

Two Years in the French West Indies

Lafcadio Hearn

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Two Years in the French West Indies
by Lafcadio Hearn
(#4 in our series by Lafcadio Hearn)

Copyright laws are changing all over the world. Be sure to check the
copyright laws for your country before downloading or redistributing
this or any other Project Gutenberg eBook.

This header should be the first thing seen when viewing this Project
Gutenberg file. Please do not remove it. Do not change or edit the
header without written permission.

Please read the "legal small print," and other information about the
eBook and Project Gutenberg at the bottom of this file. Included is
important information about your specific rights and restrictions in
how the file may be used. You can also find out about how to make a
donation to Project Gutenberg, and how to get involved.

Welcome To The World of Free Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts

eBooks Readable By Both Humans and By Computers, Since 1971

*****These eBooks Were Prepared By Thousands of Volunteers!*****

Title: Two Years in the French West Indies

Author: Lafcadio Hearn

Release Date: August, 2004 [EBook #6381]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on December 3, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO Latin-1

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, TWO YEARS IN THE FRENCH WEST
INDIES ***

Transcribed by: Richard Farris [rf7211@hotmail.com]

Livros Grátis

<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>

Milhares de livros grátis para download.

TWO YEARS

IN THE

FRENCH WEST INDIES

By LAFCADIO HEARN

AUTHOR OF "CHITA" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

"_La façon d'être du pays est si agréable, la température si bonne, et l'on y vit dans une liberté si honnête, que je n'aye pas vu un seul homme, ny une seule femme, qui en soient revenues, en qui je n'aye remarqué une grande passion d'y retourner._"-LE PÈRE DUTERTRE (1667)

À MON CHER AMI

LEOPOLD ARNOUX

NOTAIRE À SAINT PIERRE, MARTINIQUE

_Souvenir de nos promenades,--de nos voyages,--de nos causeries,-
des sympathies échangées,--de tout le charme d'une amitié
inaltérable et inoubliable,--de tout ce qui parle à
l'âme au doux Pay des Revenants._

PREFACE

During a trip to the Lesser Antilles in the summer of 1887, the writer of the following pages, landing at Martinique, fell under the influence of that singular spell which the island has always exercised upon strangers, and by which it has earned its poetic name,--_Le Pays des Revenants_. Even as many another before him, he left its charmed shores only to know himself haunted by that irresistible regret,--unlike any other,--which is the enchantment of the land upon all who wander away from it. So he returned, intending to remain some months; but the bewitchment prevailed, and he remained two years.

Some of the literary results of that sojourn form the bulk of the present volume. Several, or portions of several, papers have been published in HARPER'S MAGAZINE; but the majority of the sketches now appear in print for the first time.

The introductory paper, entitled "A Midsummer Trip to the Tropics," consists for the most part of notes taken upon a voyage of nearly three thousand miles, accomplished in less than two months. During such hasty journeying it is scarcely possible for a writer to attempt anything more serious than a mere

reflection of the personal experiences undergone; and, in spite of sundry justifiable departures from simple note-making, this paper is offered only as an effort to record the visual and emotional impressions of the moment.

My thanks are due to Mr. William Lawless, British Consul at St. Pierre, for several beautiful photographs, taken by himself, which have been used in the preparation of the illustrations.

L. H.
Philadelphia, 1889.

CONTENTS

PART ONE--A MIDSUMMER TRIP TO THE TROPICS

PART TWO--MARTINIQUE SKETCHES:--

- I. LES PORTEUSES
- II. LA GRANDE ANSE
- III. UN REVENANT
- IV. LA GUIABLESSE
- V. LA VÉRETTE
- VI. LES BLANCHISSEUSES
- VII. LA PELÉE
- VIII. 'TI CANOTIÉ
- IX. LA FILLE DE COULEUR
- X. BÊTE-NI-PIÉ
- XI. MA BONNE
- XII. "PA COMBINÉ, CHÈ"
- XIII. YÉ
- XIV. LYS

- XV. APPENDIX:--SOME CREOLE MELODIES (not included in this transcription)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

A Martinique Métisse (Frontispiece)
La Place Bertin, St. Pierre, Martinique
Itinerant Pastry-seller
In the Cimetière du Mouillage, St. Pierre
In the Jardin des Plantes, St. Pierre
Cascade in the Jardin des Plantes
Departure of Steamer for Fort-de-France
Statue of Josephine
Inner Basin, Bridgetown, Barbadoes
Trafalgar Square, Bridgetown, Barbadoes
Street in Georgetown, Demerara
Avenue in Georgetown, Demerara
Victoria Regia in the Canal at Georgetown
Demerara Coolie Girl
St. James Avenue, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad

Coolies of Trinidad
Coolie Servant
Coolie Merchant
Church Street, St. George, Grenada
Castries, St. Lucia
'Ti Marie
Fort-de-France, Martinique
Capre in Working Garb
A Confirmation Procession
Manner of Playing the Ka
A Wayside Shrine, or Chapelle
Rue Victor Hugo, St. Pierre
Quarter of the Fort, St. Pierre
Rivière des Blanchisseuses
Foot of La Pellé, behind the Quarter of the Fort
Village of Morne Rouge
Pellé as seen from Grande Anse
Arborescent Ferns on a Mountain Road
'Ti Canot
The Martinique Turban
The Guadeloupe Head-dress
Young Mulattress
Coolie Woman in Martinique Costume
Country Girl-pure Negro Race
Coolie Half-breed
Capresse
The Old Market-place of the Fort, St. Pierre
Bread-fruit Tree
Basse-terre, St. Kitt's

A Trip to the Tropics.

PART ONE--A MIDSUMMER TRIP TO THE TROPICS.

I.

... A long, narrow, graceful steel steamer, with two masts and an orange-yellow chimney,--taking on cargo at Pier 49 East River. Through her yawning hatchways a mountainous piling up of barrels is visible below;--there is much rumbling and rattling of steam-winchs, creaking of derrick-booms, groaning of pulleys as the freight is being lowered in. A breezeless July morning, and a dead heat,--87° already.

The saloon-deck gives one suggestion of past and of coming voyages. Under the white awnings long lounge-chairs sprawl here

and there,--each with an occupant, smoking in silence, or dozing with head drooping to one side. A young man, awaking as I pass to my cabin, turns upon me a pair of peculiarly luminous black eyes,--creole eyes. Evidently a West Indian....

The morning is still gray, but the sun is dissolving the haze. Gradually the gray vanishes, and a beautiful, pale, vapory blue--a spiritualized Northern blue--colors water and sky. A cannon-shot suddenly shakes the heavy air: it is our farewell to the American shore;--we move. Back floats the wharf, and becomes vapory with a bluish tinge. Diaphanous mists seem to have caught the sky color; and even the great red storehouses take a faint blue tint as they recede. The horizon now has a greenish glow, Everywhere else the effect is that of looking through very light-blue glasses....

We steam under the colossal span of the mighty bridge; then for a little while Liberty towers above our passing,--seeming first to turn towards us, then to turn away from us, the solemn beauty of her passionless face of bronze. Tints brighten;--the heaven is growing a little bluer, A breeze springs up....

Then the water takes on another hue: pale-green lights play through it, It has begun to sound, Little waves lift up their heads as though to look at us,--patting the flanks of the vessel, and whispering to one another.

Far off the surface begins to show quick white flashes here and there, and the steamer begins to swing.... We are nearing Atlantic waters, The sun is high up now, almost overhead: there are a few thin clouds in the tender-colored sky,--flossy, long-drawn-out, white things. The horizon has lost its greenish glow: it is a spectral blue. Masts, spars, rigging,--the white boats and the orange chimney,--the bright deck-lines, and the snowy rail,--cut against the colored light in almost dazzling relief. Though the sun shines hot the wind is cold: its strong irregular blowing fans one into drowsiness. Also the somnolent chant of the engines--_do-do, hey! do-do, hey!_--lulls to sleep.

..Towards evening the glaucous sea-tint vanishes,--the water becomes blue. It is full of great flashes, as of seams opening and reclosing over a white surface. It spits spray in a ceaseless drizzle. Sometimes it reaches up and slaps the side of the steamer with a sound as of a great naked hand, The wind waxes boisterous. Swinging ends of cordage crack like whips. There is an immense humming that drowns speech,--a humming made up of many sounds: whining of pulleys, whistling of riggings, flapping and fluttering of canvas, roar of nettings in the wind. And this sonorous medley, ever growing louder, has rhythm,--a _crescendo_ and _diminuendo_ timed by the steamer's regular swinging: like a great Voice crying out, "Whoh-oh-oh! whoh-oh-oh!" We are nearing the life-centres of winds and currents. One can hardly walk on deck against the ever-increasing breath;--yet now the whole world is blue,--not the least cloud is visible; and the perfect transparency and voidness about us make the immense power of this invisible medium seem something ghostly and awful.... The log, at every revolution, whines exactly like a little puppy;--one can hear it through all the roar fully forty feet away.

...It is nearly sunset. Across the whole circle of the Day we have been steaming south. Now the horizon is gold green. All about the falling sun, this gold-green light takes vast expansion. ... Right on the edge of the sea is a tall, gracious ship, sailing sunsetward. Catching the vapory fire, she seems to become a phantom,--a ship of gold mist: all her spars and sails are luminous, and look like things seen in dreams.

Crimsoning more and more, the sun drops to the sea. The phantom ship approaches him,--touches the curve of his glowing face, sails right athwart it! Oh, the spectral splendor of that vision! The whole great ship in full sail instantly makes an acute silhouette against the monstrous disk,--rests there in the very middle of the vermilion sun. His face crimson high above her top-masts,--broadens far beyond helm and bowsprit. Against this weird magnificence, her whole shape changes color: hull, masts, and sails turn black--a greenish black.

Sun and ship vanish together in another minute. Violet the night comes; and the rigging of the foremast cuts a cross upon the face of the moon.

II.

Morning: the second day. The sea is an extraordinary blue,--looks to me something like violet ink. Close by the ship, where the foam-clouds are, it is beautifully mottled,--looks like blue marble with exquisite veinings and nebulosities.... Tepid wind, and cottony white clouds,--cirri climbing up over the edge of the sea all around. The sky is still pale blue, and the horizon is full of a whitish haze.

... A nice old French gentleman from Guadeloupe presumes to say this is not blue water--he declares it greenish (verdâtre). Because I cannot discern the green, he tells me I do not yet know what blue water is. Attendez un peu!...

... The sky-tone deepens as the sun ascends,--deepens deliciously. The warm wind proves soporific. I drop asleep with the blue light in my face,--the strong bright blue of the noonday sky. As I doze it seems to burn like a cold fire right through my eyelids. Waking up with a start, I fancy that everything is turning blue,--myself included. "Do you not call this the real tropical blue?" I cry to my French fellow-traveller. "Mon Dieu! non," he exclaims, as in astonishment at the question;--"this is not blue!" ...What can be his idea of blue, I wonder!

Clots of sargasso float by,--light-yellow sea-weed. We are nearing the Sargasso-sea,--entering the path of the trade-winds. There is a long ground-swell, the steamer rocks and rolls, and the tumbling water always seems to me growing bluer; but my friend from Guadeloupe says that this color "which I call blue" is only darkness--only the shadow of prodigious depth.

Nothing now but blue sky and what I persist in calling blue sea. The clouds have melted away in the bright glow. There is no sign

of life in the azure gulf above, nor in the abyss beneath--there are no wings or fins to be seen. Towards evening, under the slanting gold light, the color of the sea deepens into ultramarine; then the sun sinks down behind a bank of copper-colored cloud.

III.

Morning of the third day. Same mild, warm wind. Bright blue sky, with some very thin clouds in the horizon,--like puffs of steam. The glow of the, sea-light through the open ports of my cabin makes them seem filled with thick blue glass.... It is becoming too warm for New York clothing....

Certainly the sea has become much bluer. It gives one the idea of liquefied sky: the foam might be formed of cirrus clouds compressed,--so extravagantly white it looks to-day, like snow in the sun. Nevertheless, the old gentleman from Guadeloupe still maintains this is not the true blue of the tropics

... The sky does not deepen its hue to-day: it brightens it--the blue glows as if it were taking fire throughout. Perhaps the sea may deepen its hue;--I do not believe it can take more luminous color without being set aflame.... I ask the ship's doctor whether it is really true that the West Indian waters are any bluer than these. He looks a moment at the sea, and replies, "_Oh_ yes!" There is such a tone of surprise in his "oh" as might indicate that I had asked a very foolish question; and his look seems to express doubt whether I am quite in earnest.... I think, nevertheless, that this water is extravagantly, nonsensically blue!

... I read for an hour or two; fall asleep in the chair; wake up suddenly; look at the sea,--and cry out! This sea is impossibly blue! The painter who should try to paint it would be denounced as a lunatic.... Yet it is transparent; the foam-clouds, as they sink down, turn sky-blue,--a sky-blue which now looks white by contrast with the strange and violent splendor of the sea color. It seems as if one were looking into an immeasurable dyeing vat, or as though the whole ocean had been thickened with indigo. To say this is a mere reflection of the sky is nonsense!--the sky is too pale by a hundred shades for that! This must be the natural color of the water,--a blazing azure,--magnificent, impossible to describe.

The French passenger from Guadeloupe observes that the sea is "beginning to become blue."

IV.

And the fourth day. One awakens unspeakably lazy;--this must be the West Indian languor. Same sky, with a few more bright clouds than yesterday;--always the warm wind blowing. There is a long

swell. Under this trade-breeze, warm like a human breath, the ocean seems to pulse,--to rise and fall as with a vast inspiration and expiration. Alternately its blue circle lifts and falls before us and behind us--we rise very high; we sink very low,--but always with a slow long motion. Nevertheless, the water looks smooth, perfectly smooth; the billowings which lift us cannot be seen;--it is because the summits of these swells are mile-broad,--too broad to be discerned from the level of our deck.

... Ten A.M.--Under the sun the sea is a flaming, dazzling lazulite. My French friend from Guadeloupe kindly confesses this is almost the color of tropical water.... Weeds floating by, a little below the surface, are azured. But the Guadeloupe gentleman says he has seen water still more blue. I am sorry,--I cannot believe him.

Mid-day.--The splendor of the sky is weird! No clouds above--only blue fire! Up from the warm deep color of the sea-circle the edge of the heaven glows as if bathed in greenish flame. The swaying circle of the resplendent sea seems to flash its jewel-color to the zenith. Clothing feels now almost too heavy to endure; and the warm wind brings a languor with it as of temptation.... One feels an irresistible desire to drowse on deck --the rushing speech of waves, the long rocking of the ship, the lukewarm caress of the wind, urge to slumber--but the light is too vast to permit of sleep. Its blue power compels wakefulness. And the brain is wearied at last by this duplicated azure splendor of sky and sea. How gratefully comes the evening to us,--with its violet glooms and promises of coolness!

All this sensuous blending of warmth and force in winds and waters more and more suggests an idea of the spiritualism of elements,--a sense of world-life. In all these soft sleepy swayings, these caresses of wind and sobbing of waters, Nature seems to confess some passionate mood. Passengers converse of pleasant tempting things,--tropical fruits, tropical beverages, tropical mountain-breezes, tropical women It is a time for dreams--those day-dreams that come gently as a mist, with ghostly realization of hopes, desires, ambitions.... Men sailing to the mines of Guiana dream of gold.

The wind seems to grow continually warmer; the spray feels warm like blood. Awnings have to be clewed up, and wind-sails taken in;--still, there are no white-caps,--only the enormous swells, too broad to see, as the ocean falls and rises like a dreamer's breast....

The sunset comes with a great burning yellow glow, fading up through faint greens to lose itself in violet light;--there is no gloaming. The days have already become shorter.... Through the open ports, as we lie down to sleep, comes a great whispering,--the whispering of the seas: sounds as of articulate speech under the breath,--as, of women telling secrets....

Fifth day out. Trade-winds from the south-east; a huge tumbling of mountain-purple waves;--the steamer careens under a full spread of canvas. There is a sense of spring in the wind to-day;--something that makes one think of the bourgeoning of Northern woods, when naked trees first cover themselves with a mist of tender green;--something that recalls the first bird-songs, the first climbings of sap to sun, and gives a sense of vital plenitude.

... Evening fills the west with aureate woolly clouds;--the wool of the Fleece of Gold. Then Hesperus beams like another moon, and the stars burn very brightly. Still the ship bends under the even pressure of the warm wind in her sails; and her wake becomes a trail of fire. Large sparks dash up through it continuously, like an effervescence of flame;--and queer broad clouds of pale fire swirl by. Far out, where the water is black as pitch, there are no lights: it seems as if the steamer were only grinding out sparks with her keel, striking fire with her propeller.

VI.

Sixth day out. Wind tepid and still stronger, but sky very clear. An indigo sea, with beautiful white-caps. The ocean color is deepening: it is very rich now, but I think less wonderful than before;--it is an opulent pansy hue. Close by the ship it looks black-blue;--the color that bewitches in certain Celtic eyes.

There is a feverishness in the air;--the heat is growing heavy; the least exertion provokes perspiration; below-decks the air is like the air of an oven. Above-deck, however, the effect of all this light and heat is not altogether disagreeable;--one feels that vast elemental powers are near at hand, and that the blood is already aware of their approach.

All day the pure sky, the deepening of sea-color, the lukewarm wind. Then comes a superb sunset! There is a painting in the west wrought of cloud-colors;--a dream of high carmine cliffs and rocks outlying in a green sea, which lashes their bases with a foam of gold....

Even after dark the touch of the wind has the warmth of flesh. There is no moon; the sea-circle is black as Acheron; and our phosphor wake reappears quivering across it;--seeming to reach back to the very horizon. It is brighter to-night;--looks like another *_Via Lactea_*;--with points breaking through it like stars in a nebula. From our prow ripples rimmed with fire keep fleeing away to right and left into the night;--brightening as they run, then vanishing suddenly as if they had passed over a precipice. Crests of swells seem to burst into showers of sparks, and great patches of spume catch flame, smoulder through, and disappear.... The Southern Cross is visible;--sloping backward and sidewise, as if propped against the vault of the sky: it is not readily discovered by the unfamiliarized eye; it is only after it has

been well pointed out to you that you discern its position. Then you find it is only the _suggestion_ of a cross--four stars set almost quadrangularly, some brighter than others.

For two days there has been little conversation on board. It may be due in part to the somnolent influence of the warm wind,--in part to the ceaseless booming of waters and roar of rigging, which drown men's voices; but I fancy it is much more due to the impressions of space and depth and vastness,--the impressions of sea and sky, which compel something akin to awe.

VII.

Morning over the Caribbean Sea,--a calm, extremely dark-blue sea. There are lands in sight,--high lands, with sharp, peaked, unfamiliar outlines.

We passed other lands in the darkness: they no doubt resembled the shapes towering up around us now; for these are evidently volcanic creations,--jagged, coned, truncated, eccentric. Far off they first looked a very pale gray; now, as the light increases, they change hue a little,--showing misty greens and smoky blues. They rise very sharply from the sea to great heights,--the highest point always with a cloud upon it;--they thrust out singular long spurs, push up mountain shapes that have an odd scooped-out look. Some, extremely far away, seem, as they catch the sun, to be made of gold vapor; others have a madderish tone: these are colors of cloud. The closer we approach them, the more do tints of green make themselves visible. Purplish or bluish masses of coast slowly develop green surfaces; folds and wrinkles of land turn brightly verdant. Still, the color gleams as through a thin fog.

... The first tropical visitor has just boarded our ship: a wonderful fly, shaped like a common fly, but at least five times larger. His body is a beautiful shining black; his wings seem ribbed and jointed with silver, his head is jewel-green, with exquisitely cut emeralds for eyes.

Islands pass and disappear behind us. The sun has now risen well; the sky is a rich blue, and the tardy moon still hangs in it. Lilac tones show through the water. In the south there are a few straggling small white clouds,--like a long flight of birds. A great gray mountain shape looms up before us. We are steaming on Santa Cruz.

The island has a true volcanic outline, sharp and high: the cliffs sheer down almost perpendicularly. The shape is still vapory, varying in coloring from purplish to bright gray; but wherever peaks and spurs fully catch the sun they edge themselves with a beautiful green glow, while interlying ravines seem filled with foggy blue.

As we approach, sun lighted surfaces come out still more luminously green. Glens and sheltered valleys still hold blues and grays; but points fairly illuminated by the solar glow show

just such a fiery green as burns in the plumage of certain humming-birds. And just as the lustrous colors of these birds shift according to changes of light, so the island shifts colors here and there,--from emerald to blue, and blue to gray.... But now we are near: it shows us a lovely heaping of high bright hills in front,--with a further coast-line very low and long and verdant, fringed with a white beach, and tufted with spidery palm-crests. Immediately opposite, other palms are poised; their trunks look like pillars of unpolished silver, their leaves shimmer like bronze.

... The water of the harbor is transparent and pale green. One can see many fish, and some small sharks. White butterflies are fluttering about us in the blue air. Naked black boys are bathing on the beach;--they swim well, but will not venture out far because of the sharks. A boat puts off to bring colored girls on board. They are tall, and not uncomely, although very dark;--they coax us, with all sorts of endearing words, to purchase bay rum, fruits, Florida water.... We go ashore in boats. The water of the harbor has a slightly fetid odor.

VIII.

Viewed from the bay, under the green shadow of the hills overlooking it, Frederiksted has the appearance of a beautiful Spanish town, with its Romanesque piazzas, churches, many arched buildings peeping through breaks in a line of mahogany, bread-fruit, mango, tamarind, and palm trees,--an irregular mass of at least fifty different tints, from a fiery emerald to a sombre bluish-green. But on entering the streets the illusion of beauty passes: you find yourself in a crumbling, decaying town, with buildings only two stories high. The lower part, of arched Spanish design, is usually of lava rock or of brick, painted a light, warm yellow; the upper stories are most commonly left unpainted, and are rudely constructed of light timber. There are many heavy arcades and courts opening on the streets with large archways. Lava blocks have been used in paving as well as in building; and more than one of the narrow streets, as it slopes up the hill through the great light, is seen to cut its way through craggy masses of volcanic stone.

But all the buildings look dilapidated; the stucco and paint is falling or peeling everywhere; there are fissures in the walls, crumbling façades, tumbling roofs. The first stories, built with solidity worthy of an earthquake region, seem extravagantly heavy by contrast with the frail wooden superstructures. One reason may be that the city was burned and sacked during a negro revolt in 1878;--the Spanish basements resisted the fire well, and it was found necessary to rebuild only the second stories of the buildings; but the work was done cheaply and flimsily, not massively and enduringly, as by the first colonial builders.

There is great wealth of verdure. Cabbage and cocoa palms overlook all the streets, bending above almost every structure, whether hut or public building;--everywhere you see the splitted green of banana leaves. In the court-yards you may occasionally

catch sight of some splendid palm with silver-gray stem so barred as to look jointed, like the body of an annelid.

In the market-place--a broad paved square, crossed by two rows of tamarind-trees, and bounded on one side by a Spanish piazza--you can study a spectacle of savage picturesqueness. There are no benches, no stalls, no booths; the dealers stand, sit, or squat upon the ground under the sun, or upon the steps of the neighboring arcade. Their wares are piled up at their feet, for the most part. Some few have little tables, but as a rule the eatables are simply laid on the dusty ground or heaped upon the steps of the piazza--reddish-yellow mangoes, that look like great apples squeezed out of shape, bunches of bananas, pyramids of bright-green cocoanuts, immense golden-green oranges, and various other fruits and vegetables totally unfamiliar to Northern eyes.... It is no use to ask questions--the black dealers speak no dialect comprehensible outside of the Antilles: it is a negro-English that sounds like some African tongue,--a rolling current of vowels and consonants, pouring so rapidly that the inexperienced ear cannot detach one intelligible word. A friendly white coming up enabled me to learn one phrase: "Massa, youwancocknerfoobuy?" (Master, do you want to buy a cocoanut?)

The market is quite crowded,--full of bright color under the tremendous noon light. Buyers and dealers are generally black; --very few yellow or brown people are visible in the gathering. The greater number present are women; they are very simply, almost savagely, garbed--only a skirt or petticoat, over which is worn a sort of calico short dress, which scarcely descends two inches below the hips, and is confined about the waist with a belt or a string. The skirt bells out like the skirt of a dancer, leaving the feet and bare legs well exposed; and the head is covered with a white handkerchief, twisted so as to look like a turban. Multitudes of these barelegged black women are walking past us,--carrying bundles or baskets upon their heads, and smoking very long cigars.

They are generally short and thick-set, and walk with surprising erectness, and with long, firm steps, carrying the bosom well forward. Their limbs are strong and finely rounded. Whether walking or standing, their poise is admirable,--might be called graceful, were it not for the absence of real grace of form in such compact, powerful little figures. All wear brightly colored cottonade stuffs, and the general effect of the costume in a large gathering is very agreeable, the dominant hues being pink, white, and blue. Half the women are smoking. All chatter loudly, speaking their English jargon with a pitch of voice totally unlike the English timbre: it sometimes sounds as if they were trying to pronounce English rapidly according to French pronunciation and pitch of voice.

These green oranges have a delicious scent and amazing juiciness. Peeling one of them is sufficient to perfume the skin of the hands for the rest of the day, however often one may use soap and water.... We smoke Porto Rico cigars, and drink West Indian lemonades, strongly flavored with rum. The tobacco has a rich, sweet taste; the rum is velvety, sugary, with a pleasant, soothing effect: both have a rich aroma. There is a wholesome originality about the flavor of these products, a uniqueness

which certifies to their naive purity: something as opulent and frank as the juices and odors of tropical fruits and flowers.

The streets leading from the plaza glare violently in the strong sunlight;--the ground, almost dead-white, dazzles the eyes.... There are few comely faces visible,--in the streets all are black who pass. But through open shop-doors one occasionally catches glimpses of a pretty quadroon face,--with immense black eyes,--a face yellow like a ripe banana.

... It is now after mid-day. Looking up to the hills, or along sloping streets towards the shore, wonderful variations of foliage-color meet the eye: gold-greens, sap-greens, bluish and metallic greens of many tints, reddish-greens, yellowish-greens. The cane-fields are broad sheets of beautiful gold-green; and nearly as bright are the masses of pomme-cannelle frondescence, the groves of lemon and orange; while tamarind and mahoganies are heavily sombre. Everywhere palm-crests soar above the wood-lines, and tremble with a metallic shimmering in the blue light. Up through a ponderous thickness of tamarind rises the spire of the church; a skeleton of open stone-work, without glasses or lattices or shutters of any sort for its naked apertures: it is all open to the winds of heaven; it seems to be gasping with all its granite mouths for breath--panting in this azure heat. In the bay the water looks greener than ever: it is so clear that the light passes under every boat and ship to the very bottom; the vessels only cast very thin green shadows,--so transparent that fish can be distinctly seen passing through from sunlight to sunlight.

The sunset offers a splendid spectacle of pure color; there is only an immense yellow glow in the west,--a lemon-colored blaze; but when it melts into the blue there is an exquisite green light.... We leave to-morrow.

... Morning: the green hills are looming in a bluish vapor: the long faint-yellow slope of beach to the left of the town, under the mangoes and tamarinds, is already thronged with bathers,--all men or boys, and all naked: black, brown, yellow, and white. The white bathers are Danish soldiers from the barracks; the Northern brightness of their skins forms an almost startling contrast with the deep colors of the nature about them, and with the dark complexions of the natives. Some very slender, graceful brown lads are bathing with them,--lightly built as deer: these are probably creoles. Some of the black bathers are clumsy-looking, and have astonishingly long legs.... Then little boys come down, leading horses;--they strip, leap naked on the animals' backs, and ride into the sea,--yelling, screaming, splashing, in the morning light. Some are a fine brown color, like old bronze. Nothing could be more statuesque than the unconscious attitudes of these bronze bodies in leaping, wrestling, running, pitching shells. Their simple grace is in admirable harmony with that of Nature's green creations about them,--rhymes faultlessly with the perfect self-balance of the palms that poise along the shore....

Boom! and a thunder-rolling of echoes. We move slowly out of the harbor, then swiftly towards the southeast.... The island seems to turn slowly half round; then to retreat from us. Across our way appears a long band of green light, reaching over the sea

like a thin protrusion of color from the extended spur of verdure in which the western end of the island terminates. That is a sunken reef, and a dangerous one. Lying high upon it, in very sharp relief against the blue light, is a wrecked vessel on her beam-ends,--the carcass of a brig. Her decks have been broken in; the roofs of her cabins are gone; her masts are splintered off short; her empty hold yawns naked to the sun; all her upper parts have taken a yellowish-white color,--the color of sun-bleached bone.

Behind us the mountains still float back. Their shining green has changed to a less vivid hue; they are taking bluish tones here and there; but their outlines are still sharp, and along their high soft slopes there are white specklings, which are villages and towns. These white specks diminish swiftly,--dwindle to the dimensions of salt-grains,--finally vanish. Then the island grows uniformly bluish; it becomes cloudy, vague as a dream of mountains;--it turns at last gray as smoke, and then melts into the horizon-light like a mirage.

Another yellow sunset, made weird by extraordinary black, dense, fantastic shapes of cloud. Night darkens, , and again the Southern Cross glimmers before our prow, and the two Milky Ways reveal themselves,--that of the Cosmos and that ghostlier one which stretches over the black deep behind us. This alternately broadens and narrows at regular intervals, concomitantly with the rhythmical swing of the steamer, Before us the bows spout: fire; behind us there is a flaming and roaring as of Phlegethon; and the voices of wind and sea become so loud that we cannot talk to one another,--cannot make our words heard even by shouting.

IX.

Early morning: the eighth day. Moored in another blue harbor,--a great semicircular basin, bounded by a high billowing of hills all green from the fringe of yellow beach up to their loftiest clouded summit. The land has that up-tossed look which tells a volcanic origin. There are curiously scalloped heights, which, though emerald from base to crest, still retain all the physiognomy of volcanoes: their ribbed sides must be lava under that verdure. Out of sight westward--in successions of bright green, pale green, bluish-green, and vapory gray--stretches a long chain of crater shapes. Truncated, jagged, or rounded, all these elevations are interunited by their curving hollows of land or by filaments--very low valleys. And as they grade away in varying color through distance, these hill-chains take a curious segmented, jointed appearance, like insect forms, enormous antibodies.... This is St. Kitt's.

We row ashore over a tossing dark-blue water, and leaving the long wharf, pass under a great arch and over a sort of bridge into the town of Basse-Terre, through a concourse of brown and black people.

It is very tropical-looking; but more sombre than Frederiksted. There are palms everywhere,--cocoa, fan, and cabbage palms; many bread-fruit trees, tamarinds, bananas, Indian fig-trees, mangoes,

and unfamiliar things the negroes call by incomprehensible names,--"sap-saps," "dhool-dhools." But there is less color, less reflection of light than in Santa Cruz; there is less quaintness; no Spanish buildings, no canary-colored arcades. All the narrow streets are gray or neutral-tinted; the ground has a dark ashen tone. Most of the dwellings are timber, resting on brick props, or elevated upon blocks of lava rock. It seems almost as if some breath from the enormous and always clouded mountain overlooking the town had begrimed everything, darkening even the colors of vegetation.

The population is not picturesque. The costumes are commonplace; the tints of the women's attire are dull. Browns and sombre blues and grays are commoner than pinks, yellows, and violets. Occasionally you observe a fine half-breed type--some tall brown girl walking by with a swaying grace like that of a sloop at sea;--but such spectacles are not frequent. Most of those you meet are black or a blackish brown. Many stores are kept by yellow men with intensely black hair and eyes,--men who do not smile. These are Portuguese. There are some few fine buildings; but the most pleasing sight the little town can offer the visitor is the pretty Botanical Garden, with its banyans and its palms, its monstrous lilies and extraordinary fruit-trees, and its beautiful little mountains. From some of these trees a peculiar tillandsia streams down, much like our Spanish moss,--but it is black!

... As we move away southwardly, the receding outlines of the island look more and more volcanic. A chain of hills and cones, all very green, and connected by strips of valley-land so low that the edge of the sea-circle on the other side of the island can be seen through the gaps. We steam past truncated hills, past heights that have the look of the stumps of peaks cut half down, --ancient fire-mouths choked by tropical verdure.

Southward, above and beyond the deep-green chain, tower other volcanic forms,--very far away, and so pale-gray as to seem like clouds. Those are the heights of Nevis,--another creation of the subterranean fires.

It draws nearer, floats steadily into definition: a great mountain flanked by two small ones; three summits; the loftiest, with clouds packed high upon it, still seems to smoke;--the second highest displays the most symmetrical crater-form I have yet seen. All are still grayish-blue or gray. Gradually through the blues break long high gleams of green.

As we steam closer, the island becomes all verdant from flood to sky; the great dead crater shows its immense wreath of perennial green. On the lower slopes little settlements are sprinkled in white, red, and brown: houses, windmills, sugar-factories, high chimneys are distinguishable;--cane-plantations unfold gold-green surfaces.

We pass away. The island does not seem to sink behind us, but to become a ghost. All its outlines grow shadowy. For a little while it continues green;--but it is a hazy, spectral green, as of colored vapor. The sea today looks almost black: the south-west wind has filled the day with luminous mist; and the phantom

of Nevis melts in the vast glow, dissolves utterly.... Once more we are out of sight of land,--in the centre of a blue-black circle of sea. The water-line cuts blackly against the immense light of the horizon,--a huge white glory that flames up very high before it fades and melts into the eternal blue.

X.

Then a high white shape like a cloud appears before us,--on the purplish-dark edge of the sea. The cloud-shape enlarges, heightens without changing contour. It is not a cloud, but an island! Its outlines begin to sharpen,--with faintest pencillings of color. Shadowy valleys appear, spectral hollows, phantom slopes of pallid blue or green. The apparition is so like a mirage that it is difficult to persuade oneself one is looking at real land,--that it is not a dream. It seems to have shaped itself all suddenly out of the glowing haze. We pass many miles beyond it; and it vanishes into mist again.

... Another and a larger ghost; but we steam straight upon it until it materializes,--Montserrat. It bears a family likeness to the islands we have already passed--one dominant height, with massing of bright crater shapes about it, and ranges of green hills linked together by low valleys. About its highest summit also hovers a flock of clouds. At the foot of the vast hill nestles the little white and red town of Plymouth. The single salute of our gun is answered by a stupendous broadside of echoes.

Plymouth is more than half hidden in the rich foliage that fringes the wonderfully wrinkled green of the hills at their base;--it has a curtain of palms before it. Approaching, you discern only one or two façades above the sea-wall, and the long wharf projecting through an opening in the masonry, over which young palms stand thick as canes on a sugar plantation. But on reaching the street that descends towards the heavily bouldered shore you find yourself in a delightfully drowsy little burgh,--a miniature tropical town,--with very narrow paved ways, --steep, irregular, full of odd curves and angles,--and likewise of tiny courts everywhere sending up jets of palm-plumes, or displaying above their stone enclosures great candelabra-shapes of cacti. All is old-fashioned and quiet and queer and small. Even the palms are diminutive,--slim and delicate; there is a something in their poise and slenderness like the charm of young girls who have not yet ceased to be children, though soon to become women....

There is a glorious sunset,--a fervid orange splendor, shading starward into delicate roses and greens. Then black boatmen come astern and quarrel furiously for the privilege of carrying one passenger ashore; and as they scream and gesticulate, half naked, their silhouettes against the sunset seem forms of great black apes.

... Under steam and sail we are making south again, with a warm wind blowing south-east,--a wind very moist, very powerful, and soporific. Facing it, one feels almost cool; but the moment one

is sheltered from its profuse perspiration bursts out. The ship rocks over immense swells; night falls very black; and there are surprising displays of phosphorescence.

XI.

... Morning. A gold sunrise over an indigo sea. The wind is a great warm caress; the sky a spotless blue. We are steaming on Dominica,--the loftiest of the lesser Antilles. While the silhouette is yet all violet in distance nothing more solemnly beautiful can well be imagined: a vast cathedral shape, whose spires are mountain peaks, towering in the horizon, sheer up from the sea.

We stay at Roseau only long enough to land the mails, and wonder at the loveliness of the island. A beautifully wrinkled mass of green and blue and gray;--a strangely abrupt peaking and heaping of the land. Behind the green heights loom the blues; behind these the grays--all pinnacled against the sky--glow--thrusting up through gaps or behind promontories. Indescribably exquisite the foldings and hollowings of the emerald coast. In glen and vale the color of cane-fields shines like a pooling of fluid bronze, as if the luminous essence of the hill tints had been dripping down and clarifying there. Far to our left, a bright green spur pierces into the now turquoise sea; and beyond it, a beautiful mountain form, blue and curved like a hip, slopes seaward, showing lighted wrinkles here and there, of green. And from the foreground, against the blue of the softly outlined shape, cocoa-palms are curving,--all sharp and shining in the sun.

... Another hour; and Martinique looms before us. At first it appears all gray, a vapory gray; then it becomes bluish-gray; then all green.

It is another of the beautiful volcanic family: it owns the same hill shapes with which we have already become acquainted; its uppermost height is hooded with the familiar cloud; we see the same gold-yellow plains, the same wonderful varieties of verdancy, the same long green spurs reaching out into the sea,--doubtless formed by old lava torrents. But all this is now repeated for us more imposingly, more grandiosely;--it is wrought upon a larger scale than anything we have yet seen. The semicircular sweep of the harbor, dominated by the eternally veiled summit of the Montagne Pelee (misnamed, since it is green to the very clouds), from which the land slopes down on either hand to the sea by gigantic undulations, is one of the fairest sights that human eye can gaze upon. Thus viewed, the whole island shape is a mass of green, with purplish streaks and shadowings here and there: glooms of forest-hollows, or moving umbrages of cloud. The city of St. Pierre, on the edge of the land, looks as if it had slid down the hill behind it, so strangely do the streets come tumbling to the port in cascades of masonry,--with a red billowing of tiled roofs over all, and enormous palms poking up through it,--higher even than the creamy white twin towers of its cathedral.

We anchor in limpid blue water; the cannon-shot is answered by a prolonged thunder-clapping of mountain echo.

Then from the shore a curious flotilla bears down upon us. There is one boat, two or three canoes; but the bulk of the craft are simply wooden frames,--flat-bottomed structures, made from shipping-cases or lard-boxes, with triangular ends. In these sit naked boys,--boys between ten and fourteen years of age,--varying in color from a fine clear yellow to a deep reddish-brown or chocolate tint. They row with two little square, flat pieces of wood for paddles, clutched in each hand; and these lid-shaped things are dipped into the water on either side with absolute precision, in perfect time,--all the pairs of little naked arms seeming moved by a single impulse. There is much unconscious grace in this paddling, as well as skill. Then all about the ship these ridiculous little boats begin to describe circles,--crossing and intercrossing so closely as almost to bring them into collision, yet never touching. The boys have simply come out to dive for coins they expect passengers to fling to them. All are chattering creole, laughing and screaming shrilly; every eye, quick and bright as a bird's, watches the faces of the passengers on deck. "'Tention-là !" shriek a dozen soprani. Some passenger's fingers have entered his vest-pocket, and the boys are on the alert. Through the air, twirling and glittering, tumbles an English shilling, and drops into the deep water beyond the little fleet. Instantly all the lads leap, scramble, topple head-foremost out of their little tubs, and dive in pursuit. In the blue water their lithe figures look perfectly red,--all but the soles of their upturned feet, which show nearly white. Almost immediately they all rise again: one holds up at arm's-length above the water the recovered coin, and then puts it into his mouth for safe-keeping; Coin after coin is thrown in, and as speedily brought up; a shower of small silver follows, and not a piece is lost. These lads move through the water without apparent effort, with the suppleness of fishes. Most are decidedly fine-looking boys, with admirably rounded limbs, delicately formed extremities. The best diver and swiftest swimmer, however, is a red lad;--his face is rather commonplace, but his slim body has the grace of an antique bronze.

... We are ashore in St. Pierre, the quaintest, queerest, and the prettiest withal, among West Indian cities: all stone-built and stone-flagged, with very narrow streets, wooden or zinc awnings, and peaked roofs of red tile, pierced by gabled dormers. Most of the buildings are painted in a clear yellow tone, which contrasts delightfully with the burning blue ribbon of tropical sky above; and no street is absolutely level; nearly all of them climb hills, descend into hollows, curve, twist, describe sudden angles. There is everywhere a loud murmur of running water,--pouring through the deep gutters contrived between the paved thoroughfare and the absurd little sidewalks, varying in width from one to three feet. The architecture is quite old: it is seventeenth century, probably; and it reminds one a great deal of that characterizing the antiquated French quarter of New Orleans. All the tints, the forms, the vistas, would seem to have been especially selected or designed for aquarelle studies,--just to please the whim of some extravagant artist. The windows are frameless openings without glass; some have iron bars; all have heavy wooden shutters with movable

slats, through which light and air can enter as through Venetian blinds. These are usually painted green or bright bluish-gray.

So steep are the streets descending to the harbor,--by flights of old mossy stone steps,--that looking down them to the azure water you have the sensation of gazing from a cliff. From certain openings in the main street--the Rue Victor Hugo--you can get something like a bird's-eye view of the harbor with its shipping. The roofs of the street below are under your feet, and other streets are rising behind you to meet the mountain roads. They climb at a very steep angle, occasionally breaking into stairs of lava rock, all grass-tufted and moss-lined.

[Illustration: LA PLACE BERTIN (THE SUGAR LANDING), ST. PIERRE, MARTINIQUE.]

The town has an aspect of great solidity: it is a creation of crag--looks almost as if it had been hewn out of one mountain fragment, instead of having been constructed stone by stone. Although commonly consisting of two stories and an attic only, the dwellings have walls three feet in thickness;--on one street, facing the sea, they are even heavier, and slope outward like ramparts, so that the perpendicular recesses of windows and doors have the appearance of being opened between buttresses. It may have been partly as a precaution against earthquakes, and partly for the sake of coolness, that the early colonial architects built thus;--giving the city a physiognomy so well worthy of its name,--the name of the Saint of the Rock.

And everywhere rushes mountain water,--cool and crystal clear, washing the streets;--from time to time you come to some public fountain flinging a silvery column to the sun, or showering bright spray over a group of black bronze tritons or bronze swans. The Tritons on the Place Bertin you will not readily forget;--their curving torsos might have been modelled from the forms of those ebon men who toil there tirelessly all day in the great heat, rolling hogsheads of sugar or casks of rum. And often you will note, in the course of a walk, little drinking-fountains contrived at the angle of a building, or in the thick walls bordering the bulwarks or enclosing public squares: glittering threads of water spurting through lion-lips of stone. Some mountain torrent, skilfully directed and divided, is thus perpetually refreshing the city,--supplying its fountains and cooling its courts.... This is called the Gouyave water: it is not the same stream which sweeps and purifies the streets.

Picturesqueness and color: these are the particular and the unrivalled charms of St. Pierre. As you pursue the Grande Rue, or Rue Victor Hugo,--which traverses the town through all its length, undulating over hill-slopes and into hollows and over a bridge,--you become more and more enchanted by the contrast of the yellow-glowing walls to right and left with the jagged strip of gentian-blue sky overhead. Charming also it is to watch the cross-streets climbing up to the fiery green of the mountains behind the town. On the lower side of the main thoroughfare other streets open in wonderful bursts of blue--warm blue of horizon and sea. The steps by which these ways descend towards the bay are black with age, and slightly mossed close to the wall on either side: they have an alarming steepness,--one

might easily stumble from the upper into the lower street. Looking towards the water through these openings from the Grande Rue, you will notice that the sea-line cuts across the blue space just at the level of the upper story of the house on the lower street-corner. Sometimes, a hundred feet below, you see a ship resting in the azure aperture,--seemingly suspended there in sky-color, floating in blue light. And everywhere and always, through sunshine or shadow, comes to you the scent of the city,--the characteristic odor of St. Pierre;--a compound odor suggesting the intermingling of sugar and garlic in those strange tropical dishes which creoles love....

XII.

... A population fantastic, astonishing,--a population of the Arabian Nights. It is many-colored; but the general dominant tint is yellow, like that of the town itself--yellow in the interblending of all the hues characterizing _mulâtresse_, capresse, griffe, quarteronne, métisse, chabine,--a general effect of rich brownish yellow. You are among a people of half-breeds,--the finest mixed race of the West Indies.

Straight as palms, and supple and tall, these colored women and men impress one powerfully by their dignified carriage and easy elegance of movement. They walk without swinging of the shoulders;--the perfectly set torso seems to remain rigid; yet the step is a long full stride, and the whole weight is springily poised on the very tip of the bare foot. All, or nearly all, are without shoes: the treading of many naked feet over the heated pavement makes a continuous whispering sound.

... Perhaps the most novel impression of all is that produced by the singularity and brilliancy of certain of the women's costumes. These were developed, at least a hundred years ago, by some curious sumptuary law regulating the dress of slaves and colored people of free condition,--a law which allowed considerable liberty as to material and tint, prescribing chiefly form. But some of these fashions suggest the Orient: they offer beautiful audacities of color contrast; and the full-dress coiffure, above all, is so strikingly Eastern that one might be tempted to believe it was first introduced into the colony by some Mohammedan slave. It is merely an immense Madras handkerchief, which is folded about the head with admirable art, like a turban;--one bright end pushed through at the top in front, being left sticking up like a plume. Then this turban, always full of bright canary-color, is fastened with golden brooches,--one in front and one at either side. As for the remainder of the dress, it is simple enough: an embroidered, low-cut chemise with sleeves; a skirt or _jupe_, very long behind, but caught up and fastened in front below the breasts so as to bring the hem everywhere to a level with the end of the long chemise; and finally a _foulard_, or silken kerchief, thrown over the shoulders. These _jupes_ and _foulards_, however, are exquisite in pattern and color: bright crimson, bright yellow, bright blue, bright green,--lilac, violet, rose,--sometimes mingled in plaidings or checkerings or stripings: black with

orange, sky-blue with purple. And whatever be the colors of the costume, which vary astonishingly, the coiffure must be yellow-brilliant, flashing yellow--the turban is certain to have yellow stripes or yellow squares. To this display add the effect of costly and curious jewellery: immense earrings, each pendant being formed of five gold cylinders joined together (cylinders sometimes two inches long, and an inch at least in circumference);--a necklace of double, triple, quadruple, or quintuple rows of large hollow gold beads (sometimes smooth, but generally ally graven)--the wonderful collier-choux. Now, this glowing jewellery is not a mere imitation of pure metal: the ear-rings are worth one hundred and seventy-five francs a pair; the necklace of a Martinique quadroon may cost five hundred or even one thousand francs.... It may be the gift of her lover, her doudoux, but such articles are usually purchased either on time by small payments, or bead by bead singly until the requisite number is made up.

But few are thus richly attired: the greater number of the women carrying burdens on their heads,--peddling vegetables, cakes, fruit, ready-cooked food, from door to door,--are very simply dressed in a single plain robe of vivid colors (douillette) reaching from neck to feet, and made with a train, but generally girded well up so as to sit close to the figure and leave the lower limbs partly bare and perfectly free. These women can walk all day long up and down hill in the hot sun, without shoes, carrying loads of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds on their heads; and if their little stock sometimes fails to come up to the accustomed weight stones are added to make it heavy enough. Doubtless the habit of carrying everything in this way from childhood has much to do with the remarkable vigor and erectness of the population.... I have seen a grand-piano carried on the heads of four men. With the women the load is very seldom steadied with the hand after having been once placed in position. The head remains almost most motionless; but the black, quick, piercing eyes flash into every window and door-way to watch for a customer's signal. And the creole street-cries, uttered in a sonorous, far-reaching high key, interblend and produce random harmonies very pleasant to hear.

..."Çe moune-là, ça qui lè bel mango?" Her basket of mangoes certainly weighs as much as herself.... "Ça qui lè bel avocat?" The alligator-pear--cuts and tastes like beautiful green cheese... "Ça qui lè escargot?" Call her, if you like snails.... "Ca qui lè titiri?" Minuscule fish, of which a thousand would scarcely fill a tea-cup;--one of the most delicate of Martinique dishes.... "Ça qui lè canna?--Ça qui lè charbon?--Ça qui lè di pain aubè?" (Who wants ducks, charcoal, or pretty little loaves shaped like cucumbers.)... "Ça qui lè pain-mi?" A sweet maize cake in the form of a tiny sugar-loaf, wrapped in a piece of banana leaf.... "Ça qui lè fromassé" (pharmacie) "lapotécai créole?" She deals in creole roots and herbs, and all the leaves that make tisanes or poultices or medicines: matriquin, feuill-corossol, balai-doux, manioc-chapelle, Marie-Perrine, graine-enba-feuill, bois d'lhomme, zhèbe-gras, bonnet-carré, zhèbe-codeinne, zhèbe-à-femme, zhèbe-à-châtte, canne-dleau, poque, fleu-papillon, lateigne, and a score of others you never saw or heard of before.... "Ça qui lè dicaments?" (overalls for laboring-men).... "Çé moune-là, si ou pa lè acheté canari-à dans lanmain moin, moin ké crazé y." The vender

of red clay cooking-pots;--she has only one left, if you do not buy it she will break it!

"Hé! zenfants-la!--en deho!" Run out to meet her, little children, if you like the sweet rice-cakes.... _"Hé! gens pa' enho', gens pa' enbas, gens di galtas, moin ni bel gououôs poisson!"_ Ho! people up-stairs, people down-stairs, and all ye good folks who dwell in the attics,--know that she has very big and very beautiful fish to sell!... _"Hé! ça qui lé mangé yonne?"_ --those are "akras,"--flat yellow-brown cakes, made of pounded codfish, or beans, or both, seasoned with pepper and fried in butter.... And then comes the pastry-seller, black as ebony, but dressed all in white, and white-aproned and white. capped like a French cook, and chanting half in French, half in creole, with a voice like a clarinet:

_ "C'est louvouier de la pâtisserie qui passe,
Qui té ka veillé pou' gagner son existence,
Toujours content,
Toujours joyeux.
Oh, qu'ils sont bons!--
Oh, qu'ils sont doux!"_

It is the pastryman passing by, who has been up all night to gain his livelihood,--always content,--always happy.... Oh, how good they are (the pies)!--Oh, how sweet they are!

... The quaint stores bordering both sides of the street bear no names and no signs over their huge arched doors;--you must look well inside to know what business is being done. Even then you will scarcely be able to satisfy yourself as to the nature of the commerce;--for they are selling gridirons and frying-pans in the dry goods stores, holy images and rosaries in the notion stores, sweet-cakes and confectionery in the crockery stores, coffee and stationery in the millinery stores, cigars and tobacco in the china stores, cravats and laces and ribbons in the jewellery stores, sugar and guava jelly in the tobacco stores! But of all the objects exposed for sale the most attractive, because the most exotic, is a doll,--the Martinique poupée. There are two kinds,--the poupée-capresse, of which the body is covered with smooth reddish-brown leather, to imitate the tint of the capresse race; and the poupée-négresse, covered with black leather. When dressed, these dolls range in price from eleven to thirty-five francs,--some, dressed to order, may cost even more; and a good poupée-négresse is a delightful curiosity. Both varieties of dolls are attired in the costume of the people; but the négresse is usually dressed the more simply. Each doll has a brodered chemise, a tastefully arranged jupe of bright hues; a silk foulard, a collier-choux, ear-rings of five cylinders (zanneaux-à-clous), and a charming little yellow-banded Madras turban. Such a doll is a perfect costume-model,--a perfect miniature of Martinique fashions, to the smallest details of material and color: it is almost too artistic for a toy.

[Illustration: ITINERANT PASTRY-SELLER. "Tourjours content, Toujours joyeux."]

These old costume-colors of Martinique--always relieved by brilliant yellow stripings or checkerings, except in the special

violet dresses worn on certain religious occasions--have an indescribable luminosity,--a wonderful power of bringing out the fine warm tints of this tropical flesh. Such are the hues of those rich costumes Nature gives to her nearest of kin and her dearest,--her honey-lovers--her insects: these are wasp-colors. I do not know whether the fact ever occurred to the childish fancy of this strange race; but there is a creole expression which first suggested it to me;--in the patois, *"pouend guêpe"*, "to catch a wasp," signifies making love to a pretty colored girl. ... And the more one observes these costumes, the more one feels that only Nature could have taught such rare comprehension of powers and harmonies among colors,--such knowledge of chromatic witchcrafts and chromatic laws.

... This evening, as I write, La Pelée is more heavily coiffed than is her wont. Of purple and lilac cloud the coiffure is,--a magnificent Madras, yellow-banded by the sinking sun. La Pelée is in *"costume de fête"*, like a *"capresse"* attired for a baptism or a ball; and in her phantom turban one great star glimmers for a brooch.

XIII.

Following the Rue Victor Hugo in the direction of the Fort,--crossing the Rivière Roxelane, or Rivière des Blanchisseuses, whose rocky bed is white with unsoaped linen far as the eye can reach,--you descend through some tortuous narrow streets into the principal marketplace. [1]

A square--well paved and well shaded--with a fountain in the midst. Here the dealers are seated in rows;--one half of the market is devoted to fruits and vegetables; the other to the sale of fresh fish and meats. On first entering you are confused by the press and deafened by the storm of creole chatter;--then you begin to discern some order in this chaos, and to observe curious things.

In the middle of the paved square, about the market fountain, are lying boats filled with fish, which have been carried up from the water upon men's shoulders,--or, if very heavy, conveyed on rollers.... Such fish!--blue, rosy, green, lilac, scarlet, gold: no spectral tints these, but luminous and strong like fire. Here also you see heaps of long thin fish looking like piled bars of silver,--absolutely dazzling,--of almost equal thickness from head to tail;--near by are heaps of flat pink creatures;--beyond these, again, a mass of azure backs and golden bellies. Among the stalls you can study the monsters,--twelve or fifteen feet long,--the shark, the *"vierge"*, the sword fish, the *"tonne"*,--or the eccentricities. Some are very thin round disks, with long, brilliant, wormy feelers in lieu of fins, flickering in all directions like a moving pendent silver fringe;--others bristle with spines;--others, serpent-bodied, are so speckled as to resemble shapes of red polished granite. These are *"moringues"*. The *"balaou"*, *"couliou"*, *"macriau"*, *"lazard"*, *"tcha-tcha"*, *"bonnique"*, and *"zorphi"* severally represent almost all possible tints of blue and violet. The *"souri"* is rose-color and yellow; the

cirurgien is black, with yellow and red stripes; the _patate_, black and yellow; the _gros-zié_ is vermilion; the _couronné_, red and black. Their names are not less unfamiliar than their shapes and tints;--the _aiguille-de-mer_, or sea-needle, long and thin as a pencil;--the _Bon-Dié-manié-moin_ ("the Good-God handled me"), which has something like finger-marks upon it;--the _lambi_, a huge sea-snail;--the _pisquette_, the _laine_ (the Moon);--the _crapaud-de-mer_, or sea-toad, with a dangerous dorsal fin;--the _vermeil_, the _jacquot_, the _chaponne_, and fifty others.... As the sun gets higher, banana or balisier leaves are laid over the fish.

Even more puzzling, perhaps, are the astonishing varieties of green, yellow, and parti-colored vegetables,--and fruits of all hues and forms,--out of which display you retain only a confused general memory of sweet smells and luscious colors. But there are some oddities which impress the recollection in a particular way. One is a great cylindrical ivory-colored thing,--shaped like an elephant's tusk, except that it is not curved: this is the head of the cabbage-palm, or palmiste,--the brain of one of the noblest trees in the tropics, which must be totally destroyed to obtain it. Raw or cooked, it is eaten in a great variety of ways,--in salads, stews, fritters, or _akras_. Soon after this compact cylinder of young germinating leaves has been removed, large worms begin to appear in the hollow of the dead tree,--the _vers-palmiste_. You may see these for sale in the market, crawling about in bowls or cans: they are said, when fried alive, to taste like almonds, and are esteemed as a great luxury.

... Then you begin to look about you at the faces of the black, brown, and yellow people who are watching at you curiously from beneath their Madras turbans, or from under the shade of mushroom-shaped hats as large as umbrellas. And as you observe the bare backs, bare shoulders, bare legs and arms and feet, you will find that the colors of flesh are even more varied and surprising than the colors of fruit. Nevertheless, it is only with fruit-colors that many of these skin-tints can be correctly be compared; the only terms of comparison used by the colored people themselves being terms of this kind,--such as _peau-chapotille_, "sapota-skin." The _sapota_ or _sapotille_ is a juicy brown fruit with a rind satiny like a human cuticle, and just the color, when flushed and ripe, of certain half-breed skins. But among the brighter half-breeds, the colors, I think, are much more fruit-like;--there are banana-tints, lemon-tones, orange-hues, with sometimes such a mingling of ruddiness as in the pink ripening of a mango. Agreeable to the eye the darker skins certainly are, and often very remarkable--all clear tones of bronze being represented; but the brighter tints are absolutely beautiful. Standing perfectly naked at door-ways, or playing naked in the sun, astonishing children may sometimes be seen,--banana-colored or gulf orange babies, There is one rare race-type, totally unseen like the rest: the skin has a perfect gold-tone, an exquisite metallic yellow the eyes are long, and have long silky lashes;--the hair is a mass of thick, rich, glossy the curls that show blue lights in the sun. What mingling of races produced this beautiful type?--there is some strange blood in the blending,--not of coolie, nor of African, nor of Chinese, although there are Chinese types here of indubitable beauty. [2]

... All this population is vigorous, graceful, healthy: all you see passing by are well made--there are no sickly faces, no scrawny limbs. If by some rare chance you encounter a person who has lost an arm or a leg, you can be almost certain you are looking at a victim of the fer-de-lance,--the serpent whose venom putrefies living tissue.... Without fear of exaggerating facts, I can venture to say that the muscular development of the working-men here is something which must be seen in order to be believed;--to study fine displays of it, one should watch the blacks and half-breeds working naked to the waist,--on the landings, in the gas-houses and slaughter-houses or on the nearest plantations. They are not generally large men, perhaps not extraordinarily powerful; but they have the aspect of sculptural or even of anatomical models; they seem absolutely devoid of adipose tissue; their muscles stand out with a saliency that astonishes the eye. At a tanning-yard, while I was watching a dozen blacks at work, a young mulatto with the mischievous face of a faun walked by, wearing nothing but a clout (_lantcho_) about his loins; and never, not even in bronze, did I see so beautiful a play of muscles. A demonstrator of anatomy could have used him for a class-model;--a sculptor wishing to shape a fine Mercury would have been satisfied to take a cast of such a body without thinking of making one modification from neck to heel. "Frugal diet is the cause of this physical condition," a young French professor assures me; "all these men," he says, "live upon salt codfish and fruit." But frugal living alone could never produce such symmetry and saliency of muscles: race-crossing, climate, perpetual exercise, healthy labor--many conditions must have combined to cause it. Also it is certain that this tropical sun has a tendency to dissolve spare flesh, to melt away all superfluous tissue, leaving the muscular fibre dense and solid as mahogany.

At the _mouillage_, below a green _morne_, is the bathing-place. A rocky beach rounding away under heights of tropical wood;--palms curving out above the sand, or bending half-way across it. Ships at anchor in blue water, against golden-yellow horizon. A vast blue glow. Water clear as diamond, and lukewarm.

It is about one hour after sunrise; and the high parts of Montaigne Pelée are still misty blue. Under the palms and among the lava rocks, and also in little cabins farther up the slope, bathers are dressing or undressing: the water is also dotted with heads of swimmers. Women and girls enter it well robed from feet to shoulders;--men go in very sparsely clad;--there are lads wearing nothing. Young boys--yellow and brown little fellows--run in naked, and swim out to pointed rocks that jut up black above the bright water. They climb up one at a time to dive down. Poised for the leap upon the black lava crag, and against the blue light of the sky, each lithe figure, gilded by the morning sun, has a statuesqueness and a luminosity impossible to paint in words. These bodies seem to radiate color; and the azure light intensifies the hue: it is idyllic, incredible;--Coomans used paler colors in his Pompeiian studies, and his figures were never so symmetrical. This flesh does not look like flesh, but like fruit-pulp....

XIV.

... Everywhere crosses, little shrines, way-side chapels, statues of saints. You will see crucifixes and statuettes even in the forks or hollows of trees shadowing the high-roads. As you ascend these towards the interior you will see, every mile or half-mile, some chapel, or a cross erected upon a pedestal of masonry, or some little niche contrived in a wall, closed by a wire grating, through which the image of a Christ or a Madonna is visible. Lamps are kept burning all night before these figures. But the village of Morne Rouge--some two thousand feet above the sea, and about an hour's drive from St. Pierre--is chiefly remarkable for such displays: it is a place of pilgrimage as well as a health resort. Above the village, upon the steep slope of a higher morne, one may note a singular succession of little edifices ascending to the summit,--fourteen little tabernacles, each containing a relievo representing some incident of Christ's Passion. This is called Le Calvaire: it requires more than a feeble piety to perform the religious exercise of climbing the height, and saying a prayer before each little shrine on the way. From the porch of the crowning structure the village of Morne Rouge appears so far below that it makes one almost dizzy to look at it; but even for the profane one ascent is well worth making, for the sake of the beautiful view. On all the neighboring heights around are votive chapels or great crucifixes.

St. Pierre is less peopled with images than Morne Rouge; but it has several colossal ones, which may be seen from any part of the harbor. On the heights above the middle quarter, or Centre, a gigantic Christ overlooks the bay; and from the Morne d'Orange, which bounds the city on the south, a great white Virgin-Notre Dame de la Garde, patron of mariners--watches above the ships at anchor in the mouillage.

... Thrice daily, from the towers of the white cathedral, a superb chime of bells rolls its carillon through the town. On great holidays the bells are wonderfully rung;--the ringers are African, and something of African feeling is observable in their impressive but in cantatory manner of ringing. The bourdon must have cost a fortune. When it is made to speak, the effect is startling: all the city vibrates to a weird sound difficult to describe,--an abysmal, quivering moan, producing unfamiliar harmonies as the voices of the smaller bells are seized and interblended by it. ...One will not easily forget the ringing of a bel-midi.

... Behind the cathedral, above the peaked city roofs, and at the foot of the wood-clad Morne d'Orange, is the Cimetière du Mouillage. ... It is full of beauty,--this strange tropical cemetery. Most of the low tombs are covered with small square black and white tiles, set exactly after the fashion of the squares on a chess-board; at the foot of each grave stands a black cross, bearing on its centre a little white plaque, on which the name is graven in delicate and tasteful lettering. So pretty these little tombs are, that you might almost believe yourself in a toy cemetery. Here and there, again, are miniature marble chapels built over the dead,--containing white Madonnas and Christs and little

angels,--while flowering creepers climb and twine about the pillars. Death seems so luminous here that one thinks of it unconsciously as a soft rising from this soft green earth,--like a vapor invisible,--to melt into the prodigious day. Everything is bright and neat and beautiful; the air is sleepy with jasmine scent and odor of white lilies; and the palm--emblem of immortality--lifts its head a hundred feet into the blue light. There are rows of these majestic and symbolic trees;--two enormous ones guard the entrance;--the others rise from among the tombs,--white-stemmed, out-spreading their huge parasols of verdure higher than the cathedral towers.

[Illustration: IN THE CIMETÈRE DU MOUILLAGE, ST. PIERRE.]

Behind all this, the dumb green life of the morne seems striving to descend, to invade the rest of the dead. It thrusts green hands over the wall,--pushes strong roots underneath;--it attacks every joint of the stone-work, patiently, imperceptibly, yet almost irresistibly.

... Some day there may be a great change in the little city of St. Pierre;--there may be less money and less zeal and less remembrance of the lost. Then from the morne, over the bulwark, the green host will move down unopposed;--creepers will prepare the way, dislocating the pretty tombs, pulling away the checkered tiling;--then will come the giants, rooting deeper,--feeling for the dust of hearts, groping among the bones;--and all that love has hidden away shall be restored to Nature,--absorbed into the rich juices of her verdure,--revitalized in her bursts of color,--resurrected in her upliftings of emerald and gold to the great sun....

XV.

Seen from the bay, the little red-white-and-yellow city forms but one multicolored streak against the burning green of the lofty island. There is no naked soil, no bare rock: the chains of the mountains, rising by successive ridges towards the interior, are still covered with forests;--tropical woods ascend the peaks to the height of four and five thousand feet. To describe the beauty of these woods--even of those covering the mornes in the immediate vicinity of St. Pierre--seems to me almost impossible;--there are forms and colors which appear to demand the creation of new words to express. Especially is this true in regard to hue;--the green of a tropical forest is something which one familiar only with the tones of Northern vegetation can form no just conception of: it is a color that conveys the idea of green fire.

You have only to follow the high-road leading out of St. Pierre by way of the Savane du Fort to find yourself, after twenty minutes' walk, in front of the Morne Parnasse, and before the verge of a high wood,--remnant of the enormous growth once covering all the island. What a tropical forest is, as seen from without, you will then begin to feel, with a sort of awe, while you watch that beautiful upclimbing of green shapes to the height

of perhaps a thousand feet overhead. It presents one seemingly solid surface of vivid color,--rugose like a cliff. You do not readily distinguish whole trees in the mass;--you only perceive suggestions, dreams of trees, Doresqueries. Shapes that seem to be staggering under weight of creepers rise a hundred feet above you;--others, equally huge, are towering above these; and still higher, a legion of monstrosities are nodding, bending, tossing up green arms, pushing out great knees, projecting curves as of backs and shoulders, intertwining mockeries of limbs. No distinct head appears except where some palm pushes up its crest in the general fight for sun. All else looks as if under a veil,--hidden and half smothered by heavy drooping things. Blazing green vines cover every branch and stem;--they form draperies and tapestries and curtains and motionless cascades--pouring down over all projections like a thick silent flood: an amazing inundation of parasitic life.... It is a weird awful beauty that you gaze upon; and yet the spectacle is imperfect. These woods have been decimated; the finest trees have been cut down: you see only a ruin of what was. To see the true primeval forest, you must ride well into the interior.

The absolutism of green does not, however, always prevail in these woods. During a brief season, corresponding to some of our winter months, the forests suddenly break into a very conflagration of color, caused by blossoming of the lianas--crimson, canary-yellow, blue and white. There are other flowerings, indeed; but that of the lianas alone has chromatic force enough to change the aspect of a landscape.

XVI.

... If it is possible for a West Indian forest to be described at all, it could not be described more powerfully than it has been by Dr. E. Ruzf, a creole of Martinique, one of whose works I venture to translate the following remarkable pages:

... "The sea, the sea alone, because it is the most colossal of earthly spectacles,--only the sea can afford us any terms of comparison for the attempt to describe a grand-bois;--but even then one must imagine the sea on a day of a storm, suddenly immobilized in the expression of its mightiest fury. For the summits of these vast woods repeat all the inequalities of the land they cover; and these inequalities are mountains from 4200 to 4800 feet in height, and valleys of corresponding profundity. All this is hidden, blended together, smoothed over by verdure, in soft and enormous undulations,--in immense billowings of foliage. Only, instead of a blue line at the horizon, you have a green line; instead of flashings of blue, you have flashings of green,--and in all the tints, in all the combinations of which green is capable: deep green, light green, yellow-green, black-green.

"When your eyes grow weary--if it indeed be possible for them to weary--of contemplating the exterior of these tremendous woods, try to penetrate a little into their interior. What an inextricable chaos it is! The sands of a sea are not more

closely pressed together than the trees are here: some straight, some curved, some upright, some toppling,--fallen, or leaning against one another, or heaped high upon each other. Climbing lianas, which cross from one tree to the other, like ropes passing from mast to mast, help to fill up all the gaps in this treillage; and parasites--not timid parasites like ivy or like moss, but parasites which are trees self-grafted upon trees--dominate the primitive trunks, overwhelm them, usurp the place of their foliage, and fall back to the ground, forming factitious weeping-willows. You do not find here, as in the great forests of the North, the eternal monotony of birch and fir: this is the kingdom of infinite variety;--species the most diverse elbow each other, interlace, strangle and devour each other: all ranks and orders are confounded, as in a human mob. The soft and tender *_balisier_* opens its parasol of leaves beside the *_gommier_*, which is the cedar of the colonies you see the *_acomat_*, the *_courbaril_*, the mahogany, the *_tedre-à-caillou_*, the iron-wood... but as well enumerate by name all the soldiers of an army! Our oak, the balata, forces the palm to lengthen itself prodigiously in order to get a few thin beams of sunlight; for it is as difficult here for the poor trees to obtain one glance from this King of the world, as for us, subjects of a monarchy, to obtain one look from our monarch. As for the soil, it is needless to think of looking at it: it lies as far below us probably as the bottom of the sea;--it disappeared, ever so long ago, under the heaping of debris,--under a sort of manure that has been accumulating there since the creation: you sink into it as into slime; you walk upon putrefied trunks, in a dust that has no name! Here indeed it is that one can get some comprehension of what vegetable antiquity signifies;--a lurid light (*_lurida lux_*), greenish, as wan at noon as the light of the moon at midnight, confuses forms and lends them a vague and fantastic aspect; a mephitic humidity exhales from all parts; an odor of death prevails; and a calm which is not silence (for the ear fancies it can hear the great movement of composition and of decomposition perpetually going on) tends to inspire you with that old mysterious horror which the ancients felt in the primitive forests of Germany and of Gaul:

"Arboribus suis horror inest." *

* "Enquête sur le Serpent de la Martinique (Vipère Fer-de-Lance, Bothrops Lancéolé, etc.)" Par le Docteur E. Rufz. 2 ed. 1859. Paris: Germer-Ballière. pp. 55-57 (note).

XVII.

But the sense of awe inspired by a tropic forest is certainly greater than the mystic fear which any wooded wilderness of the North could ever have created. The brilliancy of colors that seem almost preternatural; the vastness of the ocean of frondage, and the violet blackness of rare gaps, revealing its in conceived profundity; and the million mysterious sounds which make up its perpetual murmur,--compel the idea of a creative force that almost terrifies. Man feels here like an insect,--fears like an insect on the alert for merciless enemies; and the fear is not

unfounded. To enter these green abysses without a guide were folly: even with the best of guides there is peril. Nature is dangerous here: the powers that build are also the powers that putrefy; here life and death are perpetually interchanging office in the never-ceasing transformation of forces,--melting down and reshaping living substance simultaneously within the same vast crucible. There are trees distilling venom, there are plants that have fangs, there are perfumes that affect the brain, there are cold green creepers whose touch blisters flesh like fire; while in all the recesses and the shadows is a swarming of unfamiliar life, beautiful or hideous,--insect, reptile, bird,--inter-warring, devouring, preying.... But the great peril of the forest--the danger which deters even the naturalist;--is the presence of the terrible _fer-de-lance (trionocephalus lanceolatus,--bothrops lanceolatus,--craspodecephalus_),--deadliest of the Occidental thanatophidia, and probably one of the deadliest serpents of the known world.

... There are no less than eight varieties of it,--the most common being the dark gray, speckled with black--precisely the color that enables the creature to hide itself among the protruding roots of the trees, by simply coiling about them, and concealing its triangular head. Sometimes the snake is a clear bright yellow: then it is difficult to distinguish it from the bunch of bananas among which it conceals itself. Or the creature may be a dark yellow,--or a yellowish brown,--or the color of wine-lees, speckled pink and black,--or dead black with a yellow belly,--or black with a pink belly: all hues of tropical forest-mould, of old bark, of decomposing trees. ... The iris of the eye is orange,--with red flashes: it glows at night like burning charcoal.

And the fer-de-lance reigns absolute king over the mountains and the ravines; he is lord of the forest and solitudes by day, and by night he extends his dominion over the public roads, the familiar paths, the parks, pleasure resorts. People must remain at home after dark, unless they dwell in the city itself: if you happen to be out visiting after sunset, only a mile from town, your friends will caution you anxiously not to follow the boulevard as you go back, and to keep as closely as possible to the very centre of the path. Even in the brightest noon you cannot venture to enter the woods without an experienced escort; you cannot trust your eyes to detect danger: at any moment a seeming branch, a knot of lianas, a pink or gray root, a clump of pendent yellow It, may suddenly take life, writhe, stretch, spring, strike.... Then you will need aid indeed, and most quickly; for within the span of a few heart-beats the wounded flesh chills, tumefies, softens. Soon it changes or, and begins to spot violaceously; while an icy coldness creeps through all the blood. If the _panseur_ or the physician arrives in time, and no vein has been pierced, there is hope; but it more often happens that the blow is received directly on a vein of the foot or ankle,--in which case nothing can save the victim. Even when life is saved the danger is not over. Necrosis of the tissues is likely to set in: the flesh corrupts, falls from the bone sometimes in tatters; and the colors of its putrefaction simulate the hues of vegetable decay,--the ghastly grays and pinks and yellows of trunks rotting down into the dark soil which gave them birth. The human victim moulders as the trees moulder,--crumbles and

dissolves as crumbles the substance of the dead palms and balatas: the Death-of-the-Woods is upon him.

To-day a fer-de-lance is seldom found exceeding six feet length; but the dimensions of the reptile, at least, would seem to have been decreased considerably by man's warring upon it since the time of Père Labat, who mentions having seen a fer-de-lance nine feet long and five inches in diameter. He also speaks of a *couresse*--a beautiful and harmless serpent said to kill the fer-de-lance--over ten feet long and thick as a man's leg; but a large *couresse* is now seldom seen. The negro woodsmen kill both creatures indiscriminately; and as the older reptiles are the least likely to escape observation, the chances for the survival of extraordinary individuals lessen with the yearly decrease of forest-area,

... But it may be doubted whether the number of deadly snakes has been greatly lessened since the early colonial period. Each female produces viviparously from forty to sixty young at a birth. The favorite haunts of the fer-de-lance are to a large extent either inaccessible or unexplored, and its multiplication is prodigious. It is really only the surplus of its swarming that overpours into the cane-fields, and makes the public roads dangerous after dark;--yet more than three hundred snakes have been killed in twelve months on a single plantation. The introduction of the Indian mongoos, or *mangouste* (*ichneumon*), proved futile as a means of repressing the evil. The *mangouste* kills the fer-de-lance when it has a chance but it also kills fowls and sucks their eggs, which condemns it irrevocably with the country negroes, who live to a considerable extent by raising and selling chickens.

[Illustration: IN THE JARDIN DES PLANTES, ST. PIERRE.]

... Domestic animals are generally able to discern the presence of their deadly enemy long before a human eye, can perceive it. If your horse rears and plunges in the darkness, trembles and sweats, do not try to ride on until you are assured the way is clear. Or your dog may come running back, whining, shivering: you will do well to accept his warning. The animals kept about country residences usually try to fight for their lives; the hen battles for her chickens; the bull endeavors to gore and stamp the enemy; the pig gives more successful combat; but the creature who fears the monster least is the brave cat. Seeing a snake, she at once carries her kittens to a place of safety, then boldly advances to the encounter. She will walk to the very limit of the serpent striking range, and begin to feint,--teasing him, startling him, trying to draw his blow. How the emerald and the topazine eyes glow then!--they are flames! A moment more and the triangular head, hissing from the coil, flashes swift as if moved by wings. But swifter still the stroke of the armed paw that dashes the horror aside, flinging it mangled in the dust. Nevertheless, pussy does not yet dare to spring;--the enemy, still active, has almost instantly reformed his coil;--but she is again in front of him, watching,--vertical pupil against vertical pupil. Again the lashing stroke; again the beautiful countering;--again the living death is hurled aside; and now the scaled skin is deeply torn,--one eye socket has ceased to flame. Once more the stroke of the serpent once more the light, quick, cutting blow. But the trionocephalus is blind, is stupefied;

--before he can attempt to coil pussy has leaped upon him,--nailing the horrible flat head fast to the ground with her two sinewy Now let him lash, writhe, twine, strive to strangle her!--in vain! he will never lift his head: an instant more and he lies still: --the keen white teeth of the cat have severed the vertebra just behind the triangular skull!...

XVIII.

The Jardin des Plantes is not absolutely secure from visits of the serpent; for the trigonocephalus goes everywhere,--mounting to the very summits of the cocoa-palms, swimming rivers, ascending walls, hiding in thatched roofs, breeding in bagasse heaps. But, despite what has been printed to the contrary, this reptile fears man and hates light: it rarely shows itself voluntarily during the day. Therefore, if you desire, to obtain some conception of the magnificence of Martinique vegetation, without incurring the risk of entering the high woods, you can do so by visiting the Jardin des Plantes,--only taking care to use your eyes well while climbing over fallen trees, or picking your way through dead branches. The garden is less than a mile from the city, on the slopes of the Morne Parnasse; and the primitive forest itself has been utilized in the formation of it,--so that the greater part of the garden is a primitive growth. Nature has accomplished here infinitely more than art of man (though such art has done much to lend the place its charm),--and until within a very recent time the result might have been deemed, without exaggeration, one of the wonders of the world,

A moment after passing the gate you are in twilight,--though the sun may be blinding on the white road without. All about you is a green gloaming, up through which you see immense trunks rising. Follow the first path that slopes up on your left as you proceed, if you wish to obtain the best general view of the place in the shortest possible time. As you proceed, the garden on your right deepens more and more into a sort of ravine;--on your left rises a sort of foliage-shrouded cliff; and all this in a beautiful crepuscular dimness, made by the foliage of great trees meeting overhead. Palms rooted a hundred feet below you hold their heads a hundred feet above you; yet they can barely reach the light.... Farther on the ravine widens to frame in two tiny lakes, dotted with artificial islands, which are miniatures of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Dominica: these are covered with tropical plants, many of which are total strangers even here: they are natives of India, Senegambia, Algeria, and the most eastern East. Arboreal ferns of unfamiliar elegance curve up from path-verge lake-brink; and the great *arbre-du-voyageur* outspreads its colossal fan. Giant lianas droop down over the way in loops and festoons; tapering green cords, which are creepers descending to take root, hang everywhere; and parasites with stems thick as cables coil about the trees like boas. Trunks shooting up out of sight, into the green wilderness above, display no bark; you cannot guess what sort of trees they are; they are so thickly wrapped in creepers as to seem pillars of leaves. Between you and the sky, where everything is fighting for sun, there is an almost unbroken vault of leaves, a cloudy green confusion in

which nothing particular is distinguishable.

You come to breaks now and then in the green steep to your left,--openings created for cascades pouring down from one mossed basin of brown stone to another,--or gaps occupied by flights of stone steps, green with mosses, and chocolate-colored by age. These steps lead to loftier paths; and all the stone-work,-the grottos, bridges, basins, terraces, steps,--are darkened by time and velvety with mossy things.... It is of another century, this garden: special ordinances were passed concerning it during the French Revolution (_An. II._);--it is very quaint; it suggests an art spirit as old as Versailles, or older; but it is indescribably beautiful even now.

... At last you near the end, to hear the roar of falling water;--there is a break in the vault of green above the bed of a river below you; and at a sudden turn you in sight of the cascade. Before you is the Morne itself; and against the burst of descending light you discern a precipice-verge. Over it, down one green furrow in its brow, tumbles the rolling foam of a cataract, like falling smoke, to be caught below in a succession of moss-covered basins. The first clear leap of the water is nearly seventy feet.... Did Josephine ever rest upon that shadowed bench near by?... She knew all these paths by heart: surely they must have haunted her dreams in the after-time!

Returning by another path, you may have a view of other cascades-though none so imposing. But they are beautiful; and you will not soon forget the effect of one,--flanked at its summit by white-stemmed palms which lift their leaves so high into the light that the loftiness of them gives the sensation of vertigo.... Dizzy also the magnificence of the great colonnade of palmistes and angelins, two hundred feet high, through which: you pass if you follow the river-path from the cascade--the famed _Allée des duels_....

The vast height, the pillared solemnity of the ancient trees in the green dimness, the solitude, the strangeness of shapes but half seen,--suggesting fancies of silent aspiration, or triumph, or despair,--all combine to produce a singular impression of awe.... You are alone; you hear no human voice,--no sounds but the rushing of the river over its volcanic rocks, and the creeping of millions of lizards and tree-frogs and little toads. You see no human face; but you see all around you the labor of man being gnawed and devoured by nature,--broken bridges, sliding steps, fallen arches, strangled fountains with empty basins;--and everywhere arises the pungent odor of decay. This omnipresent odor affects one unpleasantly;--it never ceases to remind you that where Nature is most puissant to charm, there also is she mightiest to destroy.

[Illustration: CASCADE IN THE JARDIN DES PLANTES.]

The beautiful garden is now little more than a wreck of what it once was; since the fall of the Empire it has been shamefully abused and neglected. Some _agronome_ sent out to take charge of it by the Republic, began its destruction by cutting down acres of enormous and magnificent trees,--including a superb alley of

plants,--for the purpose of experimenting with roses. But the rose-trees would not be cultivated there; and the serpents avenged the demolition by making the experimental garden unsafe to enter;--they always swarm into underbrush and shrubbery after forest-trees have been cleared away.... Subsequently the garden was greatly damaged by storms and torrential rains; the mountain river overflowed, carrying bridges away and demolishing stone-work. No attempt was made to repair these destructions; but neglect alone would not have ruined the loveliness of the place;--barbarism was necessary! Under the present negro-radical regime orders have been given for the wanton destruction of trees older than the colony itself;--and marvels that could not be replaced in a hundred generations were cut down and converted into charcoal for the use of public institutions.

XIX.

How gray seem the words of poets in the presence is Nature!... The enormous silent poem of color and light--(you who know only the North do not know color, do not know light!)--of sea and sky, of the woods and the peaks, so far surpasses imagination as to paralyze it--mocking the language of admiration, defying all power of expression. That is before you which never can be painted or chanted, because there is no cunning of art or speech able to reflect it. Nature realizes your most hopeless ideals of beauty, even as one gives toys to a child. And the sight of this supreme terrestrial expression of creative magic numbs thought. In the great centres of civilization we admire and study only the results of mind,--the products of human endeavor: here one views only the work of Nature,--but Nature in all her primeval power, as in the legendary frostless morning of creation. Man here seems to bear scarcely more relation to the green life about him than the insect; and the results of human effort seem impotent by comparison with the operation of those vast blind forces which clothe the peaks and crown the dead craters with impenetrable forest. The air itself seems inimical to thought,--soporific, and yet pregnant with activities of dissolution so powerful that the mightiest tree begins to melt like wax from the moment it has ceased to live. For man merely to exist is an effort; and doubtless in the perpetual struggle of the blood to preserve itself from fermentation, there is such an expenditure of vital energy as leaves little surplus for mental exertion.

... Scarcely less than poet or philosopher, the artist, I fancy, would feel his helplessness. In the city he may find wonderful picturesqueness to invite his pencil, but when he stands face to face alone with Nature he will discover that he has no colors! The luminosities of tropic foliage could only be imitated in fire. He who desires to paint a West Indian forest,--a West Indian landscape,--must take his view from some great height, through which the colors come to his eye softened and subdued by distance,--toned with blues or purples by the astonishing atmosphere.

... It is sunset as I write these lines, and there are witchcrafts of color. Looking down the narrow, steep street

opening to the bay, I see the motionless silhouette of the steamer on a perfectly green sea,--under a lilac sky,--against a prodigious orange light.

XX.

In these tropic latitudes Night does not seem "to fall,"--to descend over the many-peaked land: it appears to rise up, like an exhalation, from the ground. The coast-lines darken first;--then the slopes and the lower hills and valleys become shadowed;--then, very swiftly, the gloom mounts to the heights, whose very loftiest peak may remain glowing like a volcano at its tip for several minutes after the rest of the island is veiled in blackness and all the stars are out...

[Illustration: DEPARTURE OF STEAMER FOR FORT-DE-FRANCE.]

... Tropical nights have a splendor that seems strange to northern eyes. The sky does not look so high--so far way as in the North; but the stars are larger, and the luminosity greater.

With the rising of the moon all the violet of the sky flushes;--there is almost such a rose-color as heralds northern dawn.

Then the moon appears over the mornes, very large, very bright--brighter certainly than many a befogged sun one sees in northern Novembers; and it seems to have a weird magnetism--this tropical moon. Night-birds, insects, frogs,--everything that can sing,--all sing very low on the nights of great moons. Tropical wood-life begins with dark: in the immense white light of a full moon this nocturnal life seems afraid to cry out as usual. Also, this moon has a singular effect on the nerves. It is very difficult to sleep on such bright nights: you feel such a vague uneasiness as the coming of a great storm gives....

XXI.

You reach Fort-de-France, the capital of Martinique, steamer from St. Pierre, in about an hour and a ... There is an overland route--_La Trace_, but it twenty-five-mile ride, and a weary one in such a climate, notwithstanding the indescribable beauty of the landscapes which the lofty road commands.

Rebuilt in wood after the almost total destruction by an earthquake of its once picturesque streets of stone, Fort-de-France (formerly Fort-Royal) has little of outward interest by comparison with St. Pierre. It lies in a low, moist plain, and has few remarkable buildings: you can walk allover the little town in about half an hour. But the Savane,--the great green public square, with its grand tamarinds and _sabliers_,--would be worth the visit alone, even were it not made romantic by the marble memory of Josephine.

I went to look at the white dream of her there, a creation of master-sculptors.... It seemed to me absolutely lovely.

Sea winds have bitten it; tropical rains have streaked it: some microscopic growth has darkened the exquisite hollow of the throat. And yet such is the human charm of the figure that you almost fancy you are gazing at a living presence.... Perhaps the profile is less artistically real,--statuesque to the point of betraying the chisel; but when you look straight up into the sweet creole face, you can believe she lives: all the wonderful West Indian charm of the woman is there.

She is standing just in the centre of the Savane, robed in the fashion of the First Empire, with gracious arms and shoulders bare: one hand leans upon a medallion bearing the eagle profile of Napoleon.... Seven tall palms stand in a circle around her, lifting their comely heads into the blue glory of the tropic day. Within their enchanted circle you feel that you tread holy ground,--the sacred soil of artist and poet;--here the recollections of memoir-writers vanish away; the gossip of history is hushed for you; you no longer care to know how rumor has it that she spoke or smiled or wept: only the bewitchment of her lives under the thin, soft, swaying shadows of those feminine palms.... Over violet space of summer sea; through the vast splendor of azure light, she is looking back to the place of her

birth, back to beautiful drowsy Trois-Islets,--and always with the same half-dreaming, half-plaintive smile,--unutterably touching....

[Illustration: STATUE OF JOSEPHINE.]

XXII.

One leaves Martinique with regret, even after so brief a stay: the old colonial life itself, not less than the revelation of tropic nature, having in this island a quality of uniqueness, a special charm, unlike anything previously seen.... We steam directly for Barbadoes;--the vessel will touch at the intervening islands only on her homeward route.

... Against a hot wind south,--under a sky always deepening in beauty. Towards evening dark clouds begin to rise before us; and by nightfall they spread into one pitch-blackness over all the sky. Then comes a wind in immense sweeps, lifting the water,--but a wind that is still strangely warm. The ship rolls heavily in the dark for an hour or more;--then torrents of tepid rain make the sea smooth again; the clouds pass, and the viole transparency of tropical night reappears,--ablaze with stars.

At early morning a long low land appears on the horizon,--totally unlike the others we have seen; it has no visable volcanic forms. That is Barbadoes,--a level burning coral coast,--a streak of green, white-edged, on the verge of the sea. But hours pass before the green line begins to show outlines of foliage.

... As we approach the harbor an overhanging black cloud suddenly bursts down in illuminated rain,--through which the shapes of moored ships seem magnified as through a golden fog. It ceases as suddenly as it begun; the cloud vanishes utterly; and the azure is revealed unflecked, dazzling, wondrous.... It is a sight worth the whole journey,--the splendor of this noon sky at Barbadoes;--the horizon glow is almost blinding, the sea; line sharp as a razor-edge; and motionless upon the sapphire water nearly a hundred ships lie,--masts, spars, booms, cordage, cutting against the amazing magnificence of blue.... Mean while the island coast has clearly brought out all its beauties: first you note the long white winding thread-line of beach-coral and bright sand;--then the deep green fringe of vegetation through which roofs and spires project here and there, and quivering feathery heads of palms with white trunks. The general tone of this verdure is sombre green, though it is full of lustre: there is a glimmer in it as of metal. Beyond all this coast-front long undulations of misty pale, green are visible,--far slopes of low hill and plain the highest curving line, the ridge of the island, bears a row of cocoa-palms, They are so far that their stems diminish almost to invisibility: only the crests are clearly distinguishable,--like spiders hanging between land and sky. But there are no forests: the land is a naked unshadowed green far as the eye can reach beyond the coast-line. There is no waste space in Barbadoes: it is perhaps one of the most densely-peopled places on the globe--(one thousand and thirty-five inhabitants to the square mile)--and it sends black laborers by thousands to the other British colonies every year,--the surplus of its population.

... The city of Bridgetown disappoints the stranger who expects to find any exotic features of architecture or custom,--disappoints more, perhaps, than any other tropical port in this respect. Its principal streets give you the impression of walking through an English town,--not an old-time town, but a new one, plain almost to commonplaceness, in spite of Nelson's monument. Even the palms are powerless to lend the place a really tropical look;--the streets are narrow without being picturesque, white as lime roads and full of glare;--the manners, the costumes, the style of living, the system of business are thoroughly English;--the population lacks visible originality; and its extraordinary activity, so oddly at variance with the quiet indolence of other West Indian peoples, seems almost unnatural. Pressure of numbers has largely contributed to this characteristic; but Barbadoes would be in any event, by reason of position alone, a busy colony. As the most windward of the West Indies it has naturally become not only the chief port, but also the chief emporium of the Antilles. It has railroads, telephones, street-cars, fire and life insurance companies, good hotels, libraries and reading-rooms, and excellent public schools. Its annual export trade figures for nearly \$6,000,000.

[Illustration: INNER BASIN, BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOES.]

The fact which seems most curious to the stranger, on his first acquaintance with the city, is that most of this business activity is represented by black men--black merchants, shopkeepers, clerks. Indeed, the Barbadian population, as a mass, strikes one as the darkest in the West Indies. Black regiments march through the street to the sound of English

music,--uniformed as Zouaves; black police, in white helmets and white duck uniforms, maintain order; black postmen distribute the mails; black cabmen wait for customers at a shilling an hour. It is by no means an attractive population, physically,--rather the reverse, and frankly brutal as well--different as possible from the colored race of Martinique; but it has immense energy, and speaks excellent English. One is almost startled on hearing Barbadian negroes speaking English with a strong Old Country accent Without seeing the speaker, you could scarcely believe such English uttered by black lips; and the commonest negro laborer about the port pronounces as well as a Londoner. The purity of Barbadian English is partly due, no doubt, to the fact that, unlike most of the other islands, Barbadoes has always remained in the possession of Great Britain. Even as far back as 1676 Barbadoes was in a very different condition of prosperity from that of the other colonies, and offered a totally different social aspect--having a white population of 50,000. At that time the island could muster 20,000 infantry and 3000 horse; there were 80,000 slaves; there were 1500 houses in Bridgetown and an immense number of shops; and not less than two hundred ships were required to export the annual sugar crop alone.

But Barbadoes differs also from most of the Antilles geologically; and there can be no question that the nature of its soil has considerably influenced the physical character of its inhabitants. Although Barbadoes is now known to be also of volcanic origin,--a fact which its low undulating surface could enable no unscientific observer to suppose,--it is superficially a calcareous formation; and the remarkable effect of limestone soil upon the bodily development of a people is not less marked in this latitude than elsewhere. In most of the Antilles the white race degenerates and dwarfs under the influence of climate and environment; but the Barbadian creole--tall, muscular, large of bone--preserves and perpetuates in the tropics the strength and sturdiness of his English forefathers.

XXIII.

... Night: steaming for British Guiana;--we shall touch at no port before reaching Demerara.... A strong warm gale, that compels the taking in of every awning and wind-sail. Driving tepid rain; and an intense darkness, broken only by the phosphorescence of the sea, which to-night displays extraordinary radiance.

[Illustration: TRAFALGAR SQUARE, BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOES.]

The steamer's wake is a great broad, seething river of fire,--white like strong moonshine: the glow is bright enough to read by. At its centre the trail is brightest;--towards either edge it pales off cloudily,--curling like smoke of phosphorus. Great sharp lights burst up momentarily through it like meteors. Weirder than this strange wake are the long slow fires that keep burning at a distance, out in the dark. Nebulous incandescences mount up from the depths, change form, and pass;--serpentine flames wriggle by;--there are long billowing crests of fire. These seem

to be formed of millions of tiny sparks, that light up all at the same time, glow for a while, disappear, reappear, and swirl away in a prolonged smouldering.

There are warm gales and heavy rain each night,--it is the hurricane season;--and it seems these become more violent the farther south we sail. But we are nearing those equinoctial regions where the calm of nature is never disturbed by storms.

... Morning: still steaming south, through a vast blue day. The azure of the heaven always seems to be growing deeper. There is a bluish-white glow in the horizon,--almost too bright to look at. An indigo sea.... There are no clouds; and the splendor endures until sunset.

Then another night, very luminous and calm. The Southern constellations burn whitely.... We are nearing the great shallows of the South American coast.

XXIV.

... It is the morning of the third day since we left Barbadoes, and for the first time since entering tropic waters all things seem changed. The atmosphere is heavy with strange mists; and the light of an orange-colored sun, immensely magnified by vapors, illuminates a greenish-yellow sea,--foul and opaque, as if stagnant.... I remember just such a sunrise over the Louisiana gulf-coast.

We are in the shallows, moving very slowly. The line-caster keeps calling, at regular intervals: "Quarter less five, sir!" "And a half four, sir!" ... There is little variation in his soundings--a quarter of a fathom or half a fathom difference. The warm air has a sickly heaviness, like the air of a swamp; the water shows olive and ochreous tones alternately;--the foam is yellow in our wake. These might be the colors of a fresh-water inundation....

A fellow-traveller tells me, as we lean over the rail, that this same viscous, glaucous sea washes the great penal colony of Cayenne--which he visited. When a convict dies there, the corpse, sewn up in a sack, is borne to the water, and a great bell tolled. Then the still surface is suddenly broken by fins innumerable--black fins of sharks rushing to the hideous funeral: they know the Bell!...

There is land in sight--very low land,--a thin dark line suggesting marshiness; and the nauseous color of the water always deepens.

As the land draws near, it reveals a beautiful tropical appearance. The sombre green line brightens color, I sharpens into a splendid fringe of fantastic evergreen fronds, bristling with palm crests. Then a mossy sea-wall comes into sight--dull gray stone--work, green-lined at all its joints. There is a fort. The steamer's whistle is exactly mocked by a queer echo,

and the cannon-shot once reverberated--only once: there are no mountains here to multiply a sound. And all the while the water becomes a thicker and more turbid green; the wake looks more and more ochreous, the foam rozier and yellower. Vessels becalmed everywhere speck the glass-level of the sea, like insects sticking upon a mirror. It begins, all of a sudden, to rain torrentially; and through the white storm of falling drops nothing is discernible.

XXV.

At Georgetown, steamers entering the river can lie close to the wharf;--we can enter the Government warehouses without getting wet. In fifteen minutes the shower ceases; and we leave the warehouses to find ourselves in a broad, palm-bordered street illuminated by the most prodigious day that yet shone upon our voyage. The rain has cleared the air and dissolved the mists; and the light is wondrous.

[Illustration: STREET IN GEORGETOWN, DEMERARA.]

My own memory of Demerara will always be a memory of enormous light. The radiance has an indescribable dazzling force that conveys the idea of electric fire;--the horizon blinds like a motionless sheet of lightning; and you dare not look at the zenith.... The brightest summer-day in the North is a gloaming to this. Men walk only under umbrellas, or with their eyes down--and the pavements, already dry, flare almost unbearably.

... Georgetown has an exotic aspect peculiar to itself,--different from that of any West Indian city we have seen; and this is chiefly due to the presence of palm-trees. For the edifices, the plan, the general idea of the town, are modern; the white streets, laid out very broad to the sweep of the sea-breeze, and drained by canals running through their centres, with bridges at cross-streets, display the value of nineteenth-century knowledge regarding house-building with a view to coolness as well as to beauty. The architecture might be described as a tropicalized Swiss style--Swiss eaves are developed into veranda roofs, and Swiss porches prolonged and lengthened into beautiful piazzas and balconies. The men who devised these large cool halls, these admirably ventilated rooms, these latticed windows opening to the ceiling, may have lived in India; but the physiognomy of the town also reveals a fine sense of beauty in the designers: all that is strange and beautiful in the vegetation of the tropics has had a place contrived for it, a home prepared for it. Each dwelling has its garden; each garden blazes with singular and lovely color; but everywhere and always tower the palms. There are colonnades of palms, clumps of palms, groves of palms--sago and cabbage and cocoa and fan palms. You can see that the palm is cherished here, is loved for its beauty, like a woman. Everywhere you find palms, in all stages of development, from the first sheaf of tender green plumes rising above the soil to the wonderful colossus that holds its head a hundred feet above the roofs; palms border the garden walks in colonnades; they are grouped in exquisite poise about the basins

of fountains; they stand like magnificent pillars at either side of gates; they look into the highest windows of public buildings and hotels.

... For miles and miles and miles we drive along avenues of palms--avenues leading to opulent cane-fields, traversing queer coolie villages. Rising on either side of the road to the same level, the palms present the vista of a long unbroken double colonnade of dead-silver trunks, shining tall pillars with deep green plume-tufted summits, almost touching, almost forming something like the dream of an interminable Moresque arcade. Sometimes for a full mile the trees are only about thirty or forty feet high; then, turning into an older alley, we drive for half a league between giants nearly a hundred feet in altitude. The double perspective lines of their crests, meeting before us and behind us in a bronze-green darkness, betray only at long intervals any variation of color, where some dead leaf droops like an immense yellow feather.

XXVI.

In the marvellous light, which brings out all the rings of their bark, these palms sometimes produce a singular impression of subtle, fleshy, sentient life,--seem to move with a slowly stealthy motion as you ride or drive past them. The longer you watch them, the stronger this idea becomes,--the more they seem alive,--the more their long silver-gray articulated bodies seem to poise, undulate, stretch.... Certainly the palms of a Demerara country-road evoke no such real emotion as that produced by the stupendous palms of the Jardin des Plantes in Martinique. That beautiful, solemn, silent life up-reaching through tropical forest to the sun for warmth, for color, for power,--filled me, I remember, with a sensation of awe different from anything which I had ever experienced.... But even here in Guiana, standing alone under the sky, the palm still seems a creature rather than a tree,--gives you the idea of personality;--you could almost believe each lithe shape animated by a thinking force,--believe that all are watching you with such passionless calm as legend lends to beings super-natural.... And I wonder if some kindred fancy might not have inspired the name given by the French colonists to the male palmiste,--_angelin_....

[Illustration: AVENUE IN GEORGETOWN, DEMERARA.]

Very wonderful is the botanical garden here. It is new; and there are no groves, no heavy timber, no shade; but the finely laid-out grounds,--alternations of lawn and flower-bed,--offer everywhere surprising sights. You observe curious orange-colored shrubs; plants speckled with four different colors; plants that look like wigs of green hair; plants with enormous broad leaves that seem made of colored crystal; plants that do not look like natural growths, but like idealizations of plants,--those beautiful fantasticalities imagined by sculptors. All these we see in glimpses from a carriage-window,--yellow, indigo, black, and crimson plants.... We draw rein only to observe in the ponds the green navies of the Victoria Regia,--the monster among water-

lilies. It covers all the ponds and many of the canals. Close to shore the leaves are not extraordinarily large; but they increase in breadth as they float farther out, as if gaining bulk proportionately to the depth of water. A few yards off, they are large as soup-plates; farther out, they are broad as dinner-trays; in the centre of the pond or canal they have surface large as tea-tables. And all have an up-turned edge, a perpendicular rim. Here and there you see the imperial flower,--towering above the leaves.... Perhaps, if your hired driver be a good guide, he will show you the snake-nut,--the fruit of an extraordinary tree native to the Guiana forests. This swart nut--shaped almost like a clam-shell, and halving in the same way along its sharp edges--encloses something almost incredible. There is a pale envelope about the kernel; remove it, and you find between your fingers a little viper, triangular-headed, coiled thrice upon itself, perfect in every detail of form from head to tail. Was this marvellous mockery evolved for a protective end? It is no eccentricity: in every nut the serpent-kernel lies coiled the same.

... Yet in spite of a hundred such novel impressions, what a delight it is to turn again cityward through the avenues of palms, and to feel once more the sensation of being watched, without love or hate, by all those lithe, tall, silent, gracious shapes!

XXVII.

Hindoos; coolies; men, women, and children--standing, walking, or sitting in the sun, under the shadowing of the palms. Men squatting, with hands clasped over their black knees, are watching us from under their white turbans--very steadily, with a slight scowl. All these Indian faces have the same set, stern expression, the same knitting of the brows; and the keen gaze is not altogether pleasant. It borders upon hostility; it is the look of measurement--measurement physical and moral. In the mighty swarming of India these have learned the full meaning and force of life's law as we Occidentals rarely learn it. Under the dark fixed frown eye glitters like a serpent's.

[Illustration: VICTORIA REGIA IN THE CANAL AT GEORGETOWN]

Nearly all wear the same Indian dress; the thickly folded turban, usually white, white drawers reaching but half-way down the thigh, leaving the knees and the legs bare, and white jacket. A few don long blue robes, and wear a colored head-dress: these are babagees--priests. Most of the men look tall; they are slender and small-boned, but the limbs are well turned. They are grave--talk in low tones, and seldom smile. Those you see heavy black beards are probably Mussulmans: I am told they have their mosques here, and that the muezzin's call to prayer is chanted three times daily on many plantations. Others shave, but the Mohammedans allow all the beard to grow.... Very comely some of the women are in their close-clinging soft brief robes and tantalizing veils--a costume leaving shoulders, arms, and ankles bare. The dark arm is always tapered and rounded; the silver-

circled ankle always elegantly knit to the light straight foot. Many slim girls, whether standing or walking or in repose, offer remarkable studies of grace; their attitude when erect always suggests lightness and suppleness, like the poise of a dancer.

... A coolie mother passes, carrying at her hip a very pretty naked baby. It has exquisite delicacy of limb: its tiny ankles are circled by thin bright silver rings; it looks like a little bronze statuette, a statuette of Kama, the Indian Eros. The mother's arms are covered from elbow to wrist with silver bracelets,--some flat and decorated; others coarse, round, smooth, with ends hammered into the form of viper-heads. She has large flowers of gold in her ears, a small gold flower in her very delicate little nose. This nose ornament does not seem absurd; on these dark skins the effect is almost as pleasing as it is bizarre. This jewellery is pure metal;--it is thus the coolies carry their savings,--melting down silver or gold coin, and recasting it into bracelets, ear-rings, and nose ornaments.

[Illustration: DEMERARA COOLIE GIRL.]

... Evening is brief: all this time the days have been growing shorter: it will be black at 6 P.M. One does not regret it;--the glory of such a tropical day as this is almost too much to endure for twelve hours. The sun is already low, and yellow with a tinge of orange: as he falls between the palms his stare colors the world with a strange hue--such a phantasmal light as might be given by a nearly burnt-out sun. The air is full of unfamiliar odors. We pass a flame-colored bush; and an extraordinary perfume--strange, rich, sweet--envelops us like a caress: the soul of a red jasmine....

... What a tropical sunset is this--within two days' steam-journey of the equator! Almost to the zenith the sky flames up from the sea,--one tremendous orange incandescence, rapidly deepening to vermilion as the sun dips. The indescribable intensity of this mighty burning makes one totally unprepared for the spectacle of its sudden passing: a seeming drawing down behind the sea of the whole vast flare of light.... Instantly the world becomes indigo. The air grows humid, weighty with vapor; frogs commence to make a queer bubbling noise; and some unknown creature begins in the trees a singular music, not trilling, like the note of our cricket, but one continuous shrill tone, high, keen, as of a thin jet of steam leaking through a valve. Strong vegetal scents, aromatic and novel, rise up. Under the trees of our hotel I hear a continuous dripping sound; the drops fall heavily, like bodies of clumsy insects. But it is not dew, nor insects; it is a thick, transparent jelly--a fleshy liquor that falls in immense drops.... The night grows chill with dews, with vegetable breath; and we sleep with windows nearly closed.

... Another sunset like the conflagration of a world, as we steam away from Guiana;--another unclouded night; and morning brings back to us that bright blue in the sea-water which we missed for the first time on our approach to the main-land. There is a long swell all day, and tepid winds. But towards evening the water once more shifts its hue--takes olive tint--the mighty flood of the Orinoco is near.

Over the rim of the sea rise shapes faint pink, faint gray-misty shapes that grow and lengthen as we advance. We are nearing Trinidad.

It first takes definite form as a prolonged, undulating, pale gray mountain chain,--the outline of a sierra. Approaching nearer, we discern other hill summits rounding up and shouldering away behind the chain itself. Then the nearest heights begin to turn faint green--very slowly. Right before the outermost spur of cliff, fantastic shapes of rock are rising sheer from the water: partly green, partly reddish-gray where the surface remains unclothed by creepers and shrubs. Between them the sea leaps and whitens.

... And we begin to steam along a magnificent tropical coast,--before a billowing of hills wrapped in forest from sea to summit,--astounding forest, dense, sombre, impervious to sun--every gap a blackness as of ink. Giant palms here and there overtop the denser foliage; and queer monster trees rise above the forest-level against the blue,--spreading out huge flat crests from which masses of lianas stream down. This forest-front has the apparent solidity of a wall, and forty-five miles of it undulate uninterruptedly by us--rising by terraces, or projecting like turret-lines, or shooting up into semblance of cathedral forms or suggestions of castellated architecture.... But the secrets of these woods have not been unexplored;--one of the noblest writers of our time has so beautifully and fully written of them as to leave little for anyone else to say. He who knows Charles Kingsley's "At Last" probably knows the woods of Trinidad far better than many who pass them daily.

Even as observed from the steamer's deck, the mountains and forests of Trinidad have an aspect very different from those of the other Antilles. The heights are less lofty,--less jagged and abrupt,--with rounded summits; the peaks of Martinique or Dominica rise fully two thousand feet higher. The land itself is a totally different formation,--anciently being a portion of the continent; and its flora and fauna are of South America.

... There comes a great cool whiff of wind,--another and another;--then a mighty breath begins to blow steadily upon us,--the breath of the Orinoco.... It grows dark before we pass through the Ape's Mouth, to anchor in one of the calmest harbors in the world,--never disturbed by hurricanes. Over unruffled water the lights of Port-of-Spain shoot long still yellow beams. The night grows chill;--the air is made frigid by the breath of the enormous river and the vapors of the great woods.

... Sunrise: a morning of supernal beauty,--the sky of a fairy tale,--the sea of a love-poem.

Under a heaven of exquisitely tender blue, the whole smooth sea has a perfect luminous dove-color,--the horizon being filled to a great height with greenish-golden haze,--a mist of unspeakably sweet tint, a hue that, imitated in any aquarelle, would be cried out against as an impossibility. As yet the hills are nearly all gray, the forests also inwrapping them are gray and ghostly, for the sun has but just risen above them, and vapors hang like a veil between. Then, over the glassy level of the flood, winds of purple and violet and pale blue and fluid gold begin to shoot and quiver and broaden; these are the currents of the morning, catching varying color with the deepening of the day and the lifting of the tide.

Then, as the sun rises higher, green masses begin to glimmer among the grays; the outlines of the forest summits commence to define themselves through the vapory light, to left and right of the great glow. Only the city still remains invisible; it lies exactly between us and the downpour of solar splendor, and the mists there have caught such radiance that the place seems hidden by a fog of fire. Gradually the gold-green of the horizon changes to a pure yellow; the hills take soft, rich, sensuous colors. One of the more remote has turned a marvellous tone--a seemingly diaphanous aureate color, the very ghost of gold. But at last all of them sharpen bluey, show bright folds and ribbings of green through their haze. The valleys remain awhile clouded, as if filled with something like blue smoke; but the projecting masses of cliff and slope swiftly change their misty green to a warmer hue. All these tints and colors have a spectral charm, a preternatural loveliness; everything seems subdued, softened, semi-vaporized,--the only very sharply defined silhouettes being those of the little becalmed ships sprinkling the western water, all spreading colored wings to catch the morning breeze.

The more the sun ascends, the more rapid the development of the landscape out of vapory blue; the hills all become green-faced, reveal the details of frondage. The wind fills the waiting sails--white, red, yellow,--ripples the water, and turns it green. Little fish begin to leap; they spring and fall in glittering showers like opalescent blown spray. And at last, through the fading vapor, dew-glittering red-tiled roofs reveal themselves: the city is unveiled--a city full of color, somewhat quaint, somewhat Spanish-looking--a little like St. Pierre, a little like New Orleans in the old quarter; everywhere fine tall palms.

XXX.

Ashore, through a black swarming and a great hum of creole chatter.... Warm yellow narrow streets under a burning blue day;--a confused impression of long vistas, of low pretty houses and cottages, more or less quaint, bathed in sun and yellow-

wash,--and avenues of shade-trees,--and low garden-walls overtopped by waving banana leaves and fronds of palms.... A general sensation of drowsy warmth and vast light and exotic vegetation,--coupled with some vague disappointment at the absence of that picturesque humanity that delighted us in the streets of St. Pierre, Martinique. The bright costumes of the French colonies are not visible here: there is nothing like them in any of the English islands. Nevertheless, this wonderful Trinidad is as unique ethnologically as it is otherwise remarkable among all the other Antilles. It has three distinct creole populations,--English, Spanish, and French,--besides its German and Madeiran settlers. There is also a special black or half-breed element, corresponding to each creole race, and speaking the language of each; there are fifty thousand Hindoo coolies, and a numerous body of Chinese. Still, this extraordinary diversity of race elements does not make itself at once apparent to the stranger. Your first impressions, as you pass through the black crowd upon the wharf, is that of being among a population as nearly African as that of Barbadoes; and indeed the black element dominates to such an extent that upon the streets white faces look strange by contrast. When a white face does appear, it is usually under the shadow of an Indian helmet, and heavily bearded, and austere: the physiognomy of one used to command. Against the fantastic ethnic background of a11 this colonial life, this strong, bearded English visage takes something of heroic relief;--one feels, in a totally novel way, the dignity of a white skin.

[Illustration: ST. JAMES AVENUE, PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD.]

... I hire a carriage to take me to the nearest coolie village; --a delightful drive.... Sometimes the smooth white road curves round the slope of a forest-covered mountain;--sometimes overlooks a valley shining with twenty different shades of surface green;--sometimes traverses marvellous natural arcades formed by the interweaving and intercrossing of bamboos fifty feet high. Rising in vast clumps, and spreading out sheafwise from the soil towards the sky, the curves of their beautiful jointed stems meet at such perfect angles above the way, and on either side of it, as to imitate almost exactly the elaborate Gothic arch-work of old abbey cloisters. Above the road, shadowing the slopes of lofty hills, forests beetle in dizzy precipices of verdure. They are green--burning, flashing green--covered with parasitic green creepers and vines; they show enormous forms, or rather dreams of form, fetichistic and startling. Banana leaves flicker and flutter along the way-side; palms shoot up to vast altitudes, like pillars of white metal; and there is a perpetual shifting of foliage color, from yellow-green to orange, from reddish-green to purple, from emerald-green to black-green. But the background color, the dominant tone, is like the plumage of a green parrot.

... We drive into the coolie village, along a narrower way, lined with plantain-trees, bananas, flamboyants, and unfamiliar shrubs with large broad leaves. Here and there are cocoa-palms. Beyond the little ditches on either side, occupying openings in the natural hedge, are the dwellings--wooden cabins, widely separated from each other. The narrow lanes that enter the road are also lined with habitations, half hidden by banana-trees. There is a prodigious glare, an intense heat. Around, above the

trees and the roofs, rise the far hill shapes, some brightly verdant, some cloudy blue, some gray. The road and the lanes are almost deserted; there is little shade; only at intervals some slender brown girl or naked baby appears at a door-way. The carriage halts before a shed built against a wall--a simple roof of palm thatch supported upon jointed posts of bamboo.

It is a little coolie temple. A few weary Indian laborers slumber in its shadow; pretty naked children, with silver rings round their ankles, are playing there with a white dog. Painted over the wall surface, in red, yellow, brown, blue, and green designs upon a white ground, are extraordinary figures of gods and goddesses. They have several pairs of arms, brandishing mysterious things,--they seem to dance, gesticulate, threaten; but they are all very naïf;--remind one of the first efforts of a child with the first box of paints. While I am looking at these things, one coolie after another wakes up (these men sleep lightly) and begins to observe me almost as curiously, and I fear much less kindly, than I have been observing the gods. "Where is your babagee?" I inquire. No one seems to comprehend my question; the gravity of each dark face remains unrelaxed. Yet I would have liked to make an offering unto Siva.

... Outside the Indian goldsmith's cabin, palm shadows are crawling slowly to and fro in the white glare, like shapes of tarantulas. Inside, the heat is augmented by the tiny charcoal furnace which glows beside a ridiculous little anvil set into a wooden block buried level with the soil. Through a rear door come odors of unknown known flowers and the cool brilliant green of banana leaves.... A minute of waiting in the hot silence;--then, noiselessly as a phantom, the nude-limbed smith enters by a rear door,--squats down, without a word, on his little mat beside his little anvil,--and turns towards me, inquiringly, a face half veiled by a black beard,--a turbaned Indian face, sharp, severe, and slightly unpleasant in expression. "_Vlé béras!" explains my creole driver, pointing to his client. The smith opens his lips to utter in the tone of a call the single syllable "_Ra_!" then folds his arms.

[Illustration: COOLIES OF TRINIDAD.]

Almost immediately a young Hindoo woman enters, squats down on the earthen floor at the end of the bench which forms the only furniture of the shop, and turns upon me a pair of the finest black eyes I have ever seen,--like the eyes of a fawn. She is very simply clad, in a coolie robe leaving arms and ankles bare, and clinging about the figure in gracious folds; her color is a clear bright brown-new bronze; her face a fine oval, and charmingly aquiline. I perceive a little silver ring, in the form of a twisted snake, upon the slender second toe of each bare foot; upon each arm she has at least ten heavy silver rings; there are also large silver rings about her ankles; a gold flower is fixed by a little hook in one nostril, and two immense silver circles, shaped like new moons, shimmer in her ears. The smith mutters something to her in his Indian tongue. She rises, and seating herself on the bench beside me, in an attitude of perfect grace, holds out one beautiful brown arm to me that I may choose a ring.

The arm is much more worthy of attention than the rings: it has the tint, the smoothness, the symmetry, of a fine statuary's work in metal;--the upper arm, tattooed with a bluish circle of arabesques, is otherwise unadorned; all the bracelets are on the fore-arm. Very clumsy and coarse they prove to be on closer examination: it was the fine dark skin which by color contrast made them look so pretty. I choose the outer one, a round ring with terminations shaped like viper heads;--the smith inserts a pair of tongs between these ends, presses outward slowly and strongly, and the ring is off. It has a faint musky odor, not unpleasant, the perfume of the tropical flesh it clung to. I would have taken it thus; but the smith snatches it from me, heats it red in his little charcoal furnace, hammers it into a nearly perfect circle again, slakes it, and burnishes it.

Then I ask for children's béras, or bracelets; and the young mother brings in her own baby girl,--a little darling just able to walk. She has extraordinary eyes;--the mother's eyes magnified (the father's are small and fierce). I bargain for the single pair of thin rings on her little wrists;--while the smith is taking them off, the child keeps her wonderful gaze fixed on my face. Then I observe that the peculiarity of the eye is the size of the iris rather than the size of the ball. These eyes are not soft like the mother's, after all; they are ungentle, beautiful as they are; they have the dark and splendid flame of the eyes of a great bird--a bird of prey.

... She will grow up, this little maid, into a slender, graceful woman, very beautiful, no doubt; perhaps a little dangerous. She will marry, of course: probably she is betrothed even now, according to Indian custom,--pledged to some brown boy, the son of a friend. It will not be so many years before the day of their noisy wedding: girls shoot up under this sun with as swift a growth as those broad-leaved beautiful shapes which fill the open door-way with quivering emerald. And she will know the witchcraft of those eyes, will feel the temptation to use them,--perhaps to smile one of those smiles which have power over life and death.

[Illustration: COOLIE SERVANT.]

And then the old coolie story! One day, in the yellowing cane-fields, among the swarm of veiled and turbaned workers, a word is overheard, a side glance intercepted;--there is the swirling flash of a cutlass blade; a shrieking gathering of women about a headless corpse in the sun; and passing cityward, between armed and helmeted men, the vision of an Indian prisoner, blood-crimsoned, walking very steadily, very erect, with the solemnity of a judge, the dry bright gaze of an idol....

XXXI.

... We steam very slowly into the harbor of St. George, Grenada, in dead silence. No cannon-signal allowed here.... Some one suggests that the violence of the echoes in this harbor renders the firing of cannon dangerous; somebody else says the town is in

so ruinous a condition that the report of a gun would shake it down.

... There are heavy damp smells in the warm air as of mould, or of wet clay freshly upturned.

This harbor is a deep clear basin, surrounded and shadowed by immense volcanic hills, all green. The opening by which we entered is cut off from sight by a promontory, and hill shapes beyond the promontory;--we seem to be in the innermost ring of a double crater. There is a continuous shimmering and plashing of leaping fish in the shadow of the loftiest height, which reaches half across the water.

As it climbs up the base of the huge hill at a precipitous angle, the city can be seen from the steamer's deck almost as in a bird's-eye view. A senescent city; mostly antiquated Spanish architecture,--ponderous archways and earthquake-proof walls. The yellow buildings fronting us beyond the wharf seem half decayed; they are strangely streaked with green, look as if they had been long under water. We row ashore, land in a crowd of lazy-looking, silent blacks.

... What a quaint, dawdling, sleepy place it is ! All these narrow streets are falling into ruin; everywhere the same green stains upon the walls, as of slime left by a flood; everywhere disjointed brickwork, crumbling roofs, pungent odors of mould. Yet this Spanish architecture was built to endure; those yellow, blue, or green walls were constructed with the solidity of fortress-work; the very stairs are stone; the balustrades and the railings were made of good wrought iron. In a Northern clime such edifices would resist the wear and tear of five hundred years. But here the powers of disintegration are extraordinary, and the very air would seem to have the devouring force of an acid. All surfaces and angles are yielding to the attacks of time, weather, and microscopic organisms; paint peels, stucco falls, tiles tumble, stones slip out of place, and in every chink tiny green things nestle, propagating themselves through the jointures and dislocating the masonry. There is an appalling mouldiness, an exaggerated mossiness--the mystery and the melancholy of a city deserted. Old warehouses without signs, huge and void, are opened regularly every day for so many hours; yet the business of the aged merchants within seems to be a problem;--you might fancy those gray men were always waiting for ships that sailed away a generation ago, and will never return. You see no customers entering the stores, but only a black mendicant from time to time. And high above all this, overlooking streets too steep for any vehicle, slope the red walls of the mouldering fort, patched with the viridescence of ruin.

[Illustration: COOLIE MERCHANT.]

By a road leading up beyond the city, you reach the cemetery. The staggering iron gates by which you enter it are almost rusted from their hinges, and the low wall enclosing it is nearly all verdant. Within, you see a wilderness of strange weeds, vines, creepers, fantastic shrubs run mad, with a few palms mounting above the green confusion;--only here and there a gleam of slabs

with inscriptions half erased. Such as you can read are epitaphs of seamen, dating back to the years 1800, 1802, 1812. Over these lizards are running; undulations in the weeds warn you to beware of snakes; toads leap away as you proceed; and you observe everywhere crickets perched--grass-colored creatures with two ruby specks for eyes. They make a sound shrill as the scream of machinery beveling marble. At the farther end of the cemetery is a heavy ruin that would seem to have once been part of a church: it is so covered with creeping weeds now that you only distinguish the masonry on close approach, and high trees are growing within it. There is something in tropical ruin peculiarly and terribly impressive: this luxuriant, evergreen, ever-splendid Nature consumes the results of human endeavor so swiftly, buries memories so profoundly, distorts the labors of generations so grotesquely, that one feels here, as nowhere else, how ephemeral man is, how intense and how tireless the effort necessary to preserve his frail creations even a little while from the vast unconscious forces antagonistic to all stability, to all factitious equilibrium.

... A gloomy road winds high around one cliff overlooking the hollow of the bay, Following it, you pass under extraordinarily dark shadows of foliage, and over a blackish soil strewn with pretty bright green fruit that has fallen from above. Do not touch them even with the tip of your finger! Those are manchineel apples; with their milky juice the old Caribs were wont to poison the barbs of their parrot-feathered arrows. Over the mould, swarming among the venomous fruit, innumerable crabs make a sound almost like the murmuring of water. Some are very large, with prodigious stalked eyes, and claws white as ivory, and a red cuirass; others, very small and very swift in their movements, are raspberry-colored; others, again, are apple-green, with queer mottlings of black and white. There is an unpleasant odor of decay in the air--vegetable decay.

Emerging from the shadow of the manchineel-trees, you may follow the road up, up, up, under beetling cliffs of plutonian rock that seem about to topple down upon the path-way. The rock is naked and black near the road; higher, it is veiled by a heavy green drapery of lianas, curling creepers, unfamiliar vines. All around you are sounds of crawling, dull echoes of dropping; the thick growths far up waver in the breathless air as if something were moving sinuously through them. And always the odor of humid decomposition. Farther on, the road looks wilder, sloping between black rocks, through strange vaultings of foliage and night-black shadows. Its lonesomeness oppresses; one returns without regret, by rusting gate-ways and tottering walls, back to the old West Indian city rotting in the sun.

... Yet Grenada, despite the dilapidation of her capital and the seeming desolation of its environs, is not the least prosperous of the Antilles. Other islands have been less fortunate: the era of depression has almost passed for Grenada; through the rapid development of her secondary cultures--coffee and cocoa--she hopes with good reason to repair some of the vast losses involved by the decay of the sugar industry.

Still, in this silence of mouldering streets, this melancholy of abandoned dwellings, this invasion of vegetation, there is a

suggestion of what any West Indian port might become when the resources of the island had been exhausted, and its commerce ruined. After all persons of means and energy enough to seek other fields of industry and enterprise had taken their departure, and the plantations had been abandoned, and the warehouses closed up forever, and the voiceless wharves left to rot down into the green water, Nature would soon so veil the place as to obliterate every outward visible sign of the past. In scarcely more than a generation from the time that the last merchant steamer had taken her departure some traveller might look for the once populous and busy mart in vain: vegetation would have devoured it.

... In the mixed English and creole speech of the black population one can discern evidence of a linguistic transition. The original French patois is being rapidly forgotten or transformed irrecognizably.

Now, in almost every island the negro idiom is different. So often have some of the Antilles changed owners, moreover, that in them the negro has never been able to form a true patois. He had scarcely acquired some idea of the language of his first masters, when other rulers and another tongue were thrust upon him,--and this may have occurred three or four times! The result is a totally incoherent agglomeration of speech-forms--a baragouin fantastic and unintelligible beyond the power of anyone to imagine who has not heard it....

XXXII.

... A beautiful fantastic shape floats to us through the morning light; first cloudy gold like the horizon, then pearly gray, then varying blue, with growing green lights;--Saint Lucia. Most strangely formed of all this volcanic family;--everywhere mountings sharp as broken crystals. Far off the Pitons--twin peaks of the high coast-show softer contours, like two black breasts pointing against the sky....

... As we enter the harbor of Castries, the lines of the land seem no less exquisitely odd, in spite of their rich verdure, than when viewed afar off;--they have a particular pitch of angle.... Other of these islands show more or less family resemblance;--you might readily mistake one silhouette for another as seen at a distance, even after several West Indian journeys. But Saint Lucia at once impresses you by its eccentricity.

[Illustration: CHURCH STREET, ST. GEORGE, GRENADA.]

Castries, drowsing under palm leaves at the edge of its curving harbor,--perhaps an ancient crater,--seems more of a village than a town: streets of low cottages and little tropic gardens. It has a handsome half-breed population: the old French colonial manners have been less changed here by English influence than in Saint Kitt's and elsewhere;--the creole patois is still spoken, though the costumes have changed.... A more beautiful

situation could scarcely be imagined,--even in this tropic world. In the massing of green heights about the little town are gaps showing groves of palm beyond; but the peak summits catch the clouds. Behind us the harbor mouth seems spanned by steel-blue bars: these are lines of currents. Away, on either hand, volcanic hills are billowing to vapory distance; and in their nearer hollows are beautiful deepening of color: ponded shades of diaphanous blue or purplish tone.... I first remarked this extraordinary coloring of shadows in Martinique, where it exists to a degree that tempts one to believe the island has a special atmosphere of its own.... A friend tells me the phenomenon is probably due to inorganic substances floating in the air--each substance in diffusion having its own index of refraction. Substances so held in suspension by vapors would vary according to the nature of soil in different islands, and might thus produce special local effects of atmospheric tinting.

... We remain but half an hour at Castries; then steam along the coast to take in freight at another port. Always the same delicious color-effects as we proceed, with new and surprising visions of hills. The near slopes descending to the sea are a radiant green, with streaks and specklings of darker verdure;--the farther-rising hills faint blue, with green saliciencies catching the sun;--and beyond these are upheavals of luminous gray--pearl-gray--sharpened in the silver glow of the horizon.... The general impression of the whole landscape is one of motion suddenly petrified,--of an earthquake surging and tossing suddenly arrested and fixed: a raging of cones and peaks and monstrous truncated shapes.... We approach the Pitons.

Seen afar off, they first appeared twin mammiform peaks,--naked and dark against the sky; but now they begin to brighten a little and show color,--also to change form. They take a lilaceous hue, broken by gray and green lights; and as we draw yet nearer they prove dissimilar both in shape and tint.... Now they separate before us, throwing long pyramidal shadows across the steamer's path. Then, as they open to our coming, between them a sea bay is revealed--a very lovely curving bay, bounded by hollow cliffs of fiery green. At either side of the gap the Pitons rise like monster pylones. And a charming little settlement, a beautiful sugar-plantation, is nestling there between them, on the very edge of the bay.

Out of a bright sea of verdure, speckled with oases of darker foliage, these Pitons from the land side tower in sombre vegetation. Very high up, on the nearer one, amid the wooded slopes, you can see houses perched; and there are bright breaks in the color there--tiny mountain pastures that look like patches of green silk velvet.

... We pass the Pitons, and enter another little craterine harbor, to cast anchor before the village of Choi-seul. It lies on a ledge above the beach and under high hills: we land through a surf, running the boat high up on soft yellowish sand. A delicious saline scent of sea-weed.

It is disappointing, the village: it is merely one cross of brief streets, lined with blackening wooden dwellings there are no buildings worth looking at, except the queer old French church, steep-roofed and bristling with points that look like

extinguishers. Over broad reaches of lava rock a shallow river flows by the village to the sea, gurgling under shadows of tamarind foliage. It passes beside the market-place--a market-place without stalls, benches, sheds, or pavements: meats, fruits, and vegetables are simply fastened to the trees. Women are washing and naked children bathing in the stream; they are bronze-skinned, a fine dark color with a faint tint of red in it.... There is little else to look at: steep wooded hills cut off the view towards the interior.

But over the verge of the sea there is something strange growing visible, looming up like a beautiful yellow cloud. It is an island, so lofty, so luminous, so phantom-like, that it seems a vision of the Island of the Seven Cities. It is only the form of St. Vincent, bathed in vapory gold by the sun.

... Evening at La Soufrière: still another semicircular bay in a hollow of green hills. Glens hold bluish shadows ows. The color of the heights is very tender; but there are long streaks and patches of dark green, marking watercourses and very abrupt surfaces. From the western side immense shadows are pitched brokenly across the valley and over half the roofs of the palmy town. There is a little river flowing down to the bay on the left; and west of it a walled cemetery is visible, out of which one monumental palm rises to a sublime height: its crest still bathes in the sun, above the invading shadow. Night approaches; the shade of the hills inundates all the landscape, rises even over the palm-crest. Then, black-towering into the golden glow of sunset, the land loses all its color, all its charm; forms of frondage, variations of tint, become invisible. Saint Lucia is only a monstrous silhouette; all its billowing hills, its volcanic bays, its amphitheatrical valleys, turn black as ebony.

And you behold before you a geological dream, a vision of the primeval sea: the apparition of the land as first brought forth, all peak-tossed and fissured and naked and grim, in the tremendous birth of an archipelago.

XXXIII.

Homeward bound.

Again the enormous poem of azure and emerald unrolls before us, but in order inverse; again is the island--Litany of the Saints repeated for us, but now backward. All the bright familiar harbors once more open to receive us;--each lovely Shape floats to us again, first golden yellow, then vapory gray, then ghostly blue, but always sharply radiant at last, symmetrically exquisite, as if chiselled out of amethyst and emerald and sapphire. We review the same wondrous wrinkling of volcanic hills, the cities that sit in extinct craters, the woods that tower to heaven, the peaks perpetually wearing that luminous cloud which seems the breathing of each island-life,--its vital manifestation....

[Illustration: CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA.]

... Only now do the long succession of exotic and unfamiliar impressions received begin to group and blend, to form homogeneous results,--general ideas or convictions. Strongest among these is the belief that the white race is disappearing from these islands, acquired and held at so vast a cost of blood and treasure. Reasons almost beyond enumeration have been advanced--economical, climatic, ethnical, political--all of which contain truth, yet no single one of which can wholly explain the fact. Already the white West Indian populations are diminishing at a rate that almost staggers credibility. In the island paradise of Martinique in 1848 there were 12,000 whites; now, against more than 160,000 blacks and half-breeds, there are perhaps 5000 whites left to maintain the ethnic struggle, and the number of these latter is annually growing less. Many of the British islands have been almost deserted by their former cultivators: St. Vincent is becoming desolate: Tobago is a ruin; St. Martin lies half abandoned; St. Christopher is crumbling; Grenada has lost more than half her whites; St. Thomas, once the most prosperous, the most active, the most cosmopolitan of West Indian ports, is in full decadence. And while the white element is disappearing, the dark races are multiplying as never before;--the increase of the negro and half-breed populations has been everywhere one of the startling results of emancipation. The general belief among the creole whites of the Lesser Antilles would seem to confirm the old prediction that the slave races of the past must become the masters of the future. Here and there the struggle may be greatly prolonged, but everywhere the ultimate result must be the same, unless the present conditions of commerce and production become marvellously changed. The exterminated Indian peoples of the Antilles have already been replaced by populations equally fitted to cope with the forces of the nature about them,--that splendid and terrible Nature of the tropics which consumes the energies of the races of the North, which devours all that has been accomplished by their heroism or their crimes,--effacing their cities, rejecting their civilization. To those peoples physiologically in harmony with this Nature belong all the chances of victory in the contest--already begun--for racial supremacy.

But with the disappearance of the white populations the ethnical problem would be still unsettled. Between the black and mixed peoples prevail hatreds more enduring and more intense than any race prejudices between whites and freedmen in the past;--a new struggle for supremacy could not fail to begin, with the perpetual augmentation of numbers, the ever-increasing

competition for existence. And the true black element, more numerically powerful, more fertile, more cunning, better adapted to pyrogenic climate and tropical environment, would surely win. All these mixed races, all these beautiful fruit-colored populations, seem doomed to extinction: the future tendency must be to universal blackness, if existing conditions continue--perhaps to universal savagery. Everywhere the sins of the past have borne the same fruit, have furnished the colonies with social enigmas that mock the wisdom of legislators, a dragon-crop of problems that no modern political science has yet proved competent to deal with. Can it even be hoped that future sociologists will be able to answer them, after Nature--who never

forgives--shall have exacted the utmost possible retribution for all the crimes and follies of three hundred years?

Part Two - Martinique Sketches.

CHAPTER I.
LES PORTEUSES.

I.

When you find yourself for the first time, upon some unshadowed day, in the delightful West Indian city of St. Pierre,--supposing that you own the sense of poetry, the recollections of a student,--there is apt to steal upon your fancy an impression of having seen it all before, ever so long ago,--you cannot tell where. The sensation of some happy dream you cannot wholly recall might be compared to this feeling. In the simplicity and solidity of the quaint architecture,--in the eccentricity of bright narrow streets, all aglow with warm coloring,--in the tints of roof and wall, antiquated by streakings and patchings of mould greens and grays,--in the startling absence of window-sashes, glass, gas lamps, and chimneys,--in the blossom-tenderness of the blue heaven, the splendor of tropic light, and the warmth of the tropic wind,--you find less the impression of a scene of to-day than the sensation of something that was and is not. Slowly this feeling strengthens with your pleasure in the colorific radiance of costume,--the semi-nudity of passing figures,--the puissant shapeliness of torsos ruddily swart like statue metal,--the rounded outline of limbs yellow as tropic fruit,--the grace of attitudes,--the unconscious harmony of groupings,--the gathering and folding and falling of light robes that oscillate with swaying of free hips,--the sculptural symmetry of unshod feet. You look up and down the lemon-tinted streets, --down to the dazzling azure brightness of meeting sky and sea; up to the perpetual verdure of mountain woods--wondering at the mellowness of tones, the sharpness of lines in the light, the diaphaneity of colored shadows; always asking memory: "When?... where did I see all this... long ago?"....

Then, perhaps, your gaze is suddenly riveted by the vast and solemn beauty of the verdant violet-shaded mass of the dead Volcano,--high-towering above the town, visible from all its ways, and umbraged, maybe, with thinnest curlings of cloud,--like spectres of its ancient smoking to heaven. And all at once the secret of your dream is revealed, with the rising of many a luminous memory,--dreams of

the Idyllists, flowers of old Sicilian song, fancies limned upon Pompeiian walls. For a moment the illusion is delicious: you comprehend as never before the charm of a vanished world,--the antique life, the story of terra-cottas and graven stones and gracious things exhumed: even the sun is not of to-day, but of twenty centuries gone;--thus, and under such a light, walked the women of the elder world. You know the fancy absurd;--that the power of the orb has visibly abated nothing in all the eras of man,--that millions are the ages of his almighty glory; but for one instant of reverie he seemeth larger,--even that sun impossible who colareth the words, colareth the works of artist-lovers of the past, with the gold light of dreams.

Too soon the hallucination is broken by modern sounds, dissipated by modern sights,--rough trolling of sailors descending to their boats,--the heavy boom of a packet's signal-gun,--the passing of an American buggy. Instantly you become aware that the melodious tongue spoken by the passing throng is neither Hellenic nor Roman: only the beautiful childish speech of French slaves.

II.

But what slaves were the fathers of this free generation? Your anthropologists, your ethnologists, seem at fault here: the African traits have become transformed; the African characteristics have been so modified within little more than two hundred years--by inter-blending of blood, by habit, by soil and sun and all those natural powers which shape the mould of races,--that you may look in vain for verification of ethnological assertions.... No: the heel does not protrude;--the foot is not flat, but finely arched;--the extremities are not large;--all the limbs taper, all the muscles are developed; and prognathism has become so rare that months of research may not yield a single striking case of it.... No: this is a special race, peculiar to the island as are the shapes of its peaks,--a mountain race; and mountain races are comely.... Compare it with the population of black Barbadoes, where the apish grossness of African coast types has been perpetuated unchanged;--and the contrast may well astonish!...

III.

The erect carriage and steady swift walk of the women who bear burdens is especially likely to impress the artistic observer: it is the sight of such passers-by which gives, above all, the antique tone and color to his first sensations;--and the larger part of the female population of mixed race are practised carriers. Nearly all the transportation of light merchandise, as well as of meats, fruits, vegetables, and food stuffs,--to and from the interior,--is effected upon human heads. At some of the ports the regular local packets are loaded and unloaded by women and girls,--able to carry any trunk or box to its destination.

At Fort-de-France the great steamers of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, are entirely coaled by women, who carry the coal on their heads, singing as they come and go in processions of hundreds; and the work is done with incredible rapidity. Now, the creole _porteuse_, or female carrier, is certainly one of the most remarkable physical types in the world; and whatever artistic enthusiasm her graceful port, lithe walk, or half-savage beauty may inspire you with, you can form no idea, if a total stranger, what a really wonderful being she is.... Let me tell you something about that highest type of professional female carrier, which is to the _charbonnière_, or coaling-girl, what the thorough-bred racer is to the draught-horse,--the type of porteuse selected for swiftness and endurance to distribute goods in the interior parishes, or to sell on commission at long distances. To the same class naturally belong those country carriers able to act as porteuses of plantation produce, fruits, or vegetables,--between the nearer ports and their own interior parishes.... Those who believe that great physical endurance and physical energy cannot exist in the tropics do not know the creole carrier-girl.

IV.

At a very early age--perhaps at five years--she learns to carry small articles upon her head,--a bowl of rice,--a dobanne, or red earthen decanter, full of water,--even an orange on a plate; and before long she is able to balance these perfectly without using her hands to steady them. (I have often seen children actually run with cans of water upon their heads, and never spill a drop.) At nine or ten she is able to carry thus a tolerably heavy basket, or a _trait_ (a wooden tray with deep outward sloping sides) containing a weight of from twenty to thirty pounds; and is able to accompany her mother, sister, or cousin on long peddling journeys,--walking barefoot twelve and fifteen miles a day. At sixteen or seventeen she is a tall robust girl,--lithe, vigorous, tough,--all of tendon and hard flesh;--she carries a tray or a basket of the largest size, and a burden of one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty pounds weight;--she can now earn about thirty francs (about six dollars) a month, _by walking fifty miles a day_, as an itinerant seller. Among her class there are figures to make you dream of Atalanta;--and all, whether ugly or attractive as to feature, are finely shapen as to body and limb. Brought into existence by extraordinary necessities of environment, the type is a peculiarly local one,--a type of human thorough-bred representing the true secret of grace: economy of force. There are no corpulent porteuses for the long interior routes; all are built lightly and firmly as those racers. There are no old porteuses; --to do the work even at forty signifies a constitution of astounding solidity. After the full force of youth and health is spent, the poor carrier must seek lighter labor;--she can no longer compete with the girls. For in this calling the young body is taxed to its utmost capacity of strength, endurance, and rapid motion.

As a general rule, the weight is such that no well-freighted porteuse can, unassisted, either "load" or "unload" (_châgé_ or _déchâgé_, in creole phrase); the effort to do so would burst a

blood-vessel, wrench a nerve, rupture a muscle. She cannot even sit down under her burden without risk of breaking her neck: absolute perfection of the balance is necessary for self-preservation. A case came under my own observation of a woman rupturing a muscle in her arm through careless haste in the mere act of aiding another to unload.

And no one not a brute will ever refuse to aid a woman to lift or to relieve herself of her burden;--you may see the wealthiest merchant, the proudest planter, gladly do it;--the meanness of refusing, or of making any conditions for the performance of this little kindness has only been imagined in those strange Stories of Devils wherewith the oral and uncollected literature of the creole abounds. [3]

V.

Preparing for her journey, the young *màchane* (*marchande*) puts on the poorest and briefest chemise in her possession, and the most worn of her light calico robes. These are all she wears. The robe is drawn upward and forward, so as to reach a little below the knee, and is confined thus by a waist-string, or a long kerchief bound tightly round the loins. Instead of a Madras or painted turban-kerchief, she binds a plain *mouchoir* neatly and closely about her head; and if her hair be long, it is combed back and gathered into a loop behind. Then, with a second *mouchoir* of coarser quality she makes a pad, or, as she calls it, *tòche*, by winding the kerchief round her fingers as you would coil up a piece of string;--and the soft mass, flattened with a patting of the hand, is placed upon her head, over the coiffure. On this the great loaded trait is poised.

[Illustration: 'TI MARIE (On the Route from St. Pierre to Basse-Pointe.)]

She wears no shoes! To wear shoes and do her work swiftly and well in such a land of mountains would be impossible. She must climb thousands and descend thousands of feet every day,--march up and down slopes so steep that the horses of the country all break down after a few years of similar journeying. The girl invariably outlasts the horse,--though carrying an equal weight. Shoes, unless extraordinarily well made, would shift place a little with every change from ascent to descent, or the reverse, during the march,--would yield and loosen with the ever-varying strain,--would compress the toes,--produce corns, bunions, raw places by rubbing, and soon cripple the *porteuse*. Remember, she has to walk perhaps fifty miles between dawn and dark, under a sun to which a single hour's exposure, without the protection of an umbrella, is perilous to any European or American--the terrible sun of the tropics! Sandals are the only conceivable foot-gear suited to such a calling as hers; but she needs no sandals: the soles of her feet are toughened so as to feel no asperities, and present to sharp pebbles a surface at once yielding and resisting, like a cushion of solid caoutchouc.

Besides her load, she carries only a canvas purse tied to her

girdle on the right side, and on the left a very small bottle of rum, or white _tafia_,--usually the latter, because it is so cheap.... For she may not always find the Gouyave Water to drink,--the cold clear pure stream conveyed to the fountains of St. Pierre from the highest mountains by a beautiful and marvellous plan of hydraulic engineering: she will have to drink betimes the common spring-water of the bamboo-fountains on the remoter high-roads; and this may cause dysentery if swallowed without a spoonful of spirits. Therefore she never travels without a little liquor.

VI.

... So!--She is ready: "_Châgé moin, souplè, chè!_" She bends to lift the end of the heavy trait: some one takes the other,--_yon!-dé!--tous!_--it is on her head. Perhaps she winces an instant;--the weight is not perfectly balanced; she settles it with her hands,--gets it in the exact place. Then, all steady,--lithe, light, half naked,--away she moves with a long springy step. So even her walk that the burden never sways; yet so rapid her motion that however good a walker you may fancy yourself to be you will tire out after a sustained effort of fifteen minutes to follow her uphill. Fifteen minutes;--and she can keep up that pace without slackening--save for a minute to eat and drink at mid-day,--for at least twelve hours and fifty-six minutes, the extreme length of a West Indian day. She starts before dawn; tries to reach her resting-place by sunset: after dark, like all her people, she is afraid of meeting _zombis_.

Let me give you some idea of her average speed under an average weight of one hundred and twenty-five pounds,--estimates based partly upon my own observations, partly upon the declarations of the trustworthy merchants who employ her, and partly on the assertion of habitants of the burghs or cities named--all of which statements perfectly agree. From St. Pierre to Basse-Pointe, by the national road, the distance is a trifle less than twenty-seven kilometres and three-quarters. She makes the transit easily in three hours and a half; and returns in the afternoon, after an absence of scarcely more than eight hours. From St. Pierre to Morne Rouge--two thousand feet up in the mountains (an ascent so abrupt that no one able to pay carriage-fare dreams of attempting to walk it)--the distance is seven kilometres and three-quarters. She makes it in little more than an hour. But this represents only the beginning of her journey. She passes on to Grande Anse, twenty-one and three-quarter kilometres away. But she does not rest there: she returns at the same pace, and reaches St. Pierre before dark. From St. Pierre to Gros-Morne the distance to be twice traversed by her is more than thirty-two kilometres. A journey of sixty-four kilometres,--daily, perhaps,--forty miles! And there are many m^àchannes who make yet longer trips,--trips of three or four days' duration;--these rest at villages upon their route.

VII.

Such travel in such a country would be impossible but for the excellent national roads,--limestone highways, solid, broad, faultlessly graded,--that wind from town to town, from hamlet to hamlet, over mountains, over ravines; ascending by zigzags to heights of twenty-five hundred feet; traversing the primeval forests of the interior; now skirting the dizziest precipices, now descending into the loveliest valleys. There are thirty-one of these magnificent routes, with a total length of 488,052 metres (more than 303 miles), whereof the construction required engineering talent of the highest order,--the building of bridges beyond counting, and devices the most ingenious to provide against dangers of storms, floods, and land-slips. Most have drinking-fountains along their course at almost regular intervals,--generally made by the negroes, who have a simple but excellent plan for turning the water of a spring through bamboo pipes to the road-way. Each road is also furnished with mile-stones, or rather kilometre-stones; and the drainage is perfect enough to assure of the highway becoming dry within fifteen minutes after the heaviest rain, so long as the surface is maintained in tolerably good condition. Well-kept embankments of earth (usually covered with a rich growth of mosses, vines, and ferns), or even solid walls of masonry, line the side that overhangs a dangerous depth. And all these highways pass through landscapes of amazing beauty,--visions of mountains so many-tinted and so singular of outline that they would almost seem to have been created for the express purpose of compelling astonishment. This tropic Nature appears to call into being nothing ordinary: the shapes which she evokes are always either gracious or odd,--and her eccentricities, her extravagances, have a fantastic charm, a grotesqueness as of artistic whim. Even where the landscape-view is cut off by high woods the forms of ancient trees--the infinite interwreathing of vine growths all on fire with violence of blossom-color,--the enormous green outbursts of balisiers, with leaves ten to thirteen feet long,--the columnar solemnity of great palmistes,--the pliant quivering exquisiteness of bamboo,--the furious splendor of roses run mad--more than atone for the loss of the horizon. Sometimes you approach a steep covered with a growth of what, at first glance, looks precisely like fine green fur: it is a first-growth of young bamboo. Or you see a hill-side covered with huge green feathers, all shelving down and overlapping as in the tail of some unutterable bird: these are baby ferns. And where the road leaps some deep ravine with a double or triple bridge of white stone, note well what delicious shapes spring up into sunshine from the black profundity on either hand! Palmiform you might hastily term them,--but no palm was ever so gracile; no palm ever bore so dainty a head of green plumes light as lace! These likewise are ferns (rare survivors, maybe, of that period of monstrous vegetation which preceded the apparition of man), beautiful tree-ferns, whose every young plume, unrolling in a spiral from the bud, at first assumes the shape of a crozier,--a crozier of emerald! Therefore are some of this species called "archbishop-trees," no doubt.... But one might write for a hundred years of the sights to be seen upon such a mountain road.

In every season, in almost every weather, the porteuse makes her journey,--never heeding rain;--her goods being protected by double and triple water-proof coverings well bound down over her trait. Yet these tropical rains, coming suddenly with a cold wind upon her heated and almost naked body, are to be feared. To any European or un-acclimated white such a wetting, while the pores are all open during a profuse perspiration, would probably prove fatal: even for white natives the result is always a serious and protracted illness. But the porteuse seldom suffers in consequences: she seems proof against fevers, rheumatisms, and ordinary colds. When she does break down, however, the malady is a frightful one,--a pneumonia that carries off the victim within forty-eight hours. Happily, among her class, these fatalities are very rare.

And scarcely less rare than such sudden deaths are instances of failure to appear on time. In one case, the employer, a St. Pierre shopkeeper, on finding his *_marchande_* more than an hour late, felt so certain something very extraordinary must have happened that he sent out messengers in all directions to make inquiries. It was found that the woman had become a mother when only half-way upon her journey home. The child lived and thrived;--she is now a pretty chocolate-colored girl of eight, who follows her mother every day from their mountain *ajoupa* down to the city, and back again,--bearing a little trait upon her head.

Murder for purposes of robbery is not an unknown crime in Martinique; but I am told the porteuses are never molested. And yet some of these girls carry merchandise to the value of hundreds of francs; and all carry money,--the money received for goods sold, often a considerable sum. This immunity may be partly owing to the fact that they travel during the greater part of the year only by day,--and usually in company. A very pretty girl is seldom suffered to journey unprotected: she has either a male escort or several experienced and powerful women with her. In the cacao season--when carriers start from Grande Anse as early as two o'clock in the morning, so as to reach St. Pierre by dawn--they travel in strong companies of twenty or twenty-five, singing on the way. As a general rule the younger girls at all times go two together,--keeping step perfectly as a pair of blooded fillies; only the veterans, or women selected for special work by reason of extraordinary physical capabilities, go alone. To the latter class belong certain girls employed by the great bakeries of Fort-de-France and St. Pierre: these are veritable caryatides. They are probably the heaviest-laden of all, carrying baskets of astounding size far up into the mountains before daylight, so as to furnish country families with fresh bread at an early hour; and for this labor they receive about four dollars (twenty francs) a month and one loaf of bread per diem.... While stopping at a friend's house among the hills, some two miles from Fort-de-France, I saw the local bread-carrier halt before our porch one morning, and a finer type of the race it would be difficult for a sculptor to imagine. Six feet tall,--strength and grace united throughout her whole figure from neck to heel; with that clear black skin which is beautiful to any but ignorant or prejudiced eyes; and the smooth, pleasing, solemn features of a

sphinx,--she looked to me, as she towered there in the gold light, a symbolic statue of Africa. Seeing me smoking one of those long thin Martinique cigars called *_bouts_*, she begged one; and, not happening to have another, I gave her the price of a bunch of twenty,--ten sous. She took it without a smile, and went her way. About an hour and a half later she came back and asked for me,--to present me with the finest and largest mango I had ever seen, a monster mango. She said she wanted to see me eat it, and sat down on the ground to look on. While eating it, I learned that she had walked a whole mile out of her way under that sky of fire, just to bring her little gift of gratitude.

[Illustration: FORT-DE-FRANCE, MARTINIQUE--(FORMERLY FORT ROYAL.)]

IX.

Forty to fifty miles a day, always under a weight of more than a hundred pounds,--for when the trait has been emptied she puts in stones for ballast;--carrying her employer's merchandise and money over the mountain ain ranges, beyond the peaks, across the ravines, through the tropical forest, sometimes through by-ways haunted by the *fer-de-lance*,--and this in summer or winter, the deason of rains or the season of heat, the time of fevers or the time of hurricanes, at a franc a day!... How does she live upon it?

There are twenty sous to the franc. The girl leaves St. Pierre with her load at early morning. At the second village, Morne Rouge, she halts to buy one, two, or three biscuits at a sou apiece; and reaching Ajoupa-Bouillon later in the forenoon, she may buy another biscuit or two. Altogether she may be expected to eat five Sous of biscuit or bread before reaching Grande Anse, where she probably has a meal waiting for her. This ought to cost her ten sous,--especially if there be meat in her ragoût: which represents a total expense of fifteen sous for eatables. Then there is the additional cost of the cheap liquor, which she must mix with her drinking-water, as it would be more than dangerous to swallow pure cold water in her heated condition; two or three sous more. This almost makes the franc. But such a hasty and really erroneous estimate does not include expenses of lodging and clothing;--she may sleep on the bare floor sometimes, and twenty francs a year may keep her in clothes; but she must rent the floor and pay for the clothes out of that franc. As a matter of fact she not only does all this upon her twenty sous a day, but can even economize something which will enable her, when her youth and force decline, to start in business for herself. And her economy will not seem so wonderful when I assure you that thousands of men here--huge men muscled like bulls and lions--live upon an average expenditure of five sous a day. One sou of bread, two sous of manioc flour, one sou of dried codfish, one sou of tafia: such is their meal.

There are women carriers who earn more than a franc a day,--women with a particular talent for selling, who are paid on commission--from ten to fifteen per cent. These eventually make themselves independent

in many instances;--they continue to sell and bargain in person, but hire a young girl to carry the goods.

X.

... " _Ou 'lè màchane!_" rings out a rich alto, resonant as the tone of a gong, from behind the balisiers that shut in our garden. There are two of them--no, three--Maiyotte, Chéchelle, and Rina. Maiyotte and Chéchelle have just arrived from St. Pierre;--Rina come from Gros-Morne with fruits and vegetables. Suppose we call them all in, and see what they have got. Maiyotte and Chéchelle sell on commission; Rina sells for her mother, who has a little garden at Gros-Morne.

... " _Bonjou', Maiyotte;--bonjou', Chéchelle! coument ou kallé, Rina, chè!_"... Throw open the folding-doors to let the great trays pass.... Now all three are unloaded by old Théréza and by young Adou;--all the packs are on the floor, and the water-proof wrappings are being un-corded, while Ah-Manmzell, the adopted child, brings the rum and water for the tall walkers. ... "Oh, what a medley, Maiyotte!"... Inkstands and wooden cows; purses and paper dogs and cats; dolls and cosmetics; pins and needles and soap and tooth-brushes; candied fruits and smoking-caps; _pelotes_ of thread, and tapes, and ribbons, and laces, and Madeira wine; cuffs, and collars, and dancing-shoes, and tobacco _sachets_.... But what is in that little flat bundle? Presents for your _guêpe_, if you have one.... _Fesis-Maïa!_--the pretty foulards! Azure and yellow in checkerings; orange and crimson in stripes; rose and scarlet in plaidings; and bronze tints, and beetle-tints of black and green.

"Chéchelle, what a _bloucoutoum_ if you should ever let that tray fall--_aïe yaïe yaïe!_" Here is a whole shop of crockeries and porcelains;--plates, dishes, cups,--earthen-ware _canaris_ and _dobannes_, and gift-mugs and cups bearing creole girls' names,--all names that end in _ine_. "Micheline," "Honorine," "Prospérine" [you will never sell that, Chéchelle: there is not a Prospérine this side of St. Pierre], "Azaline," "Leontine," "Zéphyrine," "Albertine," "Chrysaline," "Florine," "Coralline," "Alexandrine." ...And knives and forks, and cheap spoons, and tin coffee-pots, and tin rattles for babies, and tin flutes for horrid little boys,--and pencils and note-paper and envelopes!...

... "Oh, Rina, what superb oranges!--fully twelve inches round-!

... and these, which look something like our mandarins, what do you call them?" "Zorange-macaque!" (monkey-oranges). And here are avocados--beauties!--guavas of three different kinds,--tropical cherries (which have four seeds instead of one),--tropical raspberries, whereof the entire eatable portion comes off in one elastic piece, lined with something like white silk.... Here are fresh nutmegs: the thick green case splits in equal halves at a touch; and see the beautiful heart within,--deep dark glossy red, all wrapped in a bright net-work of flat blood-colored fibre, spun over it like branching veins.... This big heavy red-and-yellow thing is a _pomme-cythère_: the smooth

cuticle, bitter as gall, covers a sweet juicy pulp, interwoven with something that seems like cotton thread.... Here is a _pomme-cannelle_: inside its scaly covering is the most delicious yellow custard conceivable, with little black seeds floating in it. This larger _corossol_ has almost as delicate an interior, only the custard is white instead of yellow.... Here are _christophines_,--great pear-shaped things, white and green, according to kind, with a peel prickly and knobby as the skin of a horned toad; but they stew exquisitely. And _mélongènes_, or egg-plants; and palmiste-pith, and _chadèques_, and _pommes-d'Haïti_,--and roots that at first sight look all alike, but they are not: there are _camanioc_, and _couscous_, and _choux-caraïbes_, and _zignames_, and various kinds of _patates_ among them. Old Théréza's magic will transform these shapeless muddy things, before evening, into pyramids of smoking gold,--into odorous porridges that will look like messes of molten amber and liquid pearl;--for Rina makes a good sale.

Then Chéchelle manages to dispose of a tin coffee-pot and a big canari.... And Maiyotte makes the best sale of all; for the sight of a funny _biscuit_ doll has made Ah-Manmzell cry and smile so at the same time that I should feel unhappy for the rest of my life if I did not buy it for her. I know I ought to get some change out of that six francs;--and Maiyotte, who is black but comely as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon, seems to be aware of the fact.

Oh, Maiyotte, how plaintive that pretty sphinx face of yours, now turned in profile;--as if you knew you looked beautiful thus,--with the great gold circlets of your ears glittering and swaying as you bend! And why are you so long, so long untying that poor little canvas purse?--fumbling and fingering it?--is it because you want me to think of the weight of that trait and the sixty kilometres you must walk, and the heat, and the dust, and all the disappointments? Ah, you are cunning, Maiyotte! No, I do not want the change!

XI.

... Travelling together, the porteuses often walk in silence for hours at a time;--this is when they feel weary. Sometimes they sing,--most often when approaching their destination;--and when they chat, it is in a key so high-pitched that their voices can be heard to a great distance in this land of echoes and elevations. But she who travels alone is rarely silent: she talks to herself or to inanimate things;--you may hear her talking to the trees, to the flowers,--talking to the high clouds and the far peaks of changing color,--talking to the setting sun!

Over the miles of the morning she sees, perchance, the mighty Piton Gélé, a cone of amethyst in the light; and she talks to it: "_Ou jojoll, oui!--moin ni envie monté assou ou, pou moin ouè bien, bien!_" (Thou art pretty, pretty, aye!--I would I might climb thee, to see far, far off!) By a great grove of palms she passes;--so thickly mustered they are that against the sun their intermingled heads form one unbroken awning of green.

Many rise straight as masts; some bend at beautiful angles, seeming to intercross their long pale single limbs in a fantastic dance; others curve like bows: there is one that undulates from foot to crest, like a monster serpent poised upon its tail. She loves to look at that one--" _joli pié-bois-là!_ --talks to it as she goes by, --bids it good-day.

Or, looking back as she ascends, she sees the huge blue dream of the sea,--the eternal haunter, that ever becomes larger as she mounts the road; and she talks to it: " _Mi lanmé ka gaudé moin!_ " (There is the great sea looking at me!) " _Màché toujou deïé moin, lanmè!_ " (Walk after me, O Sea!)

Or she views the clouds of Pelée, spreading gray from the invisible summit, to shadow against the sun; and she fears the rain, and she talks to it: " _Pas mouillé moin, laplie-à! Quitté moin rivé avant mouillé moin!_ " (Do not wet me, O Rain! Let me get there before thou wettest me!)

Sometimes a dog barks at her, menaces her bare limbs; and she talks to the dog: " _Chien-a, pas mòdé moin, chien--anh! Moin pa fé ou arien, chien, pou ou mòdé moin!_ " (Do not bite me, O Dog! Never did I anything to thee that thou shouldst bite me, O Dog! Do not bite me, dear! Do not bite me, _doudoux_!)

Sometimes she meets a laden sister travelling the opposite way.... " _Coument ou yé, chè?_ " she cries. (How art thou, dear?) And the other makes answer, " _Toutt douce, chè,--et ou?_ " (All sweetly, dear,--and thou?) And each passes on without pausing: they have no time!

... It is perhaps the last human voice she will hear for many a mile. After that only the whisper of the grasses-- _graïe-gras, graïe-gras!_ --and the gossip of the canes-- _chououa, chououa!_ --and the husky speech of the _pois-Angole, ka babillé conm yon vié fenme_ ,--that babbles like an old woman;--and the murmur of the _filao_ -trees, like the murmur of the River of the Washerwomen.

XII.

... Sundown approaches: the light has turned a rich yellow;-- long black shapes lie across the curving road, shadows of balisier and palm, shadows of tamarind and Indian-reed, shadows of ceiba and giant-fern. And the porteuses are coming down through the lights and darkneses of the way from far Grande Anse, to halt a moment in this little village. They are going to sit down on the road-side here, before the house of the baker; and there is his great black workman, Jean-Marie, looking for them from the door-way, waiting to relieve them of their loads.... Jean-Marie is the strongest man in all the Champ-Flore: see what a torso,--as he stands there naked to the waist!... His day's work is done; but he likes to wait for the girls, though he is old now, and has sons as tall as himself. It is a habit: some say that he had a daughter once,--a porteuse like those coming, and used to wait for her thus at that very door-way until one evening that she failed to appear, and never

returned till he carried her home in his arms dead,--stricken by a serpent in some mountain path where there was none to aid.... The roads were not as good then as now.

... Here they come, the girls--yellow, red, black. See the flash of the yellow feet where they touch the light! And what impossible tint the red limbs take in the changing glow!... Finotte, Pauline, Médelle,--all together, as usual,--with Ti-Ciê trotting behind, very tired.... Never mind, Ti-Ciê!--you will outwalk your cousins when you are a few years older,--pretty Ti-Ciê.... Here come Cyrellia and Zabelle, and Fêfê and Dodotte and Fevriette. And behind them are coming the two _chabines_,--golden girls: the twin-sisters who sell silks and threads and foulards; always together, always wearing robes and kerchiefs of similar color,--so that you can never tell which is Lorraine and which Édoualise.

And all smile to see Jean-Marie waiting for them, and to hear his deep kind voice calling, "_Coument ou yé, chère? coument ou kallé?_" ... (How art thou, dear?--how goes it with thee?)

And they mostly make answer, "_Toutt douce, chère,--et ou?_" (All sweetly, dear,--and thou?) But some, over-weary, cry to him, "_Ah! déchâgé moin vite, chère! moin lasse, lasse!_" (Unload me quickly, dear; for I am very, very weary.) Then he takes off their burdens, and fetches bread for them, and says foolish little things to make them laugh. And they are pleased, and laugh, just like children, as they sit right down on the road there to munch their dry bread.

... So often have I watched that scene! ... Let me but close my eyes one moment, and it will come back to me,--through all the thousand miles,--over the graves of the days....

Again I see the mountain road in the yellow glow, banded with umbrages of palm. Again I watch the light feet coming,--now in shadow, now in sun,--soundlessly as falling leaves. Still I can hear the voices crying, "_Ah! déchâgé moin vite, chère! moin lasse!_" --and see the mighty arms outreach to take the burdens away. ... Only, there is a change,--I know not what!... All vapory the road is, and the fronds, and the comely coming feet of the bearers, and even this light of sunset,--sunset that is ever larger and nearer to us than dawn, even as death than birth. And the weird way appeareth a way whose dust is the dust of generations;--and the Shape that waits is never Jean-Marie, but one darker; and stronger;--and these are surely voices of tired souls. I who cry to Thee, thou dear black Giver of the perpetual rest, "_Ah! déchâgé moin vite, chère! moin lasse!_"

CHAPTER II. LA GRANDE ANSE.

I.

In the village of Morne Rouge, I was frequently impressed by the singular beauty of young girls from the north-east coast--all porteuses, who passed almost daily on their way from Grande Anse to St. Pierre and back again--a total trip of thirty-five miles.... I knew they were from Grande Anse, because the village baker, at whose shop they were wont to make brief halts, told me a good deal about them: he knew each one by name. Whenever a remarkably attractive girl appeared, and I would inquire whence she came, the invariable reply (generally preceded by that peculiarly intoned French "Ah!" signifying, "Why, you certainly ought to know!") was "Grand Anse." ..._Ah! c'est de Grande Anse, ça!_ And if any commonplace, uninteresting type showed itself it would be signalled as from somewhere else--Gros-Morne, Capote, Marigot, perhaps,--but never from Grand Anse. The Grande Anse girls were distinguished by their clear yellow or brown skins, lithe light figures and a particular grace in their way of dressing. Their short robes were always of bright and pleasing colors, perfectly contrasting with the ripe fruit-tint of nude limbs and faces: I could discern a partiality for white stuffs with apricot-yellow stripes, for plaidings of blue and violet, and various patterns of pink and mauve. They had a graceful way of walking under their trays, with hands clasped behind their heads, and arms uplifted in the manner of caryatides. An artist would have been wild with delight for the chance to sketch some of them.... On the whole, they conveyed the impression that they belonged to a particular race, very different from that of the chief city or its environs.

"Are they all banana-colored at Grande Anse?" I asked,--" and all as pretty as these?"

"I was never at Grande Anse," the little baker answered, "although I have been forty years in Martinique; but I know there is a fine class of young girls there: _il y a une belle jeunesse là, mon cher!_"

Then I wondered why the youth of Grande Anse should be any finer than the youth of other places; and it seemed to me that the baker's own statement of his never having been there might possibly furnish a clew.... Out of the thirty-five thousand inhabitants of St. Pierre and its suburbs, there are at least twenty thousand who never have been there, and most probably never will be. Few dwellers of the west coast visit the east coast: in fact, except among the white creoles, who represent but a small percentage of the total population, there are few persons to be met with who are familiar with all parts of their native island. It is so mountainous, and travelling is so wearisome, that populations may live and die in adjacent valleys without climbing the intervening ranges to look at one another. Grande Anse is only about twenty miles from the principal city; but it requires some considerable inducement to make the journey on horseback; and only the professional carrier-girls, plantation messengers, and colored people of peculiarly tough constitution attempt it on foot. Except for the transportation of sugar and rum, there is practically no communication by sea between the west and the north-east coast--the sea is too dangerous--and thus the populations on either side of the island are more or less isolated from each other, besides being further subdivided and segregated by the lesser mountain chains crossing their respective

territories.... In view of all these things I wondered whether a community so secluded might not assume special characteristics within two hundred years--might not develop into a population of some yellow, red, or brown type, according to the predominant element of the original race-crossing.

II.

I had long been anxious to see the city of the Porteuses, when the opportunity afforded itself to make the trip with a friend obliged to go thither on some important business;--I do not think I should have ever felt resigned to undertake it alone. With a level road the distance might be covered very quickly, but over mountains the journey is slow and wearisome in the perpetual tropic heat. Whether made on horseback or in a carriage, it takes between four and five hours to go from St. Pierre to Grand Anse, and it requires a longer time to return, as the road is then nearly all uphill. The young porteuse travels almost as rapidly; and the bare-footed black postman, who carries the mails in a square box at the end of a pole, is timed on leaving Morne Rouge at 4 A.M. to reach Ajoupa-Bouillon a little after six, and leaving Ajoupa-Bouillon at half-past six to reach Grande Anse at half-past eight, including many stoppages and delays on the way.

Going to Grande Anse from the chief city, one can either hire a horse or carriage at St. Pierre, or ascend to Morne Rouge by the public conveyance, and there procure a vehicle or animal, which latter is the cheaper and easier plan. About a mile beyond Morne Rouge, where the old Calebasse road enters the public highway, you reach the highest point of the journey,--the top of the enormous ridge dividing the north-east from the western coast, and cutting off the trade-winds from sultry St. Pierre. By climbing the little hill, with a tall stone cross on its summit, overlooking the Champ-Flore just here, you can perceive the sea on both sides of the island at once--_lapis lazuli_ blue. From this elevation the road descends by a hundred windings and lessening undulations to the eastern shore. It sinks between mornes wooded to their summits,--bridges a host of torrents and ravines,--passes gorges from whence colossal trees tower far overhead, through heavy streaming of lianas, to mingle their green crowns in magnificent gloom. Now and then you hear a low long sweet sound like the deepest tone of a silver flute,--a bird-call, the cry of the _siffleur-de-montagne_; then all is stillness. You are not likely to see a white face again for hours, but at intervals a porteuse passes, walking very swiftly, or a field-hand heavily laden; and these salute you either by speech or a lifting of the hand to the head.... And it is very pleasant to hear the greetings and to see the smiles of those who thus pass,--the fine brown girls bearing trays, the dark laborers bowed under great burdens of bamboo-grass,--_Bonjou', Missié!_ Then you should reply, if the speaker be a woman and pretty, "Good-day, dear" (_bonjou', chè_), or, "Good-day, my daughter" (_mafi_) even if she be old; while if the passer-by be a man, your proper reply is, "Good-day, my son" (_monfi_).... They are less often uttered now than in other years, these kindly greetings,

but they still form part of the good and true creole manners.

[Illustration: A CREOLE CAPRE IN WORKING GARB.]

The feathery beauty of the tree-ferns shadowing each brook, the grace of bamboo and arborescent grasses, seem to decrease as the road descends,--but the palms grow taller. Often the way skirts a precipice dominating some marvellous valley prospect; again it is walled in by high green banks or shrubby slopes which cut off the view; and always it serpentine so that you cannot see more than a few hundred feet of the white track before you.

About the fifteenth kilometre a glorious landscape opens to the right, reaching to the Atlantic;--the road still winds very high; forests are billowing hundreds of yards below it, and rising miles away up the slopes of mornes, beyond which, here and there, loom strange shapes of mountain,--shading off from misty green to violet and faintest gray. And through one grand opening in this multicolored surging of hills and peaks you perceive the gold-yellow of cane-fields touching the sky-colored sea. Grande Anse lies somewhere in that direction.... At the eighteenth kilometre you pass a cluster of little country cottages, a church, and one or two large buildings framed in shade-trees--the hamlet of Ajoupa-Bouillon. Yet a little farther, and you find you have left all the woods behind you. But the road continues its bewildering curves around and between low mornes covered with cane or cocoa plants: it dips down very low, rises again, dips once more;--and you perceive the soil is changing color; it is taking a red tint like that of the land of the American cotton-belt. Then you pass the Rivière Falaise (marked Filasse upon old maps),--with its shallow crystal torrent flowing through a very deep and rocky channel,--and the Capote and other streams; and over the yellow rim of cane-hills the long blue bar of the sea appears, edged landward with a dazzling fringe of foam. The heights you have passed are no longer verqant, but purplish or gray,--with Pelée's cloud-wrapped enormity overtopping all. A very strong warm wind is blowing upon you--the trade-wind, always driving the clouds west: this is the sunny side of Martinique, where gray days and heavy rains are less frequent. Once or twice more the sea disappears and reappears, always over canes; and then, after passing a bridge and turning a last curve, the road suddenly drops down to the shore and into the burgh of Grande Anse.

III.

Leaving Morne Rouge at about eight in the morning, my friend and I reached Grande Anse at half-past eleven. Everything had been arranged to make us comfortable, I was delighted with the airy corner room, commanding at once a view of the main street and of the sea--a very high room, all open to the trade-winds--which had been prepared to receive me. But after a long carriage ride in the heat of a tropical June day, one always feels the necessity of a little physical exercise. I lingered only a minute or two in the house, and went out to look at the little town and its surroundings.

As seen from the high-road, the burgh of Grande Anse makes a

long patch of darkness between the green of the coast and the azure of the water: it is almost wholly black and gray--suited to inspire an etching, High slopes of cane and meadow rise behind it and on either side, undulating up and away to purple and gray tips of mountain ranges. North and south, to left and right, the land reaches out in two high promontories, mostly green, and about a mile apart--the Pointe du Rochet and the Pointe de Séguinau, or Croche-Mort, which latter name preserves the legend of an insurgent slave, a man of color, shot dead upon the cliff. These promontories form the semicircular bay of Grande Anse. All this Grande Anse, or "Great Creek," valley is an immense basin of basalt; and narrow as it is, no less than five streams water it, including the Riviere de la Grande Anse.

There are only three short streets in the town. The principal, or Grande Rue, is simply a continuation of the national road; there is a narrower one below, which used to be called the Rue de la Paille, because the cottages lining it were formerly all thatched with cane straw; and there is one above it, edging the cane-fields that billow away to the meeting of morne and sky. There is nothing of architectural interest, and all is sombre,--walls and roofs and pavements. But after you pass through the city and follow the southern route that ascends the Séguinau promontory, you can obtain some lovely landscape views a grand surging of rounded mornes, with farther violet peaks, truncated or horned, pushing up their heads in the horizon above the highest flutterings of cane; and looking back above the town, you may see Pelée all unclouded,--not as you see it from the other coast, but an enormous ghostly silhouette, with steep sides and almost square summit, so pale as to seem transparent. Then if you cross the promontory southward, the same road will lead you into another very beautiful valley, watered by a broad rocky torrent,--the Valley of the Rivière du Lorrain. This clear stream rushes to the sea through a lofty opening in the hills; and looking westward between them, you will be charmed by the exquisite vista of green shapes piling and pushing up one behind another to reach a high blue ridge which forms the background--a vision of tooth-shaped and fantastical mountains,--part of the great central chain running south and north through nearly the whole island. It is over those blue summits that the wonderful road called _La Trace_ winds between primeval forest walls.

But the more you become familiar with the face of the little town itself, the more you are impressed by the strange swarthy tone it preserves in all this splendid expanse of radiant tinting. There are only two points of visible color in it,--the church and hospital, built of stone, which have been painted yellow: as a mass in the landscape, lying between the dead-gold of the cane-clad hills and the delicious azure of the sea, it remains almost black under the prodigious blaze of light. The foundations of volcanic rock, three or four feet high, on which the frames of the wooden dwellings rest, are black; and the sea-wind appears to have the power of blackening all timber-work here through any coat of paint. Roofs and façades look as if they had been long exposed to coal-smoke, although probably no one in Grande Anse ever saw coal; and the pavements of pebbles and cement are of a deep ash-color, full of micaceous scintillation, and so hard as to feel disagreeable even to feet protected by good thick shoes. By-and-by you notice walls of

black stone, bridges of black stone, and perceive that black forms an element of all the landscape about you. On the roads leading from the town you note from time to time masses of jagged rock or great boulders protruding through the green of the slopes, and dark as ink. These black surfaces also sparkle. The beds of all the neighboring rivers are filled with dark gray stones; and many of these, broken by those violent floods which dash rocks together,--deluging the valleys, and strewing the soil of the bottom-lands (_fonds_) with dead serpents,--display black cores. Bare crags projecting from the green cliffs here and there are soot-colored, and the outlying rocks of the coast offer a similar aspect. And the sand of the beach is funereally black--looks almost like powdered charcoal; and as you walk over it, sinking three or four inches every step, you are amazed by the multitude and brilliancy of minute flashes in it, like a subtle silver effervescence.

This extraordinary sand contains ninety per cent of natural steel, and efforts have been made to utilize it industrially. Some years ago a company was formed, and a machine invented to separate the metal from the pure sand,--an immense revolving magnet, which, being set in motion under a sand shower, caught the ore upon it. When the covering thus formed by the adhesion of the steel became of a certain thickness, the simple interruption of an electric current precipitated the metal into appropriate receptacles. Fine bars were made from this volcanic steel, and excellent cutting tools manufactured from it: French metallurgists pronounced the product of peculiar excellence, and nevertheless the project of the company was abandoned. Political disorganization consequent upon the establishment of universal suffrage frightened capitalists who might have aided the undertaking under a better condition of affairs; and the lack of large means, coupled with the cost of freight to remote markets, ultimately baffled this creditable attempt to found a native industry.

Sometimes after great storms bright brown sand is flung up from the sea-depths; but the heavy black sand always reappears again to make the universal color of the beach.

IV.

Behind the roomy wooden house in which I occupied an apartment there was a small garden-plot surrounded with a hedge strengthened by bamboo fencing, and radiant with flowers of the _loseille-bois_,--the creole name for a sort of begonia, whose closed bud exactly resembles a pink and white dainty bivalve shell, and whose open blossom imitates the form of a butterfly. Here and there, on the grass, were nets drying, and _nasses_--curious fish-traps made of split bamboos interwoven and held in place with _mibi_ stalks (the mibi is a liana heavy and tough as copper wire); and immediately behind the garden hedge appeared the white flashing of the surf. The most vivid recollection connected with my trip to Grande Anse is that of the first time that I went to the end of that garden, opened the little bamboo gate, and found myself overlooking the beach--an immense breadth

of soot-black sand, with pale green patches and stripings here and there upon it--refuse of cane thatch, decomposing rubbish spread out by old tides. The one solitary boat owned in the community lay there before me, high and dry. It was the hot period of the afternoon; the town slept; there was no living creature in sight; and the booming of the surf drowned all other sounds; the scent of the warm strong sea-wind annihilated all other odors. Then, very suddenly, there came to me a sensation absolutely weird, while watching the strange wild sea roaring over its beach of black sand,--the sensation of seeing something unreal, looking at something that had no more tangible existence than a memory! Whether suggested by the first white vision of the surf over the bamboo hedge,--or by those old green tide-lines on the desolation of the black beach,--or by some tone of the speaking of the sea,--or something indefinable in the living touch of the wind,--or by all of these, I cannot say;--but slowly there became defined within me the thought of having beheld just such a coast very long ago, I could not tell where,--in those child-years of which the recollections gradually become indistinguishable from dreams.

Soon as darkness comes upon Grande Anse the face of the clock in the church-tower is always lighted: you see it suddenly burst into yellow glow above the roofs and the cocoa-palms,--just like a pharos. In my room I could not keep the candle lighted because of the sea-wind; but it never occurred to me to close the shutters of the great broad windows,--sashless, of course, like all the glassless windows of Martinique;--the breeze was too delicious. It seemed full of something vitalizing that made one's blood warmer, and rendered one full of contentment--full of eagerness to believe life all sweetness. Likewise, I found it soporific--this pure, dry, warm wind. And I thought there could be no greater delight in existence than to lie down at night, with all the windows open,--and the Cross of the South visible from my pillow,--and the sea-wind pouring over the bed,--and the tumultuous whispering and muttering of the surf in one's ears,--to dream of that strange sapphire sea white-bursting over its beach of black sand.

V.

Considering that Grande Anse lies almost opposite to St. Pierre, at a distance of less than twenty miles even by the complicated windings of the national road, the differences existing in the natural conditions of both places are remarkable enough. Nobody in St. Pierre sees the sun rise, because the mountains immediately behind the city continue to shadow its roofs long after the eastern coast is deluged with light and heat. At Grande Anse, on the other hand, those tremendous sunsets which delight west coast dwellers are not visible at all; and during the briefer West Indian days Grande Anse is all wrapped in darkness as early as half-past four,--or nearly an hour before the orange light has ceased to flare up the streets of St. Pierre from the sea;--since the great mountain range topped by Pelée cuts off all the slanting light from the east valleys. And early as folks rise in St. Pierre, they rise still earlier at Grande Anse--before the sun emerges from the rim of the Atlantic: about

half-past four, doors are being opened and coffee is ready. At St. Pierre one can enjoy a sea bath till seven or half-past seven o'clock, even during the time of the sun's earliest rising, because the shadow of the morne still reaches out upon the bay; --but bathers leave the black beach of Grande Anse by six o'clock; for once the sun's face is up, the light, levelled straight at the eyes, becomes blinding. Again, at St. Pierre it rains almost every twenty-four hours for a brief while, during at least the greater part of the year; at Grande Anse it rains more moderately and less often. The atmosphere at St. Pierre is always more or less impregnated with vapor, and usually an enervating heat prevails, which makes exertion unpleasant; at Grande Anse the warm wind keeps the skin comparatively dry, in spite of considerable exercise. It is quite rare to see a heavy surf at St. Pierre, but it is much rarer not to see it at Grande Anse.... A curious fact concerning custom is that few white creoles care to bathe in front of the town, notwithstanding the superb beach and magnificent surf, both so inviting to one accustomed to the deep still water and rough pebbly shore of St. Pierre. The creoles really prefer their rivers as bathing-places; and when willing to take a sea bath, they will walk up and down hill for kilometres in order to reach some river mouth, so as to wash off in the fresh-water afterwards. They say that the effect of sea-salt upon the skin gives *_bouton chauds_* (what we call "prickly heat"). Friends took me all the way to the mouth of the Lorrain one morning that I might have the experience of such a double bath; but after leaving the tepid sea, I must confess the plunge into the river was something terrible--an icy shock which cured me of all further desire for river baths. My willingness to let the sea-water dry upon me was regarded as an eccentricity.

VI.

It may be said that on all this coast the ocean, perpetually moved by the blowing of the trade-winds, never rests--never hushes its roar, Even in the streets of Grande Anse, one must in breezy weather lift one's voice above the natural pitch to be heard; and then the breakers come in lines more than a mile long, between the Pointe du Rochet and the Pointe de Séguinau,--every unfurling thunder-clap. There is no travelling by sea. All large vessels keep well away from the dangerous coast. There is scarcely any fishing; and although the sea is thick with fish, fresh fish at Grande Anse is a rare luxury. Communication with St. Pierre is chiefly by way of the national road, winding over mountain ridges two thousand feet high; and the larger portion of merchandise is transported from the chief city on the heads of young women. The steepness of the route soon kills draught-horses and ruins the toughest mules. At one time the managers of a large estate at Grande Anse attempted the experiment of sending their sugar to St. Pierre in iron carts, drawn by five mules; but the animals could not endure the work. Cocoa can be carried to St. Pierre by the portees, but sugar and rum must go by sea, or not at all; and the risk and difficulties of shipping these seriously affect the prosperity of all the north and north-east coast. Planters have actually been ruined by inability to send their products to market during a protracted spell of rough

weather. A railroad has been proposed and planned: in a more prosperous era it might be constructed, with the result of greatly developing all the Atlantic side of the island, and converting obscure villages into thriving towns.

Sugar is very difficult to ship; rum and tafia can be handled with less risk. It is nothing less than exciting to watch a shipment of tafia from Grande Anse to St. Pierre.

A little vessel approaches the coast with extreme caution, and anchors in the bay some hundred yards beyond the breakers. She is what they call a pirogue here, but not at all what is called a pirogue in the United States: she has a long narrow hull, two masts, no deck; she has usually a crew of five, and can carry thirty barrels of tafia. One of the pirogue men puts a great shell to his lips and sounds a call, very mellow and deep, that can be heard over the roar of the waves far up among the hills. The shell is one of those great spiral shells, weighing seven or eight pounds--rolled like a scroll, fluted and scalloped about the edges, and pink-pearled inside,--such as are sold in America for mantle-piece ornaments,--the shell of a lambi. Here you can often see the lambi crawling about with its nacreous house upon its back: an enormous sea-snail with a yellowish back and rose-colored belly, with big horns and eyes in the tip of each horn--very pretty yes, having a golden iris. This creature is a common article of food; but its thick white flesh is almost compact as cartilage, and must be pounded before being cooked. [4]

At the sound of the blowing of the lambi-shell, wagons descend to the beach, accompanied by young colored men running beside the mules. Each wagon discharges a certain number of barrels of tafia, and simultaneously the young men strip. They are slight, well built, and generally well muscled. Each man takes a barrel of tafia, pushes it before him into the surf, and then begins to swim to the pirogue,--impelling the barrel before him. I have never seen a swimmer attempt to convey more than one barrel at a time; but I am told there are experts who manage as many as three barrels together,--pushing them forward in line, with the head of one against the bottom of the next. It really requires much dexterity and practice to handle even one barrel or cask. As the swimmer advances he keeps close as possible to his charge,--so as to be able to push it forward with all his force against each breaker in succession,--making it dive through. If it once glide well out of his reach while he is in the breakers, it becomes an enemy, and he must take care to keep out of its way,--for if a wave throws it at him, or rolls it over him, he may be seriously injured; but the expert seldom abandons a barrel. Under the most favorable conditions, man and barrel will both disappear a score of times before the clear swells are reached, after which the rest of the journey is not difficult. Men lower ropes from the pirogue, the swimmer passes them under his barrel, and it is hoisted aboard.

... Wonderful surf-swimmers these men are;--they will go far out for mere sport in the roughest kind of a sea, when the waves, abnormally swollen by the peculiar conformation of the bay, come rolling in thirty and forty feet high. Sometimes, with the swift impulse of ascending a swell, the swimmer seems suspended in air as it passes beneath him, before he plunges into the trough

beyond. The best swimmer is a young capre who cannot weigh more than a hundred and twenty pounds. Few of the Grande Anse men are heavily built; they do not compare for stature and thew with those longshoremen at St. Pierre who can be seen any busy afternoon on the landing, lifting heavy barrels at almost the full reach of their swarthy arms.

... There is but one boat owned in the whole parish of Grande Anse,--a fact due to the continual roughness of the sea. It has a little mast and sail, and can hold only three men. When the water is somewhat less angry than usual, a colored crew take it out for a fishing expedition. There is always much interest in this event; a crowd gathers on the beach; and the professional swimmers help to bring the little craft beyond the breakers. When the boat returns after a disappearance of several hours, everybody runs down from the village to meet it. Young colored women twist their robes up about their hips, and wade out to welcome it: there is a display of limbs of all colors on such occasions, which is not without grace, that untaught grace which tempts an artistic pencil. Every *_bonne_* and every house-keeper struggles for the first chance to buy the fish;--young girls and children dance in the water for delight, all screaming, "*_Rhalé bois-cano!*"... Then as the boat is pulled through the surf and hauled up on the sand, the pushing and screaming and crying become irritating and deafening; the fishermen lose patience and say terrible things. But nobody heeds them in the general clamoring and haggling and furious bidding for the *_pouèsson-ououge_*, the *_dorades_*, the *_volants_* (beautiful purple-backed flying-fish with silver bellies, and fins all transparent, like the wings of dragon-flies). There is great bargaining even for a young shark,--which makes very nice eating cooked after the creole fashion. So seldom can the fishermen venture out that each trip makes a memorable event for the village.

The St. Pierre fishermen very seldom approach the bay, but they do much fishing a few miles beyond it, almost in front of the Pointe du Rochet and the Roche à Bourgaut. There the best flying-fish are caught,--and besides edible creatures, many queer things are often brought up by the nets: monstrosities such as the *_coffre_*-fish, shaped almost like a box, of which the lid is represented by an extraordinary conformation of the jaws;--and the *_barrique-de-vin_* ("wine cask"), with round boneless body, secreting in a curious vesicle a liquor precisely resembling wine lees;--and the "needle-fish" (*_aiguille de mer_*), less thick than a Faber lead-pencil, but more than twice as long;--and huge cuttle-fish and prodigious eels. One conger secured off this coast measured over twenty feet in length, and weighed two hundred and fifty pounds--a veritable sea-serpent.... But even the fresh-water inhabitants of Grande Anse are amazing. I have seen crawfish by actual measurement fifty centimetres long, but these were not considered remarkable. Many are said to much exceed two feet from the tail to the tip of the claws and horns. They are of an iron-black color, and have formidable pincers with serrated edges and tip-points inwardly converging, which cannot crush like the weapons of a lobster, but which will cut the flesh and make a small ugly wound. At first sight one not familiar with the crawfish of these regions can hardly believe he is not viewing some variety of gigantic lobster instead of the common fresh-water crawfish of the east coast. When the head, tail,

legs, and cuirass have all been removed, after boiling, the curved trunk has still the size and weight of a large pork sausage.

These creatures are trapped by lantern-light. Pieces of manioc root tied fast to large boulders sunk in the river are the only bait;--the crawfish will flock to eat it upon any dark night, and then they are caught with scoop-nets and dropped into covered baskets.

VII.

One whose ideas of the people of Grande Anse had I been formed only by observing the young porteuses of the region on their way to the other side of the Island, might expect on reaching this little town to find its population yellow as that of a Chinese city. But the dominant hue is much darker, although the mixed element is everywhere visible; and I was at first surprised by the scarcity of those clear bright skins I supposed to be so numerous. Some pretty children--notably a pair of twin-sisters, and perhaps a dozen school-girls from eight to ten years of age--displayed the same characteristics I have noted in the adult porteuses of Grande Anse; but within the town itself this brighter element is in the minority. The predominating race element of the whole commune is certainly colored (Grande Anse is even memorable because of the revolt of its *hommes de couleur* some fifty years ago);--but the colored population is not concentrated in the town; it belongs rather to the valleys and the heights surrounding the *chef-lieu*. Most of the porteuses are country girls, and I found that even those living in the village are seldom visible on the streets except when departing upon a trip or returning from one. An artist wishing to study the type might, however, pass a day at the bridge of the Rivière Falaise to advantage, as all the carrier-girls pass it at certain hours of the morning and evening.

But the best possible occasion on which to observe what my friend the baker called *la belle jeunesse*, is a confirmation day;--when the bishop drives to Grande Anse over the mountains, and all the population turns out in holiday garb, and the bells are tapped like tam-tams, and triumphal arches--most awry to behold!--span the road-way, bearing in clumsiest lettering the welcome, *Vive Monseigneur*. On that event, the long procession of young girls to be confirmed--all in white robes, white veils, and white satin slippers--is a numerical surprise. It is a moral surprise also;--to the stranger at least; for it reveals the struggle of a poverty extraordinary with the self-imposed obligations of a costly ceremonialism.

No white children ever appear in these processions: there are not half a dozen white families in the whole urban population of about seven thousand souls; and those send their sons and daughters to St. Pierre or Morne Rouge for their religious training and education. But many of the colored children look very charming in their costume of confirmation;--you could not easily recognize one of them as the same little *bonne* who

brings your morning cup of coffee, or another as the daughter of a plantation _commandeur_ (overseer's assistant),--a brown slip of a girl who will probably never wear shoes again. And many of those white shoes and white veils have been obtained only by the hardest physical labor and self-denial of poor parents and relatives: fathers, brothers, and mothers working with cutlass and hoe in the snake-swarming cane-fields;--sisters walking bare-footed every day to St. Pierre and back to earn a few francs a month.

[Illustration: A CONFIRMATION PROCESSION.]

... While watching such a procession it seemed to me that I could discern in the features and figures of the young confirmants something of a prevailing type and tint, and I asked an old planter beside me if he thought my impression correct.

"Partly," he answered; "there is certainly a tendency towards an attractive physical type here, but the tendency itself is less stable than you imagine; it has been changed during the last twenty years within my own recollection. In different parts of the island particular types appear and disappear with a generation. There is a sort of race-fermentation going on, which gives no fixed result of a positive sort for any great length of time. It is true that certain elements continue to dominate in certain communes, but the particular characteristics come and vanish in the most mysterious way. As to color, I doubt if any correct classification can be made, especially by a stranger. Your eyes give you general ideas about a red type, a yellow type, a brown type; but to the more experienced eyes of a creole, accustomed to live in the country districts, every individual of mixed race appears to have a particular color of his own. Take, for instance, the so-called capre type, which furnishes the finest physical examples of all,--you, a stranger, are at once impressed by the general red tint of the variety; but you do not notice the differences of that tint in different persons, which are more difficult to observe than shade-differences of yellow or brown. Now, to me, every capre or capresse has an individual color; and I do not believe that in all Martinique there are two half-breeds--not having had the same father and mother--in whom the tint is precisely the same."

VIII.

I thought Grande Anse the most sleepy place I had ever visited. I suspect it is one of the sleepest in the whole world. The wind, which tans even a creole of St. Pierre to an unnatural brown within forty-eight hours of his sojourn in the village, has also a peculiarly somnolent effect. The moment one has nothing particular to do, and ventures to sit down idly with the breeze in one's face, slumber comes; and everybody who can spare the time takes a long nap in the afternoon, and little naps from hour to hour. For all that, the heat of the east coast is not enervating, like that of St. Pierre; one can take a great deal of exercise in the sun without feeling much the worse. Hunting excursions, river fishing parties, surf-bathing, and visits to

neighboring plantations are the only amusements; but these are enough to make existence very pleasant at Grande Anse. The most interesting of my own experiences were those of a day passed by invitation at one of the old colonial estates on the hills near the village.

It is not easy to describe the charm of a creole interior, whether in the city or the country. The cool shadowy court, with its wonderful plants and fountain of sparkling mountain water, or the lawn, with its ancestral trees,--the delicious welcome of the host, whose fraternal easy manner immediately makes you feel at home,--the coming of the children to greet you, each holding up a velvety brown cheek to be kissed, after the old-time custom,--the romance of the unconventional chat, over a cool drink, under the palms and the ceibas,--the visible earnestness of all to please the guest, to inwrap him in a very atmosphere of quiet happiness,--combine to make a memory which you will never forget. And maybe you enjoy all this upon some exquisite site, some volcanic summit, overlooking slopes of a hundred greens,--mountains far winding in blue and pearly shadowing,--rivers singing seaward behind curtains of arborescent reeds and bamboos,--and, perhaps, Pelee, in the horizon, dreaming violet dreams under her foulard of vapors,--and, encircling all, the still sweep of the ocean's azure bending to the verge of day.

... My host showed or explained to me all that he thought might interest a stranger. He had brought to me a nest of the _carouge_, a bird which suspends its home, hammock-fashion, under the leaves of the banana-tree;--showed me a little fer-de-lance, freshly killed by one of his field hands; and a field lizard (_zanoli tè_ in creole), not green like the lizards which haunt the roofs of St. Pierre, but of a beautiful brown bronze, with shifting tints; and eggs of the _zanoli_, little soft oval things from which the young lizards will perhaps run out alive as fast as you open the shells; and the _matoutou falaise_, or spider of the cliffs, of two varieties, red or almost black when adult, and bluish silvery tint when young,--less in size than the tarantula, but equally hairy and venomous; and the _crabe-c'est-ma-faute_ (the "Through-my-fault Crab"), having one very small and one very large claw, which latter it carries folded up against its body, so as to have suggested the idea of a penitent striking his bosom, and uttering the sacramental words of the Catholic confession, "Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault."... Indeed I cannot recollect one-half of the queer birds, queer insects, queer reptiles, and queer plants to which my attention was called. But speaking of plants, I was impressed by the profusion of the _zhèbe-moin-misé_--a little sensitive-plant I had rarely observed on the west coast. On the hill-sides of Grande Anse it prevails to such an extent as to give certain slopes its own peculiar greenish-brown color. It has many-branching leaves, only one inch and a half to two inches long, but which recall the form of certain common ferns; these lie almost flat upon the ground. They fold together upward from the central stem at the least touch, and the plant thus makes itself almost imperceptible;--it seems to live so, that you feel guilty of murder if you break off a leaf. It is called _Zhèbe-moin-misé_, or "Plant-did-I-amuse-myself," because it is supposed to tell naughty little children who play truant, or who delay much longer than is necessary in delivering a message, whether

they deserve a whipping or not. The guilty child touches the plant, and asks, "*Ess moin amisé moin?*" (Did I amuse myself?); and if the plant instantly shuts its leaves up, that means, "Yes, you did." Of course the leaves invariably close; but I suspect they invariably tell the truth, for all colored children, in Grande Anse at least, are much more inclined to play than work.

The kind old planter likewise conducted me over the estate. He took me through the sugar-mill, and showed me, among other more recent inventions, some machinery devised nearly two centuries ago by the ingenious and terrible Père Labat, and still quite serviceable, in spite of all modern improvements in sugar-making;--took me through the *rhummerie*, or distillery, and made me taste some colorless rum which had the aroma and something of the taste of the most delicate gin;--and finally took me into the *cases-à-vent*, or "wind-houses,"--built as places of refuge during hurricanes. Hurricanes are rare, and more rare in this century by far than during the previous one; but this part of the island is particularly exposed to such visitations, and almost every old plantation used to have one or two *cases-à-vent*. They were always built in a hollow, either natural or artificial, below the land-level,--with walls of rock several feet thick, and very strong doors, but no windows. My host told me about the experiences of his family in some *case-à-vent* during a hurricane which he recollected. It was found necessary to secure the door within by means of strong ropes; and the mere task of holding it taxed the strength of a dozen powerful men: it would bulge in under the pressure of the awful wind,--swelling like the side of a barrel; and had not its planks been made of a wood tough as hickory, they would have been blown into splinters.

I had long desired to examine a plantation drum, and see it played upon under conditions more favorable than the excitement of a holiday *caleinda* in the villages, where the amusement is too often terminated by a *voum* (general row) or a *goumage* (a serious fight);--and when I mentioned this wish to the planter he at once sent word to his commandeur, the best drummer in the settlement, to come up to the house and bring his instrument with him. I was thus enabled to make the observations necessary, and also to take an instantaneous photograph of the drummer in the very act of playing.

The old African dances, the *caleinda* and the *bélé* (which latter is accompanied by chanted improvisation) are danced on Sundays to the sound of the drum on almost every plantation in the island. The drum, indeed, is an instrument to which the country-folk are so much attached that they swear by it,--*Tambou!* being the oath uttered upon all ordinary occasions of surprise or vexation. But the instrument is quite as often called *ka*, because made out of a quarter-barrel, or *quart*,--in the patois "ka." Both ends of the barrel having been removed, a wet hide, well wrapped about a couple of hoops, is driven on, and in drying the stretched skin obtains still further tension. The other end of the *ka* is always left open. Across the face of the skin a string is tightly stretched, to which are attached, at intervals of about an inch apart, very short thin fragments of bamboo or cut feather stems. These lend a certain vibration to the tones.

In the time of Père Labat the negro drums had a somewhat different form. There were then two kinds of drums--a big tamtam and a little one, which used to be played together. Both consisted of skins tightly stretched over one end of a wooden cylinder, or a section of hollow tree trunk. The larger was from three to four feet long with a diameter of fifteen to sixteen inches; the smaller, called *_baboula_*, [5] was of the same length, but only eight or nine inches in diameter.

Père Labat also speaks, in his West Indian travels, of another musical instrument, very popular among the Martinique slaves of his time--"a sort of guitar" made out of a half-calabash or *_couï_*, covered with some kind of skin. It had four strings of silk or catgut, and a very long neck. The tradition of this African instrument is said to survive in the modern "*_banza_*" (*_banza nèg Guinée_*).

The skilful player (*_bel tambouyé_*) straddles his ka stripped to the waist, and plays upon it with the finger-tips of both hands simultaneously,--taking care that the vibrating string occupies a horizontal position. Occasionally the heel of the naked foot is pressed lightly or vigorously against the skin, so as to produce changes of tone. This is called "giving heel" to the drum--*_baill y talon_*. Meanwhile a boy keeps striking the drum at the uncovered end with a stick, so as to produce a dry clattering accompaniment. The sound of the drum itself, well played, has a wild power that makes and masters all the excitement of the dance--a complicated double roll, with a peculiar billowy rising and falling. The creole onomatopes, *_b'lip-b'lib-b'lib-b'lip_*, do not fully render the roll;--for each *_b'lip_* or *_b'lib_* stands really for a series of sounds too rapidly filliped out to be imitated by articulate speech. The tapping of a ka can be heard at surprising distances; and experienced players often play for hours at a time without exhibiting wearisomeness, or in the least diminishing the volume of sound produced.

It seems there are many ways of playing--different measures familiar to all these colored people, but not easily distinguished by anybody else; and there are great matches sometimes between celebrated *_tambouyé_*. The same *_commandè_* whose portrait I took while playing told me that he once figured in a contest of this kind, his rival being a drummer from the neighboring burgh of Marigot.... "*_Aïe, aïe, yaïe! mon chè!--y fai tambou-à pàlé!_*" said the *_commandè_*, describing the execution of his antagonist;--"my dear, he just made that drum talk! I thought I was going to be beaten for sure; I was trembling all the time--*_aïe, aïe, yaïe!_* Then he got off that ka. mounted it; I thought a moment; then I struck up the 'River-of-the-Lizard,'--*_mais, mon chè, yon larivie-Léza toutt pi!_*--such a River-of-the-Lizard, ah! just perfectly pure! I gave heel to that ka; I worried that ka;--I made it mad--I made it crazy;--I made it talk;--I won!"

During some dances a sort of chant accompanies the music--a long sonorous cry, uttered at intervals of seven eight seconds, which perfectly times a particular measure in the drum roll. It may be the burden of a song: a mere improvisation:

"Oh! yoïe-yoïe!"

(Drum roll.)
"Oh! missié-à!"
(Drum roll.)
"Y bel tambouyé!"
(Drum roll.)
"Aie, ya, yaie!"
(Drum roll.)
"Joli tambouyé!"
(Drum roll.)
"Chauffé tambou-à!"
(Drum roll.)
"Géné tambou-à!"
(Drum roll.)
"Crazé tambou-à!" etc., etc.

... The crieur, or chanter, is also the leader of the dance. The caleïnda is danced by men only, all stripped to the waist, and twirling heavy sticks in a mock fight, Sometimes, however--especially at the great village gatherings, when the blood becomes overheated by tafia--the mock fight may become a real one; and then even cutlasses are brought into play.

But in the old days, those improvisations which gave one form of dance its name, bélé (from the French bel air), were often remarkable rhymeless poems, uttered with natural simple emotion, and full of picturesque imagery. I cite part of one, taken down from the dictation of a common field-hand near Fort-de-France. I offer a few lines of the creole first, to indicate the form of the improvisation. There is a dancing pause at the end of each line during the performance:

Toutt fois lanmou vini lacase moin
Pou pàlé moin, moin ka reponne:
"Khé moin deja placé,"
Moin ka crié, "Secou! les voisinages!"
Moin ka crié, "Secou! la gâde royale!"
Moin ka crié, "Secou! la gendâmerie!"
Lanmou pouend yon poignâ pou poignadé moin!"

The best part of the composition, which is quite long, might be rendered as follows:

Each time that Love comes to my cabin
To speak to me of love I make answer,
"My heart is already placed,"
I cry out, "Help, neighbors! help!"
I cry out, "Help, la Garde Royale!"
I cry out, "Help, help, gendarmes!"
Love takes a poniard to stab me;
How can Love have a heart so hard
To thus rob me of my health!"
When the officer of police comes to me
To hear me tell him the truth,
To have him arrest my Love;--
When I see the Garde Royale
Coming to arrest my sweet heart,
I fall down at the feet of the Garde Royale,--
I pray for mercy and forgiveness.
"Arrest me instead, but let my dear Love go!"

How, alas! with this tender heart of mine,
Can I bear to see such an arrest made!
No, no! I would rather die!
Dost not remember, when our pillows lay close together,
How we told each to the other all that our hearts thought?... etc.

[Illustration: MANNER OF PLAYING THE KA]

The stars were all out when I bid my host good-bye;--he sent his lack servant along with me to carry a lantern and keep a sharp watch for snakes along the mountain road.

IX.

... Assuredly the city of St. Pierre never could have seemed more quaintly beautiful than as I saw it on the evening of my return, while the shadows were reaching their longest, and sea and sky were turning lilac. Palm-heads were trembling and masts swaying slowly against an enormous orange sunset,--yet the beauty of the sight did not touch me! The deep level and luminous flood of the bay seemed to me for the first time a dead water;--I found myself wondering whether it could form a part of that living tide by which I had been dwelling, full of foam-lightnings and perpetual thunder. I wondered whether the air about me--heavy and hot and full of faint leafy smells--could ever have been touched by the vast pure sweet breath of the wind from the sunrising. And I became conscious of a profound, unreasoning, absurd regret for the somnolent little black village of that bare east coast,--where there are no woods, no ships, no sunsets,...only the ocean roaring forever over its beach of black sand.

CHAPTER III. UN REVENANT

I.

He who first gave to Martinique its poetical name, _Le Pays des Revenants_, thought of his wonderful island only as "The Country of Comers-back," where Nature's unspeakable spell bewitches wandering souls like the caress of a Circe,--never as the Land of Ghosts. Yet either translation of the name holds equal truth: a land of ghosts it is, this marvellous Martinique!. Almost every plantation has its familiar spirits,--its phantoms: some may be unknown beyond the particular district in which fancy first gave them being;--but some belong to popular song and story,--to the imaginative life of the whole people. Almost every promontory and peak, every village and valley along the coast, has its special folk-lore, its particular tradition. The legend of Thomasseau of Perinnelle, whose body was taken out of the coffin

and carried away by the devil through a certain window of the plantation-house, which cannot be closed up by human power;--the Demarche legend of the spectral horseman who rides up the hill on bright hot days to seek a friend buried more than a hundred years ago;--the legend of the Habitation Dillon, whose proprietor was one night mysteriously summoned from a banquet to disappear forever;--the legend of l'Abbé Piot, who cursed the sea with the curse of perpetual unrest;--the legend of Aimeé Derivry of Robert, captured by Barbary pirates, and sold to become a Sultana-Validé-(she never existed, though you can find an alleged portrait in M. Sidney Daney's history of Martinique): these and many similar tales might be told to you even on a journey from St. Pierre to Fort-de-France, or from Lamentin to La Trinité, according as a rising of some peak into view, or the sudden opening of an anse before the vessel's approach, recalls them to a creole companion.

And new legends are even now being made; for in this remote colony, to which white immigration has long ceased,--a country so mountainous that people are born (and buried in the same valley without ever seeing towns but a few hours' journey beyond their native hills, and that distinct racial types are forming within three leagues of each other,--the memory of an event or of a name which has had influence enough to send one echo through all the forty-nine miles of peaks and craters is apt to create legend within a single generation. Nowhere in the world, perhaps, is popular imagination more oddly naive and superstitious; nowhere are facts more readily exaggerated or distorted into unrecognizability; and the forms of any legend thus originated become furthermore specialized in each separate locality where it obtains a habitat. On tracing back such a legend or tradition to its primal source, one feels amazed at the variety of the metamorphoses which the simplest fact may rapidly assume in the childish fancy of this people.

I was first incited to make an effort in this direction by hearing the remarkable story of "Missié Bon." No legendary expression is more wide-spread throughout the country than temps coudvent Missié Bon (in the time of the big wind of Monsieur Bon). Whenever a hurricane threatens, you will hear colored folks expressing the hope that it may not be like the temps coudvent Missié Bon. And some years ago, in all the creole police-courts, old colored witnesses who could not tell their age would invariably try to give the magistrate some idea of it by referring to the never-to-be-forgotten temps coudvent Missié Bon.

... "Temps coudvent Missié Bon, moin té ka tété encò" (I was a child at the breast in the time of the big wind of Missié Bon); or "Temps coudvent Missié Bon, moin té toutt piti manmaill,--moin ka souvini y pouend caïe manman moin pôté allé." (I was a very, very little child in the time of the big wind of Missié Bon,--but I remember it blew mamma's cabin away.) The magistrates of those days knew the exact date of the temps coudvent.

But all could learn about Missié Bon among the country-folk was this: Missié Bon used to be a great slave-owner and a cruel master. He was a very wicked man. And he treated his slaves so terribly that at last the Good-God (Bon-Dié) one day sent a

great wind which blew away Missié Bon and Missié Bon's house and everybody in it, so that nothing was ever heard of them again.

It was not without considerable research that I succeeded at last in finding some one able to give me the true facts in the case of Monsieur Bon. My informant was a charming old gentleman, who represents a New York company in the city of St. Pierre, and who takes more interest in the history of his native island than creoles usually do. He laughed at the legend I had found, but informed me that I could trace it, with slight variations, through nearly every canton of Martinique.

"And now" he continued "I can tell you the real history of 'Missié Bon'--for he was an old friend of my grandfather; and my grandfather related it to me.

"It may have been in 1809--I can give you the exact date by reference to some old papers if necessary--Monsieur Bon was Collector of Customs at St. Pierre: and my grandfather was doing business in the Grande Rue. A certain captain, whose vessel had been consigned to my grandfather, invited him and the collector to breakfast in his cabin. My grandfather was so busy he could not accept the invitation;--but Monsieur Bon went with the captain on board the bark.

... "It was a morning like this; the sea was just as blue and

the sky as clear. All of a sudden, while they were at breakfast, the sea began to break heavily without a wind, and clouds came up, with every sign of a hurricane. The captain was obliged to sacrifice his anchor; there was no time to land his guest: he hoisted a little jib and top-gallant, and made for open water, taking Monsieur Bon with him. Then the hurricane came; and from that day to this nothing has ever been heard of the bark nor of the captain nor of Monsieur Bon." [6]

"But did Monsieur Bon ever do anything to deserve the reputation he has left among the people ?" I asked.

"_Ah! le pauvre vieux corps_! ... A kind old soul who never uttered a harsh word to human being;--timid,--good-natured,--old-fashioned even for those old-fashioned days.... Never had a slave in his life!"

II.

The legend of "Missié Bon" had prepared me to hear without surprise the details of a still more singular tradition,--that of Father Labat.... I was returning from a mountain ramble with my guide, by way of the Ajoupa-Bouillon road;--the sun had gone down; there remained only a blood-red glow in the west, against which the silhouettes of the hills took a velvety blackness indescribably soft; the stars were beginning to twinkle out everywhere through the violet. Suddenly I noticed on the flank of a neighboring morne--which I remembered by day as an apparently uninhabitable wilderness of bamboos, tree-ferns, and

balisiers--a swiftly moving point of yellow light. My guide had observed it simultaneously;--he crossed himself, and exclaimed:

"_Moin ka couè c'est fanal Pè Labatt!_" (I believe it is the lantern of Perè Labat.)

"Does he live there?" I innocently inquired.

"Live there?--why he has been dead hundreds of years! ...
Ouill! you never heard of Pè Labatt?"...

"Not the same who wrote a book about Martinique?"

"Yes,--himself.... They say he comes back at night. Ask mother about him;--she knows."...

...I questioned old Théréza as soon as we reached home; and she told me all she knew about "Pè Labatt." I found that the father had left a reputation far more wide-spread than the recollection of "Missié Bon,"--that his memory had created, in fact, the most impressive legend in all Martinique folk-lore.

"Whether you really saw Pè Labatt's lantern," said old Thereza, "I do not know;--there are a great many queer lights to be seen after nightfall among these mornes. Some are zombi-fires; and some are lanterns carried by living men; and some are lights burning in ajoupas so high up that you can only see a gleam coming through the trees now and then. It is not everybody who sees the lantern of Pè Labatt; and it is not good-luck to see it.

"Pè Labatt was a priest who lived here hundreds of years ago; and he wrote a book about what he saw. He was the first person to introduce slavery into Martinique; and it is thought that is why he comes back at night. It is his penance for having established slavery here.

"They used to say, before 1848, that when slavery should be abolished, Pè Labatt's light would not be seen any more. But I can remember very well when slavery was abolished; and I saw the light many a time after. It used to move up the Morne d'Orange every clear night;--I could see it very well from my window when I lived in St. Pierre. You knew it was Pè Labatt, because the light passed up places where no man could walk. But since the statue of Notre Dame de la Garde was placed on the Morne d'Orange, people tell me that the light is not seen there any more.

"But it is seen elsewhere; and it is not good-luck to see it. Everybody is afraid of seeing it.... And mothers tell their children, when the little ones are naughty: '_Mi! moin ké fai Pè Labatt vini pouend ou,--oui!_' (I will make Pè Labatt come and take you away.)"....

What old Théréza stated regarding the establishment of slavery in Martinique by Père Labat, I knew required no investigation,--inasmuch as slavery was a flourishing institution in the time of Père Dutertre, another Dominican missionary and historian, who wrote his book,--a queer book in old French, [7] --before Labat was born.

But it did not take me long to find out that such was the general belief about Père Labat's sin and penance, and to ascertain that his name is indeed used to frighten naughty children. _Eh! ti manmaille-là, moin ké fai Pè Labatt vini pouend ou!_--is an exclamation often heard in the vicinity of ajoupas just about the hour when all found a good little children ought to be in bed and asleep.

... The first variation of the legend I heard was on a plantation in the neighborhood of Ajoupa-Bouillon. There I was informed that Père Labat had come to his death by the bite of a snake,--the hugest snake that ever was seen in Martinique. Perè Labat had believed it possible to exterminate the fer-de-lance, and had adopted extraordinary measures for its destruction. On receiving his death-wound he exclaimed, "_C'est pè toutt sépent qui té ka mòdé moin_" (It is the Father of all Snakes that has bitten me); and he vowed that he would come back to destroy the brood, and would haunt the island until there should be not one snake left. And the light that moves about the peaks at night is the lantern of Père Labat still hunting for snakes.

"_Ou pa pè suivre ti limié-là piess!_" continued my informant. "You cannot follow that little light at all;--when you first see it, it is perhaps only a kilometre away; the next moment it is two, three, or four kilometres away."

I was also told that the light is frequently seen near Grande Anse, on the other side of the island,--and on the heights of La Caravelle, the long fantastic promontory that reaches three leagues into the sea south of the harbor of La Trinité. [8]

And on my return to St. Pierre I found a totally different version of the legend;--my informant being one Manm-Robert, a kind old soul who kept a little _boutique-lapacotte_ (a little booth where cooked food is sold) near the precipitous Street of the Friendships.

... "_Ah! Pè Labatt, oui!_" she exclaimed, at my first question,--"Pè Labatt was a good priest who lived here very long ago. And they did him a great wrong here;--they gave him a wicked _coup d'langue_ (tongue wound); and the hurt given by an evil tongue is worse than a serpent's bite. They lied about him; they slandered him until they got him sent away from the country. But before the Government 'embarked' him, when he got to that quay, he took off his shoe and he shook the dust of his shoe upon that quay, and he said: 'I curse you, O Martinique!--I curse you! There will be food for nothing, and your people will not even be able to buy it! There will be clothing material for nothing, and your people will not be able to get so much as one dress! And the children will beat their mothers!... You banish me;--but I will come back again.'" [9]

"And then what happened, Manm-Robert?"

"_Eh! fouinq! chè_, all that Pè Labatt said has come true. There is food for almost nothing, and people are starving here in St. Pierre; there is clothing for almost nothing, and poor girls cannot earn enough to buy a dress. The pretty printed calicoes

(_indiennes_) that used to be two francs and a half the metre, now sell at twelve sous the metre; but nobody has any money. And if you read our papers,--_Les Colonies, La Defense Coloniale_,-- you will find that there are sons wicked enough to beat their mothers: _oui! yche ka batt manman!_ It is the malediction of Pè Labatt."

This was all that Manm-Robert could tell me. Who had related the story to her? Her mother. Whence had her mother obtained it? From her grandmother.... Subsequently I found many persons to confirm the tradition of the curse,--precisely as Manm-Robert had related it.

Only a brief while after this little interview I was invited to pass an afternoon at the home of a gentleman residing upon the Morne d' Orange,--the locality supposed to be especially haunted by Père Labat. The house of Monsieur M-- stands on the side of the hill, fully five hundred feet up, and in a grove of trees: an antiquated dwelling, with foundations massive as the walls of a fortress, and huge broad balconies of stone. From one of these balconies there is a view of the city, the harbor¹ and Pelée, which I believe even those who have seen Naples would confess to be one of the fairest sights in the world.... Towards evening I obtained a chance to ask my kind host some questions about the legend of his neighborhood.

... "Ever since I was a child," observed Monsieur M--, "I heard it said that Père Labat haunted this mountain, and I often saw what was alleged to be his light. It looked very much like a lantern swinging in the hand of some one climbing the hill. A queer fact was that it used to come from the direction of Carbet, skirt the Morne d'Orange a few hundred feet above the road, and then move up the face of what seemed a sheer precipice. Of course somebody carried that light,--probably a negro; and perhaps the cliff is not so inaccessible as it looks: still, we could never discover who the individual was, nor could we imagine what his purpose might have been.... But the light has not been seen here now for years."

III.

And who was Père Labat,--this strange priest whose memory, weirdly disguised by legend, thus lingers in the oral literature of the colored people? Various encyclopedias answer the question, but far less fully and less interestingly than Dr. Rufz, the Martinique historian, whose article upon him in the _Etudes Statistiques et Historiques_ has that charm of sympathetic comprehension by which a master-biographer sometimes reveals himself a sort of necromancer,--making us feel a vanished personality with the power of a living presence. Yet even the colorless data given by dictionaries of biography should suffice to convince most readers that Jean-Baptiste Labat must be ranked among the extraordinary men of his century.

Nearly two hundred years ago--24th August, 1693--a traveller wearing the white habit of the Dominican order, partly covered by

a black camlet overcoat, entered the city of Rochelle. He was very tall and robust, with one of those faces, at once grave and keen, which bespeak great energy and quick discernment. This was the Père Labat, a native of Paris, then in his thirtieth year. Half priest, half layman, one might have been tempted to surmise from his attire; and such a judgement would not have been unjust. Labat's character was too large for his calling,--expanded naturally beyond the fixed limits of the ecclesiastical life; and throughout the whole active part of his strange career we find in him this dual character of layman and monk. He had come to Rochelle to take passage for Martinique. Previously he had been professor of philosophy and mathematics at Nancy. While watching a sunset one evening from the window of his study, some one placed in his hands a circular issued by the Dominicans of the French West Indies, calling for volunteers. Death had made many wide gaps in their ranks; and various misfortunes had reduced their finances to such an extent that ruin threatened all their West Indian establishments. Labat, with the quick decision of a mind suffering from the restraints of a life too narrow for it, had at once resigned his professorship, and engaged himself for the missions.

... In those days, communication with the West Indies was slow, irregular, and difficult. Labat had to wait at Rochelle six whole months for a ship. In the convent at Rochelle, where he stayed, there were others waiting for the same chance,--including several Jesuits and Capuchins as well as Dominicans. These unanimously elected him their leader,--a significant fact considering the mutual jealousy of the various religious orders of that period, There was something in the energy and frankness of Labat's character which seems to have naturally gained him the confidence and ready submission of others.

... They sailed in November; and Labat still found himself in the position of a chief on board. His account of the voyage is amusing;--in almost everything except practical navigation, he would appear to have regulated the life of passengers and crew. He taught the captain mathematics; and invented amusements of all kinds to relieve the monotony of a two months' voyage.

... As the ship approached Martinique from the north, Labat first beheld the very grimmest part of the lofty coast,--the region of Macouba; and the impression it made upon him was not pleasing. "The island," he writes, "appeared to me all one frightful mountain, broken everywhere by precipices: nothing about it pleased me except the verdure which everywhere met the eye, and which seemed to me both novel and agreeable, considering the time of the year."

Almost immediately after his arrival he was sent by the Superior of the convent to Macouba, for acclimation; Macouba then being considered the healthiest part of the island. Whoever makes the journey on horseback thither from St. Pierre to-day can testify to the exactitude of Labat's delightful narrative of the trip. So little has that part of the island changed since two centuries that scarcely a line of the father's description would need correction to adopt it bodily for an account of a ride to Macouba in 1889.

At Macouba everybody welcomes him, pets him,--finally becomes enthusiastic about him. He fascinates and dominates the little community almost at first sight. "There is an inexpressible charm," says Rufz,--commenting upon this portion of Labat's narrative,--"in the novelty of relations between men: no one has yet been offended, no envy has yet been excited;--it is scarcely possible even to guess whence that ill-will you must sooner or later provoke is going to come from;--there are no rivals;--there are no enemies. You are everybody's friend; and many are hoping you will continue to be only theirs." ... Labat knew how to take legitimate advantage of this good-will;--he persuaded his admirers to rebuild the church at Macouba, according to designs made by himself.

At Macouba, however, he was not permitted to sojourn as long as the good people of the little burgh would have deemed even reasonable: he had shown certain aptitudes which made his presence more than desirable at Saint-Jacques, the great plantation of the order on the Capesterre, or Windward coast. It was in debt for 700,000 pounds of sugar,--an appalling condition in those days,--and seemed doomed to get more heavily in debt every successive season. Labat inspected everything, and set to work for the plantation, not merely as general director, but as engineer, architect, machinist, inventor. He did really wonderful things. You can see them for yourself if you ever go to Martinique; for the old Dominican plantation--now Government property, and leased at an annual rent of 50,000 francs--remains one of the most valuable in the colonies because of Labat's work upon it. The watercourses directed by him still excite the admiration of modern professors of hydraulics; the mills he built or invented are still good;--the treatise he wrote on sugar-making remained for a hundred and fifty years the best of its kind, and the manual of French planters. In less than two years Labat had not only rescued the plantation from bankruptcy, but had made it rich; and if the monks deemed him veritably inspired, the test of time throws no ridicule on their astonishment at the capacities of the man. ... Even now the advice he formulated as far back as 1720--about secondary cultures,--about manufactories to establish,--about imports, exports, and special commercial methods--has lost little of its value.

Such talents could not fail to excite wide-spread admiration,--nor to win for him a reputation in the colonies beyond precedent. He was wanted everywhere.... Auger, the Governor of Guadeloupe, sent for him to help the colonists in fortifying and defending the island against the English; and we find the missionary quite as much at home in this new role--building bastions, scarps, counterterscarps, ravelins, etc.--as he seemed to be upon the plantation of Saint-Jacques. We find him even taking part in an engagement;--himself conducting an artillery duel,--loading, pointing, and firing no less than twelve times after the other French gunners had been killed or driven from their posts. After a tremendous English volley, one of the enemy cries out to him in French: "White Father, have they told?" (*Père Blanc, ont-ils porté?*) He replies only after returning the fire with, a better-directed aim, and then repeats the mocking question: "Have they told?" "Yes, they have," confesses the Englishman, in surprised dismay; "but we will pay you back for that!"...

... Returning to Martinique with new titles to distinction,

Labat was made Superior of the order in that island, and likewise Vicar-Apostolic. After building the Convent of the Mouillage, at St. Pierre, and many other edifices, he undertook that series of voyages in the interests of the Dominicans whereof the narration fills six ample volumes. As a traveller Père Labat has had few rivals in his own field;--no one, indeed, seems to have been able to repeat some of his feats. All the French and several of the English colonies were not merely visited by him, but were studied in their every geographical detail. Travel in the West Indies is difficult to a degree of which strangers have little idea; but in the time of Père Labat there were few roads,--and a far greater variety of obstacles. I do not believe there are half a dozen whites in Martinique who thoroughly know their own island,--who have even travelled upon all its roads; but Labat knew it as he knew the palm of his hand, and travelled where roads had never been made. Equally well he knew Guadeloupe and other islands; and he learned all that it was possible to learn in those years about the productions and resources of the other colonies. He travelled with the fearlessness and examined with the thoroughness of a Humboldt,--so far as his limited science permitted: had he possessed the knowledge of modern naturalists and geologists he would probably have left little for others to discover after him. Even at the present time West Indian travellers are glad to consult him for information.

These duties involved prodigious physical and mental exertion, in a climate deadly to Europeans. They also involved much voyaging in waters haunted by filibusters and buccaneers. But nothing appears to daunt Labat. As for the filibusters, he becomes their comrade and personal friend;--he even becomes their chaplain, and does not scruple to make excursions with them. He figures in several sea-fights;--on one occasion he aids in the capture of two English vessels,--and then occupies himself in making the prisoners, among whom are several ladies, enjoy the event like a holiday. On another voyage Labat's vessel is captured by a Spanish ship. At one moment sabres are raised above his head, and loaded muskets levelled at his breast;--the next, every Spaniard is on his knees, appalled by a cross that Labat holds before the eyes of the captors,--the cross worn by officers of the Inquisition,--the terrible symbol of the Holy Office. "It did not belong to me," he says, "but to one of our brethren who had left it by accident among my effects." He seems always prepared in some way to meet any possible emergency. No humble and timid monk this: he has the frame and temper of those medieval abbots who could don with equal indifference the helmet or the cowl. He is apparently even more of a soldier than a priest. When English corsairs attempt a descent on the Martinique coast at Sainte-Marie they find Père Labat waiting for them with all the negroes of the Saint-Jacques plantation, to drive them back to their ships.

For other dangers he exhibits absolute unconcern. He studies the phenomena of hurricanes with almost pleasurable interest, while his comrades on the ship abandon hope. When seized with yellow-fever, then known as the Siamese Sickness (mal de Siam), he refuses to stay in bed the prescribed time, and rises to say his mass. He faints at the altar; yet a few days later we hear of him on horseback again, travelling over the mountains in the worst and hottest season of the year....

... Labat was thirty years old when he went to the Antilles;--he was only forty-two when his work was done. In less than twelve years he made his order the most powerful and wealthy of any in the West Indies,--lifted their property out of bankruptcy to rebuild it upon a foundation of extraordinary prosperity. As Rufz observes without exaggeration, the career of Père Labat in the Antilles seems to more than realize the antique legend of the labors of Hercules. Whithersoever he went,--except in the English colonies,--his passage was memorialized by the rising of churches, convents, and schools,--as well as mills, forts, and refineries. Even cities claim him as their founder. The solidity of his architectural creations is no less remarkable than their excellence of design;--much of what he erected still remains; what has vanished was removed by human agency, and not by decay; and when the old Dominican church at St. Pierre had to be pulled down to make room for a larger edifice, the workmen complained that the stones could not be separated,--that the walls seemed single masses of rock. There can be no doubt, moreover, that he largely influenced the life of the colonies during those years, and expanded their industrial and commercial capacities.

He was sent on a mission to Rome after these things had been done, and never returned from Europe. There he travelled more or less in after-years; but finally settled at Paris, where he prepared and published the voluminous narrative of his own voyages, and other curious books;--manifesting as a writer the same tireless energy he had shown in so many other capacities. He does not, however, appear to have been happy. Again and again he prayed to be sent back to his beloved Antilles, and for some unknown cause the prayer was always refused. To such a character, the restraint of the cloister must have proved a slow agony; but he had to endure it for many long years. He died at Paris in 1738, aged seventy-five.

... It was inevitable that such a man should make bitter enemies: his preferences, his position, his activity, his business shrewdness, his necessary self-assertion, yet must have created secret hate and jealousy even when open malevolence might not dare to show itself. And to these natural results of personal antagonism or opposition were afterwards superadded various resentments--irrational, perhaps, but extremely violent,--caused by the father's cynical frankness as a writer. He spoke freely about the family origin and personal failings of various colonists considered high personages in their own small world; and to this day his book has an evil reputation undeserved in those old creole communities, but where any public mention of a family scandal is never just forgiven or forgotten.... But probably even before his work appeared it had been secretly resolved that he should never be permitted to return to Martinique or Guadeloupe after his European mission. The exact purpose of the Government in this policy remains a mystery,--whatever ingenious writers may have alleged to the contrary. We only know that M. Adrien Dessalles,--the trustworthy historian of Martinique,--while searching among the old Archives de la Marine, found there a ministerial letter to the Intendant de Vaucresson in which this statement occurs;--

... "Le Père Labat shall never be suffered to return to the colonies, whatever efforts he may make to obtain permission."

IV.

One rises from the perusal of the "Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique" with a feeling approaching regret; for although the six puffy little volumes composing it--full of quaint drawings, plans, and odd attempts at topographical maps--reveal a prolix writer, Père Labat is always able to interest. He reminds you of one of those slow, precise, old-fashioned conversationalists who measure the weight of every word and never leave anything to the imagination of the audience, yet who invariably reward the patience of their listeners sooner or later by reflections of surprising profundity or theories of a totally novel description. But what particularly impresses the reader of these volumes is not so much the recital of singular incidents and facts as the revelation of the author's personality. Reading him, you divine a character of enormous force,--gifted but unevenly balanced; singularly shrewd in worldly affairs, and surprisingly credulous in other respects; superstitious and yet cynical; unsympathetic by his positivism, but agreeable through natural desire to give pleasure; just by nature, yet capable of merciless severity; profoundly devout, but withal tolerant for his calling and his time. He is sufficiently free from petty bigotry to make fun of the scruples of his brethren in the matter of employing heretics; and his account of the manner in which he secured the services of a first-class refiner for the Martinique plantation at the Fond Saint-Jacques is not the least amusing page in the book. He writes: "The religious who had been appointed Superior in Guadeloupe wrote me that he would find it difficult to employ this refiner because the man was a Lutheran. This scruple gave me pleasure, as I had long wanted to have have him upon our plantation in the Fond Saint-Jacques, but did not know how I would be able to manage it! I wrote to the Superior at once that all he had to do was to send the man to me, because it was a matter of indifference to me whether the sugar he might make were Catholic or Lutheran sugar, provided it were very white." [10]

He displays equal frankness in confessing an error or a discomfiture. He acknowledges that while Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy, he used to teach that there were no tides in the tropics; and in a discussion as to whether the *_diablotin_* (a now almost extinct species of West Indian nocturnal bird) were fish flesh, and might or might not be eaten in Lent, he tells us that he was fairly worsted,--(although he could cite the celebrated myth of the "barnacle-geese" as a "fact" in justification of one's right to doubt the nature of diablotins).

One has reason to suspect that Père Labat, notwithstanding his references to the decision of the Church that diablotins were not birds, felt quite well assured within himself that they were. There is a sly humor in his story of these controversies, which would appear to imply that while well pleased at the decision referred to, he knew all about diablotins. Moreover, the father

betrays certain tendencies to gormandize not altogether in harmony with the profession of an ascetic.... There were parrots in nearly all of the French Antilles in those days [11] and Père Labat does not attempt to conceal his fondness for cooked parrots. (He does not appear to have cared much for them as pets: if they could not talk well, he condemned them forthwith to the pot.) "They all live upon fruits and seeds," he writes, "and their flesh contracts the odor and color of that particular fruit or seed they feed upon. They become exceedingly fat in the season when the guavas are ripe; and when they eat the seeds of the *_Bois d'Inde_* they have an odor of nutmeg and cloves which is delightful (*_une odeur de muscade et de girofle qui fait plaisir_*)." He recommends four superior ways of preparing them, as well as other fowls, for the table, of which the first and the best way is "to pluck them alive, then to make them swallow vinegar, and then to strangle them while they have the vinegar still in their throats by twisting their necks"; and the fourth way is "to skin them alive" (*de les écorcher tout en vie_*).... "It is certain," he continues, "that these ways are excellent, and that fowls that have to be cooked in a hurry thereby obtain an admirable tenderness (*_une tendreté admirable_*)." Then he makes a brief apology to his readers, not for the inhumanity of his recipes, but for a display of culinary knowledge scarcely becoming a monk, and acquired only through those peculiar necessities which colonial life in the tropics imposed upon all alike. The touch of cruelty here revealed produces an impression which there is little in the entire work capable of modifying. Labat seems to have possessed but a very small quantity of altruism; his cynicism on the subject of animal suffering is not offset by any visible sympathy with human pain;--he never compassionates: you may seek in vain through all his pages for one gleam of the goodness of gentle Père Du Tertre, who, filled with intense pity for the condition of the blacks, prays masters to be merciful and just to their slaves for the love of God. Labat suggests, on the other hand, that slavery is a good means of redeeming negroes from superstition and saving their souls from hell: he selects and purchases them himself for the Saint-Jacques plantation, never makes a mistake or a bad bargain, and never appears to feel a particle of commiseration for their lot. In fact, the emotional feeling displayed by Père Du Tertre (whom he mocks slyly betimes) must have seemed to him rather condemnable than praiseworthy; for Labat regarded the negro as a natural child of the devil,--a born sorcerer,--an evil being wielding occult power.

Perhaps the chapters on negro sorcery are the most astonishing in the book, displaying on the part of this otherwise hard and practical nature a credulity almost without limit. After having related how he had a certain negro sent out of the country "who predicted the arrival of vessels and other things to come,--in so far, at least, as the devil himself was able to know and reveal these matters to him," he plainly states his own belief in magic as follows:

"I know there are many people who consider as pure imagination, and as silly stories, or positive false-hoods, all that is related about sorcerers and their compacts with the devil. I was myself for a long time of this opinion. Moreover, I am aware that what is said on this subject is frequently exaggerated; but

I am now convinced it must be acknowledged that all which has been related is not entirely false, although perhaps it may not be entirely true."...

Therewith he begins to relate stories upon what may have seemed unimpeachable authority in those days. The first incident narrated took place, he assures us, in the Martinique Dominican convent, shortly before his arrival in the colony. One of the fathers, Père Fraise, had had brought to Martinique, "from the kingdom of Juda (?) in Guinea," a little negro about nine or ten years old. Not long afterwards there was a serious drought, and the monks prayed vainly for rain. Then the negro child, who had begun to understand and speak a little French, told his masters that he was a Rain-maker, that he could obtain them all the rain they wanted. "This proposition," says Père Labat, "greatly astonished the fathers: they consulted together, and at last, curiosity overcoming reason, they gave their consent that this unbaptized child should make some rain fall on their garden." The unbaptized child asked them if they wanted "a big or a little rain"; they answered that a moderate rain would satisfy them. Thereupon the little negro got three oranges, and placed them on the ground in a line at a short distance from one another, and bowed down before each of them in turn, muttering words in an unknown tongue. Then he got three small orange-branches, stuck a branch in each orange, and repeated his prostrations and mutterings;--after which he took one of the branches, stood up, and watched the horizon. A small cloud appeared, and he pointed the branch at it. It approached swiftly, rested above the garden, and sent down a copious shower of rain. Then the boy made a hole in the ground, and buried the oranges and the branches. The fathers were amazed to find that not a single drop of rain had fallen outside their garden. They asked the boy who had taught him this sorcery, and he answered them that among the blacks on board the slave-ship which had brought him over there were some Rain-makers who had taught him. Père Labat declares there is no question as to the truth of the occurrence: he cites the names of Père Fraise, Père Rosié", Père Temple, and Père Bournot,--all members of his own order,--as trust-worthy witnesses of this incident.

Père Labat displays equal credulity in his recital of a still more extravagant story told him by Madame la Comtesse du Gênes. M. le Comte du Gênes, husband of the lady in question, and commander of a French squadron, captured the English fort of Gorea in 1696, and made prisoners of all the English slaves in the service of the factory there established. But the vessel on which these were embarked was unable to leave the coast, in spite of a good breeze: she seemed bewitched. Some of the the slaves finally told the captain there was a negress on board who had enchanted the ship, and who had the power to "dry up the hearts" of all who refused to obey her. A number of deaths taking place among the blacks, the captain ordered autopsies made, and it was found that the hearts of the dead negroes were desiccated. The negress was taken on deck, tied to a gun and whipped, but uttered no cry;--the ship's surgeon, angered at her stoicism, took a hand in the punishment, and flogged her "with all his force." Thereupon she told him that inasmuch as he had abused her without reason, his heart also should be "dried up." He died next day; and his heart was found in the condition predicted. All this

time the ship could not be made to move in any direction; and the negress told the captain that until he should put her and her companions on shore he would never be able to sail. To convince him of her power she further asked him to place three fresh melons in a chest, to lock the chest and put a guard over it; when she should tell him to unlock it, there would be no melons there. The capttain made the experiment. When the chest was opened, the melons appeared to be there; but on touching them it was found that only the outer rind remained: the interior had been dried up,--like the surgeon's heart. Thereupon the captain put the witch and her friends all ashore, and sailed away without further trouble.

Another story of African sorcery for the truth of which Père Labat earnestly vouches is the following:

A negro was sentenced to be burned alive for witchcraft at St. Thomas in 1701;--his principal crime was "having made a little figure of baked clay to speak." A certain creole, meeting the negro on his way to the place of execution, jeeringly observed, "Well, you cannot make your little figure talk any more now;--it has been broken." "If the gentleman allow me," replied the prisoner, "I will make the cane he carries in his hand speak." The creole's curiosity was strongly aroused: he prevailed upon the guards to halt a few minutes, and permit the prisoner to make the experiment. The negro then took the cane, stuck it into the ground in the middle of the road, whispered something to it, and asked the gentleman what he wished to know. "I, would like to know," answered the latter, "whether the ship has yet sailed from Europe, and when she will arrive." "Put your ear to the head of the cane," said the negro. On doing so the creole distinctly heard a thin voice which informed him that the vessel in question had left a certain French port on such a date; that she would reach St. Thomas within three days; that she had been delayed on her voyage by a storm which had carried away her foretop and her mizzen sail; that she had such and such passengers on board (mentioning the names), all in good health.... After this incident the negro was burned alive; but within three days the vessel arrived in port, and the prediction or divination was found to have been absolutely correct in every particular.

... Père Labat in no way disapproves the atrocious sentence inflicted upon the wretched negro: in his opinion such predictions were made by the power and with the personal aid of the devil; and for those who knowingly maintained relations with the devil, he could not have regarded any punishment too severe. That he could be harsh enough himself is amply shown in various accounts of his own personal experience with alleged sorcerers, and especially in the narration of his dealings with one-- apparently a sort of African doctor--who was a slave on a neighboring plantation, but used to visit the Saint-Jacques quarters by stealth to practise his art. One of the slaves of the order, a negress, falling very sick, the wizard was sent for; and he came with all his paraphernalia--little earthen pots and fetiches, etc.--during the night. He began to practise his incantations, without the least suspicion that Père Labat was watching him through a chink; and, after having consulted his fetiches, he told the woman she would die within four days. At this juncture the priest suddenly burst.in the door and entered,

followed by several powerful slaves. He dashed to pieces the soothsayer's articles, and attempted to reassure the frightened negress, by declaring the prediction a lie inspired by the devil. Then he had the sorcerer stripped and flogged in his presence.

"I had him given," he calmly observes, "about (_environ_) three hundred lashes, which flayed him (_l'écorchait_) from his shoulders to his knees. He screamed like a madman. All the negroes trembled, and assured me that the devil would cause my death.... Then I had the wizard put in irons, after having had him well washed with a _pimentade_,--that is to say, with brine in which pimentos and small lemons have been crushed. This causes a horrible pain to those skinned by the whip; but it is a certain remedy against gangrene."...

And then he sent the poor wretch back to his master with a note requesting the latter to repeat the punishment,--a demand that seems to have been approved, as the owner of the negro was "a man who feared God." Yet Père Labat is obliged to confess that in spite of all his efforts, the sick negress died on the fourth day,--as the sorcerer had predicted. This fact must have strongly confirmed his belief that the devil was at the bottom of the whole affair, and caused him to doubt whether even a flogging of about three hundred lashes, followed by a pimentade, were sufficient chastisement for the miserable black. Perhaps the tradition of this frightful whipping may have had something to do with the terror which still attaches to the name of the Dominican in Martinique. The legal extreme punishment was twenty-nine lashes.

Père Labat also avers that in his time the negroes were in the habit of carrying sticks which had the power of imparting to any portion of the human body touched by them a most severe chronic pain. He at first believed, he says, that these pains were merely rheumatic; but after all known remedies for rheumatism had been fruitlessly applied, he became convinced there was something occult and diabolical in the manner of using and preparing these sticks.... A fact worthy of note is that this belief is still prevalent in Martinique!

One hardly ever meets in the country a negro who does not carry either a stick or a cutlass, or both. The cutlass is indispensable to those who work in the woods or upon plantations; the stick is carried both as a protection against snakes and as a weapon of offence and defence in village quarrels, for unless a negro be extraordinarily drunk he will not strike his fellow with a cutlass. The sticks are usually made of a strong dense wood: those most sought after of a material termed _moudongue_, [12] almost as tough, but much lighter than, our hickory.

On inquiring whether any of the sticks thus carried were held to possess magic powers, I was assured by many country people that there were men who knew a peculiar method of "arranging" sticks so that to touch any person with them even lightly, _and through any thickness of clothing_, would produce terrible and continuous pain.

Believing in these things, and withal unable to decide whether

the sun revolved about the earth, or the earth about the sun, [13] Père Labat was, nevertheless, no more credulous and no more ignorant than the average missionary of his time: it is only by contrast with his practical perspicacity in other matters, his worldly rationalism and executive shrewdness, that this superstitious naïveté impresses one as odd. And how singular sometimes is the irony of Time! All the wonderful work the Dominican accomplished has been forgotten by the people; while all the witchcrafts that he warred against survive and flourish openly; and his very name is seldom uttered but in connection with superstitions,—has been, in fact, preserved among the blacks by the power of superstition alone, by the belief in zombis and goblins.... " _Mi! ti manmaille-là, moin ké fai Pè Labatt vini pouend ou! _"...

V.

Few habitants of St. Pierre now remember that the beautiful park behind the cathedral used to be called the Savanna of the White Fathers,—and the long shadowed meadow beside the Roxelane, the Savanna of the Black Fathers: the Jesuits. All the great religious orders have long since disappeared from the colony: their edifices have been either converted to other uses or demolished; their estates have passed into other hands.... Were their labors, then, productive of merely ephemeral results?—was the colossal work of a Père Labat all in vain, so far as the future is concerned? The question is not easily answered; but it is worth considering.

Of course the material prosperity which such men toiled to obtain for their order represented nothing more, even to their eyes, than the means of self-maintenance, and the accumulation of force necessary for the future missionary labors of the monastic community. The real ultimate purpose was, not the acquisition of power for the order, but for the Church, of which the orders represented only a portion of the force militant; and this purpose did not fail of accomplishment. The orders passed away only when their labors had been completed,—when Martinique had become (exteriorly, at least) more Catholic than Rome itself,—after the missionaries had done all that religious zeal could do in moulding and remoulding the human material under their control. These men could scarcely have anticipated those social and political changes which the future reserved for the colonies, and which no ecclesiastical sagacity could, in any event, have provided against. It is in the existing religious condition of these communities that one may observe and estimate the character and the probable duration of the real work accomplished by the missions.

... Even after a prolonged residence in Martinique, its visible religious condition continues to impress one as something phenomenal. A stranger, who has no opportunity to penetrate into the home life of the people, will not, perhaps, discern the full extent of the religious sentiment; but, nevertheless, however brief his stay, he will observe enough of the extravagant symbolism of the cult to fill him with surprise. Wherever he may

choose to ride or to walk, he is certain to encounter shrines, statues of saints, or immense crucifixes. Should he climb up to the clouds of the peaks, he will find them all along the way;--he will perceive them waiting for him, looming through the mists of the heights; and passing through the loveliest ravines, he will see niches hollowed out in the volcanic rocks, above and below him, or contrived in the trunks of trees bending over precipices, often in places so difficult of access that he wonders how the work could have been accomplished. All this has been done by the various property-owners throughout the country: it is the traditional custom to do it--brings good-luck! After a longer stay in the island, one discovers also that in almost every room of every dwelling--stone residence, wooden cottage, or palm-thatched ajoupa--there is a chapelle: that is, a sort of large bracket fastened to the wall, on which crosses or images are placed, with vases of flowers, and lamps or wax-tapers to be burned at night. Sometimes, moreover, statues are placed in windows, or above door-ways;--and all passers-by take off their hats to these. Over the porch of the cottage in a mountain village, where I lived for some weeks, there was an absurd little window contrived,--a sort of purely ornamental dormer,--and in this a Virgin about five inches high had been placed. At a little distance it looked like a toy,--a child's doll forgotten there; and a doll I always supposed it to be, until one day that I saw a long procession of black laborers passing before the house, every one of whom took off his hat to it.... My bedchamber in the same cottage resembled a religious museum. On the chapelle there were no less than eight Virgins, varying in height from one to sixteen inches,--a St. Joseph,--a St. John,--a crucifix,--and a host of little objects in the shape of hearts or crosses, each having some special religious significance;--while the walls were covered with framed certificates of baptism, "first-communion," confirmation, and other documents commemorating the whole church life of the family for two generations.

[Illustration: A WAYSIDE SHRINE, OR CHAPELLE.]

... Certainly the first impression created by this perpetual display of crosses, statues, and miniature chapels is not pleasing,--particularly as the work is often inartistic to a degree bordering upon the grotesque, and nothing resembling art is anywhere visible. Millions of francs must have been consumed in these creations, which have the rudeness of mediaevalism without its emotional sincerity, and which--amid the loveliness of tropic nature, the grace of palms, the many-colored fire of liana blossoms--jar on the aesthetic sense with an almost brutal violence. Yet there is a veiled poetry in these silent populations of plaster and wood and stone. They represent something older than the Middle Ages, older than Christianity,--something strangely distorted and transformed, it is true, but recognizably conserved by the Latin race from those antique years when every home had its beloved ghosts, when every wood or hill or spring had its gracious divinity, and the boundaries of all fields were marked and guarded by statues of gods.

Instances of iconoclasm are of course highly rare in a country of which no native--rich or poor, white or half-breed--fails to doff his hat before every shrine, cross, or image he may happen

to pass. Those merchants of St. Pierre or of Fort-de-France living only a few miles out of the city must certainly perform a vast number of reverences on their way to or from business;--I saw one old gentleman uncover his white head about twenty times in the course of a fifteen minutes' walk. I never heard of but one image-breaker in Martinique; and his act was the result of superstition, not of any hostility to popular faith or custom: it was prompted by the same childish feeling which moves Italian fishermen sometimes to curse St. Antony or to give his image a ducking in bad weather. This Martinique iconoclast was a negro cattle-driver who one day, feeling badly in need of a glass of tafia, perhaps, left the animals intrusted to him in care of a plaster image of the Virgin, with this menace (the phrase is on record):--

"_Moin ka quitté bef-la ba ou pou gàdé ba moin. Quand moin vini, si moin pa trouvé compte-moin, moin ké fouté ou vingt-nèf coudfouètt!_" (I leave these cattle with you to take care of for me. When I come back, if I don't find them all here, I'll give you twenty-nine lashes.)

Returning about half an hour later, he was greatly enraged to find his animals scattered in every direction;--and, rushing at the statue, he broke it from the pedestal, flung it upon the ground, and gave it twenty-nine lashes with his bull-whip. For this he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to imprisonment, with hard labor, for life! In those days there were no colored magistrates;--the judges were all _békés_.

"Rather a severe sentence," I remarked to my informant, a planter who conducted me to the scene of the alleged sacrilege.

"Severe, yes," he answered;--"and I suppose the act would seem to you more idiotic than criminal. But here, in Martinique, there were large questions involved by such an offence. Relying, as we have always done to some extent, upon religious influence as a factor in the maintenance of social order, the negro's act seemed a dangerous example."...

That the Church remains still rich and prosperous in Martinique there can be no question; but whether it continues to wield any powerful influence in the maintenance of social order is more than doubtful. A Polynesian laxity of morals among the black and colored population, and the history of race-hatreds and revolutions inspired by race-hate, would indicate that neither in ethics nor in politics does it possess any preponderant authority. By expelling various religious orders; by establishing lay schools, lycées, and other educational institutions where the teaching is largely characterized by aggressive antagonism to Catholic ideas;--by the removal of crucifixes and images from public buildings, French Radicalism did not inflict any great blow upon Church interests. So far as the white, and, one may say, the wealthy, population is concerned, the Church triumphs in her hostility to the Government schools; and to the same extent she holds an educational monopoly. No white creole would dream of sending his children to a lay school or a lycée--notwithstanding the unquestionable superiority of the educational system in the latter institutions;--and, although obliged, as the chief tax-

paying class, to bear the burden of maintaining these establishments, the whites hold them in such horror that the Government professors are socially ostracized. No doubt the prejudice or pride which abhors mixed schools aids the Church in this respect; she herself recognizes race-feeling, keeps her schools unmixed, and even in her convents, it is said, obliges the colored nuns to serve the white! For more than two centuries every white generation has been religiously moulded in the seminaries and convents; and among the native whites one never hears an overt declaration of free-thought opinion. Except among the colored men educated in the Government schools, or their foreign professors, there are no avowed free-thinkers;--and this, not because the creole whites, many of whom have been educated in Paris, are naturally narrow-minded, or incapable of sympathy with the mental expansion of the age, but because the religious question at Martinique has become so intimately complicated with the social and political one, concerning which there can be no compromise whatever, that to divorce the former from the latter is impossible. Roman Catholicism is an element of the cement which holds creole society together; and it is noteworthy that other creeds are not represented. I knew only of one Episcopalian and one Methodist in the island,--and heard a sort of legend about a solitary Jew whose whereabouts I never could discover;--but these were strangers.

It was only through the establishment of universal suffrage, which placed the white population at the mercy of its former slaves, that the Roman Church sustained any serious injury. All local positions are filled by blacks or men of color; no white creole can obtain a public office or take part in legislation; and the whole power of the black vote is ungenerously used against the interests of the class thus politically disinherited. The Church suffers in consequence: her power depended upon her intimate union with the wealthy and dominant class; and she will never be forgiven by those now in power for her sympathetic support of that class in other years. Politics yearly intensify this hostility; and as the only hope for the restoration of the whites to power, and of the Church to its old position, lies in the possibility of another empire or a revival of the monarchy, the white creoles and their Church are forced into hostility against republicanism and the republic. And political newspapers continually attack Roman Catholicism,--mock its tenets and teachings,--ridicule its dogmas and ceremonies,--satirize its priests.

In the cities and towns the Church indeed appears to retain a large place in the affection of the poorer classes;--her ceremonies are always well attended; money pours into her coffers; and one can still witness the curious annual procession of the "converted,"--aged women of color and negresses going to communion for the first time, all wearing snow-white turbans in honor of the event. But among the country people, where the dangerous forces of revolution exist, Christian feeling is almost stifled by ghastly beliefs of African origin;--the images and crucifixes still command respect, but this respect is inspired by a feeling purely fetichistic. With the political dispossession of the whites, certain dark powers, previously concealed or repressed, have obtained , formidable development. The old enemy of Père Labat, the wizard (the *_quimboiseur_*),

already wields more authority than the priest, exercises more terror than the magistrate, commands more confidence than the physician. The educated mulatto class may affect to despise him; --but he is preparing their overthrow in the dark. Astonishing is the persistence with which the African has clung to these beliefs and practices, so zealously warred upon by the Church and so mercilessly punished by the courts for centuries. He still goes to mass, and sends his children to the priest; but he goes more often to the quimboiseur and the "_magnetise_." He finds use for both beliefs, but gives large preference to the savage one,--just as he prefers the pattering of his tam tam to the music of the military band at the _Savane du Fort_.... And should it come to pass that Martinique be ever totally abandoned by its white population,--an event by no means improbable in the present order of things,--the fate of the ecclesiastical fabric so toilsomely reared by the monastic orders is not difficult to surmise.

VI.

From my window in the old Rue du Bois-Morin,--which climbs the foot of Morne Labelle by successions of high stone steps,--all the southern end of the city is visible as in a bird's-eye view. Under me is a long peaking of red-scaled roofs,--gables and dormer-windows,--with clouds of bright green here and there,--foliage of tamarind and corossolier;--westward purples and flames the great circle of the Caribbean Sea;--east and south, towering to the violet sky, curve the volcanic hills, green-clad from base to summit;--and right before me the beautiful Morne d'Orange, all palm-plumed and wood-wrapped, trends seaward and southward. And every night, after the stars come out, I see moving lights there,--lantern fires guiding the mountain-dwellers home; but I look in vain for the light of Père Labat.

And nevertheless,--although no believer in ghosts,--I see thee very plainly sometimes, thou quaint White Father, moving through winter-mists in the narrower Paris of another century; musing upon the churches that arose at thy bidding under tropic skies; dreaming of the primeval valleys changed by thy will to green-gold seas of cane,--and the strong mill that will bear thy name for two hundred years (it stands solid unto this day),--and the habitations made for thy brethren in pleasant palmy places,--and the luminous peace of thy Martinique convent,--and odor of roasting parrots fattened upon _grains de bois d'Inde_ and guavas,--" _l'odeur de muscade et de girofle qui fait plaisir_."...

Eh, Père Labat!--what changes there have been since thy day! The White Fathers have no place here now; and the Black Fathers, too, have been driven from the land, leaving only as a memory of them the perfect and ponderous architecture of the Perinnelle plantation-buildings, and the appellation of the river still known as the Rivière des Pères. Also the Ursulines are gone, leaving only their name on the corner of a crumbling street. And there are no more slaves; and there are new races and colors thou wouldst deem scandalous though beautiful; and there are no more

parrots; and there are no more diabolins. And the grand woods thou sawest in their primitive and inviolate beauty, as if fresh from the Creator's touch in the morning of the world, are passing away; the secular trees are being converted into charcoal, or sawn into timber for the boat-builders: thou shouldst see two hundred men pulling some forest giant down to the sea upon the two-wheeled screaming thing they call a "devil" (_yon diabe_),--cric-crac!--cric-crac!--all chanting together;--

"_Soh-soh!--yaïe-yah!
Rhâlé bois-cano!_"

And all that ephemeral man has had power to change has been changed,--ideas, morals, beliefs, the whole social fabric. But the eternal summer remains,--and the Hesperian magnificence of azure sky and violet sea,--and the jewel-colors of the perpetual hills;--the same tepid winds that rippled thy cane-fields two hundred years ago still blow over Sainte-Marie;--the same purple shadows lengthen and dwindle and turn with the wheeling of the sun. God's witchery still fills this land; and the heart of the stranger is even yet snared by the beauty of it; and the dreams of him that forsakes it will surely be haunted--even as were thine own, Père Labat--by memories of its Eden-summer: the sudden leap of the light over a thousand peaks in the glory of tropic dawn,--the perfumed peace of enormous azure noons,--and shapes of palm wind-rocked in the burning of colossal sunsets,--and the silent flickering of the great fire-flies through the lukewarm darkness, when mothers call their children home... "_Mi fanal Pè Labatt!--mi Pè Labatt ka vini pouend ou!_"

CHAPTER IV. LA GUIABLESSE.

I.

Night in all countries brings with it vaguenesses and illusions which terrify certain imaginations;--but in the tropics it produces effects peculiarly impressive and peculiarly sinister. Shapes of vegetation that startle even while the sun shines upon them assume, after his setting, a grimness,--a grotesquery,--a suggestiveness for which there is no name.... In the North a tree is simply a tree;--here it is a personality that makes itself felt; it has a vague physiognomy, an indefinable _Me_: it is an Individual (with a capital I); it is a Being (with a capital B).

From the high woods, as the moon mounts, fantastic darkneses descend into the roads,--black distortions, mockeries, bad dreams,--an endless procession of goblins. Least startling are the shadows flung down by the various forms of palm, because instantly recognizable;--yet these take the semblance of giant fingers opening and closing over the way, or a black crawling of unutterable spiders....

Nevertheless, these phasma seldom alarm the solitary and belated Bitaco: the darkneses that creep stealthily along the path have no frightful signification for him,--do not appeal to his imagination;--if he suddenly starts and stops and stares, it is not because of such shapes, but because he has perceived two specks of orange light, and is not yet sure whether they are only fire-flies, or the eyes of a trigonocephalus. The spectres of his fancy have nothing in common with those indistinct and monstrous umbrages: what he most fears, next to the deadly serpent, are human witchcrafts. A white rag, an old bone lying in the path, might be a malefice which, if trodden upon, would cause his leg to blacken and swell up to the size of the limb of an elephant;--an unopened bundle of plantain leaves or of bamboo strippings, dropped by the way-side, might contain the skin of a Soucouyan. But the ghastly being who doffs or dons his skin at will--and the Zombi--and the Moun-Mò--may be quelled or exorcised by prayer; and the lights of shrines, the white gleaming of crosses, continually remind the traveller of his duty to the Powers that save. All along the way there are shrines at intervals, not very far apart: while standing in the radiance of one niche-lamp, you may perhaps discern the glow of the next, if the road be level and straight. They are almost everywhere,--shining along the skirts of the woods, at the entrance of ravines, by the verges of precipices;--there is a cross even upon the summit of the loftiest peak in the island. And the night-walker removes his hat each time his bare feet touch the soft stream of yellow light outpoured from the illuminated shrine of a white Virgin or a white Christ. These are good ghostly company for him;--he salutes them, talks to them, tells them his pains or fears: their blanched faces seem to him full of sympathy;--they appear to cheer him voicelessly as he strides from gloom to gloom, under the goblinry of those woods which tower black as ebony under the stars.... And he has other companionship. One of the greatest terrors of darkness in other lands does not exist here after the setting of the sun,--the terror of Silence.... Tropical night is full of voices;--extraordinary populations of crickets are trilling; nations of tree-frogs are chanting; the Cabri-des-bois, [14] or cra-cra, almost deafens you with the wheezy bleating sound by which it earned its creole name; birds pipe: everything that bells, ululates, drones, clacks, guggles, joins the enormous chorus; and you fancy you see all the shadows vibrating to the force of this vocal storm. The true life of Nature in the tropics begins with the darkness, ends with the light.

And it is partly, perhaps, because of these conditions that the coming of the dawn does not dissipate all fears of the supernatural. I ni pè zombi mên gran'-jou (he is afraid of ghosts even in broad daylight) is a phrase which does not sound exaggerated in these latitudes,--not, at least, to anyone knowing something of the conditions that nourish or inspire weird beliefs. In the awful peace of tropical day, in the hush of the woods, the solemn silence of the hills (broken only by torrent voices that cannot make themselves heard at night), even in the amazing luminosity, there is a something apparitional and weird,--something that seems to weigh upon the world like a measureless haunting. So still all Nature's chambers are that a loud utterance jars upon the ear brutally, like a burst of laughter in a sanctuary. With all its luxuriance of color, with all its

violence of light, this tropical day has its ghostliness and its ghosts. Among the people of color there are many who believe that even at noon--when the boulevards behind the city are most deserted--the zombis will show themselves to solitary loiterers.

II.

... Here a doubt occurs to me,--a doubt regarding the precise nature of a word, which I call upon Adou to explain. Adou is the daughter of the kind old capresse from whom I rent my room in this little mountain cottage. The mother is almost precisely the color of cinnamon; the daughter's complexion is brighter,--the ripe tint of an orange.... Adou tells me creole stories and _tim-tim_. Adou knows all about ghosts, and believes in them. So does Adou's extraordinarily tall brother, Yébé,--my guide among the mountains.

--"Adou," I ask, "what is a zombi?"

The smile that showed Adou's beautiful white teeth has instantly disappeared; and she answers, very seriously, that she has never seen a zombi, and does not want to see one.

--" _Moin pa té janmain ouè zombi,--pa 'lè ouè ça, moin!_"

--"But, Adou, child, I did not ask you whether you ever saw It; --I asked you only to tell me what It is like?"...

Adou hesitates a little, and answers:

--" _Zombi? Mais ça fai désòde lanuitt, zombi!_"

Ah! it is Something which "makes disorder at night." Still, that is not a satisfactory explanation. "Is it the spectre of a dead person, Adou? Is it _one who comes back?_"

--" _Non, Missié,--non; çé pa ca._"

--"Not that?... Then what was it you said the other night when you were afraid to pass the cemetery on an errand,--_ça ou té ka di_, Adou?"

--"Moin té ka di: 'Moin pa lé k'allé bò cimétiè-là pa ouappò moun-mò;--moun-mò ké barré moin: moin pa sé pè vini enco.'" (_I said, "I do not want to go by that cemetery because of the dead folk,--the dead folk will bar the way, and I cannot get back again._")

--"And you believe that, Adou?"

--"Yes, that is what they say... And if you go into the cemetery at night you cannot come out again: the dead folk will stop you--_moun-mò ké barré ou._"...

--"But are the dead folk zombis, Adou?"

--"No; the moun-mò are not zombis. The zombis go everywhere: the dead folk remain in the graveyard.... Except on the Night of All Souls: then they go to the houses of their people everywhere."

--"Adou, if after the doors and windows were locked and barred you were to see entering your room in the middle of the night, a Woman fourteen feet high?"...

--" _Ah! pa pàlé ça!!_ "...

--"No! tell me, Adou?"

--"Why, yes: that would be a zombi. It is the zombis who make all those noises at night one cannot understand.... Or, again, if I were to see a dog that high [she holds her hand about five feet above the floor] coming into our house at night, I would scream: "_Mi Zombi!_"

... Then it suddenly occurs to Adou that her mother knows something about zombis.

--" _Ou Manman!_"

--" _Eti!_" answers old Thérèza's voice from the little out-building where the evening meal is being prepared over a charcoal furnace, in an earthen canari.

--" _Missié-là ka mandé save ça ça yé yonne zombi;--vini ti bouin!_"... The mother laughs, abandons her canari, and comes in to tell me all she knows about the weird word.

"_I ni pè zombi_"--I find from old Thereza's explanations--is a phrase indefinite as our own vague expressions, "afraid of ghosts," "afraid of the dark." But the word "Zombi" also has special strange meanings.... "Ou passé nans grand chimin lanuitt, épi ou ka ouè gouòs difé, épi plis ou ka vini assou difé-à pli ou ka ouè difé-à ka màché: çé zombi ka fai ça.... Encò, chouval ka passé,--chouval ka ni anni toua patt: ça zombi." (You pass along the high-road at night, and you see a great fire, and the more you walk to get to it the more it moves away: it is the zombi makes that.... Or a horse _with only three legs_ passes you: that is a zombi.)

--"How big is the fire that the zombi makes ?" I ask.

--"It fills the whole road," answers Thérèza: "_li ka rempli toutt chimin-là_. Folk call those fires the Evil Fires,--_mauvai difé_;--and if you follow them they will lead you into chasms,--_ou ké tombé adans labîme_"...

And then she tells me this:

--"Baidaux was a mad man of color who used to live at St. Pierre, in the Street of the Precipice. He was not dangerous,--never did any harm;--his sister used to take care of him. And what I am going to relate is true,--_çe zhistouè veritabe!_"

"One day Baidaux said to his sister: 'Moin ni yonne yche, va!--ou

pa connaitt li!' [I have a child, ah!--you never saw it!] His sister paid no attention to what he said that day; but the next day he said it again, and the next, and the next, and every day after,--so that his sister at last became much annoyed by it, and used to cry out: 'Ah! mais pé guiole ou, Baidaux! ou fou pou embeté moin conm ça!--ou bien fou!'... But he tormented her that way for months and for years.

"One evening he went out, and only came home at midnight leading a child by the hand,--a black child he had found in the street; and he said to his sister:--

"Mi yche-là moin mené ba ou! Tou léjou moin té ka di ou moin tini yonne yche: ou pa té 'lè couè,--eh, ben! MI Y! [Look at the child I have brought you! Every day I have been telling you I had a child: you would not believe me,--very well, LOOK AT HIM!]

"The sister gave one look, and cried out: 'Baidaux, oti ou pouend yche-là?'... For the child was growing taller and taller every moment.... And Baidaux,--because he was mad,--kept saying: 'Çé yche-moin! çé yche moin!' [It is my child!]

"And the sister threw open the shutters and screamed to all the neighbors,--'_Sécou, sécou, sécou! Vini oué ça Baidaux mené ba moin!_' [Help! help! Come see what Baidaux has brought in here!] And the child said to Baidaux: '_Ou ni bonhè ou fou!' [You are lucky that you are mad!]... Then all the neighbors came running in; but they could not see anything: the Zombi was gone."...

III.

... As I was saying, the hours of vastest light have their weirdness here;--and it is of a Something which walketh abroad under the eye of the sun, even at high noontide, that I desire to speak, while the impressions of a morning journey to the scene of its last alleged apparition yet remains vivid in my recollection.

You follow the mountain road leading from Calebasse over long meadowed levels two thousand feet above the ocean, into the woods of La Couresse, where it begins to descend slowly, through deep green shadowing, by great zigzags. Then, at a turn, you find yourself unexpectedly looking down upon a planted valley, through plummy fronds of arborescent fern. The surface below seems almost like a lake of gold-green water,--especially when long breaths of mountain-wind set the miles of ripening cane a-ripple from verge to verge: the illusion is marred only by the road, fringed with young cocoa-palms, which serpentine across the luminous plain. East, west, and north the horizon is almost wholly hidden by surging of hills: those nearest are softly shaped and exquisitely green; above them loftier undulations take hazier verdancy and darker shadows; farther yet rise silhouettes of blue or violet tone, with one beautiful breast-shaped peak thrusting up in the midst;--while, westward, over all, topping even the Piton, is a vapory huddling of prodigious shapes--wrinkled, fissured, horned, fantastically tall.... Such at least are the tints of the morning.... Here and there, between gaps in the volcanic chain,

the land hollows into gorges, slopes down into ravines;--and the sea's vast disk of turquoise flames up through the interval. Southwardly those deep woods, through which the way winds down, shut in the view.... You do not see the plantation buildings till you have advanced some distance into the valley;--they are hidden by a fold of the land, and stand in a little hollow where the road turns: a great quadrangle of low gray antiquated edifices, heavily walled and buttressed, and roofed with red tiles. The court they form opens upon the main route by an immense archway. Farther along ajoupas begin to line the way,--the dwellings of the field hands,--tiny cottages built with trunks of the arborescent fern or with stems of bamboo, and thatched with cane-straw: each in a little garden planted with bananas, yams, couscous, camanioc, choux-caraibes, or other things,--and hedged about with roseaux d'Inde and various flowering shrubs.

Thereafter, only the high whispering wildernesses of cane on either hand,--the white silent road winding between its swaying cocoa-trees,--and the tips of hills that seem to glide on before you as you walk, and that take, with the deepening of the afternoon light, such amethystine color as if they were going to become transparent.

IV.

... It is a breezeless and cloudless noon. Under the dazzling downpour of light the hills seem to smoke blue: something like a thin yellow fog haloes the leagues of ripening cane,--a vast reflection. There is no stir in all the green mysterious front of the vine-veiled woods. The palms of the roads keep their heads quite still, as if listening. The canes do not utter a single susurrantion. Rarely is there such absolute stillness among them: on the calmest days there are usually rustlings audible, thin cracklings, faint creepings: sounds that betray the passing of some little animal or reptile--a rat or a wa manicou, or a zanoli or couresse,--more often, however, no harmless lizard or snake, but the deadly fer-de-lance. To-day, all these seem to sleep; and there are no workers among the cane to clear away the weeds, --to uproot the pié-treffe, pié-poule, pié-balai, zhèbe-en-mè: it is the hour of rest.

A woman is coming along the road,--young, very swarthy, very tall, and barefooted, and black-robed: she wears a high white turban with dark stripes, and a white foulard is thrown about her fine shoulders; she bears no burden, and walks very swiftly and noiselessly.... Soundless as shadow the motion of all these naked-footed people is. On any quiet mountain-way, full of curves, where you fancy yourself alone, you may often be startled by something you feel, rather than hear, behind you,--surd steps, the springy movement of a long lithe body, dumb oscillations of raiment;--and ere you can turn to look, the haunter swiftly passes with creole greeting of "bon-jou" or "bonsouè, Missié." This sudden "becoming aware" in broad daylight of a living presence unseen is even more disquieting than that sensation which, in absolute darkness, makes one halt all

breathlessly before great solid objects, whose proximity has been revealed by some mute blind emanation of force alone. But it is very seldom, indeed, that the negro or half-breed is thus surprised: he seems to divine an advent by some specialized sense,--like an animal,--and to become conscious of a look directed upon him from any distance or from behind any covert;--to pass within the range of his keen vision unnoticed is almost impossible.... And the approach of this woman has been already observed by the habitants of the ajoupas;--dark faces peer out from windows and door-ways;--one half-nude laborer even strolls out to the road-side under the sun to her coming. He looks a moment, turns to the hut and calls:--

--"Ou-ou! Fafa!"

--"Étí! Gabou!"

--"Vini ti bouin!--mi bel negresse!"

Out rushes Fafa, with his huge straw hat in his hand: "Oti, Gabou?"

--"Mi!"

--"Ah! quimbé moin!" cries black Fafa, enthusiastically; "fouing! li bell!--Jésis-Maïa! li doux!"...Neither ever saw that woman before; and both feel as if they could watch her forever.

There is something superb in the port of a tall young mountain-griffone, or negress, who is comely and knows that she is comely: it is a black poem of artless dignity, primitive grace, savage exultation of movement.... "Ou marché tête enlai conm couresse qui ka passélariviè" (_You walk with your head in the air, like the couresse-serpent swimming a river_) is a creole comparison which pictures perfectly the poise of her neck and chin. And in her walk there is also a serpentine elegance, a sinuous charm: the shoulders do not swing; the cambered torso seems immobile;--but alternately from waist to heel, and from heel to waist, with each long full stride, an indescribable undulation seems to pass; while the folds of her loose robe oscillate to right and left behind her, in perfect libration, with the free swaying of the hips. With us, only a finely trained dancer could attempt such a walk;--with the Martinique woman of color it is natural as the tint of her skin; and this allurements of motion unrestrained is most marked in those who have never worn shoes, and are clad lightly as the women of antiquity,--in two very thin and simple garments;--chemise and _robe--d'indienne_.... But whence is she?--of what canton? Not from Vauclin, nor from Lamentin, nor from Marigot,--from Case-Pilote or from Case-Navire: Fafa knows all the people there. Never of Sainte-Anne, nor of Sainte-Luce, nor of Sainte-Marie, nor of Diamant, nor of Gros-Morne, nor of Carbet,--the birthplace of Gabou. Neither is she of the village of the Abysses, which is in the Parish of the Preacher,--nor yet of Ducos nor of François, which are in the Commune of the Holy Ghost....

... She approaches the ajoupa: both men remove their big straw hats; and both salute her with a simultaneous "Bonjou', Manzell."

--"Bonjou', Missié," she responds, in a sonorous alto, without appearing to notice Gabou,--but smiling upon Fafa as she passes, with her great eyes turned full upon his face.... All the libertine blood of the man flames under that look;--he feels as if momentarily wrapped in a blaze of black lightning.

--"Ça ka fai moin pè," exclaims Gabou, turning his face towards the ajoupa. Something indefinable in the gaze of the stranger has terrified him.

--"Pa ka fai moin pè--fouinq!_" (She does not make me afraid) laughs Fafa, boldly following her with a smiling swagger.

--"Fafa!" cries Gabou, in alarm. "_Fafa, pa fai ça!_" But Fafa does not heed. The strange woman has slackened her pace, as if inviting pursuit;--another moment and he is at her side.

--"Oti ou ka rêté, che?" he demands, with the boldness of one who knows himself a fine specimen of his race.

--"Zaffai cabritt pa zaffai lapin," she answers, mockingly.

--"Mais pouki au rhabillé toutt nouè conm ça."

--"Moin pòté deil pou name main mò."

--"Aïe ya yaïe!... Non, vouè!--ça ou kallé atouèlement?"

--"Lanmou pàti: moin pàti deïé lanmou."

--"Ho!--on ni guêpe, anh?"

--"Zanoli bail yon bal; épi maboya rentré ladans."

--"Di moin oti ou kallé, doudoux?"

--"Jouq larivière Lezà."

--"Fouinq!--ni plis passé trente kilomett!"

--"Eh ben?--ess ou 'lè vini épi moin?" [15]

And as she puts the question she stands still and gazes at him;--her voice is no longer mocking: it has taken another tone,--a tone soft as the long golden note of the little brown bird they call the *siffleur-de-montagne*, the mountain-whistler.... Yet Fafa hesitates. He hears the clear clang of the plantation bell recalling him to duty;--he sees far down the road--(_Ouill!_ how fast they have been walking!)--a white and black speck in the sun: Gabou, uttering through his joined hollowed hands, as through a horn, the *ouklé*, the rally call. For an instant he thinks of the overseer's anger,--of the distance,--of the white road glaring in the dead heat: then he looks again into the black eyes of the strange woman, and answers:

--"Oui;--moin ké vini épi ou."

With a burst of mischievous laughter, in which Fafa joins, she walks on,--Fafa striding at her side.... And Gabou, far off, watches them go,--and wonders that, for the first time since ever they worked together, his comrade failed to answer his _ouklé_,

--"Coument yo ka crié ou, chè" asks Fafa, curious to know her name.

--"Châché nom moin ou-menm, duviné,"

But Fafa never was a good guesser,--never could guess the simplest of tim-tim.

--"Ess Cendrine?"

--"Non, çe pa ça."

--"Ess Vitaline?"

--"Non çe pa ça."

--"Ess Aza?"

--"Non, çe pa ça."

--"Ess Nini?"

--"Châché encò."

--"Ess Tité"

--"Ou pa save,--tant pis pou ou!"

--"Ess Youma?"

--"Pouki ou 'lè save nom moin?--ça ou ké épi y?"

--"Ess Yaiya?"

--"Non, çe pa y."

--"Ess Maiyotte?"

--"Non! ou pa ké janmain trouvé y!"

--"Ess Sounoune?--ess Loulouze?"

She does not answer, but quickens her pace and begins to sing,--not as the half-breed, but as the African sings,--commencing with a low long weird intonation that suddenly breaks into fractions of notes inexpressible, then rising all at once to a liquid purling bird-tone, and descending as abruptly again to the first deep quavering strain:--

"À te--
moin ka dòmi toute longue;

Yon paillasse sé fai main bien,
Doudoux!

À te--
moin ka dòmi toute longue;
Yon robe biésé sé fai moin bien,
Doudoux!

À te--
moin ka dòmi toute longue;
Dè jolis foulà sé fai moin bien,
Doudoux!

À te--
moin ka dòmi toute longue;
Yon joli madras sé fai moin bien,
Doudoux!

À te--
moin ka dòmi toute longue:
Çe à tè..."

... Obligated from the first to lengthen his stride in order to keep up with her, Fafa has found his utmost powers of walking overtaxed, and has been left behind. Already his thin attire is saturated with sweat; his breathing is almost a panting;--yet the black bronze of his companion's skin shows no moisture; her rhythmic her silent respiration, reveal no effort: she laughs at his desperate straining to remain by her side.

--"Marché toujou' deïé moin,--anh, chè?--marché toujou' deïé!"...

And the involuntary laggard--utterly bewitched by supple allurements of her motion, by the black flame of her gaze, by the savage melody of her chant--wonders more and more who she may be, while she waits for him with her mocking smile.

But Gabou--who has been following and watching from afar off, and sounding his fruitless ouklé betimes--suddenly starts, halts, turns, and hurries back, fearfully crossing himself at every step.

He has seen the sign by which She is known...

VI.

... None ever saw her by night. Her hour is the fulness of the sun's flood-tide: she comes in the dead hush and white flame of windless noons,--when colors appear to take a very unearthliness of intensity,--when even the flash of some colibri, bosomed with living fire, shooting hither and thither among the grenadilla blossoms, seemeth a spectral happening because of the great green trance of the land....

Mostly she haunts the mountain roads, winding from plantation to

plantation, from hamlet to hamlet,--sometimes dominating huge sweeps of azure sea, sometimes shadowed by mornes deep-wooded to the sky. But close to the great towns she sometimes walks: she has been seen at mid-day upon the highway which overlooks the Cemetery of the Anchorage, behind the cathedral of St. Pierre.... A black Woman, simply clad, of lofty stature and strange beauty, silently standing in the light, _keeping her eyes fixed upon the Sun!_...

VII.

Day wanes. The further western altitudes shift their pearline gray to deep blue where the sky is yellowing up behind them; and in the darkening hollows of nearer mornes strange shadows gather with the changing of the light--dead indigoes, fuliginous purples, rubifications as of scoriae,--ancient volcanic colors momentarily resurrected by the illusive haze of evening. And the fallow of the canes takes a faint warm ruddy tinge. On certain far high slopes, as the sun lowers, they look like thin golden hairs against the glow,--blond down upon the skin of the living hills.

Still the Woman and her follower walk together,--chatting loudly, laughing--chanting snatches of song betimes. And now the valley is well behind them;--they climb the steep road crossing the eastern peaks,--through woods that seem to stifle under burdening of creepers. The shadow of the Woman and the shadow of the man,--broadening from their feet,--lengthening prodigiously,--sometimes, mixing, fill all the way; sometimes, at a turn, rise up to climb the trees. Huge masses of frondage, catching the failing light, take strange fiery color;--the sun's rim almost touches one violet hump in the western procession of volcanic silhouettes....

Sunset, in the tropics, is vaster than sunrise.... The dawn, upflaming swiftly from the sea, has no heralding erubescence, no awful blossoming--as in the North: its fairest hues are fawn-colors, dove-tints, and yellows,--pale yellows as of old dead gold, in horizon and flood. But after the mighty heat of day has charged all the blue air with translucent vapor, colors become strangely changed, magnified, transcendentalized when the sun falls once more below the verge of visibility. Nearly an hour before his death, his light begins to turn tint; and all the horizon yellows to the color of a lemon. Then this hue deepens, through tones of magnificence unspeakable, into orange; and the sea becomes lilac. Orange is the light of the world for a little space; and as the orb sinks, the indigo darkness comes--not descending, but rising, as if from the ground--all within a few minutes. And during those brief minutes peaks and mornes, purpling into richest velvety blackness, appear outlined against passions of fire that rise half-way to the zenith,--enormous furies of vermilion.

... The Woman all at once leaves the main road,--begins to mount a steep narrow path leading up from it through the woods upon the left. But Fafa hesitates,--halts a moment to look back. He

sees the sun's huge orange face sink down,--sees the weird procession of the peaks vesture themselves in blackness funereal,--sees the burning behind them crimson into awfulness; and a vague fear comes upon him as he looks again up the darkling path to the left. Whither is she now going?

--"Oti ou kallé la?" he cries.

--"Mais conm ça!--chimin tala plis cou't,--coument?"

It may be the shortest route, indeed;--but then, the fer-de-lance!...

--"Ni sèpent ciya,--en pile."

No: there is not a single one, she avers; she has taken that path too often not to know:

--"Pa ni sèpent piess! Moin ni coutime passé là;--pa ni piess !"

... She leads the way.... Behind them the tremendous glow deepens;--before them the gloom. Enormous gnarled forms of ceiba, balata, acoma, stand dimly revealed as they pass; masses of viny drooping things take, by the failing light, a sanguine tone. For a little while Fafa can plainly discern the figure of the Woman before him;--then, as the path zigzags into shadow, he can descry only the white turban and the white foulard;--and then the boughs meet overhead: he can see her no more, and calls to her in alarm:--

--"Oti ou?--moin pa pè ouè arien!"

Forked pending ends of creepers trail cold across his face. Huge fire-flies sparkle by,--like atoms of kindled charcoal thinkling, blown by a wind.

--"Içitt!--quimbé lanmain-moin!"...

How cold the hand that guides him!...She walks swiftly, surely, as one knowing the path by heart. It zigzags once more; and the incandescent color flames again between the trees;--the high vaulting of foliage fissures overhead, revealing the first stars. A cabritt-bois begins its chant. They reach the summit of the morne under the clear sky.

The wood is below their feet now; the path curves on eastward between a long swaying of ferns sable in the gloom,--as between a waving of prodigious black feathers. Through the further purpling, loftier altitudes dimly loom; and from some viewless depth, a dull vast rushing sound rises into the night.... Is it the speech of hurrying waters, or only some tempest of insect voices from those ravines in which the night begins?...

Her face is in the darkness as she stands;--Fafa's eyes turned to the iron-crimson of the western sky. He still holds her hand, fondles it,--murmurs something to her in undertones.

--"Ess ou ainmein moin conm ça?" she asks, almost in a whisper,

Oh! yes, yes, yes!... more than any living being he loves her!... How much? Ever so much,--_gouôs conm caze!_... Yet she seems to doubt him,--repeating her question over and over:

--"Ess ou ainmein moin?"

And all the while,--gently, caressingly, imperceptibly--she draws him a little nearer to the side of the nearer to the black waving of the ferns, nearer to the great dull rushing sound that rises from beyond them:

--"Ess ou ainmein moin?"

--"Oui, oui!" he responds,--"ou save ça!--oui, chè doudoux, ou save ça!"...

And she, suddenly,--turning at once to him and to the last red light, the goblin horror of her face transformed,--shrieks with a burst of hideous laughter:

--"_Atò, bô!_" [16]

For the fraction of a moment he knows her name:--then, smitten to the brain with the sight of her, reels, recoils, and, backward falling, crashes two thousand feet down to his death upon the rocks of a mountain torrent.

CHAPTER V. LA VÉRETTE.

I. --ST. PIERRE, _1887_.

One returning from the country to the city in the Carnival season is lucky to find any comfortable rooms for rent. I have been happy to secure one even in a rather retired street,--so steep that it is really dangerous to sneeze while descending it, lest one lose one's balance and tumble right across the town. It is not a fashionable street, the Rue du Morne Mirail; but, after all, there is no particularly fashionable street in this extraordinary city, and the poorer the neighborhood, the better one's chance to see something of its human nature.

One consolation is that I have Manm-Robert for a next-door neighbor, who keeps the best bouts in town (those long thin Martinique cigars of which a stranger soon becomes fond), and who can relate more queer stories and legends of old times in the island than anybody else I know of. Manm-Robert is _yon màchanne lapacotte_, a dealer in such cheap articles of food as the poor live upon: fruits and tropical vegetables, manioc-flour, "macadam " (a singular dish of rice stewed with salt fish--_diri épi coubouyon lamori_), akras, etc.; but her bouts probably bring her the largest profit--they are all bought up by the békés.

Manm-Robert is also a sort of doctor: whenever anyone in the neighborhood falls sick she is sent for, and always comes, and very often cures,--as she is skilled in the knowledge and use of medicinal herbs, which she gathers herself upon the mornes. But for these services she never accepts any reueration: she is a sort of Mother of the poor in immediate vicinity. She helps everybody, listens to everybody's troubles, gives everybody some sort of consolation, trusts everybody, and sees a great deal of the thankless side of human nature without seeming to feel any the worse for it. Poor as she must really be she appears to have everything that everybody wants; and will lend anything to her neighbors except a scissors or a broom, which it is thought bad-luck to lend. And, finally, if anybody is afraid of being bewitched (_quimboisé_) Manm-Robert can furnish him or her with something that will keep the bewitchment away....

II. _February 15th._

... Ash-Wednesday. The last masquerade will appear this afternoon, notwithstanding; for the Carnival is in Martinique a day longer than elsewhere.

All through the country districts since the first week of January there have been wild festivities every Sunday--dancing on the public highways to the pattering of tamtams,--African dancing, too, such as is never seen in St. Pierre. In the city, however, there has been less merriment than in previous years;--the natural gaiety of the population has been visibly affected by the advent of a terrible and unfamiliar visitor to the island,--_La Vérette_: she came by steamer from Colon.

... It was in September. Only two cases had been reported when every neighboring British colony quarantined against Martinique. Then other West Indian colonies did likewise. Only two cases of small-pox. "But there may be two thousand in another month," answered the governors and the consuls to many indignant protests. Among West Indian populations the malady has a signification unknown in Europe or the United States: it means an exterminating plague.

Two months later the little capital of Fort-de-France was swept by the pestilence as by a wind of death. Then the evil began to spread. It entered St. Pierre in December, about Christmas time. Last week 173 cases were reported; and a serious epidemic is almost certain. There were only 8500 inhabitants in Fort-de-France; there are 28,000 in the three quarters of St. Pierre proper, not including her suburbs; and there is no saying what ravages the disease may make here.

III.

... Three o'clock, hot and clear.... In the distance there is a heavy sound of drums, always drawing nearer: _tam!--tam!--

tamtamtam!_ The Grande Rue is lined with expectant multitudes; and its tiny square,--the Batterie d'Esnotz,--thronged with békés. _Tam!--tam!--tamtamtam!_... In our own street the people are beginning to gather at door-ways, and peer out of windows,--prepared to descend to the main thoroughfare at the first glimpse of the procession.

--" _Oti masque-à? _" Where are the maskers?

It is little Mimi's voice: she is speaking for two besides herself, both quite as anxious as she to know where the maskers are,--Maurice, her little fair-haired and blue-eyed brother, three years old; and Gabrielle, her child-sister, aged four,--two years her junior.

Every day I have been observing the three, playing in the doorway of the house across the street. Mimi, with her brilliant white skin, black hair, and laughing black eyes, is the prettiest,--though all are unusually pretty children. Were it not for the fact that their mother's beautiful brown hair is usually covered with a violet foulard, you would certainly believe them white as any children in the world. Now there are children whom everyone knows to be white, living not very far from here, but in a much more silent street, and in a rich house full of servants, children who resemble these as one *fleur-d'amour* blossom resembles another;--there is actually another Mimi (though she is not so called at home) so like this Mimi that you could not possibly tell one from the other,--except by their dress. And yet the most unhappy experience of the Mimi who wears white satin slippers was certainly that punishment given her for having been once caught playing in the street with this Mimi, who wears no shoes at all. What mischance could have brought them thus together?--and the worst of it was they had fallen in love with each other at first sight!... It was not because the other Mimi must not talk to nice little colored girls, or that this one may not play with white children of her own age: it was because there are cases.... It was not because the other children I speak of are prettier or sweeter or more intelligent than these now playing before me;--or because the finest microscopist in the world could or could not detect any imaginable race difference between those delicate satin skins. It was only because human nature has little changed since the day that Hagar knew the hate of Sarah, and the thing was grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.....

... The father of these children loved them very much: he had provided a home for them,--a house in the Quarter of the Fort, with an allowance of two hundred francs monthly; and he died in the belief their future was secured. But relatives fought the will with large means and shrewd lawyers, and won!... Yzore, the mother, found herself homeless and penniless, with three children to care for. But she was brave;--she abandoned the costume of the upper class forever, put on the *douillette* and the foulard,--the attire that is a confession of race,--and went to work. She is still comely, and so white that she seems only to be masquerading in that violet head-dress and long loose robe....

--" _Vini ouè!--vini ouè! _" cry the children to one another,--"come and see!" The drums are drawing near;--everybody is

running to the Grande Rue....

IV.

Tam!--tam!--tamtamtam!... The spectacle is interesting from the Batterie d'Esnotz. High up the Rue Peysette,--up all the precipitous streets that ascend the mornes,--a far gathering of showy color appears: the massing of maskers in rose and blue and sulphur-yellow attire.... Then what a _degringolade_ begins!--what a tumbling, leaping, cascading of color as the troupes descend. Simultaneously from north and south, from the Mouillage and the Fort, two immense bands enter the Grande Rue;--the great dancing societies these,--the _Sans-souci_ and the _Intrépides_. They are rivals; they are the composers and singers of those Carnival songs,--cruel satires most often, of which the local meaning is unintelligible to those unacquainted with the incident inspiring the improvisation,--of which the words are too often coarse or obscene,--whose burdens will be caught up and re-echoed through all the burghs of the island. Vile as may be the motive, the satire, the malice, these chants are preserved for generations by the singular beauty of the airs; and the victim of a Carnival song need never hope that his failing or his wrong will be forgotten: it will be sung of long after he is in his grave.

[Illustration: RUE VICTOR HUGO (FORMERLY GRANDE RUE), ST. PIERRE]

... Ten minutes more, and the entire length of the street is thronged with a shouting, shrieking, laughing, gesticulating host of maskers. Thicker and thicker the press becomes;--the drums are silent: all are waiting for the signal of the general dance. Jests and practical jokes are being everywhere perpetrated; there is a vast hubbub, made up of screams, cries, chattering, laughter. Here and there snatches of Carnival song are being sung:--" _Cambronne, Cambronne_;" or " _Ti fenm-là doux, li doux, li doux!_ "..." "Sweeter than sirup the little woman is";--this burden will be remembered when the rest of the song passes out of fashion. Brown hands reach out from the crowd of masks, pulling the beards and patting the faces of white spectators.... " _Moin connaitt ou, chè!--moin connaitt ou, doudoux! ba moin ti d'mi franc!_ " It is well to refuse the half-franc,--though you do not know what these maskers might take a notion to do to-day.... Then all the great drums suddenly boom together; all the bands strike up; the mad medley kaleidoscopes into some sort of order; and the immense processional dance begins. From the Mouillage to the Fort there is but one continuous torrent of sound and color: you are dazed by the tossing of peaked caps, the waving of hands, and twinkling of feet;--and all this passes with a huge swing,--a regular swaying to right and left.... It will take at least an hour for all to pass; and it is an hour well worth passing. Band after band whirls by; the musicians all garbed as women or as monks in canary-colored habits;--before them the dancers are dancing backward, with a motion as of skaters; behind them all leap and wave hands as in pursuit. Most of the bands are playing creole airs,--but that of the _Sans-souci_ strikes up the melody of the latest French song in vogue,--_Petits amoureux aux plumes_

("Little feathered lovers"). [17]

Everybody now seems to know this song by heart; you hear children only five or six years old singing it: there are pretty lines in it, although two out of its four stanzas are commonplace enough, and it is certainly the air rather than the words which accounts for its sudden popularity.

V.

... Extraordinary things are happening in the streets through which the procession passes. Pest-smitten women rise from their beds to costume themselves,--to mask face already made unrecognizable by the hideous malady,--and stagger out to join the dancers.... They do this in the Rue Longchamps, in the Rue St. Jean-de-Dieu, in the Rue Peysette, in the Rue de Petit Versailles. And in the Rue Ste.-Marthe there are three young girls sick with the disease, who hear the blowing of the horns and the pattering of feet and clapping of hands in chorus;--they get up to look through the slats of their windows on the masquerade,--and the creole passion of the dance comes upon them. "_Ah!_" cries one,--"_nou ké bien amieusé nou!--c'est zaffai si nou mò!_" [We will have our fill of fun: what matter if we die after!] And all mask, and join the rout, and dance down to the Savane, and over the river-bridge into the high streets of the Fort, carrying contagion with them!... No extraordinary example, this: the ranks of the dancers hold many and many a _verrettier_.

VI.

... The costumes are rather disappointing,--though the mummery has some general characteristics that are not unpicturesque--for example, the predominance of crimson and canary-yellow in choice of color, and a marked predilection for pointed hoods and high-peaked head-dresses, Mock religious costumes also form a striking element in the general tone of the display,--Franciscan, Dominican, or Penitent habits,--usually crimson or yellow, rarely sky-blue. There are no historical costumes, few eccentricities or monsters: only a few "vampire-bat" head-dresses abruptly break the effect of the peaked caps and the hoods.... Still there are some decidedly local ideas in dress which deserve notice,--the _congo_, the _bébé_ (or _ti-manmaille_), the _ti nègue gouos-sirop_ ("little molasses-negro"); and the _diablesse_.

The congo is merely the exact reproduction of the dress worn by workers on the plantations. For the women, a gray calico shirt and coarse petticoat of percaline with two coarse handkerchiefs (_mouchoirs fatas_), one for her neck, and one for the head, over which is worn a monstrous straw hat;--she walks either barefoot or shod with rude native sandals, and she carries a hoe. For the man the costume consists of a gray shirt of lugh material, blue canvas pantaloons, a large mouchoir fatas to tie around his waist, and a _chapeau Bacoué_,--an enormous hat of Martinique palm-straw. He walks barefooted and carries a cutlass.

The sight of a troupe of young girls _en bébé_, in baby-dress,
is re

Livros Grátis

(<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>)

Milhares de Livros para Download:

[Baixar livros de Administração](#)

[Baixar livros de Agronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Arquitetura](#)

[Baixar livros de Artes](#)

[Baixar livros de Astronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Biologia Geral](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Computação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Informação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência Política](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciências da Saúde](#)

[Baixar livros de Comunicação](#)

[Baixar livros do Conselho Nacional de Educação - CNE](#)

[Baixar livros de Defesa civil](#)

[Baixar livros de Direito](#)

[Baixar livros de Direitos humanos](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia Doméstica](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação - Trânsito](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Engenharia Aeroespacial](#)

[Baixar livros de Farmácia](#)

[Baixar livros de Filosofia](#)

[Baixar livros de Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Geociências](#)

[Baixar livros de Geografia](#)

[Baixar livros de História](#)

[Baixar livros de Línguas](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil](#)
[Baixar livros de Matemática](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária](#)
[Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente](#)
[Baixar livros de Meteorologia](#)
[Baixar Monografias e TCC](#)
[Baixar livros Multidisciplinar](#)
[Baixar livros de Música](#)
[Baixar livros de Psicologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Química](#)
[Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva](#)
[Baixar livros de Serviço Social](#)
[Baixar livros de Sociologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Teologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Trabalho](#)
[Baixar livros de Turismo](#)