the lower orders alone are people seen in these Western Isles possessing remarkable and mysterious powers, but many a wondrous tale have I heard from the mouths of intelligent people of marvellous events having occurred to their certain knowledge. The following wonderful incident I really believe to have happened, as there are still scores of witnesses who swear to its truth in every particular. I will give it in the words of a friend, a French Roman Catholic priest, from whom I first heard it.

“I was once in charge of a large and rather populous country district in Trinidad, and while there a remarkable event occurred which, being still unexplained, has quite shaken my ideas respecting the many stories of mystery one hears so often and laughs at. A friend of mine had bought a large but almost abandoned sugar estate, and the original dwelling-house having fallen to ruins, he was obliged to run up a small temporary wooden building until he could set about

erecting a permanent dwelling. This little house was only composed of two good sized rooms, divided by a small wooden partition and having no ceiling but the roof above them. The whole house was perhaps about thirty feet long by fourteen broad. It had been built and occupied by the planter and a brother of his for some weeks, when one evening I met them rushing towards me with the wonderful assertion, that stones were falling in their house, and that they could not explain how. They were in a state of great agitation, and by degrees I extracted from them that they had been sitting in the veranda while the sun was setting, and had remained there until it had become quite dark. One of them was just about to go inside to light a lamp when the noise of something heavy falling on the floor of the inner room startled him. A moment after came another crash. Hastily lighting the lamp, he opened the door and advanced into the room; on the floor he perceived a couple of good sized stones lying near him. Thinking himself the victim of some trick, he looked towards the window, which, however, was firmly secured. At that instant he heard another crash in the room he had just left. Hastily returning to it, he found on the floor another stone—Bang! Crash! again in the bedroom! Thoroughly alarmed, he rushed outside and called his brother, who, before he had time to speak, asked what he was kicking up all the row for! From outside they could hear distinctly the continual falling of the stones, and, unable to bear

it any longer, they had rushed out to beg me to come and see the wonderful and terrifying occurrence.

“Calling a couple of men, we returned all together to the little wooden house, and as we approached we could distinctly hear the crash of the falling stones. It was only with great trouble that I could induce my two black fellows to accompany us, so great was their terror of this supernatural business. Taking the lantern in my hand, I entered the porch, and instantly, as the light penetrated the house, the noise ceased. Entering the outer room, we found the floor covered with flinty stones of various sizes, some weighing a couple of ounces, others as many pounds. The windows were all closed, and I was perfectly dumbfounded. We were all inside examining the stones when a sudden gust of wind blew out the lantern. Instantly the stones began to descend on all sides. We were glued to the spot with terror, and could hear the stones falling quite close to us on all sides; sometimes I could feel them whistling down quite close to my head, but, marvellous to relate, not one of us was as much as touched. Regaining courage, I managed to relight the lantern, and instantly the miraculous shower stopped. I was at my wits' end to account for the phenomenon; the stones lay in heaps all round the spot on which we were standing, but as soon as the lantern was alight, all became as still as the grave.

“Carefully placing our light in a sheltered corner, we began gathering up the stones and piled them

together in a heap outside. Finding all still again, we resolved to pass the remainder of the night there, sleeping on the floor as best we could.

“Everything remained perfectly quiet for a couple of hours, and most of us were soon sound asleep. Being nearest the lantern, and curious to determine the nature of this phenomenon, I plucked up courage and blew out the light. Instantly, as before, the stones began to fall on all sides, and finding that no one had received the slightest hurt, we all began to regain courage and speculate on the causes of this wonderful phenomenon. Every time the lantern was relighted, the shower immediately stopped, only to recommence every time the light was put out. This continued all through the night, and ceased on the first appearance of dawn. The roof was in no way injured, and the mystery was perfectly inexplicable. The amount of stones gathered up in the house formed a large heap outside, and were not of the same nature as those lying about the place.

“Nothing remarkable happened during the day, but the news of this miraculous shower becoming known in the district, crowds of people came from all sides to see the stones, and hundreds begged to be allowed to pass the night in the house, hoping to witness the phenomenon for themselves, in case it was repeated. A few of our friends, and especially those who pooh-poohed the thing and openly expressed their conviction that the whole business was a hoax, were allowed to

pass the night in the wonderful house. They were not disappointed, for as soon as complete darkness came on, the stones once more began to descend. The shower, however, was not so continual as on the previous night, but was witnessed by some fourteen or fifteen people. The next morning, on gathering up the stones, we found that the heap collected on the previous day was intact, and that the stones falling during the second night were fresh ones, obtained,—Heaven knows where.

“As might be expected, the news of these wonders was very soon spread all over the island, and the place was crowded from morning till night. The mysterious shower, however, never occurred again, and the place returned to its normal condition. Neither the reason, cause, nor effect of these miraculous showers has ever been explained, and the whole thing remains a mystery to this day. That the thing happened, I will solemnly vouch for, but that is all I know about it, and I suppose, a mystery it will ever remain.”

Another most astonishing and as unaccountable mystery happened a few years ago in St. Lucia, in connection with a little girl, who possessed the undesirable power of causing rain to fall wherever she might be. The first shower came on quite suddenly, and one day the mother of the child was astounded on being told that rain was falling in the bedroom at that moment occupied by her little girl. Rushing upstairs at once, the lady did actually find a smart

shower of water falling from the ceiling and soaking into the floor. Umbrellas had to be called into immediate requisition in order to investigate the mystery. It could only however be "constaté" that although perfectly fine and dry outside, rain was undoubtedly falling, in broad daylight, in the room occupied by the little girl. The child was taken into another room, with the immediate effect of producing another equally smart shower, whereas the room she had just vacated became quite dry again. The unfortunate little girl was hurried from one room to another, upstairs and down again, only with the same invariable effect. She was ultimately taken into the garden, in the hope that she might water some beds of vegetables which sadly needed irrigation, but unfortunately, this watery little girl obtained no effect outside, and was only found to cause showers in undesirable places, such as bedrooms and kitchens. The news was soon bruited about and numbers came to see the young phenomenon. The poor child was in imminent danger of catching her death of cold, but happily this attack of spontaneous waterworks only lasted a day or two, during which time the unhappy little girl had to be accommodated in a wash-house, where her watery powers were duly appreciated and turned to profit.

All joking apart, though, this wonderful incident did really occur, as numbers of residents in St. Lucia can testify, nor is the case a solitary one. Almost similar cases have been known from time to time,

where young girls have been found endued with remarkable powers. Many of my readers will remember seeing in the papers, some four or five years ago, accounts of a young girl in Kent, I believe, who was endowed with the wonderful property of causing all the furniture of the room in which she happened to be, to jump about and indulge in most wonderful movements and activity. A great many papers took up the case, and the phenomenon was observed by numbers of people. The young girl as suddenly as she had become possessed of her uncanny influence on inanimate objects as quickly lost it, and though the mystery remained unsolved, the case was dropped and nothing more heard of it.

M. Lafontaine, in his "Art de Magnetiser," gives a wonderful instance of a young girl who was similarly endowed with a marvellous influence on inanimate objects. This power he attributes to the possession of an unnatural amount of electricity possessed by the young girl. I will translate the extract relating to this wonderful case. Speaking of the property possessed by certain animals, such as the electric eel and others, of emitting shocks of electricity at will, he says :—

"A young girl named Angelina Cottin, likewise possessed the power of emitting shocks of the electricity which was being developed in her to an extraordinary degree.

"Shortly after her arrival in Paris, this young girl

was brought to me three times. On the first occasion, namely 15th February, 1846, four days before she came under the notice of M. Arago, I observed, most cautiously, the phenomena exhibited by her, as I was rather predisposed to consider her a hoax; but the following are the results of my investigations, assisted by several of my friends.

“The persons who had brought her to me had told the girl that I would be able to send her to sleep by magnetism, and that if I did so she would most likely lose her precious power. She seemed, consequently, much alarmed while in my presence, so much so, that more than half an hour elapsed before she produced any phenomena. This, however, only put me still more on my guard and increased my doubts about her.

“However, it struck me that the waxed floor of the drawing-room might be an obstacle to her, being a bad conductor of the electric fluid. I then led her into the dining-room, which was paved with tiles, and five minutes after, her wonderful power began to make itself felt. A chair was the first thing to fall; another one was handed to her, but as she was about to sit down, it receded from her and swayed to and fro violently.

“An armchair was then pushed towards her, which I firmly held, assisted by a friend. On her approaching it, the heavy piece of furniture started backwards and rocked from side to side so violently as to require our united efforts to keep it in its place.

“The young girl seemed to experience a powerful and painful shock every time these effects were produced. Suddenly turning round, she happened to touch a table, which shifted backwards two or three feet; at the same time, one, two, three chairs fell to the ground and jumped convulsively.

“Having been satisfied that these phenomena were undoubtedly genuine, the young girl was led back to the drawing-room. Here, however, her influence continued to be felt. I then magnetized a young somnambulist called Louise. When Angelique Cottin saw her arrived at the state of ecstasy, provoked by the sound of the piano, she was evidently powerfully impressed by the sight, and involuntarily approached the piano, at which was sitting M. Adolphe Adam, the well-known composer of the ‘Châlet.’ Instantly, the piano seemed to receive a shock and jumped a foot from the ground. M. Adam was quite dumfounded. In order to verify the spontaneity of this phenomenon, we attempted to lift the piano, which, however, required our united efforts to move even slightly.

“M. Adam continued playing and the piano again moved back the distance of a foot. The eyes of every one present were constantly fixed on the young girl, who seemed almost unconscious of the effects of her power, and in fact seemed quite absorbed in contemplation of the ecstatic movements of the somnambulist, and was not even touching the piano.

“Iron did not seem to be affected by her, but wood seemed peculiarly sensible to her influence. Her left wrist being placed near a lighted candle, the flame was observed to become horizontal, as if blown on by a current of air.

“Ten days later the young girl was brought back to me, but the effects produced were much slighter, and did not appear at all on her third visit. These phenomena had been observed in her for the first time on the 15th January, 1846, and in the middle of February, six weeks later, they appeared for the last time.

“Another almost similar case happened at Carcassonne in 1833 or 1834, where a young girl, eight or nine years old, at certain times, by her presence alone in the kitchen, would cause all the saucepans, kettles, and fire-irons to execute a fantastic dance over the floor.”

In many parts of Central Africa the medicine-men are credited by their fellow savages with the power of causing rain to fall, in fact, this is their principal function. No one would think of believing in this power. Yet Père Labat gives a most wonderful anecdote relative to rain falling at the command of a negro, and one can evidently see by the good old Father's words that he more than half believed in the truth of the anecdote. He relates how once in Dominica, or Martinique, the island was suffering from a protracted drought, and the convent garden

was especially dry and unproductive. The good Fathers were in despair at seeing their crops of vegetables and herbs withering away, and daily prayers for rain were offered up. One especially dry morning, Père Labat was astounded by the proposal of a young black slave, who offered to cause the rain to fall in a very short time. The more the Father laughed at his pretensions, the more the slave boy persisted in his assertions of being able to produce rain at will. There being not a cloud in the sky, and not the faintest sign of rain, Pére Labat gave him full permission to try all he knew. The boy thereupon began to mutter a long African spell, and the worthy Father most solemnly avers that in less than an hour, a small cloud appeared, and as it passed over the Convent, the garden received a fine drenching shower. The rain, he goes on to say, fell nowhere else, and the pious Dominican hastens to say how he reproved the boy for his evident intercourse with the devil, and there and then exorcised the evil spirit with which the boy was possessed.

Whether due to intercourse with Mephistopheles or not, it is really a pity that the secret of producing rain has not been handed down to the present day. The scores of lovely islets now barren from continual drought would otherwise be cool and refreshing spots of verdure, flowing with milk and honey.

## CHAPTER X.

- Erroneous ideas current on the West Indies—Climate—Hurricanes—Description of great hurricane—Decadence of sugar industry—Cocoa—A profitable product—Queer notions of West Indian planters—Effect of the moon.

It is remarkable to note how little most English people know of the West Indies. To nearly all, except those who have relations or property in these colonies, the West Indies are summed up in the one island Jamaica, while the names of the other islands are generally taken to be the towns of the largest colony. I have frequently seen letters addressed to Barbados—Jamaica, and have even come across a circular issued from the General Post Office speaking of Barbados, Trinidad, Demerara, and the other islands, thus giving Demerara an insular form, whereas it really is only a district of British Guiana. This is bad enough, but one will meet thousands of people at home, especially ladies, who seem determined to mix up the West with the East Indies, and any one returning home from the West Indies is frequently asked to tell all about the elephants and tigers and other ferocious animals he is supposed to have come

across ; and I have often felt humiliated to see the loss of interest consequent on the declaration, that in most of the West Indian colonies, there are no wild beasts at all, except mosquitoes, and that one has really no travellers' tales to tell.

It is on the subject of climate especially that erroneous ideas are most rife. Any one leaving England for the West Indies is given up as infallibly lost to his friends and relations, but, on the other hand, if by chance he should escape falling a victim to yellow fever, small pox, or cholera, he will return home after a few years as yellow as the million of guineas his pockets are certain to be stuffed with.

Some of the colonies are certainly rightly considered unhealthy and show a heavy death-rate. British Guiana suffers considerably from yellow fever, but it must also be said that the terrific amount of swizzles, cocktails and punches imbibed by the inhabitants must in a great degree be responsible for a large proportion of the death-rate.

Barbados, though more frequently visited by epidemics of yellow fever than the other colonies, still shows a proportion of deaths very little higher than that of temperate Europe ; while the smaller islands, such as Grenada, St. Vincent, and the Leeward Islands, are blessed with an almost perfect climate, and are wonderfully free from epidemics.

Earthquakes and hurricanes are of comparatively rare occurrence, and the slight shocks of the former

experienced from time to time do very little more damage than those felt in Northern Europe. Hurricanes seem restricted to a certain zone, the limits of which are nicely defined. While some of the islands are almost totally exempted from these terrific scourges, others, on the contrary, are frequently almost completely devastated by these fearful cyclones. No one except an eye-witness can have any conception of the awfulness of a West Indian hurricane, when all the elements seem to have torn the reins out of their guiding hand, and all appears to be returning to chaos. Barbados has frequently fallen a victim to tremendous hurricanes, and it shows what wonderful recuperative power this marvellous little colony must possess, when one notes the extraordinary rapidity with which the colony seems to emerge from the wave of destruction which so frequently passes over it. The following description of a dreadful hurricane which almost completely devastated Barbados in 1831 is told in the words of an eye-witness, Mr. Bryan T. Young, and gives a good impression of the awfulness of a West Indian cyclone.

“On the 10th of August the sun rose without a cloud and shone resplendently. At 10 a.m. a gentle breeze which had been blowing, died away. After a temporary calm, high winds sprung up from the east-north-east, which in their turn subsided. For the most part, calms prevailed, interrupted by occasional sudden puffs from between the north and north-east.

“At noon the heat increased to  $87^{\circ}$  Fahr. and at 2 p.m. to  $88^{\circ}$ , at which time the weather was uncommonly sultry and oppressive.

“At four o'clock the thermometer sank again to  $86^{\circ}$ . At five, the clouds seemed gathering densely from the north, the wind commencing to blow freshly from that point. Then a shower of rain fell, followed by a sudden stillness, but there was a dismal blackness all round. Towards the zenith there was an obscure circle of imperfect light, subtending about  $35^{\circ}$  or  $40^{\circ}$ . From six to seven o'clock, the weather was fair and wind moderate, with occasional slight puffs from the north, the lower and principal stratum of clouds passing fleetly towards the south, the higher strata, a scud, rapidly flying to various points. At seven o'clock the sky was clear and the air calm, tranquility reigned until about nine o'clock, when the wind again blew from the north. At half-past nine it freshened, and moderate showers of rain fell at intervals for the next hour.

“Distant lightning was observed at half-past ten, in the north-north-east and north-west; squalls of wind and rain from the north-north-east with intervals of calms succeeding each other until midnight. The thermometer, meantime, varied with remarkable activity; during the calms it rose as high as  $86^{\circ}$ , and at other times it fluctuated between  $83^{\circ}$  to  $85^{\circ}$ . It is necessary to be thus explanatory, for the time the storm commenced and the manner of its approach

varied considerably in different situations. Some houses were actually levelled to the earth, when the residents of others, scarcely a mile apart, were not sensible that the weather was unusually boisterous.

“After midnight the continual flashing of lightning was awfully grand, and the gale blew fiercely from between the north and north-east. At 1 a.m. of the 11th, the tempestuous rage of the wind increased, the storm, which at one moment blew from the north-east, suddenly shifted from that quarter and burst from the north-west and intermediate points. The upper regions were from this time illuminated by incessant lightning, but the quivering sheet of blaze was surpassed in brilliancy by the darts of electric fire which exploded in every direction. At a little after two, the astounding roar of the hurricane, which rushed from the north-north-west and north-west, cannot by language be described. About three, the wind occasionally abated, but intervening gusts proceeded from the south-west, the west and west-north-west with accumulated fury. The lightning having also ceased for a few moments only at a time, the blackness in which the town was enveloped was inexpressibly awful. Fiery meteors were presently seen falling from the heavens; one, in particular, of a globular form and a deep red hue, was observed to descend perpendicularly from a vast height. It evidently fell by its specific gravity, and was not shot or propelled by any extraneous force. On approaching

the earth, with accelerated motion, it assumed a dazzling whiteness and an elongated form, and dashing to the ground in Beckwith Square, it splashed around in the same manner as melted ore would have done, and was instantly extinct. In shape and size it appeared much like a common barrel shade. Its brilliancy and the spattering of its particles on meeting the earth, gave it the resemblance of a body of quicksilver of equal bulk.

“A few minutes after the appearance of this phenomenon, the deafening noise of the wind sank to a solemn murmur, or more correctly speaking, a distant roar; and the lightning, which from midnight had flashed and darted forkedly, with few and but momentary intermissions, now for a space of nearly half a minute, played frightfully between the clouds and the earth, with novel and surprising action. The vast body of vapour appeared to touch the houses, and issued downward, flaming blazes which were nimbly returned from the earth upward. The coruscations for the short space of time they continued, instantly succeeding each other; this strange quivering or darting of flashes down and up may be compared to the miniature blazing produced by the rapid and irregular discharges of opposing artillery, closely engaged. Whilst this remarkable phenomenon proceeded, the earth vibrated in a manner and in time answering with the action of the lightning. Twice or more, when the coruscations were more brilliant and intense,

but less rapid in succession, the earth received correspondent shocks. The moment after this singular alternation of lightning, the hurricane again burst from the Western points with a violence beyond conception, hurling before it thousands of missiles, the fragments of every unsheltered structure of human art. The strongest houses were caused to vibrate to their foundations and the surface of the very earth trembled as the destroyer raged over it. No thunder was at any time heard; had the cannon of a hundred contending armies been discharged, or the fulmination of the most tremendous thunder-claps rattled through the air, the sounds could not have been distinguished. The horrible roar and yelling of the wind, the noise of the tumultuous ocean, whose frightful waves threatened the town with destruction, if all the other elements might spare; the clattering of tiles; the falling of roofs and walls, and the combination of a thousand other sounds, formed the most hideous din, which appalled the heart and bewildered if not alienated the mind. No adequate idea of the sensations which then distracted the mind and confounded the faculties can possibly be conveyed to those who were distant from the scene of terror. The sheltered observer of the storm, amazed and in a state of stupor, was fixed to the spot where he stood; the sight and the hearing were overpowered, and the excess of astonishment refused admission to fear; what must have been the mental agonies of those wretched fugitives, who,

destitute of a place of refuge, were the sport of the dreadful and ruthless tempest, and alive to all its horrors! This unparalleled uproar continued without intermission until half-past four, the raging blast then veering from the west and other points to the southward of it, attended with avalanches of rain. After five o'clock, the storm now and then for a few moments abated, at which time the dreadful roar of the elements, having partially subsided, the falling of tiles and building materials, which, by the last dreadful gust, had probably been carried to a lofty height, the shrieks of suffering victims, the cries of the terrified inhabitants, and the howling of dogs, were clearly audible, and awakened the mind to a distressing apprehension of the havoc and carnage which had been and still were desolating the island.

“ At half-past five, after a dreadful gust from the west-south-west, the wind suddenly chopped round to the east, from whence it blew a moderate gale, which in a few minutes increased, and changing to the south-east, a hurricane again raged, but unaccompanied by those fatal gusts which from the western quarter had inflicted so much destruction. Torrents of rain at this time fell. At six the hurricane blew steadily and tremendously from the south, driving sheets of rain horizontally before it. This continued till seven, when the wind, then from south-east, was more moderate; but floods of rain still deluged the ruins of the town, and the miserable population were

now destitute of any shelter. At 8 a.m. strong breezes blew from the east-south-east; after that hour the dense body of clouds began to break up, and at ten o'clock the sun for a few moments darted its rays over a prospect of wretchedness and woe, more replete with real misery and sickness to the heart, than the field of battle (after a sanguinary conflict) ever presented."

Another eye-witness gives the following description of the appearance of the island after that horrible night:—

"About eleven o'clock in the morning of the 11th of August, I ventured out and walked from the Careenage along the bay; not a house, not a wall, not a tree to be seen standing, until we reached the Honourable Mr. Beckle's dwelling (part of which only is injured). Shingles, immense pieces of wood, &c., knee deep through the streets; in one place, the heads of the numberless dead were seen, in another, their arms and legs, in many instances severed from the body; whilst others were carried to and fro on boards. I then went up to the garrison, and here my pen fails to describe the scene which presented itself; the barracks almost to the ground, and numbers buried in the ruins. I next proceeded to Bishop's Court; here, too, was ruin and desolation—not a wall standing except the new Hall; the Bishop, Mrs. Coleridge and the Rev. Mr. Luckcock were in the hall; neither his lordship nor Mrs. Coleridge

remembered my name, although I had before been an intimate of the family. They knew my person. The former had nothing on of his own, except an old hat. I met Mr. S. at the foot of Gibraltar Hill (where his residence was situated) with hardly a rag on his back; to and fro was he wandering,—pitiful indeed was the sight; he from whom we had parted not five days before, in comfortable circumstances, was now reduced almost to beggary; his grandmother, mother and aunt, shocking to relate, hastening to the grave: Cavan's house levelled to the ground. The Arch-deacon's escaped with little damage: Government House unroofed, and otherwise materially damaged; the boys' Central school slightly injured; the girls' entirely gone, every individual within it at the time buried in the ruins; but, most providentially, all have been dug out and not so much as a limb broken; the King's House and Commissary quarters are standing, but the iron fence enclosing them totally destroyed. Rev. Mr. Cummins' house still erect, although built of wood. Rev. Mr. Garnett's almost to the ground; Cathedral roof gone; Commissariat's office has sustained injury. I again reached town. Few houses I found standing uninjured except Mr. Pierce's and Dr. Armstrong's just opposite. Almost every merchant ruined: few of them possess so much as a suit of clothes to walk the streets in. Every vessel thrown high up into the Bay.

“Having seen the greater part of the town, I

yesterday morning, the 12th, ventured to go into the country. After having crossed trees and streams of water, I reached Chaplain's lodge, the residence of the Rev. Mr. Watts, this was down entirely; the white inmates (Mrs. Watts excepted, who was at the Bishop's) had escaped with difficulty and found refuge beneath Mr. Pinder's shattered roof. The house of Mr. Hinkson and other buildings down.

"Now, at the top of the hill, what a scene is presented to my view! No St. Mark's chapel, not a stone to tell where it stood: no Sealy Hall, and what is still worse, very little of the College was to be seen; the new additions to each wing entirely gone; the hall and the chapel levelled, the foundations only remaining; the library entirely demolished, not a vestige of a book to be seen.

"Were you to ride through the country, you would actually be shocked; the scene generally is changed, it is with difficulty a road into the country is traced; not a dwelling-house, not a set of sugar works, and but few pieces even of the walls of the mills, are to be seen on the road from town to the College by the way of 'Kendall's' and back again on the St. Philip's road through the heart of the country. You would scarcely credit the difference everything presents to what we saw on our way to town on the 6th instant. Scenes of ruin and devastation are everywhere to be met with. For the last two days, the living have been employed in burying the dead;

this is a most distressing sight; wherever one turns there are coffins to be met with, in each of which two poor creatures are in many instances conveyed to the grave.

“ The Cathedral, now converted into an hospital for the sick, is another most appalling sight; it is crowded with objects of pity. The Bishop’s little chapel, St. Paul’s, has one window remaining to show where it stood. The Governor has called a council for Monday next, to adopt speedy measures for the relief of the inhabitants generally, as well as to prevent, by application to other islands for supplies, a famine, which every individual is dreading.”

These extracts sufficiently show the fury and devastating effects of the hurricane. A piece of lead which weighed 150 pounds was carried to a distance of more than 1800 feet, and another piece, 400 pounds in weight, was lifted up and carried a distance of 1680 feet. Rafters and beams were flying through the air with frightful rapidity, and shingles pierced in several instances hard-wood trees and remained sticking in them. Another instance is related that part of a child’s trumpet was driven into an evergreen tree, where it buried itself in the trunk. If an object so light as a piece of tin be driven into wood, the force required to bury it in the tree may be imagined. And nevertheless, it appears, that on that awful night, a party amused themselves with dancing, and were so engrossed by their amusement, as to be

wholly unconscious of the desolation which was going on around, until, at daylight, they left the house and saw the ruins of the town and country.

Nor are the English ideas on the climate more erroneous than the general belief in the wealth of the West Indies. "West Indian," at home, seems synonymous with millionaire, and suggests to many, visions of bloated slave-owning planters, eking out a splendid existence on what is left of their livers. Alas! how far from the truth. We will not go so far as to say that the West Indies are played out; on the contrary, there is no doubt a large fund of vitality still left in these colonies, but their present prosperity from one point of view is no more to be compared to what it was, than the West Indian planter of to-day is the equal of the slave owner of fifty years ago.

The emancipation of the slaves was the death-blow to the prosperity and wealth of the higher classes, and although wonderful improvements in hundreds of ways have resulted from the removal of that great blot on the colonies, the West Indies have never recovered from the blow thereby dealt at their commerce. It will be seen on looking over old colonial statistics that the exports of sugar from nearly every island were almost double what they are at present. Immediately after the declaration of freedom, the profits on the sugar industry began to decrease, and during the last half century every colony capable of producing anything else has slowly and by degrees replaced the sugar culti-

vation by some other industry which pays better. Take Grenada, for example; in 1790 the colony produced over 9000 tons of sugar, worth on an average £40 a ton; besides nearly 7000 puncheons of rum. These two items alone produced a gross sum of nearly £400,000, whereas last year Grenada exported no rum at all and only 80 tons of sugar. All round the island may be seen abandoned sugar estates, slowly returning to bush and forest; their works and buildings, which must have cost thousands to erect, now standing roofless and denuded of everything which might be turned into money. Most of these plantations, fifty years ago, yielded crops of three and four hundred hogsheads of sugar each, giving their owners incomes something like eight and ten thousand a year.

Happily for Grenada and most of the colonies, large tracts of land are still lying uncleared, and gradually other industries and crops are being raised to replace the fallen sugar-cane, and most of the colonies are coming to the surface once more. Bad indeed is the outlook for colonies such as Barbados, Antigua and St. Kitts, where sugar is the only thing that can be produced. Anxious eyes are constantly turned from these islands to the Home Government to see what will be done to protect them and their struggling industry against the overwhelming competition of the beet.

Grenada is far ahead in prosperity of most of her

sister colonies, owing to the cocoa plantations now established nearly all over the island. The soil and face of the colony seem especially adapted to this cultivation, and as prices are up and returns high, all is smiles and contentment.

Ideas, at home, on cocoa are generally very mixed, as most writers on the subject use various terms, such as cocoa, cacao, cocoa-nut, cocoa-palm, &c. The cocoa or chocolate is also often confused with the cocoa-nut palm. The latter, which produces the cocoa-nuts of commerce, is a palm growing to a height of fifty or sixty feet with graceful pendant spathes, and bearing its fruit in grape-like bunches issuing from the crown of the palm. The cocoa, on the contrary, is a tree with wide-spreading branches and attains the size of a full grown apple-tree. The leaves resemble those of the chesnut, and when young are of a beautiful fleshy pink colour. The cocoa-trees are planted in rows fifteen feet apart, and when full grown form a beautifully clean cultivation; the branches of each row interlacing with the next, form endless cool shady avenues, and carpet the ground with fallen leaves. The fruit grows in large red, yellow and green pods, ribbed something like a melon and sprouting from the trunk and branches of the tree. When ripe, these pods are picked, cut open, and the beans found inside thrown into boxes and allowed to "sweat" or ferment for five or six days; the beans are then taken out and spread out in drawers and mats, and after six or

seven days' drying in the sun, are bagged and shipped to Europe. These cocoa beans or nibs are then ground and manufactured into chocolate.

The profits on cocoa cultivation being very large, every acre of land fit to produce cocoa is being planted up, not only in Grenada, but in Trinidad and other colonies, and it is very much to be feared that in a few years the supply will exceed the demand, and these colonies, which persist in putting all their eggs in one basket, will at no distant date find themselves in the same predicament as they were in, fifty years ago, with their sugar.

West Indian planters have a good many queer notions on agriculture, and a European visiting these colonies is generally astonished to see the great part which the moon is supposed to play in connection with planting and agriculture. Nearly all the planter's work on an estate seems to be regulated by the phases of the moon, and most agriculturists will wax most indignant if it be suggested to them that a great part of their ideas on the subject are nonsense.

The moon, however, does, undoubtedly, seem to have a far greater influence on vegetation in the tropics than in more temperate climes, and seeds planted within three days before or after the full moon rarely come to anything good. Bamboos or other wood cut down at the wrong phase of the moon, crumble away to dust very soon, while the same timber, felled at the right time, lasts three times as long. Indian corn sown at

the full moon rarely produces anything, and vegetables run to leaves and yield little or no fruit.

Many planters, however, go much farther, and insist that almost everything should be regulated by the phases of our satellite. One, in fact, goes so far as to have his hair cut only at the new moon, and many other just as curious fancies are quite common in the islands.

The rays of the moon, in the tropics, seem to be much more powerful than they are in more northern latitudes, and any one with good eyes can read even small print by the light of the full moon. An idea is prevalent in many of the islands that the beams of the full moon are very injurious, and persons walking in the moonlight may often be noticed carrying open umbrellas. There is no greater pleasure, however, to be had in the West Indies than a ride in the moonlight, the bright beams of our satellite shed a silver sheen over the broad ocean, the roads gleam white and free from dust, while a cool breeze from the sea waves the cocoa-nut branches on the roadsides, and makes the horses wild for a gallop.

## CHAPTER XI.

Jumbies—Ghosts—Silk-cotton-trees—Vandalism of Scotch planter—Palmistes—Inhabitants of Grenada—Coloured people—Quashie—Happy country—Grenada houses—Bijou villa—A tropical garden—Negro wedding—Wedding feast—Quashie as a letter writer—Parochial Boards—Unruly members—Government of Grenada.

THERE are English "Ghosts," German "Geiste," French "Revenants," so also are there West Indian "Jumbies" or "Duppies." All the world over are people to be found steadfastly believing in the shadowy presence on earth of visitors from the ghostly spirit world. Every other person one meets will be found to have had once in their lives, at least, some mysterious visitation or unexplained adventure with regard to the shadow world, and so positive are these in their assertions, that one is loath to put down as nonsense all one hears of the mysterious visitations of the children of night. As might be expected, Quashie with his love for and unshaken belief in the uncanny, has profound faith in the existence of "Jumbies," and one might as well endeavour to persuade him that day is night as convince him that

the spirits of dead people no longer haunt the earth. Much'as he is terrified by Obeah and Loupsgarou, he is imbued with a still greater awe of Jumbies, and only mentions them with the greatest reluctance. Every one has seen a Loupsgarou, but Jumbies' and Duppies' visits are comparatively rare, and accordingly, the greater the mystery the greater the fear.

According to Creoles, some houses, old ones especially, are particularly affected by Jumbies, and any one living in a house having this gruesome reputation finds it extremely difficult to get a servant of any sort to stay in the place. This is not, however, without its advantages, and I know a doctor who assiduously keeps up and encourages the reputation his house has gained for being an abode of jumbies. Not once in three months does he get a night call, and if there be a serious case demanding the immediate presence of the doctor, six or seven messengers at least will have to be sent in a body, who require to keep up their courage when nearing the neighbourhood of the doctor's residence by the martial sounds produced by beating tin pots or tom-toms.

I rented for some time a place rejoicing in the name of "Paradise." It was in rather a lonely situation and had no near neighbours. On account of the reputation the house bore, namely, of being haunted by troops of Jumbies, it was with the greatest

difficulty that I could induce a groom to sleep in the place, and only succeeded in getting one to stay by allowing him to sleep on the mat outside my bedroom door.

I certainly used to hear, during the night, all sorts of peculiar noises and gruesome sounds, but the house being an old one, was infested by rats, and to the gambols of these gentry I ascribed the uncanny noises.

The groom, however, emphatically denied the culpability of the rats, and insisted on blaming the ghosts for the noise. Over and over he would tell me that he would have to leave the work, as "De Jumbies does trouble me too much," and frequently, in the middle of the night, I would wake up with a start, hearing the boy yelling out to me. "What on earth is the matter, you ——?" I would call out in exasperation, only to receive every time the same answer about the Jumbies. "Just listen, sah, dey lighting matches all round the house." I certainly could hear sounds as of matches being drawn, but that was all, and the other sounds could be put down to the bats that infested the place.

One night, however, I was really horribly alarmed, and experienced a good share of the feeling engendered by reading some of Edgar Poe's ghastly tales. I was quite alone in the house and had given the boy leave to sleep out for the night. I went to bed as usual

and was awakened after a few hours' sleep by some sound or other. The wind was pretty high, and whistled mournfully through the trees. I had not had a pleasant dream, and awakened with a feeling of uneasiness, while my thoughts reverted to unpleasant ideas and some gruesome tales I had read the day before.

The mournful cry of an owl resounded from time to time, and it seemed to me the rats and bats seemed unusually restive and ghostlike. Heavens! what was that rustling sound just outside beneath the window? It sounded like a footfall. There it is again! Gracious! I'd swear that was the clank of iron, it sounded like fetters! A cold perspiration broke over me, my hair was quite damp. I held my breath to catch the slightest sound. Again I heard the clank of the chain, now close beneath the window. All the blood-curdling stories of fettered ghosts I had ever read flew through my brain. The moon shed fitful rays from behind a cloud and enabled me to distinguish objects. Again the clank and a rustle.

Do all I could, I could not tear my eyes away from the window, and every second I expected and dreaded to see a cold, white face with gleaming eyes pressed against the window pane. I could stand it no longer, and don't know what I was about to do, when an awful sound broke the ghostly stillness of the

night. "Hee haw! Hee haw!" 'Twas the other donkey loose outside. Never had I thought there was such enchantment in a donkey's bray, never so sweet a sound had I ever heard, nor one so full of comforting melody. Once more I was at peace, and, calling myself some inelegant names, I turned on my other side and slept till morning.

But the haunt "par excellence" of the Jumbie is the glorious silk-cotton-tree (*bombax ceiba*) and Quashie would sooner do anything than pass under its spreading branches after nightfall. This splendid tree, the king of the West Indian vegetable world, has a huge trunk, sometimes measuring thirty feet in circumference, supported by great buttresses jutting out all round. The branches of the ceiba, sometimes called Jumbie or Devil's tree, are supposed to be the roosting place of swarms of Jumbies, who jealously revenge themselves on any one troubling their solitude after dark. There is also a belief that great harm will inevitably befall any one attempting to hew down a ceiba. I am sure that any one looking at one of these magnificent trees with its wide-spreading branches and feathery leaves, and thinking of the centuries which must have elapsed to enable this giant to attain his size, would consider as well merited any accident which might befall the Vandal who would attempt to destroy the greatest ornament of the landscape. I know of one such person, a Scotch

manager, who in order to plant a few rows of cocoa-trees, sacrificed the largest ceiba in Grenada. While superintending the work of destruction, he tripped and fell between two of the huge buttresses, and got a thorough drenching in a pool of water lodged in the hollow. A tremendous attack of rheumatics was the consequence, and Quashie now cites this incident as proof of the power of incensed Jumbies.

There is not a creature on earth so devoid of the power of appreciating the beauties of scenery as the average West Indian planter. He looks on any one who breaks out in unrestrainable admiration of a lovely bit of landscape as a maniac, and is about as sympathetic on being asked to admire a gorgeous piece of colouring as the scraggy dog trotting behind his horse. A lovely little valley with silvery splashing stream and banks dotted with tree ferns, he may be found to admire. Yes! provided the soil be good and shows capabilities for growing cocoa; he will order rows of majestic mountain palms to be ruthlessly cut down without the slightest compunction; and if remonstrated with and begged to preserve these glorious trees, if only on account of their age and comparative rarity, will in nine cases out of ten, vote them all "bosh" and you a "puir, feckless, meddling creature."

In a few years, such a thing as a mountain or cabbage palm will be very scarce in Grenada, and one of the loveliest distinctive marks of the tropics

will be as rare in Grenada as it is at present in Barbados.

Quashie, with this bad example before him, has naturally no eye for the beautiful, and everything "no good for eat" falls a prey to his merciless cutlass. Small attempts at flower gardening may sometimes be seen around the little negro cottages, but these generally give way to Indian corn as the planting season comes on.

In the preceding pages I have generally used the name "Quashie" in speaking of the lower classes. I did so advisedly; I could not use the general term negro, as pure blacks are rapidly becoming the minority, and the population of these islands is gradually becoming lighter and lighter; I mean as to colour. My remarks specially apply to Grenada, and what with the constant indiscriminate mixture of the breeds, such distinctions as quadroon, octoroon, cob and cabreze, so clearly defined in the Spanish colonies, have been lost sight of here.

A century ago, the inhabitants might have been divided into two large classes, black and white, the number of mulattoes and coloured people being comparatively insignificant. However, encouraged by the loose state of morals of those years, the class of mulattoes, that is to say the children of a white and a black parent, increased considerably, and although for a long time treated shamefully and not even allowed the privileges of blacks, the class began to gain in

numbers and importance and became a source of constant trouble and danger to the whites, until their rights were conceded to them. As years went on, the mixing up of whites, mulattoes and blacks increased, and gradually the distinctions of colour were hard to trace, and now the lower classes are of all shades from pure black to whitey-brown. At present, in Grenada, the pure white inhabitants only number some eight or nine hundred, and are generally Government officials, merchants and planters. The coloured inhabitants, and according to the prejudice of the country that class comprises many who though perfectly white in complexion unfortunately possessed a coloured great-grandmother or other as remote ancestor, form what might be called the middle class, and being generally merchants and planters, are frequently better off and richer than the whites.

We now come to the masses, the petty shopkeepers and labourers. Among the latter must be included some fifteen hundred Coolie immigrants imported as indentured labourers, and who, having served their indenture, have preferred to remain in the island and take the bounty, rather than take advantage of the free passage back to India, to which they are entitled after ten years' service. Nearly all these Coolies now possess houses and plots of land, and are generally ten times as well off as their fellows in India. They have changed their religion as they would change their shirts, and are now mostly Protestants.

We now come to “*Quashie*” proper, who should be the lineal descendant of the Africans imported during the time of slavery. At the time of the emancipation, in 1834, there were in Grenada about 37,000 blacks and coloured people. Their quiet and reasonable conduct on receiving their freedom soon quieted the fears at first entertained, and in a short time the labouring masses, from a state of slavery and dependence, settled down into a law-abiding and peaceful population of field labourers. The population of the island being small for its area, the negroes were enabled to rent plots of land from the proprietors of estates on easy terms, and with the profits arising from their cultivation, were soon enabled to purchase the plots of land which they had formerly rented. Later on, the cultivation of sugar-cane becoming unprofitable, many large estates were thrown into the market, and not finding purchasers in their entirety, were cut up into acre lots and eagerly bought up by the negroes, who, planting up their plots with cocoa and spices, soon became the flourishing class they are at present, and can now compare favourably with the labouring population of any country in the world.

At present the staple produce and main export of Grenada consists of cocoa. Nutmegs and other spices are also shipped in considerable quantities. The sugar industry has almost completely died out, and though at one time Grenada exported 9000 tons of

sugar, and 700,000 gallons of rum, only enough is made at present for consumption in the island. The wages earned by labourers are generally one shilling a day for men, and tenpence for a woman. This amount amply suffices for all their wants, and after working for a few years, a man is generally able to put up a small shingled house, and owns a horse and a good suit of clothes to turn out a "swell" in on Sundays.

Notwithstanding this happy state of affairs, I have often heard Quashie say, "Ah, we poor naygurs, we berry miserable." Miserable, indeed! they are princes compared to the poor of hundreds of other places. There are no poor in Grenada! pauperism is almost undiscoverable, and any one wishing to be charitable, would with difficulty find a worthy object to help, or one really needing assistance. A lovely climate where no clothing is needed except for decency's sake—a land where threepence a day will feed a family, and work always to be had for the asking. What a contrast to the poor of London, and other large centres! Taxation is not heavy, and land rent is low. The Crown lands, too, in the mountains are so extensive and so little known, that hundreds of squatters have cleared little patches of the forest, and till and cultivate the land free of rent or taxes. When we think of the unhappy condition and miserable poverty of the Skye Crofters and unfortunate Irish peasantry, and compare their lot with the condition of

these West Indian blacks, the comparison is all one-sided. Fifty years ago, almost every negro was a slave, a thing, a chattel, the property of another man, possessing neither rights nor privileges; a beast of the field, in fact. Now, all are free as air, nearly every man owning his acre of land, and generally a good wooden house besides. Government schools educate his children for next to nothing, and in the next ten years it will be hard to find a man or woman as utterly ignorant as are many of the European peasantry.

Thatched huts are rapidly disappearing, and neat little shingled houses are taking their places everywhere. One might wish to see a little less crowding, and sleeping apartments a trifle less promiscuous, but at all events in the day-time, these little habitations are the pink of neatness; the hall or parlour generally boasting of at least one rocking chair, and always a small mahogany sideboard, on which is exposed the pride of Quashie's heart, half a dozen thick glass tumblers, and a massive decanter, never used, but looked upon as the first rank of the household gods. In the last few years, really large, handsome houses have been erected by black men who started as field labourers, and who through luck and economy now possess cocoa lands yielding an income of several hundred pounds a year. On Sunday afternoons these Quashies will be seen hanging out of their drawing-room windows, well in sight of their envious and less

fortunate neighbours, reading the *Graphic* or *Illustrated*, and admiring the pictures upside down. When one thinks that the fathers, or, at all events, the grandparents of these people were savages, who dined off toasted missionary in the wilds of Africa, one is almost tempted to think that after all Quashie may furnish the "coming race."

The country houses in Grenada are nearly all built of wood on stone foundations. In the towns, however, the houses and stores are mostly stone buildings; and as earthquakes are becoming more rare than they used to be, nearly all the new houses are being built of stone. In the erection of these houses, however, a lamentable want of taste is generally displayed, and owing, I suppose, to a sentiment of conservatism *outré*, the new houses are generally built on the pattern of those erected a hundred years ago, and are mostly as unsightly as they are inconvenient.

In these charming islands, where most lovely building sites are to be found on all sides, and where nature with its beautiful shrubs and brilliant flowering creepers assists art so largely, the exercise of a little taste would turn any ugly building into a gem of brightness and comfort; but, alas! it is just the one thing requisite—taste—that is so often missing.

As an example of what might be done with a little care and taste, I will try to describe a planter's house, which has lately been built on a cocoa estate in

Grenada, and which as a "tout ensemble" of its kind could hardly be surpassed.

A short, well-kept avenue bordered by agaves and Spanish needles leads up to a square, cool, green, grassy lawn, on one side of which stands the cocoa "boucan," with its long drawers full of rich chocolate cocoa beans drying in the sun. On the other side stand the stables, a pretty, light, wooden building painted maroon and slate grey, and through the open windows of which two or three well-kept ponies can be seen munching the fresh, green cane tops. Opposite the boucan is the house—a gem of good taste and comfort. Like most dwellings in Grenada, it is a light wooden erection, consisting only of a ground floor, raised on mason-work a few feet above the level of the lawn. The dark slate roof picked out with maroon-painted gutters, makes a pretty contrast to the cool, pearl-grey and white walls. The front has seven windows and an oblong portico, round the delicate pearl-grey columns of which the purple-flowered ipomea twines its dark green tendrils, and makes a tangle with clusters of "boule de neige" roses. Perfect bushes of delicate maiden-hair fern, in dark green jardinières, stand on each side of the door which leads into a square ante-chamber, fitted up, half as a hall, half as a cool morning room. Through a wide door, draped with heavy Persian "portières," and flanked by two pretty little stained glass windows, one enters a spacious and elegantly furnished drawing-

room, the other extremity of which is bow-shaped, and ornamented with four windows and a glass door, giving on to another arbour-shaped portico leading into the garden. It is the prettiest drawing-room imaginable—its glistening waxed floors, covered here and there with turkish rugs or squares of Indian matting; cosy wicker-work chairs, and cool bent wood rockers, form inviting groups near the open windows, where the snow-white jessamine and stephanotis peep in and fill the room with their fragrance. Little tables covered with nick-nacks and bric-a-brac of all sorts, a handsome cottage Pleyel and bright porcelain jardinières here and there, filled with delicate ferns and flowers—all combine to give an air of brightness and elegance.

On one side of the drawing-room is a cosy little dining-room replete with every comfort, while further on lies a cool little study and a spare bedroom. The corresponding wing on the other side of the drawing-room contains two more bedrooms and that necessary and most indispensable part of a house in the tropics, the bath room.

The view from the drawing-room window is charming, stretching over a smiling fertile valley, through the centre of which can be seen a bubbling, rushing stream threading its way in and out of the overhanging cocoa-trees like a silver ribbon in the glistening sunlight, hurrying on its course towards the deep blue sea in the distance, from which floats up a

cool, briny-scented breeze, mingling with the almost oppressive odour of mace, cloves, and other spices growing round the house.

And then the garden! All the rarest English hot-house plants growing in almost wild profusion. Glorious pink and white oleanders, more resembling trees than shrubs. Twenty or thirty different kinds of crotons, with colours such as can never be attained in the temperate climate of Europe. Hibiscus shrubs mingling their brilliant blossoms with the scarlet "flamboyant." Fan palms and graceful tree ferns bending their drooping branches over the rarest roses of Europe; altogether a garden such as can only be dreamt of in colder climes, and one which repays a thousand-fold the labour expended on it. Ah! what would the city man or flower-loving spinster whose "habitat" lies in the suburbs of smoky London say on being shown such a garden as this? They to whom that dry, chalky plot of ground lying between their front door and the road is as the apple of their eye; or that tiny yard behind the house, enclosed in four high walls, without even room to swing the proverbial cat, if so inclined; where hours and hours of care and trouble are spent in making every square yard of stony soil yield some stunted, sickly plant, which as winter comes on withers away, or has to be carried into a conservatory. They, to whom a single palm-tree seems to constitute an earthly paradise. What would they think of our gardens, in these bright

sunny lands, where King Sol's hot smiles force everything into life and brilliant colour! Here no cruel frost to nip the opening buds, no biting east wind to cut the delicate blossom, nor cheerless snow to numb the bursting seed! Christmas, instead of covering Mother Earth with its white mantle of desolation, means, in these more favoured climes, the season of rose and butterfly.

To see Grenadians in all their glory, one must attend a black wedding. Unfortunately virtue is not always considered an indispensable qualification for a bride, and frequently the happy pair about to be joined in hymeneal bonds have, to all intents and purposes, been a married couple for the last ten years.

However, all the same, a day comes when Mademoiselle prevails on her protector to have a wedding, and, if the cocoa crop have proved a good one, Monsieur Quashie will make up his mind to spend the seven or eight pounds he has saved, and have a grand wedding in the sight of all men in the parish. The dusky and unblushing bride will have saved and scraped for years to provide herself with the exquisite toilette in which she appears at the altar. Do not let my fair readers imagine that the gown is of bright flowered print, or her head-dress a gorgeous bandana. Not a bit of it. That may be all very well for other occasions, but to-day she appears in some ethereal creation taken from the pages of the *Young Ladies'*

*Journal*, or perhaps the *Queen*. Pure white silk or satin with imitation lace tablier; orange blossoms galore, and sweeping train; twelve button gloves conceal the dusky digits, while from the woolly plaited top-knot, crowned by a wreath of orange blossoms, descends a veil of snowy tulle. A powerful odour of "cherry blossom" or "white rose" diffuses itself around her, and coyly and with copious tears she places her ungloved hand in that of her stalwart partner. He, in all the glory of black frock coat and very blue-grey unmentionables, white silk tie, and radiant button-hole, stands proudly ready for the ordeal which is to constitute him what he will call himself in future "a legitimate man."

Behind comes a file of radiant bridesmaids, in gorgeous dresses of pink and blue and cream satteens, their woolly tresses decked with wedding cake ornaments or gaudy artificial flowers. A mass of gold and silver trinkets, borrowed from all their friends, chains, necklets and lockets, lie pendant on their stomachs, and amid the tears which it is considered "bon-ton" to shed at a wedding, one can note a conscious pride in their gorgeous appearance, due to the knowledge of the impression they are making on the admiring swains at their sides. The ceremony ended, and their names signed or marks made in the register, the company troops off to some house lent for the purpose, where the gorgeous dresses are doffed for more sober riding habits, and the whole cavalcade

starts off for the bridegroom's house, where the wedding feast awaits the guests.

Here the wedding garments are once more donned, and the grand business of the day, *i.e.* the feed, begins. The tables groan beneath the weight of huge joints of beef, mutton, and pork, interspersed with decanters of port and sherry, while at either end reclines the *ne plus ultra* of victuals in Quashie's eye, a ham. The wedding guests fall to; plates are heaped up with indiscriminate helpings of different viands; knives and forks will at first be coyly trifled with, soon to be laid aside in favour of the less dangerous spoon and nature's forks. As the feast proceeds, movements will be seen on the part of the elegantly dressed females, which look suspiciously like attempts at unhooking their stays, while the groomsmen unblushingly unbuckle their waistcoat bands and set to with redoubled ardour. Any one looking on would be astounded to note the miraculous disappearance of plates which a moment ago were heaped up with all sorts of food. Observe that elegant young lady with the silver leaves in her hair. Her plate has just been handed back to her overflowing with junks of pork, beef, and ham. A glance round assures her no one is looking. Houp la! presto! Mysterious disappearance of viands in her lap. Oh dear! all over the front of that lovely pink creation? Oh no, only into a large tin skillet which is at once clutched at by the small black girl standing behind her chair, and

who now makes tracks with the booty intended for private delectation at home. It is not considered "good style" to be detected in these manœuvres too openly, but they all do it, and every one knows it is being done. Everything having been pretty well cleared off the table, the moment for speeches and toasts has now arrived. The health of the married couple is proposed by one of the guests in certain set phrases which are never departed from. Allusions to the happy connubial state of turtle doves, and the well-known adventures of Isaac and Rebecca are never omitted, and this speech once over, the other more amusing and original toasts begin. One of the groomsmen will get up and propose the health of the bridesmaids. The more polysyllables and high-sounding, senseless phrases he can remember, the more will he and the company be pleased. Passages from any book containing very long words, though having no earthly reference to the occasion, will be learnt by heart and retailed to the admiring guests, who would disdain to listen to a sensible speech made up of commonplace, every-day words. Verses from the Bible are frequently pressed into service, and seem to afford much satisfaction. At last, the toasts having been exhausted, the table and chairs will be cleared away, performers on the fiddle, triangle and tambourine will be introduced, and dancing is kept up till next morning. Mary Salomé will be found by her mistress, next day, lying asleep behind the door instead of

doing her work, and Sennacherib will be much too sleepy to clean out the stable for the next two days.

Quashie has an intense love for long words of which he does not know the meaning, and delights in using them on any occasion. In his love letters especially does he express his feelings in these long-winded polysyllables. Sense is a secondary consideration, and his position in the affections of his lady love very much depends on the number of jaw-breaking words he can cram into an epistle. Some of their letters are very funny; the following is a copy of one which was addressed to a friend of mine by a man who was applying for a place as cook:—

“DEAR SIR,—Believing in the principal of a good day, I send you my kindest respectful regards and love to Madam whilst in the earnest of my interior propensities, wish this may find your wife in the full and luxuriant beneficial of a good state of health with matrimonial exercise to accomplish the ends of justice, which Almighty might spare you to enforce.

“I come forward and without delay to ask you for a reply to the offer of my services. I can even cook and roost beef and muttons in joints, hence the reason why you should take me for I hear that Father T. and your wife loves good cookery; if you employ me, my dear fine Sir, you shall be well pleased with everything I does, for as for giving and taking prayers,

I am an expert. Hoping you will favour me with a reply D.V.

“ I am, mostly,  
“ yours truly  
“ JAMES HANNIBAL.”

Although progressing with wonderful rapidity in many directions, Grenadian Creoles are certainly not quite ripe for the representative institutions and extensive franchise which they are continually clamouring for.

Ten or twelve years ago, the island boasted of a House of Assembly, composed of a certain number of representatives from each of the parishes of the colony.

The proceedings of this Assembly and the very unconstitutional conduct of its members brought about its downfall, and the house itself voted its own abolishment and a return to Crown Colony government. Men without the slightest education or other requisite qualification got themselves elected members of the Assembly, and, as might be expected, most egregious were some of the mistakes made by many of these embryo legislators. For instance, the Government once asking for a vote of 150*l.* per annum to the Attorney-General for framing the laws of the island, The Honourable member for — at once got on his hind legs and excitedly opposed the motion, averring that the amount asked for was preposterous,

as his carpenter would put the laws in a splendid frame for seven and sixpence !

Latterly, the Government ceding to the reiterated demands of the Creole inhabitants for representative institutions and a voice in the affairs of the colony, granted them as a test, parochial boards, with the powers usually accorded to such municipal bodies. The Government nominated about half the members, and the remainder were elected by the taxpayers. The colony being a small one, great difficulty was experienced in obtaining really qualified men to offer themselves for election, and unfortunately the desired element being wanting, men were nominated who were quite unfit for the duties. Great was the enthusiasm at first among the natives, and there was a very general resolve to do their best, and, by their good management of their parochial duties, prove to the Government their competency to regulate the financial affairs of the colony. Difficulties soon cropped up, a lack of interest soon became apparent, members became unruly, and seemed to form their conduct on that of the Irish Members at home. One of these unruly legislators, only the other day, used language of such unparliamentary description that the chairman had to be held back to prevent his "going for him!" At another board a member got up and informed his confrères that apart from Mr. So and So and Mr. Thingamy, they were a pack of thieves! Finally, two vacancies having occurred on the Parochial Board

of the principal town, St. George's, not a candidate nor a single voter turned up on the day appointed for the election.

The Government of Grenada, at present, is that of a Crown Colony, and is vested in a Governor-in-Chief, who is also charged with the administration of St. Vincent and St. Lucia, which, with Grenada, form the group known as the Windward Islands. The Governor-in-Chief is assisted by an Executive Council formed of the Colonial Secretary, Treasurer, Attorney-General, and an unofficial government nominee. There is also a Legislative Council consisting of the members of the Executive, together with a like number of unofficial representatives.

Most of the officials are Englishmen ; and they and their families, together with the wealthiest planters, constitute what may be called "society" in Grenada. The upper coloured classes are progressing rapidly, but have still much to learn. Grenada cannot be called a gay place, but occasional dances, dinners, race meetings, cricket matches, tennis, and picnics keep the inhabitants alive.

## CHAPTER XII.

Private Cemeteries—Quashie's funerals—Bush doctors—Mortality among children—Negro races.

NOTWITHSTANDING Quashie's fear of jumbies, the influence of Obeah is sometimes strong enough to cause him to disregard the powers of outraged spirits, and gruesome tales are told of graves being desecrated in order to procure the most powerful of all the instruments of Obeah. This is none other than the liver of a human corpse. Two or three years ago, a woman and a child died under very suspicious circumstances, in Carriacou, a small island some twenty miles distant from Grenada. A post-mortem examination proved the deaths to be owing to poison of some sort, and after a good deal of inquiry, a barrel of brown sugar was found in the house, and evidently contained a quantity of highly poisonous matter. Further evidence disclosed that this sugar had been sent to the unfortunate woman as a present from another woman in Grenada, who had lived for many years with the present husband of the deceased. It also cropped up that a grave near the residence of the Grenada woman had been disturbed, and on

examination, the coffin was found to have been opened and the liver of the corpse extracted. This horrible substance, which has the reputation of being the most powerful of all the instruments of Obeah, had been ground and mixed up with the sugar, and thus had caused the deaths of the woman and child. A very common and reprehensible custom which obtains in Grenada to a large extent is that of burying people near the houses of their relations, and not in the cemeteries set apart for the purpose. Priests and parsons do their best to fight against this custom, and compel their parishioners to bury their dead in the consecrated burial grounds, but with not much success, and it is a very common sight to see a freshly opened grave in the middle of a negro garden. It is certainly a way of deriving profit from a relative even after death, as peas and corn seem to thrive wonderfully over these private cemeteries.

With Quashie, a funeral comes next in his estimation to a wedding, and no one fails to turn out to show respect to the last remains of a friend. On the night of the funeral, a wake is held, and boisterous sounds of revelry may be heard issuing from the house of the deceased, alternating with the sing-song of Moody and Sankey. No time is lost in hurrying the body to its last resting-place, and burial generally takes place eight or ten hours after the decease. Hearses being nearly unknown in Grenada, the coffin is usually borne along on men's shoulders, and frequent rests taken

on the road. Quashie is most positive in his assertion that it is only with great difficulty that a corpse can be induced to pass certain spots with which it was well acquainted during life, and the coffin striking against anything in its progress is taken as a very evil sign by the bearers. This reminds me of rather a good story in connection with funerals. A woman had died rather suddenly, and, according to custom, was fastened down in her coffin with all speed. On the way to the cemetery the coffin struck against a tree, and the assistants were horrified to hear a thumping sound issuing from the coffin. The lid was instantly unscrewed, and the woman was found alive and just regaining consciousness. The *ci-devant* corpse was immediately taken out and returned to the arms of her astonished husband. Some time later this same woman died in grim earnest, and the funeral procession once more wended its way through the same road. On approaching the scene of the former resurrection, the widowed mourner (?) was heard to ejaculate, "Oh, for goodness' sake, mind the tree!"

It is to be feared that platonic affection does not enter largely in a negro's composition, and I have frequently remarked the callousness and apparently disinterestedness with which a negro will speak of the death of a parent or child. I have often seen a man or woman come to the Registrar and smilingly say, "One of my child dead, sah!" or, "Me moder dead, sah!" evidently without the slightest feeling of grief.

The death of a child is much more regretted than the demise of a parent, as children represent so much capital and value to a mother and father. Disputes often occur between a man and a woman as to which of them shall have the custody of an illegitimate child. A woman having four or five children, can rest on her laurels, and subsist on the money earned weekly by her brats in the "small gang" employed on a sugar estate. Talking of registration of deaths, it is frequently very difficult to ascertain the true cause of death if a doctor have not attended the case. I was once trying my best to extract from a man the cause of his child's death, but to little purpose; at last, the man seemed suddenly to remember something, and pulling out a scrap of paper, he handed me the doctor's prescription, saying, "He died of dat, sah!"

Of all uninteresting patients, I should think a negro is the worst, and it must be very difficult for a medical practitioner to feel any interest at all in the cases brought under his notice. If Quashie feels sick, he at once intimates the fact to his neighbours by appearing with his head bound up and any amount of leaves and bush tied round his forehead. He will always be found to have "a cold in me belly, sah!" and if he gets worse, his wife or mother will lay him up and proceed to apply vinegar and brown paper over every inch of his body. Should his ailments not succumb to this favourite remedy, a bush doctor will

then be called in. This may be either some old African man or woman with a reputation for Obeah or some Creole quack with a trifling knowledge of bush remedies or such medicines as he has seen used in the case of sick animals. These persons, if successful in a simple case, at once acquire a great reputation, and enjoy more of the confidence of the people than the government medical officer of the district. However, it is most probable that for every cure which they effect, perhaps five unfortunates are hurried to their graves by their attempts at medicine. I once saw one of these bush doctors go into a chemist's shop, and ask the apothecary, not for so many drams of this or that drug, but for twopence worth of this, and penny of that, and three-half-pence in something else. These he emptied into a bottle, which he then filled up with water, shook well, and handed to an unfortunate woman waiting outside, who paid him there and then a florin of the realm in exchange for his nostrum.

Most people affect to consider all bush medicines as rubbish; this is a very erroneous idea, and I feel sure that there exist in the woods of these islands hundreds of plants possessing valuable medicinal properties still unknown to the faculty. There are still some old Africans in Grenada who undoubtedly possess the secret of several wild plants, most valuable in certain diseases, but this knowledge is most difficult to extract from them, and their use is

mixed up with so many absurd superstitions and conditions, that it is most difficult to find out where the rubbish leaves off and the truth begins.

To revert to what I was saying about medical practice in these islands, I have remarked that only after the Obeah man and bush doctor have done their best, or rather, worst, is the medical officer called in. The case is then generally hopeless, as nothing is left to the doctor but to state the primary cause of death. On the other hand, supposing the doctor to have been called in at the beginning of the sickness, his prescription is eagerly looked for, but his reputation for skill depends entirely on the medicines ordered proving a purge, powerful enough for a horse. If the prescription has not acted in that unmistakable manner, the medicine is voted too weak, and the doctor a humbug. Especially great, in these islands, is the mortality among children. In Grenada about half the children born die before they are twelve months old. Right down infanticide is very rare, but it is quite certain that this great mortality among children is due to rough treatment, and coarse, heavy food given to them in infancy. As soon as a child is able to swallow it, lumps of indigestible plantains and corn-meal are stuffed into it, and those who survive the treatment toddle about with huge stomachs in front of them, more suitable in point of size to a child in its teens than to a two-year-old baby.

Taking it all round, though, the negro population

of the West Indies is a fine healthy race, and the death rate among them is very small. It is curious to observe the progress made in physique by these blacks during the last fifty years. In the time of slavery, negroes were imported from different parts of the western coast of Africa. All sorts of different races were introduced, differing as much in appearance, manners and customs as any of the different races in Europe. Mandingoes were mostly Mahometans; Joloffa and Foolah negroes distinctly showed traces of Moorish and Arabian blood, and were generally a magnificently formed lot of people; Koromantyn negroes would vie with the ancient Romans for courage and disregard of death: Eboes, on the contrary, were pusillanimous, and presented a more degraded type of negro. Besides these, there were slaves imported from Whidah, Benin, Juda, Arda, and Congo. These latter, which were mostly imported into the smaller islands, such as Grenada, St. Lucia, and Barbados, were a very ugly and inferior lot of people, and those still living have more the appearance of monkeys and chimpanzees than men. Both sexes seem stunted and extremely simple in their ideas. The crossing of all these races, however, has produced a breed remarkable for their strength and beauty of form. The features certainly leave something to be desired, but as to form of body and limb, every other Quashie might pose for an Antinous or an Apollo Belvidere.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Servants—A cook's qualifications—The cook's stock—"Boys"  
—Servants' wages—"Diablasses!"—Cursing.

NOT in England alone have ladies reason to talk about "those dreadful servants;" even out here in these distant Caribbee islands, the topic is almost as general a one as the weather, and usually much more sympathetic. Eliza Jane's black counterpart has just the same failings as she has, and gives her unfortunate mistress quite as much worry. Just as in England, Mary Ann is cheeky, fond of sugar and biscuits, and unduly partial to the society of her "young man," so is Roselia or Lucretia out here cursed with a long tongue and sweet tooth for the dainties of the forbidden cupboard. As to the last charge with regard to "young men," if not as openly acknowledged as Mary Ann's, Sambo is just as certain to be behind the scenes, and Lucretia is every bit as fond of asking leave to run and buy a piece of ribbon as Betsy Jane or Anna Maria.

On the other hand, I have come across many an old trusty black servant, whom it would be difficult to

match among her white sisters, but of these I fear the race is rapidly becoming extinct. It is no exaggeration to say that many of these old servants, formerly slaves of their present employers, would gladly lay down their old lives to purchase the safety of the young people whom they saw born and nursed from infancy. The rising generation of servants, alas! is as fickle and changeable as the "slaveys" at home, and if medals were presented to all those who had stayed even ten years together in one situation, the expense for bronze would not be ruinous. It is quite a common thing to hear people say they have changed their butler or groom seven or eight times in one year; but it is generally out of the frying pan into the fire, and the wretches seem every one worse than the last.

Suppose you are looking out for a cook; you let people know you want a servant, the next morning the courtyard will be full of applicants; most of them just come out of the adjoining cane-field. Up comes one, "I hear you wants a cook, marm."

"Yes, can you cook?"

"Mo save boui manger, marm." (I can boil food.)

Her qualifications, as you see, are not great; however, take her on trial. You will find that the only things she knows in the cooking line are boiling salt fish and pounding plantains. Not being satisfied with such very plain fare, you set to and teach her a few things. Maybe she will pick up notions very quickly,

and you begin to congratulate yourself on having at last secured a treasure. Yes? In about two months' time, when she knows how to roast a joint or dress a fowl, she will come and tell you, she feels sick, and wants a rest, and thereupon gives you notice to leave at the end of the month. The ungrateful hussy will march herself off to the town, give out that she is a "cordon bleu," and get a place with higher wages, leaving you to begin the same training process with some other black wench, who will serve you in the same way.

After changing cooks about four times in seven months, I once engaged a middle-aged woman who had been in service before, and evidently knew something of her business. All went well for the first week, nice little dishes frequently made their appearance unexpectedly, and I was beginning to think myself lucky. On the seventh morning, however, I was awakened by unwonted sounds in the courtyard. Jumping up, I went out into the veranda. Here I was confronted by a beast of a big black dog, who defied me to come further. I called out to the boy to know whose dog it was. "The cook's, sah." At that moment a grunt, quite close to me, made me turn round sharp just in time to catch a large pig in the act of rooting up a valuable croton. I again put the question of proprietorship to the boy. "The cook's, sah," I could just make out in the middle of a sextuor proceeding from two ewes, each with a pair of

kids bleating with all their might. I was getting warm, and once more, though this time with some unnecessary expletives, asked whose they were. "Mine, sah," answered the cook, who at that moment appeared in person at the gate, holding the chains of two fine oxen, also her property, I presumed. "Yes, sah." "Then clear out every wretched animal at once," I cried out.

"I can't keep this stock here, then, sah?"

"Of course not."

"Then I won't stay any longer, and you can keep me money if you like," exclaimed the irate female as she flounced out of the premises.

I was only too glad to secure anything next day in the shape of a cook, provided she did not make her stay conditional on turning the place into a stock farm.

She, however, had a failing which I could not break her from. She would call any old nigger a "gentleman." Often did she give me a scare, when cooling out in my pyjamas, by saying, "Please, sah, a gentleman come to see you." Hurrying on something decent, I would come out of my bedroom, only to find some Quashie asking for work or offering corn or vegetables for sale.

I once heard the same woman, on being asked by a lady to call back a certain black woman then passing, yell out, "Hi! de lady wid de yams! De white woman wants you!" She meant no impertinence, but made

the mistake that so many people make of not knowing who is a lady and who is not.

Now we come to "boys," and they are equal to any plague of Egypt. Be he fourteen or forty years old, men servants are nearly always called "boys" in the West Indies, and if the female servants are bad, they are worse. Among the "boys" I have had, I might mention the boy who would wear my clothes, the boy who galloped out my horses at night, the boy who gave drum dances in the dining-room when I left home for a couple of days, and so on, ad infinitum. One can, however, sometimes come across as good a servant as any to be found anywhere, and were "Jeames" to see some of his black counterparts, in gorgeous livery, standing six feet three in their socks, and guiltless of artificial calves, his cheek would pale with envy. A thing that strikes one oddly on first arrival in the West Indies, is to see servants going about barefooted. One quickly gets accustomed to it, however, and though some people make their servants wear shoes, their silent barefooted movements are far preferable to the awful and persistent creak of the "talky-talky" boots that Quashie loves so much. The feet of some Quashies are really huge, and I should think a black shoemaker might justly be called "boot builder." Number thirteens, if there be such a number made, would be much too small for the average negro. I once watched a coolie buying a pair of boots. The lot was marked eight

shillings a pair. "All same price?" asked the coolie. "Yes." "Big boot eight shilling, little boot eight shilling. Me take big boot."

Servants' wages vary according to the locality. In Grenada, country female servants are generally paid from twelve to sixteen shillings a month with board, and "boys" from sixteen to thirty shillings. Servants in the towns generally know more, and receive higher wages. Barbadians generally make very good domestics, but their dreadful nasal twang is rather against them. Two of the best or rather least bad servants I ever had, were Barbadians, and a more superstitious pair I never met. They seemed to me to talk of nothing else than about obeah, jumbies, and loogaroos, and would entertain each other with endless wonderful tales, called "nancy stories." These "nancy stories" were series of adventures with ghosts, devils, and all sorts of gruesome beings, with which Quashie believes the woods and mountains to be infested, and I frequently had to combat these ridiculous ideas if I wanted the boy to go any long distance for me. On one occasion, wishing to spend a couple of days with a friend on the other side of the island, I called the boy and said to him "Charlie, I shall want you to carry my portmanteau to Towerby Hall to-morrow morning, and you had better go by the mountain road, so as to be there in good time."

"De mountain road, sah? I rather go by de long broad road."

“ What for ? ” said I, “ it is four or five miles longer than the way through the woods ? ”

“ Yes, sah. But I too much ’fraid of de diablasses. ”

“ Diablasses ! What on earth are they ? Some more of your Jumbie rubbish, I suppose ? ”

This called forth an indignant protest from the cook, who was sitting in the pantry, shelling peas.

“ Oh, yes, you can laugh, sah, but there is ‘ diablasses ’ for true. Dey is women dat meet you in de road and lead you away into de bush. ”

“ Yes, sah, ” chimed in Charlie, “ and dey got one cattle foot, and one human foot. ”

“ How can you both believe such utter nonsense ? ” said I ; “ and have you ever seen one of these diablasses, Caroline ? ”

“ No, sah, not me, but a man, by de name of Sam, was sitting in his door-mouth, one evening, and he see’d a woman passing by, and de woman tell him she livin’ up a little way in de mountain, and she ’fraid of de dark, and ask him to come up with her part of de way. Sam go wid she, and soon dey come to she house—a purty little house, too, very nice put away, and de woman asked him to stay, and she would cook him some dinner. So Sam stop, and presently he see de woman in de kitchen cooking some rice, and every now and then she would stick her finger in de rice and throw some far behind she back ; and she kep’ on doing this several times. Sam look at she, and he

say to herself, 'Eh! Eh! but dis can't be a good woman,' and he get out of the house quick, and he run. De woman foller him for a long way, until he reach a coolie house, where he break in de door, and fell down in a faint, till morning, when they had to rub him up."

"So then, Caroline, the woman, by just sticking her finger in the rice, gave undoubted proof that she was dealing with the devil, eh?"

"Ah, yes, yourself now, sah! You never hear 'bout one Mr. Bagley, sah? Well, he was once riding down to Sessions over the Grand Etang road, and on de way he meet a woman riding a mule, she two foot was up in de air, and she head near de ground, and she was riding so! Mr Bagley call on her to stop, and den he fire he gun at she. De woman vanish like smoke, sah! and Mr. Bagley went mad de next day!"

Caroline having apparently convinced me to her satisfaction, retired into the kitchen, where, once being in her favourite vein, she must have gone on telling the unfortunate Charlie stories of diablusses and jumbies, enough to make his wool unfrizzle.

West Indian servants frequently give one a lot of trouble on account of their quarrelsome propensities, and if they be honest and careful, they are generally so noisy and troublesome that frequent are the rows raised in the kitchen, and which would often end in blows if not instantly quelled by the master or mistress. I

once had a female servant who was faultless in many respects, and with whom I was quite satisfied, were it not for one dreadful drawback, which finally made me send her away. Lucretia had the most dreadfully penetrating, disagreeable voice a woman could be cursed with, and it seemed as if no efforts of hers could curb this unruly member into submission. Add to this an unfortunate habit of talking to herself continually, not in muttered whispers, but in a voice which might be heard all over the house. Her temper, too, was lamentably short, and would vent itself in interminable harangues. I had at that time a boy, with whom I was also satisfied, and whom I was anxious to keep as long as I could, on account of many good qualities rarely found in the species. Unfortunately, boy and cook could not agree, and night and morning I had to act as peace-maker, though frequently to small purpose, as I had finally to send them both about their business.

A fearful row in the kitchen, in which the cook's voice was generally predominant, would over and over force me to descend to the lower regions and command peace in no measured terms. Lucretia would insist on a hearing, and wrathfully ask how on earth I could expect her to sit down quietly and hear her grandmother cursed and herself called a good-for-nothing woman.

“ He call me a good-for-nothing woman, sah ! Me ! a big able woman, dat make seven children already !

Oh me God! me, a good-for-nothing woman indeed! but I'll have de law ob him, if I have to sell all me property, the nigger! Amid my unavailing attempts at pacification, she would go on,—“Yes, sah! for me-self I ain't so much care, but you no hear the boy cuss me grandmoder, sah?” Then, I saw the matter was serious; cursing any one's progenitors is with Quashie a fearful offence, and one generally only to be washed out in a free fight. “Oh, your grandmother's head!” is enough to raise the wrath of any negro, and the vilest epithets applied to himself are as nothing compared to opprobrium in connection with his ancestors, however remote.

Quashie applies to the term “curse” quite a different meaning to that of Webster or Johnson; a servant will frequently say that her mistress has “cursed her too badly,” which might convey to a stranger the idea that the lady was addicted to strong language. Cursing any one, in the West Indies, simply means scolding, and the slightest remark made to a slavey is generally turned into “cuss me too bad.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

Vampires and Loups-garou—Wide-spread superstition—The curse in the “Giaour”—Vampirism—Loogaroos in Grenada—Loogaroo traps—Loogaroo sucking animals—Horses in Grenada.

ONE of the most deeply-rooted of all the West Indian superstitions, is a belief in the existence of vampires, or, as they are called in Grenada, “Loogaroos.” No amount of reasoning or argument will ever convince Quashie that Loogaroos exist only in his imagination. “But I seed dem, often and often, sah, wid my own eyes,” he will say in answer to your arguments, and he as firmly believes in the existence of these ghastly beings as in any other object of his every-day life. This superstition is far from being restricted to the West Indies, and, strange to say, is believed in by nearly all the races of the earth. According to Don Calmet’s “Dissertation sur les Vampires,” the vampire is a dead man who returns in body and soul from the other world and wanders about the earth, doing every kind of mischief to the living. He is generally characterized by sucking the blood of persons asleep and thus causing their

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death ; his victims, in their turn, becoming vampires. According to this author, the only way to get rid of such unwelcome visitors is to disinter their bodies, to pierce them with a stake cut from a green tree, to cut off their heads and to burn their hearts.

A similar superstition is very prevalent in Turkey, where these vampires are known under the name of ‘Ghoul.’ Not only are they believed to suck the blood of the living, but also to desecrate the graves of the dead and feed on the corpses. The dark ages were full of rude superstitions, and the belief in vampires was exceptionally strong. Christianity failed to destroy the belief in these apparitions, and these superstitions remained in full force during the dark times of the middle ages, so much so that in the reign of Charlemagne, it was found expedient to enact certain ordinances dealing with *Striga* or *Masca*, signifying shapeless beings. The advance of civilization arrested but slightly the progress of superstition founded on a feeling by which the majority of mankind is so frequently actuated—fear—and many abstruse works were composed on the subject.

The superstition concerning vampires is especially strong in Eastern Europe. These apparitions are known in Poland under the name of “*Upior*,” in Russia, “*Googooka*,” in Hungary, Servia, Greece, &c., “*Vardoolacka*.” In Greenland, even, the belief in vampires, imported no doubt from Iceland, is very strong. Captain Jansen, who was wrecked on the

coast of that country in 1777, tells us that the natives were dreadfully terrified by the neighbourhood of the body of a seaman who was buried among the rocks, and which, they averred, had become a vampire and was sucking many of them to death.

Very general, also, is the vampire superstition in the Levant, and *loupsgarou* are there known under the name of "*Vroucolochas*." The Greeks never mention the word without horror, and the man who refuses to believe in the gruesome feats of these ghouls, is looked upon as an object of pity.

Some of the stories connected with these vampires are really most incredibly attested, and nothing would shake a Levantine's belief in them. Freshness of the face and wetness of the lip with blood are held indubitable signs of a vampire. The blood-curdling curse in Byron's "*Giaour*" fully explains the horrid attributes of a vampire.

“ But thou false Infidel shalt writhe  
Beneath avenging Monkir's scythe;  
And from its torment 'scape alone  
To wander round lost Eblis' throne;  
And fire unquenched, unquenchable,  
Around, within, thy heart shall dwell;  
Nor ear can hear, nor tongue can tell  
The tortures of that inward hell!  
But first, on earth as vampire sent,  
Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent:  
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,  
And suck the blood of all thy race:

There, from thy daughter, sister, wife,  
 At midnight drain the stream of life ;  
 Yet loathe the banquet which perforce  
 Must feed thy livid living corse :  
 Thy victims, ere they yet expire,  
 Shall know the demon for their sire,  
 As cursing thee, thou cursing them,  
 Thy flowers are withered on the stem.  
 But one that for thy crime must fall,  
 The youngest, most beloved of all,  
 Shall bless thee with a father's name—  
 That word shall wrap thy heart in flame !  
 Yet must thou end thy task, and mark  
 Her cheek's last tinge, her eye's last spark,  
 And the last glassy glance must view  
 Which freezes o'er its lifeless blue ;  
 Then with unhallowed hand shall tear  
 The tresses of her yellow hair,  
 Of which in life—a lock when shorn  
 Affection's fondest pledge was worn ;  
 But now is borne away by thee,  
 Memorial of thine agony !  
 Wet with thine own best blood shall drip  
 Thy gnashing tooth and hag-gard lip ;  
 Then stalking to thy sullen grave,  
 Go—and with Ghouls and Afrits rave ;  
 Till these in horror shrink away  
 From spectre more accursed than they !

. . . . .  
 Especially in Hungary did the idea of vampirism  
 have a firm hold on the minds of the people, high and  
 low, and between 1730 and 1735 all Europe was filled  
 with terrifying reports of the exploits of these grue-  
 some beings. The belief was so general that Louis  
 XV. of France commissioned his ambassador at Vienna,  
 the Duc de Richelieu, personally to ascertain in

Hungary and Austria, the reality of the existence of vampires. The superstition gained ground so much that the chief periodicals of the time contain frequent accounts of cases of vampirism in Hungary. A great number of anecdotes were officially registered and are related by contemporary writers. Some of them even describe the manners and customs of these vampires, and aver that when lying in their graves, they suck and chew their winding-sheets, and that it was necessary to place under their chins a piece of green turf, in order that they might not reach their sheets with their teeth, and to bind their hands, that they might not turn about in their coffins.

Many believed that notwithstanding all the means used to destroy their bodies, vampires would resume their shape and recommence their mischievous wanderings as soon as the rays of moonlight fell on their graves.

Even at the present day the French peasant firmly believes in the existence of a species of vampire known as "Loupsgarou." Paul Feval in one of his books gives a charming little story showing the origin of Loupsgarou.

The belief in the existence of Loupsgarou must in a great measure have been inculcated into Quashie's forefathers by the French colonists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the Grenadian "Loogaroo" of to-day possesses almost exactly the same attributes as the French one. Quashie firmly believes that

Loogaroos are human beings, generally old women, who have made a pact with the devil, by which, in exchange for the possession of some occult power, they have bound themselves to provide a certain quantity of human blood every night during their lifetime for the delectation of the arch fiend.

Every night at first cock-crow, loogaroos wend their way to the mystic silk-cotton-tree, and there, by some singular and as yet undiscovered process, will proceed to divest themselves of their skins, which are carefully folded up and hidden away; the loogaroo *écorché* then loses its human form, and is only visible as a ball of bluish fire which Quashie swears any one can see any night flying through the air, on its way to perform its ghastly duties. This belief in the existence of loogaroos is ineradicably ingrained in the lower classes, and any one suggesting that such beings did not exist, would be looked on as an idiot. Many who do not allow themselves to be taken in by the trickeries of Obeah, still believe firmly in the existence of these vampires, and many an old man or woman has been pointed out to me as an undoubted loogaroo.

I have frequently been called outside by my servants late at night to see a loogaroo, and certainly have often seen solitary lights flashing about on the opposite hill-side, which were pointed out to me as loogaroos, but might just as well have been lanterns carried by perfectly harmless people watching a cocoa piece. This idea was always laughed to scorn, and my servants, I

am sure, generally hoped I should some day experience the existence of loogaroos in person.

The principal function of loogaroos, as I have said before, is to suck the blood of living persons and animals, and any Quashie feeling tired and languid on awaking will aver that he has been sucked by a loogaroo, and will accordingly, ere nightfall, take a multitude of precautions as a defence against the attacks of the loogaroo whose visit he expects.

Doors and shutters, it appears, are no barriers to a loogaroo, as the smallest crack or chink in the wall is enough to give him admittance to his victims. It has, however, been proved that if rice and sand be sprinkled over-night in front of the door of a cabin, the loogaroo will be forced to stop and count every grain before entering, and as morning would certainly overtake him before the completion of the task, the inmates of the hut are secure so long as this precaution is taken.

My notice was once drawn, by a man working in the garden, to an old woman walking along the road close by. He bade me notice a bandage she was wearing over one eye, and then informed me that the old creature was a loogaroo of the first water.

He then went on to relate how the old woman was known to be a loogaroo by all the inhabitants of the village, and that he himself had suffered from her attacks. It appears that he awakened one morning feeling very weak and languid, and, on looking about,

noticed two or three drops of blood on his clothes. This discovery at once convinced him that he had been sucked, during the night, by a loogaroo.

Accordingly, he and his wife determined to watch during the following night and prepare themselves for the visit of the expected loogaroo. Each kept the other awake, and remained perfectly silent so as not to alarm the vampire. Everything remained perfectly still, and not a sound was heard until just after the second cock-crow, when they both distinctly noticed a sound of scratching on the thatch of the roof above their heads. This was evidently the loogaroo preparing to effect an entrance through the thatch. The man then noiselessly armed himself with his cutlass, and just as the scratching and rustling on the roof was growing more and more distinct, he thrust his cutlass through the thatch just at the spot whence the suspicious sounds proceeded. A dismal moan instantly sounded through the air, and rushing outside, both the man and his wife heard the sound dying away in the distance, while they noticed at that very moment a bluish loogaroo light vanish into the house inhabited by the suspected woman.

Next day, this same woman was found lying in bed, half blind from some injury to one of her eyes, which she said had been caused during the night by falling over the stump of a tree in her search for some chickens which had strayed. This cock-and-bull story was of course not believed, and on the gardener making

known his adventure, every one was well pleased that the woman had received a well-merited punishment for her gruesome misdeeds.

Loogaroos are also placed in dire predicaments by the loss of their human skins, and I have frequently been told that should I ever come across a loogaroo's skin hidden in the bushes under a silk-cotton-tree, I was to be sure to seize it at once, place it in a mortar, add a sufficiency of pepper and fine salt, and pound away at the mixture as long as I could. By this proceeding, the vampire would be unable to resume his human shape, and would soon die from the exposure.

All these ridiculous ideas and stories are believed in most firmly by Quashie, and nothing can shake his ideas on the subject. Some negroes are certainly to be found, whose superior intelligence forces them to see the absurdity of these beliefs, and inclines them to turn the credulity of their fellow-countrymen to good account. Cocoa thieves have frequently been found donning the attributes of a loogaroo in order to ensure greater security in the performance of their nefarious deeds. In fact, sham vampires have often been caught in the very act of devastating a cocoa piece; a man, stark naked, with his body well oiled, will climb up the trees or gather the pods growing on the trunk within reach, while his confederate, in similar garb, will glide about the vicinity, waving a loogaroo lantern at the end of a long stick. The

neighbours may see the light, but fear of coming across a real genuine loogaroo will keep them indoors while the robbery is being committed.

I have frequently come across these loogaroo lanterns knocking about a cocoa piece. They are generally fashioned out of an empty dry calabash, having a socket made for the insertion of a candle, and the sides of the calabash cut to imitate the features of a face.

It is very strange that this belief in loogaroos and vampires, although so ridiculous and devoid of even a semblance of truth, should have obtained so firm a hold on the minds of so many races throughout the world; and one might be almost a little inclined to acknowledge that, after all, there may be some little unexplained wonder hidden away under the mass of gross superstition on the subject. A few years ago, I was called out to see an old African woman, who had been caught the night before acting the loogaroo. The old hag had been found at the ghostly hour of midnight, stark naked, dancing round a small fire, into which she from time to time threw a variety of substances causing the flames to change colour. Up to this day, I have not been able to divine the object of her antics, and it is hard to see what advantage or power that we wot of could accrue to the old dame in return for her midnight incantations. Dogs are commonly supposed by Quashie to have the power of discerning the presence of a loogaroo, and I have often

remarked my dogs set to barking furiously at people, apparently without rhyme or reason. It was sometimes only with the greatest difficulty that they could be prevented from jumping on and biting the man or woman who seemed so objectionable to them. The other negroes standing around would look at each other significantly, and I would hear the word "loogaroo" muttered. People who have sold themselves to the devil in the capacity of vampires, cannot, it appears, be confined in prison, and Quashie will give hundreds of instances of miraculous escapes from the lock-up by well-known loogaroos, in proof of his assertion. I am more inclined to believe, however, that these miraculous escapes are not so much due to the assistance of the arch fiend as to the remarkable capacity of the native "bobbies" for receiving small bribes.

It is a comfort for white people resident in the West Indies to know that loogaroos confine their attentions to persons of their own colour, and that whites are rarely the prey of vampires. Although they in person may perhaps not suffer from the gruesome powers of loogaroos, they will not have been long in the islands before they will perceive the effects of loogaroos on their horses and cattle. I had not been long settled in Grenada, before I was annoyed to perceive that my horses were getting into very bad condition. The amount of grain they got, I knew, was more than sufficient, and yet, although I increased the allowance, the poor brutes only seemed

to get thinner and thinner, and consumed by an insatiable hunger. The boy who had the care of the animals had been highly recommended for honesty, and I trusted him implicitly. To my numerous complaints to him on the state of the horses, the only thing that I could get out of him was "Loogaroos sucking de horses too bad, sah," and that was his eternal refrain. I changed the boy, but to no purpose. When the nags were taken out of the stable in the morning, they would come out with drooping heads and careless gait, and apparently worn out. The servants were so positive that this state of things was due to the attacks of loogaroos who were sucking the life out of the horses, that I determined to sit up and watch during a night. Nor was I disappointed, for a little after twelve, although the night was dark, I perceived two dusky forms glide across the opposite side of the courtyard and advance to the stable door; I then heard the sound of a key turning in the lock: the door opened and the two horses were led out. The wretches, I saw, had saddled the nags, and just as they were mounting, a door unfortunately slammed in the house. Quick as lightning, the blackguards, suspecting they were watched, bounded into the bush and were seen no more. I called up the boy, who was snoring like the seven sleepers, and showed him the two horses standing saddled in the yard; his astonishment was great, and I could see that in secret he was much disappointed that his

mysterious loogaroos should after all have turned out to be a couple of bold niggers who rode my horses to death every night. I changed the lock on the stable door, and the nags rapidly regained flesh and spirits.

In Trinidad, however, and especially on the Spanish Main, horses suffer very much from the attacks of real loogaroos, that is to say, large vampire bats; and windows and ventilation holes of the stables and cattle pens have to be secured by wire netting to prevent the entrance of these large bats, which do a great deal of harm to the animals they manage to fasten on.

The breed of horses in the West Indies is very fair all round, but varies considerably in the different islands. Jamaica raises some very fine animals, especially suited to the tropics. Trinidad and Barbados import a good many Canadian and American horses for carriage work. Porto Rico raises the finest breed of horses to be found in the West Indies, and the strain is kept as pure as possible. A real Porto Rican is worth any amount over a hundred pounds, and is characterized by a wonderful amble. The saddles used in Porto Rico are more like arm-chairs with leg-rests than anything else, and a horse of the pure breed will carry you over mountain and down valley for forty miles at a stretch, at the same unchanging, easy amble.

A good many ponies are raised in the smaller islands, and Grenada possesses a breed of hardy

Creole ponies, much more suited to the work required of them than the heavy Americans imported now and then.

Walking is never thought of in Grenada, and no one owning a horse (and who does not?) would go the smallest distance on foot. Englishmen, on their first arrival, make up their minds to take as much walking exercise as they did in England, and are looked on by the old colonists as simpletons. They soon lose their superabundance of energy, though, and take to a horse's back even to go a hundred yards. The great drawback to the climate of these islands is its enervating influence. The slightest effort becomes a trouble, and no one exerts himself a bit more than he is absolutely obliged to. .

## CHAPTER XV.

West Indian veranda—Peaceful scene—The captain's yarn—  
Smuggling in the Caribbees—Père Labat's loup-garou.

ALMOST every West Indian house possesses a broad cool veranda or gallery, abundantly furnished with American rockers, hammocks and cosy wicker-work lounges. As soon as the day's work is done and dinner over, the whole family resorts to the veranda, and there receives its friends and visitors, and the evening is generally spent in smoking and chatting and long talks about home and home doings.

As I sit in the fast-deepening twilight, lolling in my cosy canvas chair, a well-smoked cigar between my lips and a sherry sangris at my elbow, I feel very comfortable, and must confess that, though there is no place like "home," by which all West Indians mean England, still one can pitch one's tent in far worse places than in these far Western Isles of the Caribbean Sea.

The Western sky is molten gold and throws its ruddy gleams through the veranda, and tips the spathes of the cocoanut branches with gilded light. The birds are twittering their evening chat, while the

quaint refrain of the negroes boiling sugar in the works comes up in gusts on the wings of the evening breeze. My eyes wander over the charming landscape lying at my feet; the bright and gaudy hues of tropic vegetation toned down by the indescribably lovely chiaro-oscuro that precedes nightfall in the tropics. The fields of soft green canes, bowing their feathery arrows to the gentle rustle of the spice-laden breeze, while in the distance, the still, calm ocean, studded with a hundred islets, stretches away till sea and sky fade away and mingle imperceptibly.

My reverie is abruptly terminated by the insinuating movements of the noiseless, linen-clad butler, offering iced drinks and a fresh cigar. The soothing melody of one of Mendelssohn's "*Liede ohne Worte*" has just died away in the drawing-room, and my host calls on one of his visitors, a gruff old sea dog, to tell us a yarn.

"Come, captain, tell us some of those adventures of yours, of the days when you were not the good boy you are now."

"Well, then, here goes for a yarn," acquiesces the worthy old captain, settling himself in his lounge and lighting a fresh pipe.

"You all have heard, no doubt, that in my young days I was the despair of my parents, and am sorry to say, I fear I deserved a large share of the reproaches I was always greeted with at home. Somehow or other, though, I could not settle down to steady work,

like any other fellow, and I was only happy when meddling with the sea and things nautical, and used to long and regret that I had not been born in the bold buccaneering days, when these islands were the resort of all the restless, wild and adventurous spirits in Europe. I do not suppose my people were very much surprised one day to hear that I had finally engaged myself on board a Spanish schooner, and was off to the Spanish Main.

“I am not going to recite all my ups and downs, but will spin you a yarn about how we once ‘did’ the revenue out of a cargo of brandy and cigars. Mind, I am not going to uphold smuggling; on the contrary, I now consider a smuggler as a most dishonest man; but somehow or other, by not seeing forcibly the people whom you are directly defrauding, one comes to think it rather a venial offence; and then, at the time of my tale, I was young and not too scrupulous, and the excitement of a smuggling venture attracted me almost as much as the profit to be derived.

“I was the owner of a smart little sloop of some thirty tons, which used to do the island trade, that is to say, take cargoes from one island to another, but seldom out of the Windward group. Being at that time rather hard up, I was not above turning a risky penny, by running her from Martinique or Guadaloupe to one of the English islands, with a cargo of tobacco or spirits, which I took precious good care never was checked by a customs’ officer. Ah! it was

a risky business though, for, you know, a vessel caught smuggling is usually forfeited with everything on board, and many a close shave have I had from having my vessel and cargo seized: but, on the other hand the profit on a cargo or two safely run, would have more than compensated me for the loss of my sloop. She was a tidy little craft, manned by four men and a boy, who all shared in the profits of a lucky venture. The captain was a rough old salt I picked up one day in hospital; he was convalescent and in search of a berth, so gladly closed with my offer, and being a Devonshire man, reared in a fishing village, had, in the good old days of yore, seen some fun in eluding the coast-guard, so served my purpose to a T. However, when I put my *Artful Dodger*, as she was called, on the brandy and cigar tack, I nearly always took the helm myself, and saw that all went square.

“ Well, on this particular occasion, we left Martinique at night, having on board thirty-four cases of brandy, a couple of hundred pounds of tobacco, manufactured at Martinique into a long thin cigar, generally known in the islands as ‘Long-Toms,’ and besides this we had six puncheons of rum, a few cases of gin, and some other articles of French make, upon which there is a heavy duty—altogether a valuable cargo. We had a very quick run, and arrived in sight of our destination about six o’clock in the evening of the next day. We dropped anchor at about three

hundred yards from shore, off a little collection of negro huts, which could hardly be called a village. This was the place where it had been agreed upon that the goods should be landed and taken away into the interior.

“It was a picturesque little place, and from the vessel we could see a little strip of white beach between the lofty rocky cliffs jutting out into the sea on either side, making as snug a little bay as you could wish to have for our line of business. Thick clumps of cocoanut palms grew almost down to the water’s edge, their clusters of brownish-green fruit shown up by the last rays of the setting sun. A few thatched huts were nestled in the shade, lighted up, here and there, by the fires which, no doubt, kept the pots boiling with the evening meal of plantains and breadfruit. Half a dozen little naked urchins, as black as your hat, were running about between the houses, scattering the pigs, goats and fowls always to be found round a negro hut.

“A red rag was hanging from a bamboo near the beach, placed there by one of our confederates, showing us that all was right and the coast clear. We waited of course until nightfall before we thought of beginning to land anything. The moon was only four or five days old, so we reckoned on not being betrayed by too much light. It was nearly eight o’clock when we lowered our boat and began to pull ashore, when suddenly we distinctly heard the splash of oars, some

distance from us. We began to think ourselves done for, and were pulling hastily back to the sloop, when we espied coming towards us in the dim moonlight, a canoe with a single rower; on reaching us the man asked for the captain. 'What's up?' I called out. 'Hold fast, cap'n—you's cotched, de revenue dere.' 'Where?' cried I. 'Let me tell you,' he answered, and proceeded to tell us that he had been on the watch all the afternoon, and as bad luck would have it, just as we were coming into the bay, who should he see, riding round the road skirting the top of the cliff, but the revenue officer! The latter, on seeing us, had reined in his horse and remained watching us for a few minutes, no doubt wondering what such a craft could want in such a place. He evidently thought something was wrong and suspected our designs, for he suddenly turned his horse, and started off galloping in the direction he had come from to call the assistance of the police. To the man's surprise, however, as he was running to give us the alarm, he perceived the same revenue officer creeping round the corner of the cliff, on foot, seeking to hide himself under the trees as he advanced. He most likely feared we might escape before he could return from the police station, which was fully eight miles off, so must have determined to catch us single-handed, which, to say the least of it, was plucky. Our foe continued advancing stealthily, till he reached a small patch of sugar-cane growing near the sand; here he

remained until it was almost dark, when he was seen to creep slowly on towards an overturned boat, which was lying near the water's edge; cautiously looking round to see if any one was watching him, he picked up a couple of pieces of wood, tilted up the boat so as to allow him to creep under it, got in, and propped up the boat with the sticks, so as to allow him to see what was going on around while he was lying hidden inside. Our darky having seen the enemy fairly ensconced, had borrowed a canoe and come out to warn us. As soon as the man had finished his say, to the surprise of the crew, I gave orders to open the main hatch and to bring the liquor up on deck. 'Surely, sir,' remonstrated my old captain, 'you ain't agoin' to land them things, all the same; better stand out to sea, sir, and put 'em ashore to-morrow night somewhere else.'

" 'No no, old man, never fear, we'll be clear to night, and the *Artful Dodger* must be at St. Vincent to-morrow evening in time to take that cargo to Barbados.' I then detailed to him my plan to 'circumwent,' as he called it, the revenue officer. I ordered the mate and the boy to get into the boat with me, and with muffled oars we pulled out a little way to sea, and landed behind one of the cliffs forming the bay, out of sight of the village; then, mooring the boat to some mangrove roots, we three proceeded overland and took the village by the rear. The place was quite quiet, and being naturally on our side, the natives knew

that the best thing they could do was to take no notice of our sloop when she came into the little bay.

“ We advanced noiselessly towards the overturned boat, where our enemy, like a hermit crab, was lying in wait to pounce down on the first cask we landed. Getting close up behind we could hear him whistling very softly to himself, no doubt already reckoning his share of such a fine haul. ‘ By Jove ! the sloop must be worth four hundred or five hundred pounds ; and the cargo perhaps two hundred pounds more ; I am sure the boss ought to give me a cool hundred for this.’ Such were most probably his happy thoughts, which were doomed to come to an unpleasant rupture, for suddenly kicking down the supports, we caused the uplifted side of the boat to fall to the ground, thus completely covering up our revenue officer, who had now become as harmless to us as if he had been twenty miles off. The poor fellow, on finding himself a prisoner, seemed cruelly distressed. His futile efforts to raise the boat were most ludicrous ; his prison, besides being very weighty, was rendered immovable by our sitting upon it. You may imagine how we laughed at his muffled shouts for help : he thumped and kicked away to his heart’s content, or rather discontent, and very soon subsided into comparative silence.

“ Our adversary now being safely disposed of, we could leisurely proceed to land, so I despatched the

boy to get the boat and tell the men to begin unloading. The first boat-load came ashore, a puncheon of rum, and some brandy was landed and carried off by the people who were ready to receive it. The unfeeling mate, as every package came ashore, rapped his knuckles on the top of the boat and in the most respectful tones, 'Another puncheon gone, sir; this makes three, you had better check it off. Seven more cases of brandy to come, sir!' The poor fellow inside, meanwhile making the most terrific threats. Every now and then he would yell out, 'Let me out, I tell you, you'll repent of this.' Then he would come down the scale, 'Oh, come on, let me out, and I shan't split on you.' No doubt he was beginning to feel the sand cold, lying a few hours on the beach at night is not pleasant. Then he would go off on another tack, and yell out (the voice sounded rather feeble to us), 'Remember, it is fifty pounds fine for obstruction, you had better let me out.' He must have got pretty tired, as after kicking the inside of the boat for about two hours, he seemed partially to collapse, and only disturbed us now and then by a few cries for help. The things had nearly all been landed, when we began to consider what measures we could take to prevent his seeing any of us, which would never do, as the alarm would be given and we should thenceforward be unable to touch at the island as a peaceful and law-abiding trader. One of the men, however, brought some

pickets and hammered them deep into the sand, on both sides of the overturned boat, which by means of these, was firmly lashed with ropes to the ground. The defeated foe being disposed of, we finally arranged matters on shore, got into our boat, and half-an-hour after the *Artful Dodger* had shaken out her sails and was standing out to sea. As to the unfortunate revenue officer, I believe his renewed shouts and kicks attracted the attention, the next morning, of some passers-by, who delivered him from his ignominious position. He really deserved something for his pluck, I hope the Governor rewarded him."

By the time the captain had ended his story, night had closed in once more. The fire-flies were flitting round the summits of the nutmeg-trees and the infinite army of humming insects had begun their ceaseless chorus. A glorious full moon had risen, Venus like, from the waves and was shedding her pure silvery light over the ocean, giving it the appearance of a mighty silver shield.

Some flickering lights on the opposite hill-side induced some one to say that the loup-garros were out to-night, and at their ghastly pranks, and another of the visitors began to make some reflections on this ridiculous creole superstition. Our host, in the course of the conversation, remarked how deeply rooted and ancient was this belief in the existence of vampires, and bringing out a very rare, valuable old

work on the West Indies—"Nouveaux voyages aux Isles d' Amerique, par Pére Labat"—translated to us an interesting passage where the old author gave a most extraordinary anecdote relating to the wonderful achievements of an old sorceress doing business in the vampire line. The extract was as follows:—

“Nearly all the negroes who leave their country, having attained the age of manhood, are sorcerers, or, at all events, are much tainted with magic, witchcraft, and poison. The incident which I am going to relate, although extremely marvellous, cannot be doubted, as I possess the proofs of its authenticity.

“The Count de Gennes, commanding a squadron of the king’s ships, having reduced the fort of Goree in 1696, embarked on two of his ships all the negroes found in the baracoons of the English traders and despatched them to the French Islands. In one of these ships were found some black women much versed in the diabolical sciences, and who worked their spells to such effect that the vessel became almost stationary, and the voyage, usually performed in twice twenty-four hours, took seven weeks, the ship remaining as if stuck fast in the same spot, a few leagues from land, notwithstanding that there was a favourable wind blowing continually. Such an extraordinary occurrence much amazed the officers and crew, who, not knowing the cause of this phenomenon, could not remedy it. Water and provisions began to fail, there was a great mortality among the blacks

and a great many were thrown overboard. Some of them, when about to die, complained of an old black woman, accusing her of being the cause of their death, saying that she had threatened to eat their hearts out, and that they were gradually wasting away, whilst suffering great pain. The captain of the ship caused the bodies of some of these negroes to be opened, and their hearts and livers were really found to be as dry and empty as a bladder, although otherwise they seemed in their natural condition.

“The captain then caused the accused black woman to be tied to one of the guns and severely whipped; so as to force her to acknowledge the crime with which she was charged. As she did not seem to feel the blows, the surgeon-major of the ship thought that the provost was not striking hard enough, and, taking a rope’s end, he struck her several times with it, with all his might. The witch affected still more than before not to feel the slightest pain, and told the surgeon that as he was ill-treating her without reason she would make him repent of it, and would eat his heart also. Two days after, the surgeon died in agony. His body was opened, and his heart and liver were found to be as dry as parchment.

“The captain did not know what to do after what had just occurred. He might easily have had the woman strangled or thrown into the sea; but he feared that she was not the only one, and that her companions in the black art might retaliate and re-

venge her death ; so, on the contrary, he treated her well and made her the grandest promises if she would cease her evil practices. A bargain was made and it was agreed that she should be sent back to her country, with two or three others whom she named, on condition she promised to allow the ship to continue its journey. In order to impress this officer with a sense of her power, she asked if he had any fruit, or anything else eatable on board. He answered that he had some water-melons. 'Show them to me,' returned she, 'and without touching or coming near them, I engage to have eaten them before twenty-four hours are over.' He accepted the challenge and showed her some water-melons, which he placed in a box which was immediately locked, and of which he placed the key in his pocket. The next morning the woman asked him to look at the melons ; he opened the box in which they had been placed, and, to his great satisfaction, found them seemingly untouched ; his joy, however, was but of short duration, and was changed to extreme astonishment on attempting to take up the fruit ; they were entirely empty, and nothing but the skin remained, inflated like a balloon and dry as parchment. The ship was accordingly obliged to return to land, to take in water and fresh supplies. The redoubtable woman was left on shore with several of her associates, and the ship thereupon continued and performed her voyage in a perfectly prosperous manner."

## CHAPTER XVI.

The last, which should have been first—Erroneous ideas on the climate of the West Indies—"The white man's grave"—Low death-rate in Grenada—Origin and cause of bad reputation—Drink!—Scenery in Grenada—Froude on the West Indies—Coloured people—Representative institutions—Hope for the West Indies!

ON thinking over what I am about to write, I find that I have left for the last chapter what ought really to have appeared in the first. When I began this little volume I resolved to do my best to remove a few of the erroneous ideas so prevalent in England about the climate and actual state of the West Indian colonies, and I now find that, apart from what may be gathered by the reader from the foregoing rough sketches, I have given no statistics or comparative statement, which would show more clearly than anything else how far from the truth are the ideas entertained "at home" about the West Indies.

Figures are rarely interesting except when they appear on the right side of one's bank book, but they convey, in statistics, better than anything else, the true impression generally sought to be given in a book treating of history or geography. Hours of

talking and quires of scribbling would do but little to alter the ideas of people who have always been led to believe that the West Indies come next to the Gold Coast in point of a deadly climate. The title of a pleasantly written little book, "A West Indian Sanatorium and a Guide to Barbados," published last year, must have caused many who had not read the contents to smile grimly at what they took to be a lugubrious piece of satire, but when figures are put side by side, and one is forced to believe that even in Barbados, the place known in England as "the white man's grave," the death-rate is 2·98 per cent., that white children, as a rule, grow up excessively strong and healthy, that few countries in the world can show such high numbers where the deceased had reached an age above sixty, and that small-pox, pulmonary diseases and diphtheria are almost unknown, the reader is forced to consider that he has been labouring under a false impression. Many people at home imagine that yellow fever is established *en permanence* in the West Indian colonies, and that the chances are two to one in favour of being carried off by it.

Nor is Barbados the exception among the West Indian islands in point of salubrity. Barring British Guiana, with its fever-stricken swamps, nearly every other colony, and especially the smaller islands, can show as small and even smaller death-rates than Barbados. Grenada, for instance, has not suffered from an epidemic for over thirty years. Its death-

rate is 2·46 per cent., and phthisis, scarlet fever and consumption are quite unknown. The reader may ask, "Then how on earth did the colonies earn their bad reputation?" The answer is, "Through the class of men which formerly colonized these islands." Fifty or sixty years ago, large numbers of young Scotchmen and Englishmen of low extraction were sent out by the absentee owners of estates as overseers and managers. In nine cases out of ten, these young men fell victims, not to "this fatal climate," as one sees inscribed on their tombstones—but to their careless habits, grossly immoral conduct and hard rum-drinking. Many of these unfortunates died from want of care and coarse nourishment. To hard drinking, however, ought mainly to be ascribed the evil reputation of the West Indian colonies; these young English and Scotch immigrants, long before they were acclimatized to the tropics, would indulge in unlimited quantities of the poisonous common rum manufactured on the estates, and in many cases would generally be carried off by delirium tremens. The cause of their deaths would never be reported home under its true name, but rather as "fever" and "the effects of this deadly climate!"

Happily "nous avons changé tout cela," and deaths from intemperance are at present rare—at all events in Grenada. I fear one cannot say as much for British Guiana, where eight or nine gin zizzles before breakfast are almost an institution. Morals, too, I

think, are improving, but what with the warm climate, easy notions of the lower classes on virtue, and moderate exactions of the West Indian Phrynes, there is a good deal of room for improvement.

The scenery of the West Indian Islands is generally celebrated, thanks to Kingsley, Trollope, Lady Brassey, Froude and many others, and of all the lovely islands of the Caribbean Sea, Grenada is generally allowed to be the "Pearl of the Antilles."

Between St. Vincent and Grenada, the English steamer passes through a chain of nearly four hundred little islets of surpassing beauty. Each one seems more beautiful than the last, and almost makes one wish to emulate Alexander Selkirk; the deep ultramarine of the ocean gradually toning down to a lovely sea green, while a dazzling white strip of sand divides the miniature waves from the cool green shore. Clumps of waving cocoanut palms grow right down almost to the water's edge, their feathery spathes tipped with the golden light of the tropic sun, while the cool dark shade beneath makes one long to jump overboard and swim ashore.

Clumsy-looking grey pelicans, with immense long beaks, hover above the undulating waves in quest of their prey, while now and then a silver-gleaming flying-fish will skim above the water for a few seconds, trying to escape from its inveterate foes, the dolphin or baracouta.

The rate at which the steamer goes along hardly

gives one more than a hurried glimpse of these lovely little islets. Some of them are just masses of grey and white cliffs, seeming quite inaccessible and only tenanted by immense numbers of pelicans, man-o'-war birds and sea-gulls, which, if the steamer blew its whistle, would fly out from the crevices in such swarms as to positively darken the air.

Presently the steamer passes larger islands, some measuring two or three miles in circumference. One or two of them are inhabited, and a few little brown thatched huts may be seen standing in the midst of a green patch of plantains, while the little fishing canoes lie run up on the dazzling white beach.

Grenada, which up to now, had loomed in the distant horizon, like a dark low-lying cloud, begins to grow more and more distinct, and one is soon able to discern the bright white strip of sand along the sea shore, while above that, patches of light-green sugar-canes can be described ; and higher up still, as the island shelves up gradually, the dark-green forest-clad hills and mountains overtop each other until they culminate in two or three lofty peaks rearing their summits high up in the bright blue sky.

As the steamer comes closer in shore, one is soon able to make out the little negro houses which dot the coast, while here and there, nestling in the midst of broad fields of bright green sugar-cane, a mass of fine large buildings, evidently sugar-works, may be seen. In most cases, near by, on a small eminence, a prettily

painted villa, with bright red roof, peeps out of clumps of glorious palmistes or mountain palms, rearing their plumed heads a hundred feet from the ground.

Presently, turning a little promontory, we come in sight of a cosy little town clustered round a couple of churches whose tinkling bells may almost be heard calling to morning service. Valley after valley spreads itself out before the traveller's eyes until, after coasting round the island some twenty miles, he at last comes in sight of St. George's, the chief town of the island. As the steamer nears the bay, a number of cranky little canoes will be passed, each manned by almost, if not entirely, naked black men, who haul up their fishing nets and lines without the slightest concern at their more than airy attire. Now and then larger canoes will be overtaken, evidently carrying passengers from the coast to the chief town, and sailing pretty swiftly along under one huge leg of mutton sail supported by a bamboo mast right in the bows.

St. George's is a very picturesque little town, seen from the sea, and, to judge from appearances, should be a very religious one. No less than three large churches, and two smaller edifices which look like chapels, seem to domineer over the cluster of houses built around them.

A small promontory, on which appears a picturesque old fort and a glaring white hospital, juts out into the bay and forms one of the loveliest and safest harbours one could ever wish to see. In formation very much

resembling Dartmouth, the land rises up all round the almost land-locked harbour, and numbers of prettily painted villas and cottages dot the hill-sides. Feathery clumps of bamboos grow side by side with the glorious scarlet "flamboyant," while here, there, and everywhere, cocoa-nut palms and palmistes give a distinctive tropical *cachet* to the whole scene. In the distance, above the hills surrounding the harbour, one can see the pale blue peaks of the mountains inland, picked out against the serene blue sky, while all around groves of cocoa-nut trees, cinnamon, nutmeg and other spices, seem to load the breeze with heavy odours.

While giving full justice to the picturesque beauty of the islands, many of the authors who have written on these colonies have evidently come out with a *parti pris*, and seem to have made up their minds to see everything in accordance with their preconceived notions on these colonies.

Though perfectly correct in many of his remarks, Froude, in his book, "The English in the West Indies," goes rather far in his undoubted prejudice against the negroes and coloured population of the West Indies. While deprecating my presumption in criticizing such an author as Froude, I am bound to say that his interesting work on these islands, though vigorously and graphically written, is not as reliable in its details as might have been expected. Mr. Froude took about two months to "rush around" the

West Indies, and during that short space of time appears to have visited some fifteen or twenty different places. He devotes a whole chapter to Grenada, and yet as a fact, only came ashore for dinner and was off again the same evening, by the same steamer. Consequent on this thorough investigation, Mr. Froude managed to find out that the colony was virtually in the hands of the blacks, and that the whites were evacuating the place as quickly as possible. Had Mr. Froude taken the trouble to look up the statistics of the island, he would have found that at the end of the last century, when the West Indian colonies were at the height of their prosperity, Grenada numbered, exclusive of the English troops, some twelve hundred whites and twenty-three thousand slaves and free coloured people. The last census, taken in 1882, showed over nine hundred whites and forty-four thousand people of colour.

Mr. Froude seems to judge of the prosperity of a colony by the number of English-born inhabitants it possesses. We are inclined to think, however, that a colony derives more benefit from a settled population of well-educated and energetic creoles, who are thoroughly acclimatized and possess a stake in the country, than from a fluctuating number of roving English people who stay in the colony for a few years, make what money they can, live as economically as possible, and finally clear out with their "pile" without having endowed the colony with any corresponding benefit.

The West Indies are certainly in need of fresh blood, and every advantage should be offered to *bonâ fide* European colonists to induce them to come and settle permanently in these colonies, make their homes in them, and devote their energy and capital to the introduction of new industries and the development of those already started.

The present English inhabitants of the West Indies are mostly officials, who stay four or five years in the islands, draw their salaries, live economically, and save up their money to spend it in England when they go home on leave. These may benefit the colonies by their society and education, but do not contribute materially to their prosperity. The real colonists are the educated creoles, the planters and merchants.

Many English people have an idea that "creole" means "coloured." This is not so. A creole may be coloured, but all those born in the West Indies, of English parents, are also creoles.

Probably there may not be more than six or seven hundred really white people at present in Grenada, but there is also a middle class which cannot be ignored, and which forms the backbone and stability of the colony. This is the coloured population; a great many coming under this head are perfectly white to all appearance, but having had some remote progenitor, who originally hailed from the dark continent, are all counted coloured by the colonial population. Nearly all the commercial busi-

ness is in the hands of this class, and many fine estates are owned by coloured people. All those who are able, send their children to be educated in Europe, and these return to the colony with professions, and are, to all intents and purposes, thoroughly English. I might remark, *en passant*, that the present Chief Justice of Barbados is a black man, and counted one of the best lawyers in the West Indies. Mr. Froude is violently opposed to negro democratic suffrage, and avers that if representative government is ever accorded to Jamaica and the other colonies, they will gradually revert to barbarism and savagery. Representative institutions do not mean total independence from the Home Government, and in those colonies where the experiment has been tried, the results have not in the slightest degree fulfilled Mr. Froude's dire prognostications. It would doubtless be a mistake to accord responsible government to small colonies which do not yet possess the desired elements for a representative house, but in the case of a colony like Barbados, which has enjoyed responsible government for nearly two centuries, and which possesses a large and enlightened population, it would be hard to withhold from its inhabitants a voice in the affairs of a colony in which they have so large a stake.

Writing of Grenada, Mr. Froude declares that the settlers, who had once been a thriving and wealthy community, have melted away. "Not more than six hundred English are left," he says, "and these are

clearing out at their best speed. They have sold their estates for anything which they could get”!

So far from this being the case, the truth is that ten or twenty years ago, the sugar-cane having become an unprofitable cultivation, a good many proprietors of sugar estates sold them for less than their value, and left the colony. To every one of these individuals, ten, instead of giving up in despair, stirred up their energies and set to replacing the worn-out sugar industry by raising cocoa plantations on their rich cane lands. Last year Grenada exported over 80,000 cwts. of cocoa, worth about 300,000*l.* As cocoa at present pays about twenty per cent. on the outlay, every one who can is planting up every acre he can get of suitable land, and so far from the white planters selling their estates for whatever they can get for them, it is the rarest thing for a cocoa estate to be sold willingly, and for every such estate there would be twenty buyers. A great many Englishmen have, in the last two or three years, come to Grenada with the intention of investing in cocoa plantations, but so far from obtaining estates for a song, were nearly all obliged to return home, not finding a single cocoa estate for sale. Cocoa lands sold by the Provost Marshal realize sums which would have bought five times as many acres in days gone by, and only the other day 210*l.* were paid for two acres of land in cocoa, and this was considered an excessively high price, although the yield from these two acres in the

last crop was over twelve bags, representing a nett value of nearly 50*l.*

It is unfortunate for these colonies that Mr. Froude should have accepted as perfectly reliable, and with such alacrity, whatever was told him of the islands he visited so hurriedly. Had he conscientiously inspected these colonies, I feel sure his verdict would have been very different. His book was not published as *impressions de voyage*, but as an exact account of the state of the West Indian colonies at the present date, and consequently, his book being extensively read and accepted as history and geography, Mr. Froude should have been ultra careful to ascertain the correctness of what he was told by fellow-passengers or passing acquaintances. His last work will not, as it was hoped, dispel any of the erroneous ideas entertained at home on these colonies, but will, unfortunately, rather tend to encourage and perpetuate the notion in England, that these colonies are, to use a Yankee expression, "played out" and hardly capable of improvement; whereas in reality, the majority of them are only suffering from scarcity of capital, lack of energy, and want of enterprise. Were these missing quantities present, the wonderful resources of these charming islands would speedily be developed, and wealth and contentment would reign once more in those islands which are at present struggling under a worn-out industry, and which do not possess the power, unaided, to start new industries and so free themselves from the load of

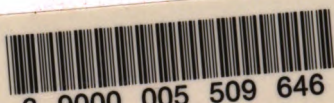
debt which presses them down and restricts their enterprise.

Although Grenada, Trinidad, and a few more of the islands are flourishing through the possession of such profitable products as cocoa and nutmegs, the majority of the West Indies are almost entirely dependent on sugar, and are at present unable to compete successfully with the bounty-supported productions of other countries. It is to be hoped that their ceaseless cries to the Home Government for protection, may at no distant date be heard, and the necessary assistance granted them, so as to enable these struggling and undeveloped colonies to regain the rank they once held amongst the British possessions, and once more hold up their heads as the brightest jewels in the English Crown.

THE END.





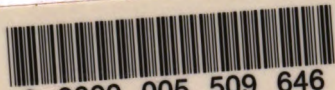


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