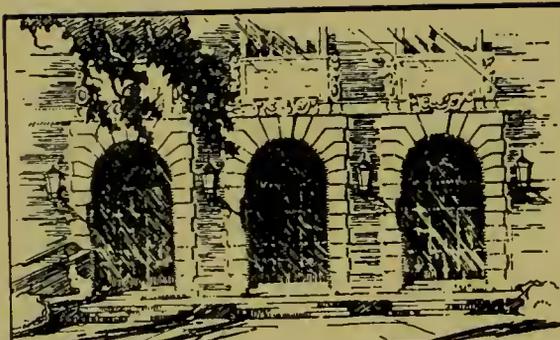


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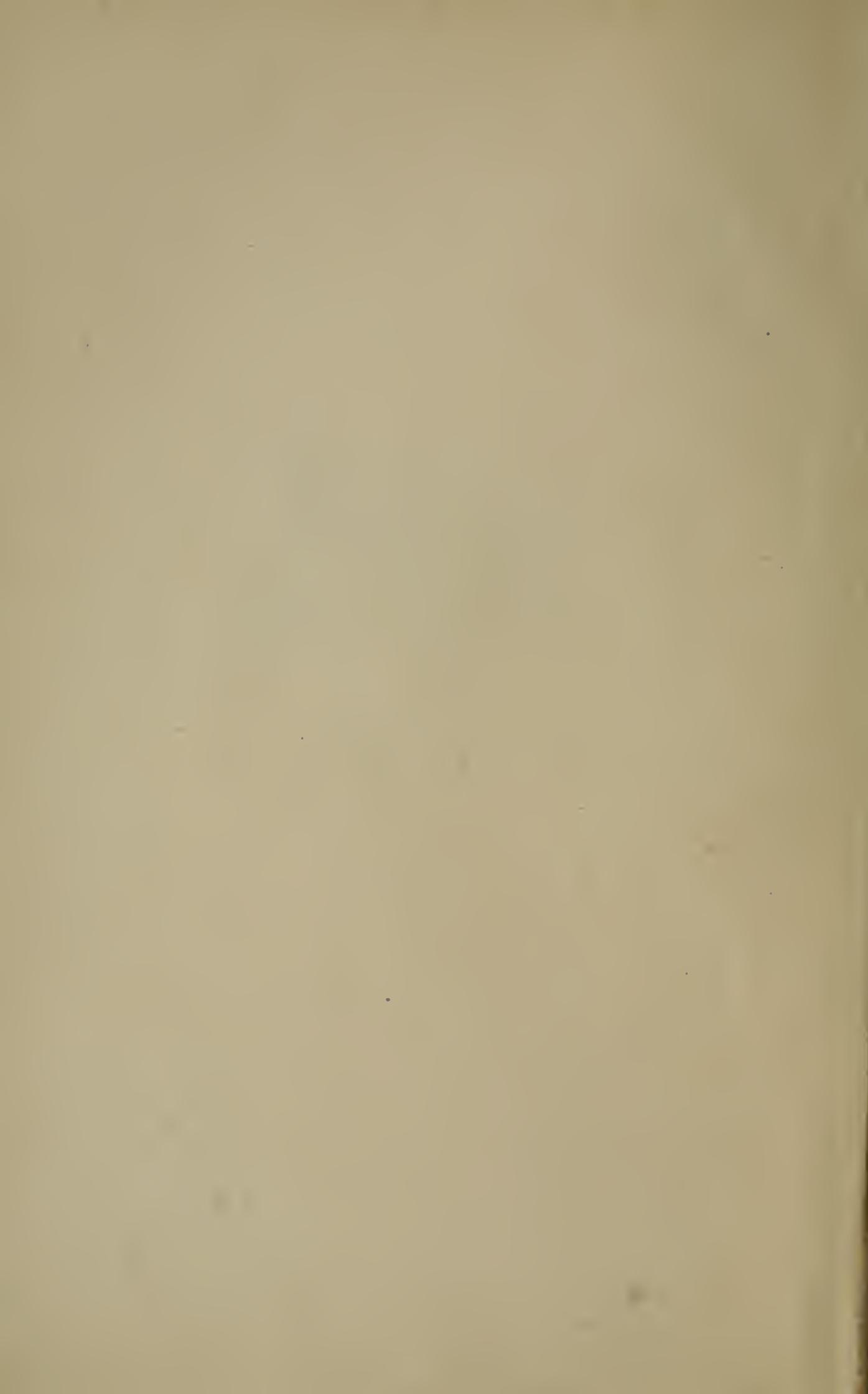
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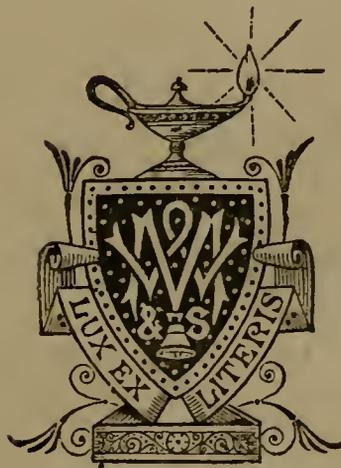
A Study of West Indian Life

BY

EDWARD JENKINS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.



WILLIAM MULLAN & SON

34 PATERNOSTER ROW LONDON

4 DONEGAL PLACE BELFAST

1877

Hazell, Watson, and Viney, Printers, London and Aylesbury.

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LUTCHMEE AND DILLOO.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A CURE OF SOULS.

MISSA SANKEY had been deeply stirred in mind and heart by the awkward incidents attending the Major's visit. Her dignity had suffered extremely. Her pride and vanity had been incurably wounded. She had exhibited herself—involuntarily 'tis true, but the fact was none the less shocking—to a vulgar and uncharitable public, in a garment only a degree removed in its simple and primitive naturalism from the original apron of mother Eve, who, by the way, was,

for all we know, of the same hue as Missa Sankey. Merely to recall such a wound to her complacency, sent a thrill of angry shame through her being, which nature however had denied her the privilege of expressing in a way that could be seen—by a blush. Besides, it added an extra sting to her humiliation that her usual attire was most tropically magnificent, both in style and colour. Then there was other ground for serious reflection. Although, being a widow, the fact that she had an infant capable of exciting the Moloch avidity of the generous Major, was in itself no suspicious matter; yet the attempt just made, as she firmly believed, to snatch that jewel from her hands, could not but remind her that his origin was not strictly praiseworthy. The attempt of the hungry

philanthropist, she thought, might perhaps be a divine judgment upon her for her sins.

Accordingly long after the white visitors had vanished and the black crowd had dispersed, Susan Sankey sat weeping copiously and in earnest. The closer she reviewed her situation the more uncomfortable she felt. Scraps of vague denunciation, oft uttered in her hearing by honest Baptist and Wesleyan evangelists, came up in memory to terrify her. Powerful illustrations, long forgotten, of the punishment which all sin must incur were now brought back to her imagination with vivid effect. So poor Missa Sankey, alone with her own consciously-wicked self, and having a very lively belief in things supernal and infernal, mingled her sobbing with ejaculations and prayers. How long this season-

able sorrow might have lasted, had it not been for the most substantial cause of it, one cannot tell. But the vexed piccaninny, left to himself and aroused by hunger, suddenly exhibited a precocity of grief which surpassed the maturer sorrows of his mother, and challenged instant attention. It was then that Missa Sankey, restored as it were to practical life, took, as we shall see, a most practical resolution. If repentance was to put her right with heaven, she was determined it should also make matters straight upon earth. Simon Pety should verify, in a literal sense, the maxim that "Sins come home to roost."

Missa Sankey turned over her wardrobe, not a poor or inconsiderable one, and, after prolonged hesitation between one thing and another, at length made choice of a costume

which she deemed to be appropriate to her purpose. She endued herself with her most admired finery. The child was also curiously and richly tricked out, after his little brown legs and arms had been polished to a nicety. Then, taking him up, she wended her way to Belle Susanne. By the time when she came in sight of the manager's stable, which was indeed her destination, evening was nigh at hand. Next to the stable was a sort of den, consecrated to the uses of the gallant Pety; and Missa Sankey intended in that den to beard the unfaithful swain.

Before, however, she had reached the yard, the noise of wheels close behind her made her turn and step aside; and the object of her search appeared, seated in a waggon in which he was driving Mr. Drum-

mond home from Georgetown. Simon Pety's muscular heart beat somewhat wildly when he saw Missa Sankey trudging along the road, in a black silk petticoat, with voluminous flounces; a white-and-yellow striped opera cloak,—remnant of some London “clearance of stock,” exported to the colony by an adventurous firm; and a white tulle and blue silk bonnet, trimmed with violent scarlet flowers; making her altogether look very much like a toucan, a scarlet ibis, and a paroquet rolled into one; while she bore in her arms that inconvenient baby, whose motley was every whit as remarkable as that of his mother. Drummond, as they passed her, looked sharply at Susan and then at his driver. The latter gallantly raised his hat and gave a ghastly grin at the widow, who however

returned to his salute only a staid and sorrowful acknowledgment. Master Pete's quick Negro temperament went down several degrees, like a barometer when heavy weather is threatening.

“ One of your young ladies, Pete ? ” said Drummond, maliciously, as the man whipped on.

“ Missa Sankey, sah ! I hab de honour ob her acquaintance, sah. Mos' sartainly fine young lady ! ”

“ Yes : and a fine young baby, Pete. Who is her husband ? ”

“ Widow, sah : mos' respeckable widow. Owns de largest plantain ground back ob Guineatown.”

“ Oh, ay ! I know the place : Jabez Sankey's lot. I remember *her* well. If she's after you, you are a lucky man,

Pete. Jabez Sankey was a thrifty fellow."

At any other time Pete would have accepted this compliment as one only due to his superior attractions: at present he had a feeling that something uncomfortable was to come with his luck. Having to get down to open a gate, he did not gain much on Missa Sankey, who reached him just as Drummond was about to walk away, after giving some directions. Without taking any notice of the master, Susan went straight up to the man.

"Simon Pety," she said, in a half-hysterical voice, "de Lord hab send me a message."

"Missa Sankey," replied Pete, in great embarrassment, and glancing sideways at Drummond, who chose not to stir, "de Lord

berry good. How'd de message arrive?—angel or black gen'leman?"

"Oh, Pete!" said Susey, bursting into tears. "Heah, take de chile quick! Ken't hold him no longer." And, throwing the infant into Pete's arms, she sank on her knees, and crying, "O Lord, O Lord, forgib me!" wept bitterly, down on the black silk flounces.

Pete was a Negro, and to a Negro crying is catching. He really liked Miss Sankey, as much as his selfish and volatile nature would let him. This scene in the open air, and the remorse of the woman, and the pricking of his own conscience, and the baby in his arms, who laughed at him very prettily, and Mr. Drummond looking on at it all, made Pete unspeakably awkward and embarrassed.

“O Pety!” sobbed the widow, “O Pety! De Lord say you got to marry me ’cause ob dat chile! What you say, Pete? Nebber shall be happy till you do. O Pete, s’pose you marry me, p’raps de Lord go to forgib us!”

Pete did not look as if Missa Sankey’s hope was his own. His ordinary confidence had deserted him. Had there been no spectator by he would very likely have gone on his knees beside the poor woman and have prayed with her as one “under conviction”; for the sympathetic nature in him would have won its way, and, bad as he was, her grief excited some compunction. But there was another restraining element in his thoughts, and that was a fleshly one—to wit, a certain Miss Rosalind Dallas. So Master Pete said, in a hesitating way, but gently,—

“How you sartin, Susey, de Lord send de message? He allays appear mos’ like an angel or a flaming fire.”

“No, no, Pety!” cried Susan Sankey, holding her hands over the opera cloak on her capacious bosom. “Nebber come to me like dat. I feel it *heah*! Ken’t hab no peace widout it, Pety!”

“Dere ain’t no peas to de wicked, Susey,” said Pete, recovering slightly, and automatically starting on his favourite career of misquotation. “Dey all like de green bay tree. Cut it down: why cumber it de ground?”

He would have wandered on, but Drummond could endure no more, and struck in sharply.

“Look here, Pete: is that your child?”

“Hum!” said Pete, looking at the

infant in his arms, and then at Missa Sankey.

“Yes!” cried Susan: “dat’s Pete’s own chile, Massa Drummond, sure as he lib.”

“Well, then, you scoundrel, why don’t you marry the woman? Don’t stand there quoting texts at her, you old hypocrite! I tell you you *shall* marry her! Get up, Susan Sankey, and wipe your eyes for a stupid woman, and he shall promise you now, or I’ll know why not!”

Missa Sankey rose and took the baby from Pete, who gladly resigned it to her. He hesitated a moment and then spoke.

“Well, Missa Sankey,” he said, “if de Lord and Massa Drummond both say marry Miss Sankey, dere’s on’y one way—to do de Lord’s will. De young man afterward repented and went, I guess. Marriage

honourable to all, Susan: let no man put it asunder."

Drummond laughed so loud and heartily that Susan, smiling through her tears, looked like a polished black pot boiling over.

"Now," said the master, "look here, Pete; you had better arrange that this little affair should come off as soon as possible; and if Miss Susan will come and live here with you, and you will promise to be true and kind to her, I'll build you a little house, and the piccaninny shall play about the yard. Put her into the waggon and drive her home: she don't look fit to walk."

It was getting dark as the horse turned out of the estate dam into the Guineatown road. Susan Sankey had been sitting quite

quiet, happily dropping tears on her baby's face. She was saying to herself, with very genuine intent, that she would try and do her duty better to the good Lord who had brought her out of the depths and changed her mourning into joy. Mr. Pete's reflections were not so bright, though he was not crying. He had been practically *check-mated!* What he was to say to Miss Dallas, a young lady of vigorous character, who would undoubtedly have her remonstrances to offer on this forced arrangement, he was vainly endeavouring to forecast. She might take it on very seriously. She might even go to the Obe Man and get that villanous agency of the devil to cut short Pete's thread of life. He had always looked upon Miss Sankey as a safe and quiet friend who would not break out upon

him. But now he had given his word to her, Drummond being witness, and it was impossible to draw back. Such were the thoughts which were gloomily clouding his mind, and, truth to tell, making him feel in any but a frame of bliss, when he felt Susan's soft arm round his neck (she had slipped off the opera cloak, and her dress was low cut, with short sleeves), and received on his undeserving cheek a cordial smack which made him wince.

“Deah Pety!” said Susan Sankey; “deah ole Pety! we go lub one anoder, as de good book say, and serve de Lord now togedder all our days, Pety! Dis little piccaninny lub you too, Pety. O Pety, say someting, or I'll scream out! I feel so happy.”

The genuine feeling of poor Susan wrought

its influence, as genuine feeling almost always does. Pete's heart was a shallow but an open one. The muddy water began to settle. Under the spell of Susan's happy voice and the pressure of her soft arm, the threatening shadow of Rosalind vanished in the distance, and Pete began to entertain the feeling that he was not so badly off with the widow. But Susan's sincere religious impulse was not so much in harmony with that wanton sinner's feelings as were her demonstrations of wifely affection. He was still—if one may say so of a man of his tint—only a whitened sepulchre; and the whitening was on in extremely thin patches.

“Susey,” he said, after driving along a little while, silently submitting to her caresses, “I go to make you happy, if I

ken, sure ; I go try be berry good to little piccaninny. We try to eddicate dis chile in de right way. As de good book say, ‘Train up a child in de way he shall go, and when he get old he bring forth fruit, some sixty-fold and some an hundred-fold.’ ”

“ Simon Pety,” said Susan, firmly in his ear, “ Simon, you promise to be good man now ; nebber leabe Susan—āllus be good to me now—sartain, Pety ? ”

Pete was stirred far below his skin and ear-drum by Susan’s earnest voice and manner. Her real affection and softened feeling penetrated to his heart.

“ By de help of de Lord I *will*, Susan Sankey ! ” cried Pete, hysterically, as the first genuine tears that had glistened in his eye for many a long day burst forth, and he threw his unoccupied arm round Susan’s

waist and inflicted on her cheek a huge salute, which was better received than the unlucky one erst bestowed on the widow with concomitant mucilage of fou-fou soup!

Now when Pete did this, the strange wild African nature of Missa Sankey waxed uncontrollable. She laughed out boisterously until the thin covering of the waggon shook again. Whereupon Pete must needs laugh too. Then in sheer gladness of heart she broke into song, irrelevant doubtless, but not without a meaning for her. It was a revival hymn set to a plantation melody, and both tune and words were, I imagine, as sweet and as sensible as some that are in vogue with educated Christians in England when giving vent to their religious feelings in song. Simon Pety caught the infection of Susan's joy, and their voices

stirred up the night which was now thick about them.

Come, sinner, will you come along wid me—

Come, sinner, will you come along wid me—

Come, sinner, will you come along wid me—

Go up to de trone of God ?

Yes, Christian, come and go to glory !

Yes, Christian, come and go to glory !

Yes, Christian, come and go to glory !

All de way to de trone of God !

Now we trabbel on to glory !

Trabbel up de road dat lead to glory !

Climb up togedder into glory—

Singing Hallelujah !

Singing Hallelujah !

Singing Hallelujah !

} Now and ebbermore !

Shouting this song, Pete and the widow arrived at her house. He descended and bore the baby into the room so familiar to him, but which, when Susan struck a light, seemed to wear to his eyes, and hers also, a new aspect. As he was about to take a

tender farewell, the widow showed that the events of the day were still, for her, matters not merely of temporal, but spiritual consequence.

“Pety,” said she, in a voice still trembling with emotion, “pray de Lord bress you and me and little piccaninny, Pety?”

So he had to go down on his knees and perform a pre-matrimonial family worship. Pety's prayer that night was not much more coherent than usual, but it was more sober in its manner and real in its earnestness. And afterwards, when he had put up his horse and retired to the room in which he slept, his spirit was subdued by the infectious penitence of Susan Sankey. His weak and ignorant nature could only dimly apprehend the meaning of the spiritual influences which had blown over it that after-

noon. He could simply realize that he had been suddenly aroused to a conviction of a great sin, and that a kindly power had stepped in and shown him a way out of a dark and evil road. The fact that Susan Sankey had been the angel of this deliverance made it none the less sweet or the less promising of permanent good.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SPLICED ROUGHLY.

GUINEATOWN was *en fête*. All the living dusky lining of its crowded houses was turned forth upon the day. Old and young of both sexes, in every sort of dress, were ranged along the dams, lounging, chattering, frolicing or singing, with all the light animal zest which came of their wild animal nature. All were keenly watching every chink and cranny in Missa Sankey's house, heartily wishing that its walls were transparent.

Whensoever, in Demerara, it is thought

necessary that a Negro should get married or buried, the deed can only be done in a manner befitting a race which estimates values by display. Blacks will often postpone their weddings indefinitely if they are unable to enhance the dignity of the ceremony with such concomitants of splendour and such extravagant festivities as Negro pride has declared to be essential to Negro respectability. To marry or be buried without carriages and a multitudinous following of friends is as great a disgrace with the Blacks as with the Irish. To enter into wedlock or the grave without these were indeed to confess yourself before all the Negro world dishonoured and unknown.

Mr. Simon Peter D'Orsay—who can say whence these blacks obtain their grand names?—and Mrs. Susan Sankey were not

of a sort to forego any of the splendours of an aristocratic wedding. Though they were honestly resolved to abjure henceforth "de world, de flesh, and de debbil," there was no doubt, as there almost always is after an exodus, a certain hankering after the old Egypt, and they could not reconcile their minds to an absolutely quiet ceremony. Susan had put by a considerable sum in view of such an event, and Master Pete was not without his deposit in the Government Savings Bank, good for the same purpose; so that they could well afford to carry out a programme in the most superlative style of their peculiar circle.

"Susan," said Pete, with a shy and gallant reference to Miss Sankey's widowhood, as they talked the matter over, "dese yere sarcumstances nebber come more dan

two or tree time, in most folks' lives, 'cept in de case ob de wise King Solomon: he mos' wonderful man; he had a wedding, I guess, most days ob his life, 'cording to Scripshur. Massa Jim Soby, berry wicked black gen'leman I know ober at Massa Coleman's, demonstrate wid me one time on dat subjeck. He say, 'King Solomon pray fur all de wisdom, and 'cause he too greedy and get too much dat way de Lord take it out ob him anoder way, by super-disposing on him all dat lot o' wives.' Poor man, Susey, dunno how he ever fix it so as to git along comf'able wid such a quantity ob ladies!"

"Mister Pete, you begin to git sassy now you goin' to marry me, sah. King Solomon's dat same sort o' man de Reverend Massa Blister gib his discourse about Sunday before last. He say, 'Dere's some

folks, my brederen, mentioned in de Bible no one ken understand. De're all wonders ob de deep. Dey require de prophets demselves to explain about 'em.' I reckon Solomon one ob dose men, sure enuf,—nassy man !”

“ Hah ! ” replied Pete, stroking his beard. “ Be keerful, Susey, be keerful ! Don't you go to call any pussin in de Bible bad names. Dey's all ministering sperrits. All Scripture written by aspiration, Susey. Solomon, son of David, must ha' been a good man, I s'pose. But, Susey, my opinion's dis,—dere's only a chance o' good men around in dis world, and all de good women wants to marry dem : dat's how Solomon come to hab so many, I reckon. But, Susey, how about de wedding ? De good book say, ‘ Let all tings

be done decently and in order. Honour to whom honour — Custom to whom custom '——'

“ Well, ain't de good book right, Pete? ” interrupted Miss Sankey. “ Dat's why you and me goin' to get married, ain't it? An' now de Lord bless us so much, we go gib all our friends a big wedding, Pete.”

“ All right, sartainly, Susey,” cried Pete. “ We go and have a most su-perio-rogatory wedding. Reverend Mister Blister always talking at de meeting 'bout work ob superiororergation: mighty big word, Susey,— dat is most superior kind ob works, I guess. So we go to have a superiorogatory wedding. Den dere's de bridesmaids. Dere was ten virgins asked to de wedding in de parable,—how many you goin' to have? ”

And so, after much more talk of this sort,

Pete and Susey had arranged for a wedding on a scale, for Guineatown, almost of unprecedented splendour. The ceremony was to be performed by the Baptist minister, the Rev. Joel Amos Daniel Blister—a good man and true, even though he was more firmly devoted to water ablution as a spiritual ceremony than as a physical duty. The knot was to be tied in the meeting-house, and the usual procession of carriages and of fashionable company was to grace the occasion. Hence, in Guineatown, public expectation was at a high pitch; and, in good sooth, the indications were full of promise.

At the earliest hour when it could have been possible for them to distinguish their dark features in a glass, young ladies and gentlemen, unable to repress their

anxiety to air themselves for the benefit of their neighbours, began to emerge from their homes. The ceremony was some hours off, it is true ; but these good people could not postpone their triumph till the time of the wedding. The gentlemen were dressed in black frock coats and trousers, and white waistcoats. They had already drawn over their dusky fingers loose white kid gloves, to which they gave the fullest effect by holding their fingers straight out and wide apart, like the wooden hands on which such things are displayed in our glove shops. Crowned with tall black hats, their ebony faces buried in collars, which towered majestically over snowy bows and ample fields of shirt bosom, whereon in some instances shone brave and startling varieties of flash jewellery,

these gentlemen cut a distinguished figure as they marched up and down in solitary dignity, or stiffly aggregated for a morning interchange of courtesies.

There also appeared a few young ladies who either were unable to restrain their impatience, or perhaps hoped by striking early in the day to secure some admiring gallant, to the confusion of the discreeter damsels who affected a fashionable lateness, or hoped to win by an artistic surprise. An accurate Court-circular description of the toilettes that glittered in the equatorial sun would scarcely be credited as true by readers unacquainted with the people. Most of them blazed in silk of bright hues, well-fitted to their lithe and handsome figures; or else were wreathed in white muslin trimmed with ribands. The favourite fashion was

the conventional low neck and short sleeves of the ball-room, to display which, those who possessed the additional glory of a white cloak or shawl, allowed it to fall gracefully off the shoulders, and to leave their buxom charms unveiled to all spectators. Upon their woolly locks, most cunningly coifed, were perched perfect miracles of incongruous millinery as to colours and materials. With a fan or parasol the outfit was complete. Their conscious pride and affected posing gave a delightful and attractive oddity to the general aspect of the performers, and great was the excitement created among the uninvited spectators by the appearance of these birds of plumage, who flitted in and out of their homes with feverish restlessness, constantly looking out for signs

of movement around Missa Sankey's house.

The day wore on, and public interest so-far satiated, somewhat relaxed under the tropical influences, until, a little before noon, the hired carriages from Georgetown began to arrive,—large, two-horsed, covered-in, stuffed, and no doubt to any but Negroes stifling. No less than eight or nine of these imposing vehicles drove into the village, some of them containing ample loads of friends of both parties from the metropolis of the colony. It was an entertaining sight to see the carriages emptied of their living contents; to watch the extravagant politeness of the drivers, the exaggerated courtesies of the gentlemen, the affected elegance of the ladies, the universal and genial sense of a great oc-

casion grandly observed, which seemed to inspire all the actors!

These now began in twos and threes to collect in front of Missa Sankey's house. And at a not quite respectful distance, in a lively circle, gathered the Guineatown population. Among them a few Coolies, attracted by the excitement and the display, looked on amused. The Asiatics are very chary of Negro association, and these held themselves among the crowd with a certain dignity which distinguished them from their more volatile neighbours.

While the guests were circling about, and introductions, recognitions, and lively bursts of laughter were the order of the day, a shout from the observant crowd beyond, called all the performers to order, and they immediately drew up at the foot of Missa

Sankey's steps; for there at the top appeared the expectant celebrants, Mr. Simon Peter D'Orsay having succeeded in slipping into the house by the back way unperceived. Never had "Simon Pety" looked more dignified or more absurd. He had received from Drummond the present of a buff waistcoat, which, as it was made for the body of a man six feet in height, and of corresponding build, resembled, on the inadequately proportioned bulk of Mr. D'Orsay, a loose leaf on an ear of Indian corn. Its ample length encroached on his nether garments down towards his thigh bones. White trousers, which had already become baggy at the knees, and everywhere much wrinkled, a vast pair of glossy boots, a white "choker," ample and stiff enough for a clergyman of the old school, with abnormal collar of

the antique type, and a large broad-brimmed black hat, set forth the bridegroom. But all eyes were turned to the lady at his side. It was well known that one of the most eminent of the milliners of the Negro quarter in Georgetown had exhausted all her skill in setting out Susan Sankey for this important day; and it was seen at a glance that she had succeeded.

The comely widow, with her deep-tinted regular features, bright eyes, and brilliant teeth, as she stood at the top of the steps, with a half-bashful consciousness of triumph, did, I doubt not, in the eyes of those to whom her tint and physique were natural, look most charming. On her head, above an ornamental, well-oiled mass of wool, which some skilful artist had tried in vain

to torture into some imitation of a European *coiffure*, was posed a white silk hat, wreathed with a wreath of the natural flowers of the *stephanotis*, from beneath which flowed a long veil of white net. So far all was perfect. The veil was parted in front and fell on either side, and through and under it gleamed the dark glossy shoulders and arms of the widow, the latter tipped by white gloved hands. Her bodice was of green satin, relieved by scarlet buttons and trimmings; a mauve skirt, trimmed with bows of tulle and lace, and a pair of white kid boots, which were extensively displayed, completed the widow's toilette, and ravished the eyes of all beholders.

At that sight, with the deepest gravity, and with what the French call *beaucoup*

d'empressement, every male guest lifted his hat, a salute responded to by Mr. D'Orsay with an elaborateness worthy of his namesake and predecessor, the great Count. Then, with a certain air of elephantine gaiety, Simon Pety escorted the widow down the steps to the leading carriage, in which he took his place beside her to drive to the chapel; for 'tis a sensible practice of some semi-civilized and of most barbarous people, not to run any risk of the bride's escape. After the happy pair rolled carriages filled veritably to overflowing, for ebony beaux sat on the boxes and hung on behind. In one of the carriages we catch sight of two familiar faces,—no others than those of Miriam and Sarcophagus, who had received the honour of an invitation to this remarkable ceremony.

To describe the condition of Sarcophagus's mind and body would occupy a whole chapter, and need the command of language and the artistic skill of a writer of social articles in a weekly review, or of the special correspondent of a sensational newspaper. The magistrate's factotum was simply glorious in lively incoherency and blundering humour. His whole being seemed to be permeated with a sense of absurdity, and the energetic Miriam was forced to lose her temper in endeavouring to reduce him to a soberness befitting the occasion. His necktie was wriggled to one side, his hat inclined to the other. His shirt, improperly studded, yawned, and displayed a black-walnut substratum, which shocked the delicate young ladies, who were freely exhibiting thrice as much skin of the

same colour at the tops of their dresses. He bowed almost to the ground, laughed idiotically, indicated to Miriam in the most candid manner that the day was coming when they together should share the glories of a similar ceremony, while at the same time, to the deep disgust of the magistrate's cook, he regarded other damsels with a broad and unequivocal approbation. Perched at length on the box of one of the carriages, he disturbed the propriety of the march by breaking out now and then into loud "yah-yahs," which scandalized the company. His conduct was deeply taken to heart by Mr. John Wesley Darby, a highly respectable black gentleman, butler to the Attorney-General, and who had his own fancy for Miriam as a thrifty and promising partner for a person of indolent tendencies.

“Mister Roebuck,” he said, addressing Sarcophagus by his correct name, “dese presumptions are berry confusing to de ladies, inside dis carriage, sah,—calculated to excite dere nervousness, sah.”

“Shoo!” exclaimed Sarcophagus, taking off his hat and making a sweep therewith at the head of the speaker, which had been projected from the window to administer the rebuke.

Mr. John Wesley Darby retired with more speed than dignity.

“Massa Sarcophagus,” cried the familiar voice of Miriam through the other window. “Your conduc, sah, is discomposing all de ladies and gentlemen. On dis melumcolly occasion you better behabe more like a gencleman, sah.”

“Miss Miriam, your most obedient!”

said Sarcophagus, kissing his hand. "You'm all de time de objec of my most despicable affectation, Miss Miriam."

Miss Miriam popped in her head, feeling as badly hit as on the other side had been the namesake of the great Methodist.

The chapel was crowded with an eager congregation which, utterly unable to restrain its feelings without some counter-excitement, had been whiling away the time by singing a revival hymn, beginning thus :

Dere's a feast all ready in de palace ob de Lord,
All laid for de marriage ob de Son ;
And He send out His minister to speak de good word,
Come and eat and be happy ebery one.
 Come and eat and be merry
At de marriage ob de Son !
 Come and drink and be merry
At de marriage ob de Son !
 Dere's plenty for ebery one !

In the midst of a chorus delivered from half a thousand throats, the bride and bridegroom were seen advancing up the passage. The song came to a sudden stop, and was followed by an impressive silence.

The Reverend Mr. Blister was a Lancashire man, with a white face and black hair, eyebrows and whiskers. The climate and poverty had acted upon him with effects of form and colour quite contrary to those which it had wrought on the Intendant-General. The worthy minister was pale and careworn. Had you passed him in the street you would hardly have turned to look again upon the ordinary figure in its seedy clothes and wide-awake hat, were it not for the large lustrous eyes,—lustrous, not alone with the inner glow of an earnest soul, but with the dangerous flame of

disease. He had worked long and hard in this unpromising field. How little of the sweets even of sacrifice had fallen to his lot! To have been poor, derided, sickly, would have been simply to know the life of primitive and more distinguished apostles. But to labour and see so little fruit; to sow and see such paltry harvest; to garner and thresh, and sift so little wheat; to bleed and sweat over ground so shallow, dry and graceless;—did it not need a faith more than human, and a hope almost supernal to keep this man steadily doing the daily task;—he only a hind in the Master's field; only a clodhopper among the Master's servants! Too well he knew of what kind were the poor people with whom he had to deal. His views of the remedy for their evil condition may have

been, intellectually estimated, narrow, even pitiful; but his limited range in time was compensated by far-sighted glimpses into eternity, and the mind which might have but feebly and irresolutely grasped at things seen, stretched out and up with giant comprehension to realities of things invisible. He could not but believe that for God these half-natures, these seemingly abortive souls, had some tender and loving interest. That nothing should come of such an interest he could not admit. And so he worked on, appearing to sow little but wind, believing that he should some day reap perchance of wheat or some other good grain.

Mr. Blister's extempore prayer was the commencement of the proceedings. It was homely enough, but it brought out Susan's ready tears, and evoked sympathetic sobs

from susceptible ladies of various shades in the congregation. He alluded plainly to the fact that Susan was a widow, and most certainly implied by some involved expressions that both she and Mr. D'Orsay were not altogether above the necessity of mediation. That this was no error in judgment was clear from the manner in which those directly concerned accepted this oratorical rebuke. It melted their hearts—which were indeed mere spiritual jellies solvent in very slight heat.

The minister had exhorted the bride and bridegroom, and the ceremony had reached that stage when the gentleman usually fumbles in his pockets for an aureate token of constancy. The happy Pete was in the act of placing on Susan's finger a huge band of yellow metal—not hall-marked, I

fear—when a loud shriek from the back of the church thrilled the excited audience to the core, and a powerful-looking young woman, whose hair no doubt would have been dishevelled if it could, strode up the passage or aisle, and snatched the precious symbol from Pete's nerveless grasp. He turned to find himself confronted by an ebonized fury. His lips moved to the words "Miss Rosalind!" but not a sound came from them.

"What you goin' do?" cried Miss Rosalind Dallas, for it was no other. "You imposition old hypocriess! Afta say you go marry *me*, den you go and trow y'rself 'way on dis trash!" turning a heightened shoulder, and an extravagantly distorted cheek towards Susan Sankey.

There was a loud "Hah!" from the con-

gregation. The minister was dumbfounded. Simon Pete, with eyes and mouth wide open, gazed astonished at the untimely apparition. Missa Sankey trembled painfully. Miss Rosalind looked from one to the other with a furious face, and spoke again, her lips almost foaming:—

“Dere! You inconsequenshious bagabones! Dere’s de ring!” She threw down the bright hoop and trampled upon it. “Pick ’im up and put ’im on now, if you please, sah! Miss Sankey, d’you know you goin’ to take my leavin’s wen you go take dis common plantain of a fellah? Hah! Ladies and genl’men,” facing the audience, and pointing to the abashed bridegroom, “dis yere man promise me ober and ober again marry ME, Miss Rosalind Dallas: now he go and fix himself to

dis woman! Oh, you imposing ole baga-bones! oh! oh!”

And the young lady testified her anguish and her muscularity by dancing up and down with a strong pair of legs, and shuddering and screaming in a way that rent everyone's heart. The audience became fearfully and wonderfully excited. They rocked themselves to and fro, ejaculating in the sheer incoherence of emotion, “Glory!” and “Amen!”

“Stay, Sister Dallas,” said the minister, meekly. “My good brethren and sisters—”

But here Miss Sankey took matters in hand, and gave the outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Throwing back her veil and dashing the tears from her eyes, she went and threw her arms round the neck of her delirious rival.

“ Oh, Miss Dallas ! ” she cried, in a plaintive voice, “ don’t ’ee please go to be angry. You nice young lady !—I show you sartain dis gen’leman bound to marry me.—Oh, Miss Dallas, see heah ! De Lord tole me to marry Massa Dorsay : he ole man dese times, not nice young gen’leman fit for handsome young lady like you, Miss Dallas.—Oh let ’im marry me quiet,—’cause he nebber so wicked to you as he been to me ! Oh, Miss Dallas, we bo’s been berry wicked, bo’s him and me : now we go to make it up ! ” cried poor Susey, in her desperation letting the cat out of the bag :—“ he fader of my piccaninny ! ”

And thereupon Susan Sankey fell down in a fit. Pete stood wringing his hands in real anguish. He was getting punished. He thought at the moment, that the Lord

was going to take Susey away, and leave him to the tender mercies of a muscular lunatic, whom he had by no means so badly wronged, and his heart told him he deserved the punishment. But the strange, perverse nature of her race and sex was seen in Miss Rosalind at this crisis. When she saw Miss Sankey stretched out on the ground, her comely face o'errun with tears, her eyes rolling, her teeth grinding, and her wedding finery coming to premature grief, while she moaned painfully,—the big rival felt a pang of pity. She stooped down, and picking up Susan's lighter and more flexible form, set her on her feet, at the same time giving her a shake, which brought her to in a moment. Susan thought her end was come. But the discarded damsel gently set to work to rearrange the disordered

dress, and then said softly, weeping the while :

“Missa Sankey—all dis not your fault. I’m berry, berry sorry make you feel so bad. —’Taint no use now, I guess.—Heah! Let me take de dust off dat skirt.—Take de ole man: my heart’s broke.—Simon, you best look out, I say!” And with this threat Miss Dallas rushed out of the chapel.

There was a general consternation. Susan grasped the arm of the trembling Pete in her own, as if she were afraid he would be spirited away.

“Simon Peter D’Orsay,” said the minister, in a quiet and solemn voice, and fixing on the luckless Pete those lustrous eyes, “do you, having committed a great sin, and being now convicted of it in the sight of God and of the Church assembled in this

place, hereby testify your repentance for the same, your desire to be forgiven, your intention henceforth, by God's help, to live a pure, true, and holy life with the woman the partner of your sad and sorrowful backsliding?"

"Oh, Massa Blister, I *do* feel it, dis time, sartain! By de Lord's help I'll try overcome de debbil; by His help desist unto blood. Dear friends and bredren," cried Pete, not very loudly or confidently, as his wont was, but humbly,—“dis yere all come ob dat old Adam. When he wax fat he kick.—I been berry wicked. I been like de raging ob de wandering stars—unstable as water,—going about like a roaring lion. Now, I tell you all, I nebber see my sins so clear afore. Here I get put to shame and suffusion of face before all dis people,

lest dat I who teach oder people myself
come to be a runaway. Missa Sankey and
me, now we husband and wife, try to walk
in de way ob de Lord. All you go and do
likewise ! ”

“ Praise de Lord,” cried the chorus,
quite in earnest.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A BAD LOOK OUT.

WHEN Dilloo, released from gaol and gaol-birds' company, came back to his wattled hut, it was the darkest and most dangerous moment of his life. For his own part, sullen, resentful, suspicious,—and further excited by what he had heard during his incarceration of the general movement among the Coolies,—almost ready for any desperate design—there awaited him at home a new sorrow, the hissing fuse to a great explosion in a soul too well prepared for it. Through the thin walls of his dwelling he heard moaning

and weeping. Lutchmee knew that he was coming, and she had a mournful tale to tell. As he entered she rose quietly and threw her arms about his neck, and cried silently on his breast. Dark and terrible were the thoughts that drove like a whirlwind to and fro within him. He saw that she had been ill; he glanced expectantly round the hut to see if it contained something he had pictured to himself in his prison thoughts,—a pledge of hope and a dear relief to their melancholy life. No! There was no coo, no cry, no little baby form.

“Lutchmee! My life, my sweet, my soul! Thy heart and mine are broken with disappointment, as the eggs of birds within a nest where lay the precious hopes of coming life! O Lutchmee! Lutchmee!”

As he sank upon the ground, his strong

manly frame unnerved, and his passionate nature for the moment beaten down to a deep despair, she knelt beside him and gazed in anguish on his altered face. What could she say? How blind were her eyes to the sense of Divine o'er-looking, to the long prophetic meaning of sorrows, to the far out-springing visions of greater life, to the glorious wide allurements of an eternal country, to the promised compensations for the dreadful present, in a bright, sweet time to come! To such untutored hearts so limited in range of knowledge and of fancy, what is there in the Beyond, but that vague terror so cunningly expressed?—

“ To die—to sleep ;—

To sleep ! Perchance to dream ; ay, there's the rub !

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil—”. . .

O God! O Heaven! What means this veil which Thou hast drawn over these childlike natures, so crude in idea, so straitened in thought, so weakly cunning in the will of wickedness, so tender, timid, trustful, human, so capable of large and holy love, and yet so little removed from lively and sagacious brutes! Why dost Thou separate these simple ones from spiritual lights and better insights into Thee?

“Dilloo!” cried Lutchmee, nerving herself to try and comfort him, “Dilloo! Do not mind this. Is it not better that it should be as it is, than to have to bear the evils that will come, knowing that another helpless one must share them?”

She had been thinking over to herself with wifely forethought, what she should

say at this painful meeting, and this reference to their hopelessness had struck her as the most skilful way to meet and check his grief.

But Dilloo heaved a great sigh, struggled a moment with his feelings, mastered them, rose from the ground gloomy and stern, and called for a cup of water. His wife went to the corner, and filling the cup at the jar handed it to him. He moistened his lips with it, and then dashed it to pieces against the door-post of the hut.

“I swear,” he said, “by the life that gave me life, and by my guardian spirits, and by Siva the great Destroyer, and by all the powers of earth, and sea, and sky, that I will live only to revenge myself on those who have done us wrong, on the cursed tyrants who here enslave and torment us ;

and by day and night, in all seasons, at every time and place, without fear or stay, I, Dilloo, will give myself to work only for their destruction, worry, and death!"

This outburst seemed to relieve him, while Lutchmee listened to it with a heavy heart. Becoming more calm he asked her to relate to him what had passed in his absence. It was nothing very extraordinary. Lutchmee had been sent to the hospital, at Craig's request; but, at Chester's instance, Ramdoolah was called in almost immediately, and before the doctor had paid a visit, to give her opinion in regard to the correctness of the younger woman's excuse to be relieved from work. The verdict was, of course, unfavourable. Lutchmee was ordered to join a bush-cutting gang at the "back," and Hunoomaun, although he was

not in charge, took pains to secure that she should be forced to work. Craig only found all this out the second day. Having met the doctor and asked him about the woman, he was surprised to find that she had not been one of his patients, and soon discovered the truth. It was too late, however. On the evening of the second day she was taken ill and sent to the hospital, and after passing through great peril, once more looked sadly upon a little form which had never breathed the breath of life.

Craig's deep Scotch nature was roused by this event as it had never been before. When he met the other overseers at supper his silent gloom excited the notice of his mates. But Drummond was there, and Drummond had an interesting narrative to

tell, for it was the evening of the very day when the unlucky Portuguese had received the reward of his foolish sympathies.

There is many a philanthropist in England whose head and back are only kept safe by the strong shield of a strong justice. The envious and malicious devilry that would, if it dared, manifest itself in assaults and Circassian forays upon goodness, finds its outlet in brutalities of the pen, in a system of secret literary Obe, and in night attacks of hungry garroters who live by choking, plundering and mauling whatever is more reputable or more worthy than themselves. It is surprising that it should be possible for such birds of prey to thrive among the eagles of higher journalism, to be recognised by them, or to be patroned by any who regard the decencies of life. To change the

figure, how much of hateful venom do these poisonous fungi mingle in and among the sweet and healthy growths of our modern newspaper literature!—

“Gentlemen,” said Drummond, after he had narrated the events of the day, animadverted on the conduct of the Governor, and contemptuously wished the Portuguese in Hades, “there cannot be any doubt that we are all in a position of great danger, and we must be prepared to take our part in suppressing any attempt at a rising if it should happen, which I think is very likely. No one can tell when or where it may begin. Among our own Coolies here there are and have been symptoms of discontent. I should think, from what you tell me, Chester, that that man Dilloo has been concerned in the memorial business.”

Drummond here looked somewhat significantly at Craig, who preserved a stern and darkened front. "Now he will be out of gaol and back here before long, and will require to be carefully watched. He is the smartest man by a long way in our Negroyard, unless that driver Hunoomaun can beat him."

"He can beat him, sir, in cunning as well as in strength, I should say," said Chester.

"I have no doubt about the cunning," replied Drummond; "but I trust none of these people. You should keep your eye on every one of them, but especially on Dilloo."

"Do you think, Mr. Drummond," said Craig, obtusely, for he ought to have seen that the manager was then in no temper

to be argued with on that subject, "that Dilloo would be really so bad if he were treated with a little more confidence? You remember how well he behaved that time when we arrested Chin-a-foo?"

Drummond looked uneasily at Craig. The reference to the obligation under which Dilloo had laid the manager was more irritating than sedative, yet being an honourable man as the world goes, it touched him for the moment: he instantly recovered.

"Confound it, Craig," cried the manager, "is it a time to be soft-hearted when men want to cut your throat? If Dilloo *did* once behave well, have I not tried to pay him for it, and is it not the rascal's own stubbornness and love of mischief which has stood in his way and brought him to

grief? Have you heard any of Chester's reports about him? The driver Hunoomaun accuses him of conspiring with a lot of men on this very estate; and, God knows, we may be honey-combed here with secret rebellion."

"I have not heard anything from Mr. Chester, sir," replied Craig. "The man has always seemed to me quietly disposed and ready enough to work."

"Don't trouble yourself about him," replied Drummond. "He may give you reason to be sorry for him as soon as he gets home again."

"He very likely will," said Craig, drily. "The news he will hear of his wife on his return will not tend to soften his heart towards Mr. Chester, or Hunoomaun either; and I admit, if he is at all desperate, he

may try to have it out with one of them."

"What do you mean?" said Chester, pale with mingled fear and anger. "I had nothing to do with it."

"Perhaps not," replied Craig: "I make no charge. But Dilloo is a Hindoo, and, as I daresay you know, a strong and daring one. (Chester grew scarlet at this chance shot.) I am afraid, when he comes to find out what has happened to his wife, and that it was you who sent her out of hospital, he will draw his own conclusions."

"D—— you, sir!" cried Mr. Chester, in a rage. "You will have to explain this——"

"Stop, gentlemen!" cried Drummond, in a thundering voice. "I'll have no quarrelling here. Whoever quarrels now,

will have to settle with me; and in the present state of things, I'll shoot the first man that offers to fight. Bottle up your rage, Chester: Craig is only a boy. And you, Craig,—why do you mix yourself up with the nonsensical complaints of these wretched people? We must all stick together, man, and well for us if we get off with our lives. There is the *Tadja* coming on. We cannot stop it; and, depend upon it, there will be the devil to pay."

Drummond went further. He had taken the precaution, before leaving town, to supply himself with revolvers, foreseeing that the rising demand for them would soon completely clear the market; and he distributed to each overseer a six-shooter, and a box of ammunition.

"Don't be showing these things about,"

he said. "Give no cause to the Indians to suspect that we know or fear anything; but keep your eyes open, and report everything to me. And it will be well for two of you to patrol the Negro-yard every night, before you turn in. Crampton, you will arrange for that."

The manager's anxiety about the approach of the *Tadja* festival was not unfounded. Corresponding to the Moham-
medan Feast of the Mohurrun, in India, it is nevertheless but a hybrid and foreign imitation of it. All the Coolies, of whatever denomination, join in celebrating it, as a sort of holiday, or rather of carnival. In the quietest times it awakens the anxiety of the Executive and of the Estate Managers; because on that day feuds that have arisen at former periods between the

Coolies of different estates are apt to be fought out, and not infrequently to fatal extremities. In one well-known case, where the Coolies of three estates fought a sort of pitched battle with those of three others, piles of broken bricks were prepared as ammunition; and not content with this, or with their favourite weapons the *hackia* sticks, the death of two persons and wounding of others by gun-shot, proved that the Indians were ready to resort to the direst weapons in these encounters. At the present moment, when the Coolies were so agitated, the opportunities afforded by such a carnival could scarcely be regarded by any one without apprehension.

In Drummond's existing frame of mind, feeling as he did most genuinely that the Colony might be on the brink of a serious

rebellion, there was no room for the play either of justice or generosity. The passionate excitement of the white community had overpowered and carried along with it even his usually sober judgment. So long as things go smoothly in such societies as that of Demerara or Mauritius or Barbadoes, and the subject class remains submissive to its fate or fortune (whichever you choose to call it), the masters of the situation can feel that they are working out a providential dispensation, and consider themselves free to be sometimes kindly, perhaps even generous, and now and then to be just. But when the real instability of their relations with the vast majority becomes too manifest, and the quiet assumptions and continued wrongs of years reach a crisis when it looks as

if that majority intended to try and balance the long account, the coolest and ablest man finds it impossible to resist the claims of self-preservation or the promptings of avarice. Such men at such times seem to entertain an honest opinion that kindness is weakness, that to deny and resist every demand of the majority is policy, and that any one who is not a thorough partisan is the worst of enemies. The manager of Belle Susanne was a man who took in the whole position with a comprehensive glance, and saw that to save the planting interest from at least a severe fall, there must be no blenching on the part of any individual. One man, known to be of their side, making any admissions of injustice, owing to any just grounds for Coolie discontent, might do incalculable mischief

to their cause, especially with that open-eared, open-mouthed British public, with its "infernal" Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Societies, and all the machinery of philanthropic agitation. The astute manager had taken care quietly to impress this upon the leading men in Georgetown. He insisted on the necessity of keeping up an angry excitement among the whites, and of alarming any waverers into silence. That on his own estate an overseer like Craig should subject safety to sentiment, was no more likely to be permitted by Drummond than such folly would be allowed to operate on public opinion in foreign affairs by the practical-minded, rate-paying Briton

The manager was very angry with Craig. His irritation was the greater because he

liked the youth. He would gladly have helped him on, that is in any path consistent with his own ideas. You very rarely see a man who can estimate at its right value a higher walk than his own ; but still more rare, if not impossible, is it to find one who would be generous enough to aid another in pursuing aims dictated by higher and purer principles than those of the life he himself leads. Drummond, a man of action and business, looked upon generosity as "sentiment." Such men are the blindest and most grovelling of utilitarians. And just now they are threatening to rule the world !

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

'TIS LOVE THAT FINDS THE WAY.

CRAIG, turning over in his steady Scotch head all the circumstances as he left the manager's house after supper, saw that his position was becoming uncomfortable, perhaps dangerous. Drummond's tone, his unwonted excitement, his unusually candid cynicism, aroused unpleasant thoughts in the young overseer's placid and inexperienced mind. If the manager of Belle Susanne were losing his self-command, what were the wilder and weaker spirits to be expected to do? As to Chester, Craig

puzzled himself to think what special motive the half-breed could have had to injure Lutchmee or Dilloo. Yet he could not shake off the belief that Chester had intentionally forced Lutchmee out to work, knowing that she was unfit for it. Dilloo's former collision with the overseer was of course unknown to the young Scotchman, though he had inadvertently in the conversation at the supper table struck Chester so squarely. The gratitude Craig cherished towards Lutchmee for her kindly nursing made him feel, now that matters were so evidently coming to a crisis both in the Colony and on the estate, under the deeper obligation to befriend her. As he thought over all the circumstances, and considered the probability that Dilloo would take some dangerous step, and recalled Drummond's

significant warning, his decided mind framed more definite resolutions. Come what would, he said to himself, he would not desert the poor woman: she had saved his life, he would try to be of use to her. Thus she grew into his thoughts; first as a subject of anxiety, then as an object of sympathy. And so the gradual familiarizing of her *eidōlon* in his mind, at that time not over-occupied or stimulated by other interesting things, insensibly developed feelings of affectionate interest in her, which, now that he had passed the Rubicon of race-repugnancy, had in them no unpleasant or unnatural elements. That she was as yet a mere child to him was, as yet, his safety; but a woman who is a child may become to a simple-hearted man the very devil.

It was not Chester's cue to take up openly with Craig the quarrel begun at the supper-table. The Scotchman for his part was quite indifferent about it; resting simply on his great strength and superior *morale*. The Barbadian resolved to bide his time, and therefore hid his resentment; but this was none the less deep and real. He watched Craig that evening as, after leaving the manager's house, he walked to the hospital to inquire about Lutchmee. "Look there!" said he to Martinho and Crampton. "He is going to see about that woman. Poor fellow: do you know I think he is quite infatuated about her! What a pity! For I like Craig; he is a fine young man."

Your Barbadian or half-negro, when he is bad, is as dangerous and as devilish as Lucifer:

At the same time that he spoke thus he was thinking to himself, "Aha, you dirty Scotchman: you will soon put yourself in a false position if you go on in this way! If *you* don't, I will do it for you."

So Chester went to look up Hunoomaun, and primed him to watch, with Ramdoolah's assistance, both Craig and Lutchmee. On his part, Craig, having seen the nurse and made his inquiry, turned back to the manager's house, and slipped up to the large pantry in the back-building, where he found Nina superintending the wash-up after the evening meal. Nina was very partial to the young overseer, and readily stepped out into the garden at his whispered request.

He told her what had happened to Lutchmee, and of the anxiety he felt

about her. He had no need to explain how difficult it would be to do anything for the poor young wife, for Nina's quick apprehension and her familiarity with Drummond's humours enabled her instantly to appreciate the situation.

“Take care, Massa Craig,” she said, earnestly. “He's in a terrible rage, I tell you. He told Mr. Crampton after you went away from tea that you were a fool and an idiot, and that if he found you playing into the Coolies' hands he would have you punished. You don't know how these men lose their heads when they feel danger. Then there's Chester: I always watch him. He hates you, and so does Martinho. I heard them saying to one another that you must be got out of the way.”

Craig drew his lips tightly together and could scarcely breathe. Must he face three angry and perhaps desperate men to do a kind deed? Was he not free to be generous or just? Should he be driven away by fear of such people? All his slow strong nature rose against it.

“Nina,” he said, “were it not for this poor woman I think I would go away. I hate the service. But I am determined not to be bullied out of my gratitude. Then there are other reasons why I do not wish to leave just now”——he stopped.

Nina was smiling in the dark, and he could not see it.

“Pr’aps,” she said, gently, “if you go over some time and see Miss Marston, she’s a very nice young lady, pr’aps she would help you to do something for Lutchmee.”

“Ha! Nina,” cried the overseer, “well thought of! A woman’s wit,” he continued, “is always the best. She may be able to get her father to do something for the poor woman.”

Craig’s simplicity came out here very ostensibly. It was scarcely to be expected that the magistrate would undertake a voluntary interference in the management of Drummond’s estate. His position as a justice made that impossible. However, for the moment the idea buoyed up Craig’s mind, which was sadly depressed. His straightforward nature was quite embarrassed when he found it necessary, for the sake of the one in whom he was interested, to pursue a cautious and disingenuous policy. Had his own interests alone been in the balance he would have been suicidally

open and decided. Men of his character, when they try to carry out a policy of cunning, often come to disaster through their incompetency to go on consistently with the *rôle*. But, in addition to the hopeful gleam which Nina's hint had thrown across his mind, there was another latent pleasure in the idea of seeing the young lady, and of making her a confidante in his present embarrassment. He yearned for sympathy, such sympathy as he had been used to receive from his mother.

Craig could hardly have long remained unsusceptible to Miss Marston's charms, even had he never seen them except on Sunday at church. But it had been managed in some mysterious way that he should be twice asked to the magistrate's house, and twice treated to a most delight-

ful *tête-à-tête* with the young lady. The truth was that Miss Bella had begun to take an interest in the Coolie people, because she had an interest in Craig. She plied Craig with questions about his work and the estate on which he laboured, and being ready to admire anything he said and did, she specially admired the justice and shrewdness of his remarks on the relations between the masters and their servants. These she repeated to her father, who affected to contemn them, though in reality they created a deep impression upon him. Moreover he liked the young overseer the better for separating himself from the low and sordid views which were so evidently entertained by overseers and managers in general. He was, however, too prudent to express any opinion

either to his daughter or to the young man, or to Drummond, for he had a suspicion that the feeling among the whites was bringing them to the eve of a period of perilous excitement. Out of this brief intercourse linked on to that which had before taken place, there had grown up in Craig's mind a regard for the young lady, which his practical caution restricted to that stage of feeling, and allowed to rise no higher. He had certainly not as yet received much obvious encouragement to let his feelings run up to blood heat. Bella Marston's fine nature was under admirable control.

The day after the conversation we have detailed happened to be Sunday, and Craig sat in the church watching the handsome face of the magistrate's daughter with a blunt directness which brought a flush to

her cheeks. He was, however, so absorbed in his purpose as to be unconscious of his rudeness.

Miss Bella gave him her hand after church with an air of delicate reserve, meant doubtless to be taken as a rebuke, but the pre-occupied young Scotchman coolly overlooked the hint. The magistrate was busy talking with one or two managers about the state of affairs, and a reported rising on the Arabian coast, so that Craig was free to saunter homewards with Miss Bella, a liberty he had never before ventured to take. Certainly it was not resented by the young lady.

“Miss Marston,” said the young Scotchman, “I know you take some interest in Lutchmee. You remember I met you once at her house.”

Bella remembered only too perfectly, and recalled it blushinglly.

“ Well,” he went on, “ she has been very ill and very unhappy. Her husband is still in gaol, she is among total strangers, and if I might dare to mention it to one in your position, I think it is likely she is an object of some persecution from one or two of the overseers. I don’t say anything against them ; they have to deal with very cunning and unscrupulous work-people, and may believe that this poor woman is as bad as others, though I am convinced she is a good and worthy creature. If I did not think so,” said Craig, turning and fixing his fine grey eyes on those of his companion, “ I should not ask you to interest yourself about her.”

The young gentleman was improving,

Bella thought. This compliment from so matter-of-fact a person was extra complimentary.

“What I have seen of her,” she said, warmly, “has given me a very good opinion of her. I should like to see her removed from her present position; she is evidently quite unfitted for it.”

“I am glad to hear you say that,” exclaimed Craig, “because I feel the same. She is far above the place. But I don’t see how she can be rescued. Her husband is engaged to Mr. Drummond, who is not likely to let him off. Besides, he thinks the man, from real or fancied wrong, is inclined to be insubordinate, if not rebellious. The manager would scarcely listen to a word in his favour. Lutchmee is in the hospital, and of course anything

I may do will be looked upon in the present state of affairs with suspicion; so," said Craig, hesitating, but of course putting the thing with the most straightforward bluntness, "so I—I thought I would ask you, as a woman, what you thought you could do, or if you could give me some advice as to what I should do for the poor girl. You know I owe her so much for her attention to me while I was ill."

Now you, knowing Miss Marston's feelings about the intimacy between Lutchmee and Craig, will perceive that his candid question was of a kind to embarrass her. Lutchmee was all very well as an abstract object of compassion; but as a subject of interest to a young man like Craig, we may pardon Miss Bella if she looked upon the Coolie woman rather coldly. Yet on

the other hand, liking Craig, anything that was interesting to him might be expected to interest this young lady. Between a nascent jealousy and an actual sympathy, however, there cannot be a very long struggle in a good heart. And her heart was a sound one. Miss Marston appreciated the overseer's manly candour, and her soul went with him in his self-imposed mission of charity.

“I think,” she said, quickly, “it will be better for us not to talk about this any more, because I see papa is coming; and, as he is very friendly with Mr. Drummond, he might not care to hear about it. (Sweet opportunity to create a little inner circle of confidence with her companion!) I will come over and visit Lutchmee, and see what can be done for her. It is very kind

of you, Mr. Craig, to trust me in a matter of this sort, for I am both young and inexperienced."

"A woman's wit, my mother used to say, Miss Marston, was worth two men's wisdom."

"But I am scarcely a woman yet," said Bella, blushing, "even were that bold saying granted. However, I will do my best. Here is papa!"

The magistrate gave his hand to the young overseer, and probably excited by the news he had heard, and being chronically *ennuyè* on Sundays, he, to Craig's surprise, as well as to that of the young lady, invited him to go home with them to dinner. Though no further opportunity offered itself to resume this conversation, Craig felt a sort of satisfaction in Bella's

presence, while her desire to please him increased with the taste of his company. The combined shrewdness and simplicity of his talk received a certain fascination from the natural gentleness, the tenderness of his manner. Mr. Marston, when the overseer had taken leave of them, was perilously frank in his approval of the young man's ability and modesty.

Thus it was that Miss Marston, on Monday morning, had taken Sarcophagus and gone over to the Belle Susanne hospital before breakfast; and Lutchmee, sitting in the women's verandah, was cheered by a musical voice, and a sweet, bright smile, and, what was an absolute absurdity for a patient in an estate hospital, with a cup full of delicious jelly.

Of course such a visit as that could not

have occurred without being reported to Drummond's ears, even had it not met his eyes. He was now ceaselessly vigilant, and watched every part of the estate for indications of any threatening movement. Seeing Miss Marston and his old friend Sarcophagus enter the compound of the hospital, he followed them, and broke in upon Miss Marston's interview with the Coolie woman.

Fortunately the young lady, without any dishonourable prompting from Craig, had been quick to perceive the part she had to play, and she answered the somewhat sinister greeting of the manager by a frank smile.

“Miss Marston! You here? And without notice, miss? What can have so interested the belle of Demerara as to bring her into these poor premises?”

“Two things. One was to visit this poor woman, who I heard was ill.”

“How did such a rumour reach the ears of Miss Marston?”

“Oh, very easily!” with a slight blush. “Papa asked Mr. Craig to come home to dinner with us yesterday, and he happened to mention her as the woman I had seen here once or twice before and taken an interest in. She seems really very ill and downcast.”

Drummond, glancing down at the Coolie, thought so too. With instinctive kindness he kneeled on one knee, and raising Lutchmee with one strong arm, with the hand of the other arranged her pillows in a more easy position. The woman shuddered, and turned her face away from him. His quick eye saw it, and it hardened his heart more

than ever. He stood up with an altered manner.

“It is very kind of you indeed, Miss Bella, to come and look after her. But she is well taken care of here. And I can assure you your visit will be likely to be misunderstood. In the excited state of the Indians just now, it is almost dangerous for you to go about.”

Miss Marston felt that these words were very rude, and that they were intended to be rude, and to act as a veto upon any further interference with Lutchmee. But the deep reasons she had for pleasing Craig, and her own genuine and strong character, at once suggested to her a spirited reply.

“I am not the least afraid of the Coolies, Mr. Drummond,” she said, “and I have a

real interest in this poor woman. Do I understand you to say distinctly that you object to my showing any kindness to her? ”

“ Oh not at all,” said Drummond, biting his lip. “ My apprehensions on your behalf alone led me to speak as I did. It is the open attention which I think is likely to be misconstrued.”

“ Well, Mr. Drummond, I will not intrude again while she is in hospital. But you will not mind her coming over to see me when she is better? ”

Drummond assented to this with a bad grace, and Miss Bella took her leave. The manager was vexed at the whole affair, and more and more annoyed with Craig, whom he guessed to be at the bottom of this “ interference.” It was a reflection on

himself to suppose that any of his Coolies wanted looking after by Miss Marston. But matters were not ripe for decided steps, and he kept his own counsel.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

KNIGHT AND LADY.

DILLOO had not been at home a week when, one afternoon, between four and five o'clock, Miss Marston arrived at the hut. Behind her the versatile Sarcophagus carried a basket of good things, few of which perhaps the Indian woman would care to eat. Lutchmee was sitting outside the house on the raised clay-floor, and when she saw Miss Marston, rose and received her with simple and graceful courtesy. The English girl's pleasant manner during her visit to the hospital had quite won the Indian

woman's heart. In truth, her jealousy, such as it was, had been rather instinctive than moral. No more malevolent desire had crossed her thoughts than that of monopolising Craig's interest in herself. The refinements of Platonic affection or the temptations of lawless love were alike unknown to her. She was too child-hearted, too devoted to her husband, to give her fancies play in forbidden directions.

“Well, Lutchmee,” said Miss Bella, “are you better now?”

“Iss, lady: well, well. Man come back too.”

She pointed inside the door, where Dilloo, sitting on a low stool, was engaged in cutting up some brilliant-looking papers.

“Why!” exclaimed Miss Marston,

startled by the reminder, "you are getting ready for the *Tadja!* I had forgotten it came so soon."

Dilloo rose to his feet, and for the first time gazed upon the handsome young lady who stood there brightening the outlook from his door. She all fair and 'witching, and gay with the excitement of a kindly purpose, with the opaline lights through her sunshade playing around her: he in the shadow of his hut, darkly meditating on his wrongs, and, in rank luxuriance of passion, thinking of revenge.

"Iss," said he, nodding his head moodily:

"*Tadja* come!"

His fine form, naked from the waist upward, stretched and expanded, and his eyes glowed in the shadow. Even Miss Marston, who was an inexperienced ob-

server, detected something sinister in his manner, which sent a slight thrill of alarm through her. But she was bold, and she held out her hand.

“Dilloo,” she said, not condescending to baby-English, “I made Lutchmee’s acquaintance when you were—were away from home. I am so sorry you have been so unfortunate, I feel so sorry too for poor Lutchmee. I hope there has been no mistake, and that you have not been punished when you did not deserve it.”

“Um!” said Dilloo, omitting to take the proffered hand, but making a low salaam. “Mahitee send Dilloo prison. Dilloo good man. Mahitee punis Dilloo, Dilloo do no bad ting. *Tadja* come!”

If Bella could have misunderstood his language, she could not mistake his man-

ner. Dilloo was not aware at the moment to whom he was addressing himself. Lutchmee instantly spoke in their own language.

“ Oh, Dilloo ! ” she said, “ be not rude to the beautiful white lady. She is herself the daughter of the magistrate.”

The Hindoo started, and shot an angry glance at his wife.

“ Do you tell me that ! ” he said, between his teeth. “ False woman, would you betray me to mine enemies ? What does she want with us ? ”

Thus small injustice brought large suspicion, and suspicion ran to rage, and rage brought blindness to everything but the fell purpose of revenge ; and in that absorbing aim, gentleness, goodness, love of wife, and manly courtesy, and all other graces,

shrank back chilled and nerveless. How venomous and bitter are the fruits of rank iniquity!

But in a moment Lutchmee's native nobleness came out. Overlooking Dilloo's rough reproach, she rose, and after a brave, sorrowful look into his uneasy eyes, she took the still outstretched hand of the beautiful girl, and after holding it to her own bosom, laid hold also of the unwilling hand of Dilloo, and with a graceful gesture put them together.

"Dilloo," she said, softly, "thou art not just to thy wife, and thou art angry with thy wife's benefactress. Though this lady may be the daughter of Magistrate Sahib, who has done you so much wrong, she is not a party to it. Know that she came to visit me when I was sick, and she

brings me now some generous gifts. Let one kind to me be treated by you with a grateful respect."

Dilloo glanced doubtfully at his wife and at the young girl, and it was plain a strong struggle was going on within him; but taking away his hand, he walked out of the hut, and throwing a scowl at the grinning Sarcophagus, rapidly made off. Lutchmee hastened to offer excuses for her husband, and to try and remove from Miss Marston's mind any unpleasant feeling.

Bella Marston, of course, had not understood the conversation that passed between husband and wife, but she had divined in their tone and gestures enough to disquiet her. She sat down, however, beside the Indian woman, and with wonderful patience and skill gradually drew from her the whole

story of her life, and especially of the mishaps of the unlucky pair at Belle Susanne. As she listened to the frankly-expressed complaints and sorrowful experiences of the Indian woman, the English girl's heart gave way to new sympathies, and her mind expanded to new ideas. There was a touch of compunction in her soul when she remembered how much of lazy life she had led, incredulous of these wrongs which she now began to perceive might be everywhere around her. In this way does not every generous and noble soul some day wake up to unacknowledged evils? Putting together Craig's disclosures about the management of the Indians with Lutchmee's simple story, the quick-witted young lady, for her own part, was not long in coming to an opinion. That

facility is a privilege of her sex. It is true—and not astonishing, having regard to the methods of feminine education in vogue just now, and, with such monstrous injustice on the part of the stronger sex, permitted to go on unremedied—that to Miss Marston the effort of working out for herself the true meaning and bearings of all she had heard was rather confusing; but her mind was a vigorous one, if badly disciplined; and she had the aid of a pure, just nature, and of feminine wit. Her sympathies naturally went with the poor woman who, with infinite delicacy, had told a tale suggestive of evils, from which the ingenuous soul of her hearer started back in horror. Were such things going on around her, and was her father, as the Indian woman had implied, a part and parcel of the sys-

tem by which those evils were sustained? Troubled by such thoughts, she took leave, enjoining upon Lutchmee if she should ever be in need of a friend, as in truth, from Dilloo's strange manner, seemed to be a thing that might well happen, she should come to the magistrate's and ask for Miss Marston.

“Sarcophagus,” said the young lady, pausing a few feet from the hut, “there is a short way home from here, is there not, across Hofman's Lust?”

“Dere's a short way, Missa Bella, round by de cane-plot, all across de next dam, down along de dam to anoder dam, den up dat dam on de one side, and turn straight to de left, ober a lillie bridge and up anoder dam, and den round by Joel Jackson's, and troo Hofman Lust, ober two dams, and

cross de bridge ob de big canal, den right along——”

“Stop, stop!” cried Miss Marston. “Where is all this going to end? No matter: we will try that way for a change.”

“Oh, Missa Bella,” cried Sarcophagus, earnestly, “do go round de straight way by de road! Jest about dis time all de Coolie come along de dams from dere work. Nebber do for young lady to go ’long dat way.”

Miss Bella reflected only an instant and came to a decision. If all the gangs were on their way home, might not all the overseers be upon the same track? There was a good half-mile of walking in Belle Susanne. They could (that is they would) take it leisurely. This was pure human

nature. She had not seen Craig for so long.

Sarcophagus piloted the way. Presently, along the dam, came slowly dropping a few labourers, covered, on bare legs and arms, with dusty tokens of dusty toil. Some carried their hoes on their shoulders, some swung their cutlasses in their hands. They stopped and looked at the black and his fair mistress; and Sarcophagus felt a creeping in his flesh as he bethought him that these ill-conditioned people were armed, and, if they meant mischief, could do it. Let us not acquit these lowering Indians of evil thoughts. If they turned and gazed somewhat rudely at the graceful figure and proud bearing of the English girl, they had such wild wishes as come out of the bottomless depths of evil in uncul-

tured natures. Bella did not like to find them lingering to watch her, and as she saw greater numbers approaching, began to wish she had gone "round the straight way." Sarcophagus being rather flurried missed a narrow, weed-covered crossing over the estate canal, and went on up the wrong side of it. The number of passing Coolies increased, and a small crowd of them, knowing that the path led nowhere but to the back of the estate, stopped to permit them to approach, and looked at them curiously. Some stood in the way, and when Sarcophagus, urged on by the boldness of terror, tried to pass them, they managed to hinder him without any violence.

The place where the young lady was thus checked was not a favourable one for escape.

On the left was a canal about twelve feet in breadth; on the right a square, which ought to have been filled with young sugar plants or well-hoed rows of hills, but was overrun with a thick fallow growth of bush of surprising height and closeness. Bella looked to right and left and onward, and could see no hope of succour if these sullen-looking people were really bent on mischief.

“Let pass!” cried Sarcophagus, brandishing his arm in desperation. “Dis Miss Marston, magistrate’s daughter.”

A quick-witted Coolie instantly caught the meaning of the latter part of the Negro’s speech.

“The daughter of the Mahitee!” went round the circle in a moment, and angry glances were thrown at Bella.

“Oh, you idiot!” she cried to Sarcophagus; and the words were scarcely out of her mouth when the Negro was seized by three or four Coolies, who pinioned his arms: whereat Sarcophagus opened his vast mouth and gave forth a yell so mighty and so far-reaching that his astounded captors let him go. Almost at the same instant a lithe Coolie dashed out of the bush on the right, pushed through the group with powerful shoulders, and uttering a few low, angry words gave a sweep of his arm. It was Dilloo. Without a word the Coolies dispersed into the bush, and Dilloo, pointing up the dam, made a low salaam, and simply saying, “Massa Craig,” leaped after his comrades, and vanished from sight.

Miss Bella, glancing along the dam, saw about half a mile off a white man on a

mule, which he was urging onward at its best speed. In a few minutes he had come up.

“Miss Marston!” exclaimed Craig, jumping, all warm and breathless, off his mule. “Pray what are you doing here, and in such times as these? You are quite pale. What has happened, and what were all those Indians doing around you?”

“Don’t be alarmed, Mr. Craig,” said Miss Marston, trying to recover herself, but evidently much agitated. “Really it was nothing, I suppose: but so many of them around us rather frightened me.”

“Dey already commence to kill me, sah!” said Sarcophagus: “only I trow dem all off and yell out.”

“Ah, that was the shout I heard! You seem to have routed them completely.

Take my arm, Miss Marston : you are faint. Sarcophagus, you can look after the mule."

Craig, supporting Miss Marston, felt all the pleasure of a *preux chevalier* who had released his dame, and she all the bliss of rescued lady-lorn leaning on the arm of her deliverer. She soon recovered from her agitation, and then disengaged herself, for, pleasant as it was to be so near him, she had never given the overseer the privilege of thus supporting her, and she felt some bashfulness about parading with him in that position, though there was no one by to watch them. Craig, for his part, now that the excitement was over, looked pale and *distrain*. His talk was reserved, and, in truth, almost monosyllabic, so that by the time the young couple had arrived at the magistrate's

house they had reduced themselves to a meditative silence. Miss Bella was mortified at Craig's coolness, and he, on his part, was agitated by conflicting thoughts.

What a soothing charm was there about this fair girl at his side, who looked at him so kindly and spoke in a voice so thrilling and so sweet! Under that sunny ray his soul warmed and expanded, but still could at first only raise its face bashfully toward the inspiring glow.

They paused at the foot of the steps of Mr. Marston's house. It then for the first time flashed across the young lady's mind that they had not considered what course they should take in regard to the incident of the afternoon.

"Pray come in and see papa about it," she said to the young overseer; who

straightway felt that it was an imperative duty to see the magistrate.

That worthy was much alarmed and annoyed by their story. It showed a more mutinous spirit among the Coolies than he had suspected, and it struck him as a very absurd position for his daughter, who really had a difficulty in accounting to him how she came to be there. A sharp-eyed mother would have accounted for it in a moment, — would have read the riddle in the blooming face.

“ You should have asked the girl to come over here, if you wished to do her a kindness,” said he. “ If Drummond hears of it he will be very angry. He is bad enough as it is——”

He stopped. It had just occurred to him that he was speaking of Craig’s employer,

and, to the magistrate, Craig was only a patronised acquaintance. Mr. Marston bit his lip and looked more put-out than ever.

“Papa, you don’t know what I have heard,” said Miss Marston, with animation. “That poor Lutchmee has been persecuted most shockingly. And,” she added, bravely, “I don’t think, papa, that you ought to have convicted her husband. It was all a mistake, and the overseer told you lies about him.”

The awkwardness which these straightforward, impulsive people introduce into life, society, and politics! The insanity of ignoring the *finesse* of life, the stupidity of unreserve! Do not such people confound the counsel of the wise, and mortify sober and sedate judgments? What is a Dutch brick front with all its gravity before

a cannon and a cannon-ball? And what is a most steady brickfaced Foreign Secretary, for instance, before one of your terrible eighty-ton political popular-movement guns with an impact of its shot to the tune of several hundred tons?

Marston looked at his daughter, aghast at her boldness, and scarce knew how to treat it in the circumstances. He was not going to argue with her the question of his own misjudgments and of an overseer's criminality, before another overseer, of whom, by the way, he only knew enough to feel a slight respect for him.

But the young people were both of them too straightforward for the elder. Said Craig:—

“I fear, Mr. Marston, it is true that Lutchmee has been a victim of unfair

treatment. I have reason to believe that Chester and Hunoomaun, a Hindoo driver, are in a conspiracy to do her and her husband injury. Dilloo's conviction appears to have been obtained by misinforming you. Chester is a scoundrel!"

Horace was not more startled by that peal of thunder from the sunny sky, than were the magistrate and his daughter at the fierceness with which the Scotchman intensified this last expression.

"Hum!" said the magistrate, with increased vexation, as he jumped up, rubbed his hair with one hand and moved about restlessly. "Mr. Craig, Mr. Craig!" he said, assuming a severe tone, "do you know, sir, that it is very improper for you to speak to me in my peculiar position in that way? Here, you,—both of you"—

Bella's heart leaped: it was the first time they had ever been so nearly associated—"come and tell me that I have been the means of doing a man an injustice; and further, you, Mr. Craig, speak of one of your colleagues in a way which is more than reprehensible, sir: it is almost criminal—unless—unless, indeed," added the magistrate, tempering his rebuke a bit, "you have the clearest evidence, the very clearest evidence, Mr. Craig."

"I am quite satisfied of it, Mr. Marston," replied Craig, "not that I have enough evidence, perhaps, to commit him in a court of justice; but I think, if we were alone, I could convince you in a short time that Dilloo has suffered from a wicked conspiracy."

"But, good heavens, man!" cried the

worried magistrate, "don't you see that this is exactly what I ought not to listen to? I am the magistrate of the district: how can I hear from my daughter and you charges against people who are within my jurisdiction?"

"Well, papa," retorted Miss Bella, "you know Mr. Drummond has often come here and told you stories about his Coolies before you have gone to try their cases."

Mr. Marston looked almost furiously at the daring young lady: and then, seeing how perfectly sweet and ingenuous was the air with which she received his glances, and in the bottom of his heart feeling that she was a sort of outside conscience to him, and not to be controverted, he shot a look at Craig, whose face held no riddles, and afterwards with a calmer aspect sat down.

“It is impossible to argue with young people,” he said, apologetically, to ease off his capitulation. “But I thought, Mr. Craig, you were a practical Scotchman, and not given to romancing about people’s wrongs. Now tell me what is this all about? And remember that I reserve the right of using any information you may impart to me.”

Thus it was that to Mr. Marston was gradually unfolded a story which did not so much surprise him, as it now aroused his mortification and his anger.

The truth was, hard words had that morning passed between him and Drummond. His native boldness made him less timorous than his more interested neighbours about the agitation among the Coolies. Hence his responses to their

excited appeals were so calm as to exasperate them. In the midst of a current of passion, you will be deemed a traitor if you keep your balance and appeal to reason. Thus Mr. Marston was being rapidly isolated by his natural sense of justice, which had at length overcome his natural indolence, so that he was now ready to permit suspicion—which had long lain quiet, because there was every motive, and a constitutional inclination, to let sleeping dogs lie—to develop into proofs. And Craig's very definite statement, supplemented delicately by Miss Marston, made the magistrate supremely uncomfortable. He was puzzled how to treat the incident of the day at Belle Susanne. He did not doubt that the Coolies who had surrounded Bella and her attendant, had been tempted

to mischief by the unwonted opportunity ; and this was the most startling token he had yet received that there was a dangerous temper awakening amongst them. On the other hand he could not but recognise his obligation to Dilloo for his timely rescue, although he saw how evidently it showed an understanding between the Indian and his mates. Still, with all these indications before him, he hesitated about raising the alarm which would assuredly result from a publication of the adventure ; and he was certain that in Drummond's present temper no effort would be spared to discover the culprits and make an example of them. Among them Dilloo would be certain to suffer. In fine the magistrate was in one of the most difficult quandaries that can be imagined ; for while duty seemed to demand

that the occurrence should be made known, on the other hand there were weighty personal and general reasons for keeping it quiet. It would drag Miss Marston into needless publicity; it would aggravate Drummond's ill-feeling; and further it might hasten a collision between the Coolies and their employers. From all this it arose, naturally and involuntarily, that Mr. Marston found himself consulting with his daughter and the young overseer on something like confidential terms, and that the latter found himself taking up ground not altogether consistent with his loyalty to the estate on which he was employed. In the result it was decided that the affair should be overlooked, Bella undertaking that Sarcophagus should receive an instructive explanation of the cir-

cumstances from her. The magistrate felt mightily uncomfortable about the whole affair. At the bottom of his heart he was a little mortified that Craig should become a confidant of his family. Yet Marston's was not one of those natures that can rely upon itself, or is content to do so; therefore he would fain have persuaded himself that this was a very sensible youth, and one to be trusted. What should come of the affair from without he did not like to think. Hence his discomfort. But in parting with Craig he was more candid than he had ever been with him, and he asked the overseer to visit them more frequently.

Craig, lighting his pipe, strolled home in the moonlight: a baneful radiance in those climates. He had the sensation that he had made a stride in manhood, but he

could not exactly define why: It might be that he had played the cavalier, it might be that he had become the confidant of a magistrate. For some unowned reason he took the way home by which he had come with his sweet companion but a few hours before.

CHAPTER XL.

A SHARP BLADE.

WHILE that little conspiracy was being arranged at the magistrate's house, another convention was held, which narrowly concerned the parties to the first.

Hofman's Lust, the estate next to Belle Susanne, on the eastern side, was shaped like the letter L, only that in its relation to the latter estate the letter was reversed. The long limb ran between Belle Susanne and Guineatown, and the shorter limb eastward, between Guineatown and the shore road, which, by the way, turned inland-

wards, and ran along the other side of Guineatown. Then the plantain grounds of the village extended as far back as cultivation was possible, being protected, as usual at the extreme rear, by a dam, to shut out the water of the interior in the rainy season. The Negro-yard of Hofman's Lust was situated at about the middle of the shorter or lower line of the estate, which was about half-a-mile in breadth, and for convenience sake it was habitual for the Coolies of Hofman's Lust, who were working on their estate at the back of the longer line, to take a short cut to and from their work across the Negro village, which straggled over nearly a square mile of swamp.

The manager of Hofman's Lust was a Creole Dutchman, named Fluyschutz, de-

scendant of one of the marvellous old Hollanders who had helped to redeem this rich Colony from sea and marsh and wilderness. There was a clear mixture of the Negro in Mr. Fluyschutz's composition, evidenced not merely by his short curly hair and large lips, but by many other characteristic traces of manner and temperament. He was not a successful planter: his estate was ill-managed and deeply mortgaged, so that the means available for its improvement and for fulfilling his contracts with his labourers were stinted. His hospital had again and again been complained of by the Medical Inspector without result. His Coolies were in a state of chronic excitement, not likely to be assuaged either by the wretched staff of overseers who were needy enough to endure his

poverty and his meanness, or by his own tyrannical disposition. Mr. Fluyschutz's position and habits were notorious in the Colony; yet no Governor would have dared to refuse the Creole's application for a batch of Coolies, although no one could doubt that they were being consigned to a lot of hopeless hardship, tempered only by an official surveillance which did not dare to be rigorous, and was unwilling to be keen. *Hinc illae lacrymae!* Hence so many of those sorrows which engage the sympathies of kindly people in Britain, and work their revenge upon the better class of planters in these odd communities. You may depend upon it that Drummond, whilst he was obliged to be civil to Mr. Fluyschutz, and felt it necessary on high planter grounds to defend him from too

intrusive Governmental interference, felt that if all such men could be turned out of Demerara it would be far easier to make concessions to the clamours of reformers. It is bad men who handicap the good—not alone in Demerara.

An estate like that of Mr. Fluyschutz's was a standing nuisance to a neighbour. It was always in a state of discontent. Its slovenly management and continual troubles exerted a disastrous influence upon the adjacent labourers. If there were a conspiracy or a rising no one would be surprised to hear that it began or was fomenting at Hofman's Lust. And in truth among the supporters of the Memorial those who were most in earnest were the Coolies in its Negro-yard. Among them was a certain Ramsammy, who had been

a Sepoy in India, and who prided himself on his military appearance and training. Without question Ramsammy had been a conspirator before, and was at best a Wahabee, wild and malevolent.

Ramsammy knew a good deal of English. Alert, adroit, cunning,—a wily actor,—he was a frequent visitor to Guineatown, and was pretty familiar to its lounging inhabitants, who knew him by the name of “Indy Soldiah.” He was accustomed on *fête* days to emerge from obscurity into fame by adopting an old red uniform, wherein he blazed about fiercely in the fervid sun.

Akaloo had pitched upon Ramsammy as the best man to lead the Coolies at Hofman’s Lust; and hence Dilloo, who was not abstractedly a likely man to cultivate

Ramsammy's acquaintance, was thrown into association with him. They frequently met, like other politicians, to talk over the state of the country. Ramsammy knew Gonzales very well: perhaps he had been of service to the Portuguese in divers matters connected with the latter's trade, for Gonzales found it useful to have a sort of Coolie-agent on each estate,—it may have been to extract rum from the puncheons; it may have been to help to sell it. At all events the news of the brutal attack on Gonzales, which thrilled the whole community, aroused in the Sepoy a vivid indignation. And Dilloo, himself a victim of inconsiderate treatment, returned to his work in precisely that state of mind which would bring such a man under the mastering influence of a resent-

ful passion to be prompted by an astute and unprincipled friend.

Dilloo and Ramsammy were engaged on this particular night in a low conversation in the latter's hut.

“Why should we wait for an answer from the Queen?” urged the Sepoy to Dilloo, who with all his boldness and resolve shrank from any precipitate step. “They mean to draw the cord more tightly round us. It will not be possible soon for an Indian to be free, even after he is ‘unbound.’ They have passed a law ordering every free man to carry about with him his picture taken by the sun, for which he is to pay four dollars, or he will be arrested on the roads. Four dollars to prove that he is not bound!”

“Aý! what next?”

“What next?” continued Ramsammy. “I was in the village to-day. I went to see the man who sells for the Portugee Sahib,—our friend, you know, whom they beat so badly. Well, the man told me all the guns and pistols in the country have been bought up by the planters.”

“What?” cried Dilloo. “How did you find that out?”

“I went to buy a pistol,” replied the other, coolly.

“They mean to massacre us,” said Dilloo, slowly, shaking his head. “What then can we gain by delay? Let us at least have our revenge before they slay us.”

Thus in these dangerous communities comes action and reaction—then reaction against that—and then perhaps some terrible action.

“I have vowed,” the Wahabee went on to Dilloo, “before I die to dip this blade in the living blood of that accursed manager Sahib. He is worse than your manager. He once struck me: the Negro dog! He is not an Inglees.”

“And I, for my part,” said Dilloo, “made a vow while I was in prison, that if ever the chance is given to me, I will take the life of that magistrate who sent me wrongfully to gaol.”

“I know,” replied the other, nodding: “magistrate and manager! One pays the other—the other helps the one who pays him. Well, *he* is easily got at. His house is not very far off, and he has no men to defend him. They do not like him, I know, in the village. But he is a strong man: what you do must be done secretly. You

might get him poisoned. Do you know the Negro conjuror and doctor whom they call Obe?"

Dilloo shook his head.

"Well, you should know about that. The Negroes look upon him like a god. His power is terrible. He lives far back in a sort of island in the middle of the woods, some miles from Guineatown. He has a hut there in a large tree. His god is a huge cock's head cut out of wood, and hideously painted and smeared with blood. If he casts his evil eye upon you, you are lost. You have only to give him offerings and name the name of your enemy, and the Obe will kill him secretly and cunningly. Sometimes he strews poisoned thorns for naked feet. Sometimes it is a pin taken from a decayed

corpse, with which if you scratch yourself you die in agony."

Dilloo shuddered. It was too supernatural.

"But," said the other, "I do not know whether he would do anything for us. Get a knife like this, my friend."

He held out a common horn-handled American bowie-knife, strong, and bright, and sharp. Dilloo taking it, firmly grasped the rough handle. It was not a weapon he cared for: but as he held it, and glanced at the glittering blade, and a sense of unrevenged wrongs rose within him passionate and powerful, his fingers played nervously round the corrugated haft. With such an instrument he could destroy his enemy. A nice thing for poor easy-going Mr. Marston to be the subject of a resentment so practical!

At that moment another Indian glided into the hut, which was lit only by a low-burning lamp. Dilloo's arm moved, and the blade flashed, but the other spoke

“Hold. It is Akaloo!”

“What, is this Dilloo?” cried the newcomer, who had been rather startled by his reception. “Are you practising already? Put away those things: that is the last appeal.”

“It is you who have brought us thus far,” said Ramsammy, securing the knife: “do you now desire us to go back?”

“No!” replied the estate trader. “But I would have you act with caution. These planter-Sahibs are trying to get you into a false position, and, if you do not restrain yourselves, they will succeed. You have only to show some violence, and you put yourselves into their hands.”

“Can we not overpower them?” said Dilloo, briding. “We are twenty to one.”

“No!” answered the Madrassee. “They are all armed, and few of the Coolies are as strong and brave as you two. You will only run your neck into a noose.”

At the dreadful word, they all shuddered. Hanging is very hateful to an Asiatic,—as indeed it is not pleasant to any race we know of.

“I hear from Mr. Williams, the lawyer-Sahib, that the planters are pressing the Governor very hard to arm the whites and make them all police. There are to be more soldiers sent for: all the roads are guarded already by police overseers. I had to make a long round to the back to get here. Every free man must carry a

pass and a photograph. I shall get one to-morrow."

The two Coolies looked at each other.

"We missed a great chance to-day," said Dilloo: "but I could not help it. The daughter of the magistrate, a beautiful white girl, was wandering in the middle of the estate with one of those Negro dogs. A party of our people surrounded them, and the opportunity was so good, that I believe they would have made the best of it; but the lady has been very kind to my Lutchmee, and was indeed going home from a visit to her, and I could never have permitted any injury to come to her in such circumstances. So I ran in and sent them all off, and fortunately the overseer Craig Sahib came up and took her home. He is the only kind man on the estate."

“I know of him,” said Akaloo. “Gonzales has told me of him as a true and honest young gentleman.”

“My wife nursed him,” said Dilloo, “and she spoke of him always with kindness. But he sees her too often,” he added, darkly. The sad experience which these natives have of our countrymen destroys their confidence in the best.

“Fear him not!” said Akaloo, “I beseech you. He is a friend at court. You are too hot and jealous.”

“Well I may be,” retorted the other, sullenly.

“I am going on farther to-night,” said the Madrassee. “Mr. Williams begged me to warn you all to keep quiet and attempt no rising. In two weeks is the *Tadja*——”

—“For which we are preparing!” said the others significantly.

“Give directions that it shall be the quietest ever spent. Have no brawls, no dissensions: give no opening for cruelty. When they strike, they will strike hard. Peace be with you.”

Shortly after Akaloo had gone, Dilloo set out to walk home by the short cut across Guineatown and through the estate of Hofman's Lust. Lithe and unencumbered, he got over the ground very rapidly. A bright moon shed its radiance over the melancholy flats, pieced out in vast square patches by the silvery lines of the canals, that seemed to stretch out into the infinite space. The village was all asleep. The only sounds were the deep bass roll of the billows on the shelving shore, a sound like

distant thunder, and the bell-like toll of a single campanero in the woods some miles away, faintly rippling to the ear through the deathly stillness. Out of the ground and from the numerous canals rose up a sultry mistiness which was transfigured by the moon into lurid vapour. Suddenly a single bark from the most distant hut in Guineatown struck harshly through the dull air, and then up rose a terrible canine chorus from every part of the village, to which each hound and cur lent his voice with furious zeal, and beside which one would think the dead must be aroused from slumber. It did not startle Dilloo, and as for the inhabitants of the village, it was a music that lulled them into deeper repose.

As Dilloo, passing along a dam of Hof-

man's Lust, silently trampling with his unshodden feet, was about to cross the main canal of the estate, his quick eye detected something moving alongside a dam that ran at right angles to the one on which he walked, about a hundred yards off. The figure was using the shadow of the dam, and of the long weeds which fringed it, to crawl along. At first he thought that it was a dog or some other animal; but every now and then it stopped and rose to an erect position: Dilloo at once dropped himself gently into the grass beside the road. Evidently the figure had not detected him, for its movements were not such as would have indicated suspicion of any one on this side of the dam. It must be stalking some object on the other side. Looking sharply before him, Dilloo then

for the first time noticed a moving form, which, being clad in white, had not before attracted his attention : it was slowly walking onward to Belle Susanne. He guessed at once that this was Craig, and became curious to know why the overseer should be so suspiciously followed. Choosing the left side of the dam on which he was walking, the other figure gliding up towards it on the right, Dilloo, concealed by the embankment, ran quickly down to the point at which the two dams and the canals intersected. He had arrived just in time to lie down flat in the grass and draw it over him, when above the embankment came the head of a Coolie. The moonbeams beat brightly into the eyes and face of Hunoomaun. Dilloo tightly grasped his lattey and held his breath, as the Sirdar, resting on hands

and knees, keenly watched the receding figure. The heart of Dilloo beat strongly and wildly; he could scarcely restrain the temptation to have it out once and for ever with his enemy. But for the fact that Craig must have heard any noise, Hunoomaun would have had to try dread conclusions that night with the man he had wronged.

As it was, however, Dilloo moved. The Sirdar looked into the grass, and seeing there the form of some animal, suddenly dashed off at his utmost speed. As Dilloo, smiling sardonically, stood up to watch the runaway, the moonlight flashed on a blade in the villain's hand.

“Aha!” said Dilloo to himself, as he quietly followed Craig home unobserved, “there are knives in more hands than one. I shall stick to my lattey.”

CHAPTER XLI.

UNEASY LIES THE HEAD !

THE man whose fortune it is to be a Colonial Governor ought to have his head screwed on tight and straight. Nevertheless it is too often found that Dame Nature has bungled it, and left even very capable official heads rolling and lolloping about, as it were, loosely on their trunks. The Colonial Office used to have a certain fatality in discovering and editing or publishing gentlemen who carried their brain power in this loose aristocratic sort of way, and so long as the patronage is left to the

Colonial Minister of the day and there is no Colonial Service system, it is likely that very queer persons will again and again be found to be in the wrong place at critical junctures of Colonial history. Poor Thomas Walkingham, at this momentous period of his pro-consulate, felt particularly conscious of the flabbiness of his vertebral structure, and heartily wished his dear friend Danby at Barbados, or Hatton-Mainham-Denvers-Studley at Trinidad, or Sir Winky Wankey, the old experienced Governor at the Cape, or in fine any other Englishman except Thomas himself, were just then sitting in the seat of government in British Guiana.

The hot excitement played around his head like summer lightning, and scorched and dazed it. He knew well the dangers of that brilliant Colonial Service. If he

made an obvious mistake, British public, Government, Colonial Minister and all, would be down upon him, fatally. If he did what was abstractedly right, he ran the chance of its never being recognised as anything but a blunder!

The legislature—ycleped Court of Policy—was a fair version of most of these Crown-colonial Governments. In one day, much against his judgment, though he did not like to oppose it with decision, an ordinance was passed changing the vagrant law, which had been severe enough before. The effect had been correctly stated by Akaloo to Dilloo and the Sepoy. No free Coolie could budge from his home unless he carried a magistrate's pass and a photograph of himself,—the price of which together was fixed by the ordinance at six dollars,—

without running the risk of being seized, locked up, and if the precious documents were lost, committed to prison for a month.* A month's labour at least to procure the evidence of one's freedom under an English Government!

The planters had long desired to pass this ordinance. It would help to make the unindentured people still more uncomfortable than they were, and would drive them to seek indenture as an improvement upon freedom. Since all these free people had served five years at least, and had thus become acclimatised, their labour was more valuable than that of new Coolies; besides that, being in the free market, they were enabled, like the Negroes, to insist upon fair terms.

* If any reader believes such a thing incredible, let him read the Mauritius Blue-book.

Outside the legislature there was extraordinary agitation among the planting community. The case was thus put by Mr. Ingledeu at the Club :—

“THE PEOPLE OF BRITISH GUIANA, Sir, have risen in their might! Our rights are in danger. Our free constitution, which has existed unimpaired ever since we wrested the colony from the Dutch, is threatened with extinction! Our franchises, our liberties, our property are menaced by revolutionary agitators! The Coolies are being inoculated with communistic fallacies, by intriguing conspirators. The fanatics of Exeter Hall will be called on to crush us. But we shall not succumb without a struggle!”

And so it seemed. It looked as if they meant to have a fight: yet no one had been

attacked. There had been no riot. No conspiracy had come to light other than the simple combination promoted by Akaloo and others to get the Coolies' griefs fairly before the Great Queen.

—For, among all ingenuous native peoples in and out of our territories, the embodiment of British power and Government is THE BRITISH QUEEN! She is imagined as all-seeing and all-performing. The righteousness that is done, the vengeance that is wreaked, the reforms that are wrought, the blunders that befall, by or through her thousand-headed staff in any quarter of the world, are the righteousness, the vengeance, the reforms, the blunders of the distant and unseen Monarch. It is a glorious ideal—a sad unreality. Were it in fact true, fortunate were Her Majesty's dominions.

If every man who administered in her name, from Prime Minister down to the resident at Falkland Island or Sherborrow, felt, and, feeling, showed that he was an humble partner or medium of that embodied Greatness of the realm's Majesty, Power and Righteousness; and were to strive for his part to maintain and transmit undimmed the glory of that Fountain-head of light and goodness, and thus helped to strengthen in all men's hearts reverence for the Impersonation of British Sovereignty,—how noble and how precious to all the earth would be the outgoing of the national majesty and might! Such a sentiment is not unpractical,—nay, it hath in it wholesome uses and blessed influences. When all executive power is working up to a high ideal of truth, justice and glory, it is a strong, though sensitive

network of nerves which knits the whole system together into a vigorous and perfect national life.

It was the crime of the Coolies that they had appealed directly to this Majestic Person. Finding within reach of them no ears to hear or heart to be moved on Its behalf by their complaints, they were now going up to the foot of the throne,—and that was the place where their masters were least willing to meet them. For they must have thought that it was an impudent presumption on the part of such bondsmen, already, like Jeshurun, too well off;—a menace to the privileges of men who had been accustomed to look upon these people as outside the pale of social and constitutional regard. Else, why did Mr. Ingledew so candidly express the arrogant views of the planting community?

Out of one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, it was a pleasant illusion of these gentlemen to think that a few hundred whites constituted "The People!" Blacks, Madeirans, Coolies, all swarming in tens of thousands, what were they? Why, they were machines to make money for the people of Demerara—to provide cheap sugar to the world in general, and plenty of profit to speculating Britons in particular. Doubtless, candid reader, if you and I were there, making money through the existing system, and knowing that to change that system meant in any case less profit to be gained, nay, perhaps much money to be lost, although we knew it might also involve a more even distribution of wealth throughout the community, we should never see the falseness of our ground; we also should

call ourselves "The People," and be ready to vindicate our privileges even to blood. Ministers of Christ in Apostolic and other Churches have been found thus blind, and how should we poor laymen escape? If you can only manage to put your conscience in your pocket, can you not be a most comfortable and honest thief, or a most gracious and gentlemanly scoundrel?

So vividly did the planters and their dependents feel the danger of exposing their system to the searching eyes of impartial justice, that they deemed it even wicked to submit it to such an inspection. What they—The People—had determined to be right and necessary for the good of them—The People—why should keen-eyed critics and quick-nosed philanthropists be permitted to subject to visual and olfactory

tests? Why, those humanitarians live by smelling and spying! They see moles and smell smells when all other eyes and noses are quite insensitive. They really know nothing about the necessities of places many thousand miles away,—like the Mauritius, for instance, where a beneficent Providence has placed two hundred and odd thousand Coolies at the mercy of a precious oligarchy,—worthy, say, of Houndsditch!—and yet these busybodies have an impudent habit of discussing things they do not understand, worrying Colonial Ministers with deputations and memorials (signed, generally, “F. W. Chesson,”—d—— him!), and of challenging God-ordained systems, or opinionating on human rights and other silly abstractions.

The course these planters took at this

critical period laid them open to a fearful suspicion of Machiavelian policy. They went about armed, having emptied all the gun and pistol-shops. They noisily demanded of the Governor that he should swear in special constables, plant cannon commanding all the main dams into Georgetown, proclaim martial law, and send to Barbadoes for more troops.

Whereto Governor Walkingham answered that there had been no riots, nobody had been killed or hurt; and, so far as he saw, the Coolies, though excited, were not disposed to fight, and he was not disposed to force them to it.

Upon this Mr. Ingledew called the Governor "a temporising poltroon;" Drummond called him "a baby;" the *People's Warder and Cock of Liberty* stated that he was "a

shallow nincompoop ; the effete relic of a used-up family tree ; a gubernatorial idiot," and "a political and moral eunuch." These phrases were the invention of a clergyman, commonly called a minister of the Gospel, (though, evidently, not any one of the familiar Evangelical Gospels), and who was ostensibly more inspired in his utterances than ordinary mortals. In addition to loud, violent language—the *Cock of Liberty* termed it "the majestic voice of the people,"—the planters and overseers went from plantation to plantation displaying their arms, and in some cases hectoring the Coolies. These sprang to the conclusion that there was to be a massacre. The wildest rumours were circulated, and as they began to tell each other of their fears they also began on the various estates to aggregate into groups

prepared to act together. Thus the terror of the one party evoked the organisation of the other.*

The Governor of the colony was sitting in his private room, and was busy drafting for his Secretary one of the despatches to the Colonial Office, which was to go out by the monthly mail. Responsibility, want of sleep, a sluggish liver and mosquitoes had depressed and unnerved him. In such conditions men cannot condense, so they expatiate; and he was in the midst of an effort to embody in one vast paragraph a vivid picture of the state of affairs.

His Secretary announced the Roman Catholic Bishop. Mr. Walkingham winced when he heard the name. The "affair

* See the Barbadoes Blue-books of 1876.

Gonzales," as the French would have termed it, still remained a hard nut for him to crack. The unlucky Portuguese had been slowly recovering under the attentions of his gentle nurses, fever having supervened on the terrible bruising he had received. The Portuguese community, though inflamed to a high degree, had not as yet given any sign of action,—a reserve which the Governor regarded with suspicious alarm. And now the wily ecclesiastic, who entered with so deferential a bow, and pressed the Governor's hand with so velvety a touch, must have come, his Excellency thought, for the purpose of raising the unpleasant question.

“Your Excellency is quite disengaged?” said the Bishop, in English. “If not, may I perhaps go, and return at some more convenient time?”

“I am always disengaged to you, my Lord,” replied the Governor, graciously; though he could not restrain a glance at the sheets of unfinished sentence. “You so seldom do me the honour to visit me that I would forego much to enjoy this rare treat.”

“Ah, ah!” said the ecclesiastic, smiling. “Your Excellency is flattering. I am, as you know, a most occupied man. Your Excellency also has much engrossing labours. So long as all goes well it is no occasion that we should meet, though always in my experience the entertainment is so agreeable.”

“Am I then to infer from your language, Bishop, that all does not go well, since you are here to-day?”

“Perhaps, yes. To be frank, your Excel-

lency," said the Bishop, looking anything but "frank," as his keen dark eye glanced from under his black eyebrows, and he played with his small brown hand on his full, smooth-shorn chin, "it is already three weeks that a Portuguese, one of my compatriots and co-religionists, sir, has been flagellated almost to the death by a planter, named Harris. He has, grace to Mary, nearly recovered himself. The Portuguese community, which is much agitated and insulted by this circumstance, has waited to see your Excellency take the means to punish this so great crime ; but——"

The Bishop here stopped and shrugged his shoulders, as he raised his hands, by which pantomime he gently conveyed to the Governor a reminder that his Excellency had not taken steps to punish that so great crime.

Mr. Walkingham's manner under the influence of the Bishop's eye was not as candid and easy as might, for the sake of his English blood, have been desired.

“You know, my Lord Bishop,” he said, blinking his eyes in a vain attempt to baffle the episcopal gaze, “that since that unfortunate occurrence, which I deeply regret, the colony has been agitated by a political excitement, demanding all the attention of the Executive, and we have not had time to inquire into the details of a street fracas.”

“What!” cried the Bishop, with a start. “Do I hear your Excellency call a brutal assault on my countrymen a ‘street fracas’? You have not received, sir, the veritable information. The Portuguese do not so regard it. It is a very serious thing. My

countrymen cannot conceal from themselves that justice most rigid is dealt out to them on the most slight infraction of the law. This man, Gonzales, for instance, has before this time been punished with severity for alleged breaking of excise laws ; but when a planter has done an outrage most grave, so as nearly to destroy a man's life, there is no regard. Behold, your Excellency, from this, there naturally results discontent and irascibility!"

The ecclesiastic spoke ever so smoothly and glanced ever so quietly, but keenly, sidewise at the Governor, who stirred uneasily in his chair. The heat appeared to distress him. However, he made a gallant effort to charge the enemy.

"The public mind is greatly excited, my Lord. All my experience of you gives me

the assurance that you will use all your powerful influence over your countrymen to get them to postpone agitation of their grievances until this danger has blown over."

"I cannot accept the responsibility your Excellency so graciously imposes upon me," cried the Bishop. "The community of the Portuguese have restrained themselves until now, under my very strong counsel and injunctions, but they will not any longer remain passive. A very grave state of affairs arises if Mr. Harris is not early arrested and subjected to process."

"Good heavens! my Lord Bishop," cried his Excellency, in a stew; "will you increase our complications at this critical moment? Were Harris to be arrested we might have bloodshed. Consider, I pray

you, the peace and prosperity of the colony are at stake.”

“Mr. Governor,” said the Bishop, and his soft purring enunciation gave his words greater incisiveness, “behold! what is the peace and prosperity of the colony excepting supreme and undisturbed rule of the planters? All is regulated in their interest. Remember, your Excellency,”—here the Bishop pinned his man with steady eyes and a monitory finger,—“remember how unjust to my Church the law has been in the process of the administration of the estate of the pious Don Diego. Years since has it been a testamentary *donum* to us, but from your Excellency has been no response to our demands so frequently reiterated.”

“I cannot interfere, my Lord, with the

administration of the law," argued the Governor.

"Nor any more with the Administrator-General, I am aware," interposed the Bishop, in the gentlest tone, smiling the while.

"But the notorious incapacity and evil manner of administering his trust, of that official, may come under your Excellency's notice and perhaps receive your attention?"

"The matter has not been overlooked," said his Excellency. "It is partly due to the complications of the Dutch law——"

—"Which complications, I regret to be obliged to remind your Excellency, do not appear to prevent very facile administration of estates, in which the English gentlemen planters are interested——"

"Permit me, my dear Bishop,—I was going to add—I have had a minute pre-

pared on the subject for the Colonial Minister.” (His Excellency felt justified in this case in representing the deed for the will.) “I will consult the Attorney-General. Let me beg you to postpone all these matters to a calmer season. You must really lend us your valuable help, as a minister of peace, to quiet the dangerous excitement which prevails. You may depend that at the earliest possible moment your affairs shall be satisfactorily settled.”

The Bishop externally looked the picture of polite credulity, but his words were sharper than a two-edged sword.

“I fear, Excellency, that nothing will satisfy my people but immediate recompense. Mr. Harris must be prosecuted, and it would very materially assist in calming the—*dangerous excitement*—do I not

use your words so correct?—if you would be able to assure me that the administration of the Estate Don Diego, will be immediately facilitated. I am delighted to observe that you so favourably view it.”

The Estate Don Diego was a *bête-noir* to the Governor. Acres of paper had been wasted over it. It was a case in which a very admirable institution had been perverted in a very arbitrary way, to keep the Roman Catholic Church out of the enjoyment of a valuable property. In British Guiana the inhabitants have some advantages that greater and more civilized communities are stupid enough to forego. There is an official called the Administrator-General, in whom vests all property of bankrupts and intestates, to be administered for the benefit of all concerned, under

an official scale of costs. In a free and large community, with a press and public opinion to keep him in order, such an official would seem to be a necessary boon, did we not see that in England, for instance, he does not exist; for a small but powerful coterie of legal monopolists manage to thwart almost every attempt to improve and cheapen laws and their administration. But in a close community like that of a Crown Colony, where the interests of officials and planters are so mixed up, you cannot always ensure, even with Her Majesty's representatives looking on, an honest discharge of public duty. The pious Don Diego had, without doubt, intended to leave all his wealth to Bishop Carvalho and the Catholic Church; but a slight informality in the will afforded the Adminis-

trator-General a pretext for stepping in to administer as for an intestacy, and for several years enabled him by clever lawyering to avoid stepping out. In the meantime the management of the estate involved a lucrative patronage and many fees.

The Governor just then wished the estate Don Diego in Hades, and the Bishop there in possession of it. But he knew that he was fairly cornered.

“Will you allow me to see what can be done?” said His Excellency. “When would it be convenient for you to have another interview on these subjects?”

“To-morrow!” replied the Bishop, promptly. “Not later than to-morrow, your Excellency, in consideration of the so *dangerous excitement*—which you most correctly have termed it.”

“Very well,” said the Governor, unable to suppress a grimace, the pill being bitter. “Let it be to-morrow, my Lord. I am sure I can rely on your good offices.”

“Always, your Excellency, regarding with admiration your Excellency’s ever so wise administration of the Government. Permit me, your Excellency, to offer you my salutations.”

The Bishop left the room, and the Governor turned with a shadowed face to his unfinished sentence. But he was not yet destined to have done with it.

In the ante-room the Bishop encountered the Intendant-General.

“Ha! me dear Bishop, is it yourself? We live in troublesome times. No doubt, with the public spirit which always dis-

tinguishes you, you have come to promise your influence in keeping order."

"That, Major," replied the ecclesiastic, smiling, "is foreign to my office. It is the affair of the Executive," motioning towards the Governor's room. "But the Civil Power always has claim to the aid of the Church, when it discharges well itself its duty to the Church."

He said this deliberately, and emphasized it with an uplifted finger. Then he went away.

"What's the old thief up to now?" soliloquised the Intendant-General, as he opened the door into the Governor's room.

"Good morning, Major!" cried His Excellency. "Did you meet the Roman Catholic Bishop going out?"

"I did."

“ And what did he say ? ”

“ Faith, he was enigmatic, to my fancy. He said the Church would help the State when the State helped the Church.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ” laughed the Governor. “ A good old principle of his Church. But do you know what he is driving at ? Sit down and listen.”—

“ The property will have to be managed,” said the Major, when Mr. Walkingham had ended his recital. “ If he gets that, he can keep the Portuguese quiet. I’ll see the Administrator meself. As for Harris, that is a more difficult business. I’d like to know where’s the magistrate would commit him ? ”

“ It must be done,” said the Governor, firmly. The Bishop’s words had pierced far beneath his outer coat of policy, and had touched his honour.

“Have you heard the news, Excellency?”
said the Major.

“No.”

“They’ve begun to put this new ordinance in force, and the police have taken up twenty men on the roads on the West Coast, before they could get a photograph at all. But better still, sir,” the Intendant-General went on with a radiant face. “They captured this morning seven Coolie children crossing Guineatown from the buildings at Hofman’s Lust, carrying their fathers’ dinner to the back of the estate—it’s the short cut, ye know,—and the infants are all locked up! Drummond just told me Fluyschutz took it before himself without consulting Marston.”

“The devil!” cried Mr. Walkingham.
“How can anyone govern such a contrary set of people?”

“Now, easy! me dear Governor,” said the Major, earnestly. “I’ll help ye out of the scrape. Sure couldn’t we just arrange to have them little vagrants all committed for a year to the Orphan Asylum? ’Twill settle the thing beautifully now; and by the end of the time I’ll make decent Christians of the lot.”

The Governor laughed consumedly.

“I admire your persistency, O’Loughlin,” he said, “and it will no doubt be rewarded some day. You will get a shower of orphans. But of course you are not in earnest. It is really too ridiculous!”

“Ah, faith!” said the Major, ruefully, “I’m heart-broken with that same asylum. Good-day, your Excellency. I’m off now straight to the Catholic Bishop! I’ll sell it to him; he wants it for a convent, and

he'll be paying for it with Don Diego's money!"

When the Major had gone the Governor touched the Secretary's bell.

"Send for the Attorney-General. Write 'urgent' on your note to him. Prepare a minute ordering him to take steps to prosecute Mr. George Harris for the assault on Gonzales."

And before the day was out the news was over the Colony like wild-fire, that a summons had been issued by the Georgetown magistrate against Mr. George Harris, of Bitter Marsh, for the assault on Gonzales.

CHAPTER XLII.

A SUDDEN DISMISSAL.

THE near approach of the *Tadja* was signified by extensive preparations on all sides. The Coolies, as was their wont before these festivals, were engaged on every estate in secret manufactures, which in ordinary times consisted of the paraphernalia, dresses, instruments and weapons of a great celebration. The whites, anxious and watchful, took every precaution fear could suggest to meet an outbreak.

Chester, now high in Drummond's confidence, arranged through Hunoomaun to

have the Coolies of Belle Susanne carefully watched; but Dilloo, on the track of vengeance, was morbidly alert, and nearly every effort to discover anything in the manner or the proceedings of himself and his friends was foiled. The Barbadian took every opportunity of embittering Drummond's mind against Craig: and he happened to possess a piece of information which he knew would deeply incense the manager. He, however, kept it back for a few days, in order to make the blow against the object of his enmity the more decisive.

The Governor, in view of the peril that seemed to be impending, issued orders to the stipendiary magistrates of the various districts to hold meetings of the Justices, and send in reports of the state of affairs within their jurisdiction, together with such

practical suggestions as the magistrates might deem it proper to make.

It was on the morning of this meeting that, as Craig was turning out of bed in the rough shanty inhabited by the overseers, Chester, from the other end of the room, called out to him that the manager wished to see him before he went "back," and would be waiting for him at the estate house.

There was something in the Barbadian's manner, in the glitter of his large teeth and the play of his mobile yellow face, that struck Craig—not a very acute observer—as rather sinister.

"Why did you not tell me that last night?" he said to the Creole.

"Soon enough this morning," replied the other, jauntily. "Too soon for you, I guess."

“What do you mean?” said Craig, a little fiercely. The other occupants of the room, Martinho and Loseby, sitting on the sides of their beds, watched the scene with attention.

“Oh, nothing!” said Chester, trying to look indifferent as he thrust a yellow leg into his canvas trousers. “P’raps Mr. Drummond wants to know what you were doing at the back of Belle Susanne with the magistrate’s daughter last Friday week.”

Across the room in a couple of bounds Craig jumped in an instant, and with a single grasp of his great hand on Chester’s throat drove his head against the wall in furious anger.

“Did I not tell you,” he cried in a terrible voice, “never to mention Miss Marston again? Eh! eh!”

Bump, bump went Chester's head against the boards, and the tears rushed from his eyes, and some inarticulate sounds from his lips. The other overseers pulled off Craig, who instantly felt ashamed of himself, while the breathless Creole fell on his bed and cried aloud with rage and pain.

The Scotchman dressed, listening to the threats and imprecations of the wretched overseer, and then took his way gloomily to see the manager. He asked himself whether anything could compensate him for the misery of such an employment in such company.

Mr. Drummond was waiting in the verandah, and, as was evident at once, in no good humour. He neither sat down himself nor permitted the overseer to do so.

“I have been waiting ten minutes for you, sir,” he said, sternly.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Drummond. I have been giving Mr. Chester a lesson in manners, sir,” replied Craig, with unusual spirit. He was in a chafed and irritated state, admirably complementary to that of his employer.

“Oh, you have, have you? That will be another matter for the magistrates, perhaps. Will you explain to me why you did not report the occurrence of last Friday, in which you and Miss Marston seem to have played the principal parts?”

“There was really nothing worth reporting. The young lady was frightened no doubt by seeing a number of Coolies about her; but she was not hurt, and I saw her

home. Neither she nor her father desired to make any fuss about it."

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Marston was a party to concealing the matter?"

Craig hesitated.

"I think, sir, any questions about Mr. Marston's conduct ought in justice to be put to himself. I might do him a wrong by imperfect representation."

"I daresay: though there seems to be a perfect understanding between you."

"I am persuaded," said Craig, "that Mr. Marston would not do anything that was not strictly honourable."

"Ah," replied Drummond, with a sneer: "he has a most influential backer. He would very likely say pretty much the same of you."

"I should feel honoured by Mr. Marston's good opinion," replied Craig, simply.

His coolness and steadiness worked Drummond's anger up to a high pitch. Unable to contain himself, he swore roundly at the overseer. Craig, listening and looking at his master, whom he overtopped by an inch, braced himself, with a dangerous restraint, which made his whole frame quiver visibly.

“Mr. Drummond,” he said, “I once had a respect for you, but I am rapidly losing it. I came into your employment to be treated like a gentleman, and I will not take that language from you or any other man.”

The shadowy play of Craig's eyes, which looked manfully into those of the manager, warned the elder not to push his anger too far.

“Very well, sir,” he said, affecting a

laugh. "You shall not be subject to such degradation any longer. Here is an order on my Georgetown agent for three months' wages, with an allowance for board. Give him a receipt. You will be good enough to take yourself off to-day. The steamer sails next week. I presume you will not look out for another employment in the colony after being dismissed by me. I cannot have on my estate a man who connives at disobedience and encourages bad discipline, and who has not the sense to understand what is for his own interest. Good-day to you, Craig: your ingratitude has deeply disappointed me."

And the manager, half-ashamed of himself and half-sorry for the young man, fairly turned and ran away before anything more could be said.

There can be no doubt that Drummond's expression of regret at Craig's "ingratitude" was quite genuine. If he and his servant differed in their notions of honour or honesty, it scarcely mattered which was right or which was wrong: the master was sure to think himself ill-used. The temper which insists on more than legal or moral service to repay friendly or benevolent treatment is a very common one; and in proportion to the purity of a man's course sometimes will be the disappointment of a master who finds him too honest for his purpose. It not seldom happens that friends who rely on each other's honour as well as each other's amity, fall out when the latter succumbs to the former, and the sufferer in that case will almost invariably go about proclaiming himself to have been sadly abused!

Craig stood looking at the cheque in the early light and slowly realizing what had happened, with sundry meditations there-upon arising. But his reflections were interrupted by Missa Nina, who came to him softly, with tears in her eyes.

“O Mister Craig,” she said, “I’m so sorry! He never was so bad as this. Sure the devil has got hold of him this time. Where will you go to, dear Mister Craig?”

She even in her kind solicitude laid her hand caressingly on his shoulder; but Craig slipped away, though he felt touched by the poor woman’s sympathy.

“Have you heard all?” he asked.

She nodded.

“I knew it was coming, Mister Craig. Chester was in here last night after supper, and told a long story. I was listening

through the partition, but I could not get out to tell you. He said Hunoomaun had found out all about the thing, some way, and he followed you to Mister Marston's. They only don't know who the Coolie was that saved Miss Bella."

Craig saw in a moment that he had been the victim of Chester's revenge, and he felt some wicked gratification in thinking of the wretched Creole with his head against the wainscot, and his rolling eyes and lolling tongue, under the grip he had given him. Then he thought of the magistrate's daughter, and of her father, and of Dilloo, —who was, as he could see, in great danger of being found out and ruined,—and of Lutchmee; and the result was a very miserable jumble of sensations, amongst which stood out one of extreme pain that he was

going away from it all. Some of them needed aid and protection,—and one of them——?

“I must go and get ready,” he said. “Good-bye, and God bless you, Nina. Ten thousand thanks for all your kindness to me!”

Nina sobbed. She held his hand and checked him.

“Are you not going to say good-bye to Miss Bella?” said she, slyly, recovering a little.

“I don’t know,” replied Craig, hesitatingly. “Perhaps I had better not.”

“Do go now!” urged Missa Nina, drying her tears again, and speaking very earnestly. “You know she has been very kind to you. I am sure she will feel it very much if you don’t.”

“Hum!” said Craig. He was really glad to have his own bashful wishes encouraged by Nina’s counsel, and that counsel he resolved to take. But first he went off to the overseers’ quarters and packed his small wardrobe; and having changed his working dress for a more presentable suit, was passing through the yard, intending to pay farewell visits to Lutchmee and then at the magistrate’s, when he met Nina, who came up breathless. She had been running fast.

“Mister Craig,” she said, “Simon Pety is to drive you into Georgetown. I ran all the way back to look for Mr. Drummond and ask him. He swore at me, and told me to mind my own business: but no matter—he said you could take the buggy.”

“ My poor Nina ! ” cried the Scotchman, shaking hands again very warmly.

“ Mr. Craig,” she said, earnestly, “ don’t you go to Mr. Marston’s until after twelve o’clock. Mr. Drummond let out that there is a meeting there this morning, and he is going. It will be over I suppose before breakfast, and you will be safe to go after. Come with me now and have something to eat.”

When Craig had fortified his inner man with the ample provision made by Miss Nina, he looked, as a healthy man should do, with more cheery feelings on the world at large,—and on his own case in particular. He was young and strong; he had done right,—save that at the bottom of his satisfaction there was an uncomfortable feeling that he had hit Chester’s head very hard and had not consulted his own dignity.

“After all,” he said to himself, philosophically, “this fellow is a nigger, one ought not to expect too much from him.”

Whereupon, as the result of his reflections, this singular young man set off to find the peccant Creole and beg his pardon; but an inquiry made to Crampton at the buildings, who expressed his hearty regret at Craig’s dismissal, proved that Chester was too far away to be looked up within a couple of hours, so the Scotchman turned towards Dilloo’s hut.

It happened that the Hindoo, who was devoting every spare hour to preparations for the *Tadja*, was in the house; while Lutchmee, in her light skirt and jacket, ran about on her small bare feet, preparing some rice for breakfast. The overseer had lately avoided her, and in a life which has

no spiritual or mental food, of books, or society, or religion, or art, or of the sight of various and beautiful nature, to lose even the incidental pleasure of meeting an agreeable friend causes a vast hiatus. So that when Lutchmee saw Craig approaching she naturally uttered an exclamation of delight; and her husband, watching keenly from within, saw her, with that elegant ease of which he had been so proud, run up to the Scotchman and familiarly take his hand like a loving child,—and there was really nothing more than this infantile feeling in the simple act. Then Dilloo, still watchful, saw Craig, who, his heart being softened at the moment, was slightly off his guard, lay his big hand gently on her tiny head as he would have done to a little girl.

Not so very long since the Coolie would

have regarded this scene between Craig and Lutchmee with less suspicious eyes. He liked and respected the overseer; he loved and trusted his wife. But now how greatly had his frank, manly nature suffered from the scorching bars of unjust justice, and the withering influence of ungenerous treatment! His mind was diseased with the sense of wrong, suspicion, resentment, the craving thirst for revenge, and he regarded the incidents of this meeting between his wife and the overseer with jealousy and anger.

“ See,” said he, to himself, “ she lets him touch her head! Is she then so much at home with an Inglees?”

But Lutchmee turned on the instant, with an innocent face, and said to Craig,—

“ Man in house: come and see him.”

Whereon Craig came forward and looked into the hut.

“Come out, Dilloo,” he said, with his manly voice. “I have come to say good-bye. I am going away to England.”

Dilloo jumped to his feet and came out.

“Craig-Sahib go away?” he cried, in amazement.

Lutchmee clasped her hands and looked the picture of distress. Dilloo’s dark eye, settling on her for a moment, suddenly clouded over. The moodiness of his altered nature had its way, and he was angry that she should feel so intensely the loss of a stranger. And then there darted through his mind, all in a tithe of the time it takes to tell it, the terrible suspicion of jealousy. However, he commanded himself, and turned to Craig.

“Why Massa go? All Coolies like Massa. Always good to Coolies. All Coolies cry for Massa. No oberseah now good to Coolies. Manahee, oberseah, all de same bad to Coolies. *All right!*”

He nodded defiantly and significantly at these last words, and his eyes strayed into the hut and fell upon his *Tadja* preparations.

Craig looked at him earnestly a moment, and felt that something had come over the man which left a disagreeable impression.

“Dilloo,” he said, laying his hand on his shoulder, “for your own sake, for Lutchmee’s sake, take my advice: be careful what you do. Try and work out your time here quietly. You have money enough to take you back to India. Don’t even *think* of doing any harm to anyone on this estate.

You will be caught and sent to prison, or hung, as sure as you live."

"Ha," exclaimed Dilloo, with his eyes on fire, "yes! I go prison two times for nossing: next time go, go for one good ting. Salaam!"

He dashed into the hut and shut the door. Craig shook hands with Lutchmee, and a weak mist dimmed his eyes, while she sobbed as if her heart would break. The overseer hastened away towards Hofman's Lust and the magistrate's house.

No sooner was he out of sight than Dilloo, in a rage at his wife's softness, took a thin cane and, for the first time in his life, beat her.

As her shrieks came forth from the hut, several women ran to their doors in the village and listened. One of them was a

flabby-looking creature, much laden with silver and with a half-toothless mouth. She smiled as she heard the cries. She had been spying through the chinks in her house the interview between Craig and the two Coolies, and she put two and two together.

“Ha,” said she, with a chuckle, “he has found out the sly woman at last, has he? I thought her day would come. Let us see if she will hold her head so high now!”

CHAPTER XLIII.

JUSTICES IN COUNCIL.

EVERY justice in the district put in an appearance at the meeting which had been called at the magistrate's house. Mr. Marston looked forward to that convention with some anxiety. He was too well aware of the character of some of the great unpaid in the colony; and he felt, moreover, that the planters were beginning to think of him with suspicion. Part of this feeling no doubt arose from a conscious change within himself. Of late, the things which had come to his knowledge through Miss

Marston and the Scotch overseer had greatly disquieted his mind. The natural reaction of a dogmatic nature against the somewhat rudely expressed criticism of his recent conduct, not only in the horribly licentious press which disgraces most of our small colonies,—and some of our large,—but in private conversations, served to strengthen his determination not to be misled, while it quickened the keenness of his insight. He could not admit to himself that the Coolies had done any wrong in making a complaint by memorial to the Queen, or that Williams was as bad as a convicted felon or worthy of hanging, because he had taken a fee to draft the petition. So he had shaken hands with Williams in Water Street, and was reported to the Club, with opprobrious comments, and received an intimation from the

Committee that if he should err so notably again, he would be asked to retire. Of course he immediately resigned. One incident leads to another. His irritation strengthened his resolution, and therefore when Mr. Fluyschutz committed to prison seven little Coolie children who had been caught on the short cut across Guineatown carrying their fathers' dinners to the back of Hofman's Lust, Mr. Marston, without consulting the Governor, promptly ordered their discharge, on several grounds, but one particularly which was incontrovertible,—namely, that these children were Mr. Fluyschutz's own labourers, and that therefore Mr. Fluyschutz should not have tried this case. Nevertheless, Mr. Drummond was as irate as anybody at what Marston had done.

“Why the d—— should he be so punc-

tilious at such a time as this?" quoth Drummond in all sincerity. "It is only letting the Coolies see we are divided, and encouraging them to go on with their rebellion."

A magistrate who is not a partisan in these chronic crises of the planting colonies, is genuinely regarded as an enemy. Your planter may repudiate that as a principle, but he could not contravene it as a fact. It is too patent to the visitor, it is written too glaringly on the pages of Commissionary evidence. *In mediis tutissimus ibis* is a Latin proverb, but privileged planters do not deal in Latin proverbs, if they should be able to understand them. "At this supreme moment of the People's danger," Mr. Ingledeu had pompously declared at the Georgetown Club, "he

who is not for us is against us!" And one is obliged to admit that he was perfectly correct. If you are interested in abuses, how can you bear to have them disinterestedly criticised?

It was not surprising that when Mr. Marston received the assembled justices in his verandah, an air of coldness and constraint prevailed on all sides. Mr. Fluyschutz was there with his dignity grievously upset, and, as his manner showed, not easy to be set right again. There also was Mr. Dupree, of Colston, and Mr. Macginnis, a rough, vulgar Irishman, from a small place up the Mahaica River, called, in bitter irony, "Brighton." There also were Messrs. Mackintosh and Grant, of the estates of Van der Tromp and Galilee. Drummond of course

attended; and Mr. Marston had taken upon him to ask Mr. Telfer, as the parish clergyman, to lend his benignant influence to the discussion.

Drummond and Macginnis arrived together; and as they slowly ascended the long steep of stairs leading to Marston's verandah, where all the jalousies were turned downwards to keep out the sun and left open to admit the air, they designedly or incautiously spoke in a tone which reached the ears of everyone in the gallery.

“No man has any business in these times, when all our lives are in danger, to be neutral. I say it is d—— cowardice for a fellow to make his living out of the planting community in quiet times and desert them in a pinch.” Thus spoke Drummond.

“By——, sir, that’s true!” answered Macginnis; “and I’d very soon tell him so, too, to his face. For meself, there’s me, every night of me life, never knowing but what I’ll be killed by a hunthered or two of rebels in me bed! Gad, I’d like him to go and sleep there for himself! Would I stand upon terms with them riff-raff? There’s only one argument a nigger or an Indian understands, and that’s buck shot, I tell ye.”

And if Mr. Macginnis’s record could have been unfolded, as perhaps it never will be till the day of judgment, it might have been found that he had acted before now up to his opinion. He was one of those *mauvais sujets* whom Drummond would in ordinary times have treated with coldness, if not with contempt. But common

danger, like misery with *its* bed-fellows, brings men cheek-by-jowl with odd characters. It was a very hard cause indeed which could gain anything by the advocacy of Fluyschutz or Macginnis.

Marston and the other justices overheard this conversation, and his blood coursed with painful rapidity through his veins, though no one could have discerned, except by the scintillation of his eyes, that a word had reached him. He gave Drummond his hand, and nodded to Mr. Macginnis.

“You, gentlemen, are the last to arrive,” he said. “We will proceed to business. As a matter of form, shall I take the chair?”

And the magistrate sat down in his favourite seat by the table.

“His Excellency the Governor,” proceeded Mr. Marston, “as I see by this letter, desires me to consult you, gentlemen, in regard to the state of affairs in this district, and the steps to be taken to preserve the peace in the agitated state of the Colony. You are more familiar with the feeling that exists among the labourers than I can be. But I would mention that there have been no assault cases before me for ten days, and so far as I know there is no immediate danger calling for extraordinary action.”

Macginnis, who had taken his morning dram, and was encouraged by it, was about to speak, when Drummond forestalled him. The tension of all minds showed itself in his words and manner.

“I thought it would be taken for granted

that there was 'danger,'” he said. “I did not suppose there was any white man in the Colony who required proof of that. When forty thousand labourers, surrounding a few masters and overseers on estates up and down the country, begin to put forward ridiculous and inadmissible claims, I should say a man must be a mole not to see danger.”

A general clearing of throats among the justices served as a sort of cheer to this speech. Marston, keenly sensitive to the delicacy of his position, held his mouth with bit and bridle, and answered quietly,—

“We are only differing about the meaning of the word ‘danger.’ I did not refer to the menace involved in the attitude of the Coolies under the Memorial, but to the ‘danger’ of a physical outbreak.”

“Physic be d——!” cried Macginnis, roughly, “and the Memorial too! We’d all be murdered and killed before you, or the likes of you, would see any danger! It’s not to split straws we came here to-day, but it’s to settle how we can keep them devils in their proper places.”

Marston’s eye grew dark and stern as he fixed Macginnis with his glance.

“Well,” he said, “if all devils were kept in their proper places, it might be more convenient for the world. But I would remind you, sir, that if any good is to come of this discussion it must be conducted in a gentlemanly manner.”

Macginnis sulked, and Marston went on.

“But, gentlemen, as you all appear to be resolved that there is danger calling for

preventive measures, let us consider what, in your opinion, are the arrangements necessary for the preservation of the peace.”

Drummond, holding a slip of paper in his hand, read as follows :—

“ Proclamation of martial law.

“ Restriction of all Coolies to their estates till after the *Tadja* time.

“ Prohibition of the *Tadja*.

“ Arrest and prosecution of Gonzales and Williams for inciting the Coolies to insurrection——”

“ Good heavens ! ” interrupted Marston, who had listened astounded to these demands. “ On what grounds ? ”

“ Do you know, Mr. Marston,” answered Drummond, angrily, “ that the Memorial drawn up by those two men contains false and malicious charges against the Legis-

lature, the Executive, the Magistrates (including yourself), the police and the whole planting community? With such ignorant and excitable people, do you suppose that such charges could be concocted and put into shape without the risk of raising a rebellion?"

"I do not see that it need follow," replied Marston, doggedly. "That must depend, to a great extent, upon the way their representations are met and treated."

Here little Mr. Telfer, who had been nodding and blinking in a corner, perched his small body well forward on the edge of his chair, and perspiring with excitement, gamely crowed a clerical challenge thus:—

"I agree with Mr. Marston!"

The justices looked at the little man with wonder and rage. He was pale, but his

face shone with a certain earnestness which none of them had ever seen upon it before.

Macginnis burst out upon him :

“ Who the —— asked your opinion ?
Have you turned traitor, too, against your
bread and butter ? By —— ”

“ Stop, sir ! ” said little Mr. Telfer, jumping off his chair, and holding up his hand towards the ruffian, as if he were about to exorcise a fiend. “ I am indifferent to your insolence to a humble person like myself, but I shall ask these gentlemen to protect me from hearing the name of God profaned, —and by such lips as yours.”

Drummond, looking at the little man with some admiration, was obliged to reach out his powerful arm and sweep him into safety, for Macginnis actually rose as if to make a dash at the courageous prophet.

And from behind the great manager's chair the worthy parson watched the excited discussion which now arose. There was challenge and retort, blast and counter-blast. As they all came down upon him harder and harder, Marston waxed more firm and explicit in his remonstrances. Drummond finally lost patience.

“It is useless to waste any more time, gentlemen,” he said, rising. “If we are to take proper measures in this district we cannot expect the co-operation of our Stipendiary,”—he put an emphasis on the word,—“Stipendiary Magistrate. Before I go I wish to give the meeting one piece of information which throws a further light on Mr. Marston's conduct. You may judge of his fitness for the important post he occupies in this grave crisis, when I tell you that he

concealed from every one an incident which happened last week at Belle Susanne; when Miss Marston, walking home across my estate, was actually threatened with personal violence by a mob of my Coolies. She was rescued, I believe, by one of my overseers, whom I this morning dismissed——”

“ You have dismissed Craig ! ” cried the magistrate.

“ Yes, sir, I have. You seem to have an understanding with him.—Gentlemen, will you believe it, Mr. Marston combined with one of my overseers to keep this serious affair, which proves a rebellious spirit among the Coolies on my estate, a secret, and I only heard of it by accident ? ”

All the planters rose to their feet, and looked at Marston, who, however, without moving, said with dignity,—

“I had no reason to believe that Miss Marston was really threatened with any serious danger. Mr. Craig is a young man of good character, and, I think, of sound judgment, and he agreed with me that what happened on the occasion was not worth notice. Besides, gentlemen, one thing will at once appeal to your good feeling,—the person chiefly concerned was my daughter.—However,” he said, rising, and speaking somewhat sharply and curtly, “I decline to discuss the propriety of my conduct here. I shall be ready to defend myself in the proper quarter. I presume I may say that this meeting is at an end.”

The justices and Mr. Marston parted without any stretch of civility; and adjourning to Drummond’s house to breakfast, arranged for an immediate appeal to the

Governor for Marston's suspension. Mr. Telfer, whose ecclesiastical apple-crust had broken to let forth some evidences of warmth and sweetness, remained to encourage the magistrate with a few not over-strong though sincere words, and then, feeling that he had a mission, went off to see the Governor.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE FIRST BLOOM OF LOVE.

WHILE the magistrate was undertaking his disagreeable duty in the verandah, an experience which had in it something of an awakening and tutorial character for him, things were happening not far off which even more narrowly concerned his peace.

Miss Bella was not insensitive to the change that was taking place in the magistrate's views, and to the probably serious consequences of that change upon his position in the Colony. So long as she had lived content with things as they were, and

in blissful indifference to the rights and wrongs of the relations between the privileged whites and the labouring blacks and browns, her mind had really nothing to develop it ; but now, that mind, habitually indolent, naturally strong, had been roused to think upon a subject very difficult, very complicated, very wide in its bearings, very much apart from ordinary young-lady consideration ; and the interest in which was intensified by its association with an object of pure but absorbing passion.

Perhaps we are not often conscious how much of our mental development is prompted or governed by mere sentiment. Could we only, in summing up the results of our education, rely upon the accuracy of our perceptions and of our memory, how much might we not be able to trace to the

oddest and most unintellectual springs! You have learned a language because of your affection for one who spoke it, or you have shut up a whole set of faculties, like a Chinese nest of boxes, because of the powerful influence of some sentimental devotion. The fondness for a woman has quickened indolent minds to unwilling studies, and turned the current of life from one channel to another. A youth, bent by the force of another's likes or dislikes, may be diverted from the career of a Stephenson or a Brunel to that of a Gladstone or a Wilberforce. Affection, or the want of it,—sentiment; or its absence,—how deep are their influences on that composite being called man, and how rarely are those influences truly gauged and recognised in that greatest of all artistic aims, a good

education! How many a time does the strong affection for some true man stir up the fallow ground of a woman's mind (often so criminally neglected), and open and stimulate its fertilizing powers! When there is no set education at hand, the strong mind sometimes, by the chance of some such prompting, seeks out an education for itself. Miss Marston's mind was developing under an influence unconsciously wielded, and Craig might never have known, had he not paid his farewell visit, that he had been a tutor to so fair a woman.

But these remarks may be resented by the reader as rather tedious; however, now, having got to the end of them, he is at liberty to strike them out.

Miss Marston, we say, sufficiently appre-

ciated the gravity of affairs to feel that the meeting which was going on in the magistrate's verandah was of grave importance to her father; wherefore it became her, as a young lady, to grow very much excited about it; and, unfortunately, there was no counter-irritant to relieve her anxiety. Extremely little housekeeping was required in the easy-going household. Miriam and Sarcophagus were always up and away to Guineatown by daybreak to purchase the day's meat and vegetables. There was hardly anything in the cooking to call for elaborate discussion. Miriam had been cook to the late Chief Justice, no mean gastronomist. Who could have tasted her crabbacks and not have felt that the singular creature was endowed with a divine genius? And what an exquisite idea of taste was

evidenced by her salmis of that noble lizard, the iguana! There was no diversion, therefore, to be had for Miss Marston in the kitchen-yard; and none over the simple appointments of a Demerara house, so that the young lady, not finding a novel sufficiently distracting, and worried by the loud and angry tones of the discussion in the gallery, at length found it impossible to sit still, and taking her light sun umbrella went out to the garden. She had on a simple white morning dress, with a blue ribbon round her neck floating in bannerets behind: this was her only ornament. Her object expressed to herself was to see if there were any ripe granadillas or a good mango or two on her father's favourite Indian tree.

As she passed along by the bright-green

thorny hedge, in a careless reverie, her muslin dress caught upon what the old poets would have called an "envious" thorn. Stooping, umbrella on shoulder, to extricate the flimsy material, she suddenly heard, greeting her from the other side of the hedge, a well-known voice.

"Good morning, Miss Marston," it said, in rather sober tones.

It was strange how, striking in unexpectedly on her high-strung feelings, this voice yet played with a soothing and pleasurable influence. But Miss Bella was very quick.

"Oh, Mr. Craig!" she said, rising immediately, "how you frightened me!"

Craig was altogether too sedate a fellow to catch at the opportunity of making some happy repartee to this doubtful expression.

She stood there looking at him across the hedge, with a faint blush, Aurora-like, flattering the pure, bright skin of her cheek; and her quick eye, taught of love, saw anxiety in his face and a shade of sorrow. But the sunshine in her countenance threw an instant's reflective ray on his.

“I am afraid I am taking a liberty, Miss Marston,” said the humble overseer. “But I did not like to go away without coming to say ‘good-bye’ to Mr. Marston and yourself. He—you—have been so kind——”

She turned pale and red by turns.

“Good-bye, Mr. Craig! Why, where are you going?”

“Home to Scotland: Mr. Drummond has dismissed me.”

Almost before he had finished his words

he had jumped the hedge at a bound, and caught the falling girl in his arms. He had seen her, with his keen grey eye,—he had seen her lids drooping down, her face paling, the sun-shade sinking slowly in her passive hand, and the pretty holder thereof slowly but gracefully following, and he leaped over just in time to catch her as she fell.

“You are ill, Bella,—Miss Marston I mean.—I will call for some one.”

He hardly knew what he was saying. Her fair figure was resting on his arm, her small white hand clutched his shoulder, her sweet and noble face was there close to his, as he bent down looking eagerly at the pallid features, where the windows of life and sentiment were shut down. But when he proposed to raise an alarm, the young

lady opened her eyes, and saying, "Don't, please,"—quietly shut them again!

Only a few seconds passed, which seemed then, and seemed ever after to Craig and Bella, to have been a long, long interval, when Miss Marston's eyes suddenly opened again very wide, and she said,—

"Oh, Arthur, what are you going away for?"

She disengaged herself from his arm and stood before him, blushing, blooming, goddess-like. A little bright, round, tell-tale crystal had slipped from under the long-lashed lids. Craig was quite confused.

"Miss Marston! Bella!" he cried, his mind quickened by a sudden revelation, "Do I?—Do you?—I mean, what do you?—Do you really love me?"

"Well, sir," said Miss Bella, rallying and

assuming a quizzical air: "What do you mean?"

"Bella," he slowly answered, looking at her with puzzled eyes, and yet as she, quite keenly observant, thought to herself, such deep, fine eyes, "I love you—if I dare."

"Oh! and don't you dare?"

She coquettishly picked up the white umbrella and threw it over her shoulder, which she slightly turned away from the hesitating young giant.

Whereupon Craig, with practical decision picked her up, umbrella and all, and under that gracious shade gave her a kiss on either cheek, and then setting her down again, looked at her with a half-frightened triumph.

"Bella," he said, "if I may—I hardly dared to think I might—I will love you with all my soul!"

Bella did not say anything: she was too happy to speak. She began, indeed, to cry, covering her face with a bit of white cambric, and putting poor Craig into a terrible state for a moment or two. When she took away the little cloud it opened up a brilliant sunshine to the ravished swain. She gave him her hand, and he squeezed it so hard in that large grasp of his, that she could not check a little cry.

“There, let me go, Arthur: dear Arthur! —Wait at the back of the house until I wave a handkerchief out of the window. Drummond is in there. You will, of course, come and breakfast with us.”

And before he knew it, she was gone.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE TADJA.

THE day of the *Tadja* had come. From one end of the Colony to the other on all hands estate-work was laid aside. The night before had been one of general anxiety and preparation. The Coolies were engaged in getting ready for a festival—the whites, from the Governor downwards, were making arrangements for a fight. Mr. Walsingham, under the pressure of his responsibilities, had worked himself into a fever which confined him to his room. He was nevertheless obliged in his bed to hold conferences, as intermittent

and frequent as his heats and chills, with the Inspector-General of Police and the officer in command of the small garrison at Eveleery. From the Arabian Coast to Berbice the police, under their district inspectors and aided by special constables, were ready, armed with rifles and cutlasses, to take the field on the slightest indication of trouble among the Coolies. The Governor did his best to restrain the arrogant spirit of his advisers. He had issued very strict orders that the troops were to remain in their barracks, under arms, but without any open demonstration, and that the police, regular and irregular, should be confined to their stations and should make no movement except under the command of the local stipendiary magistrates. For he wisely shrank from entrusting to planter

justices of the peace the responsibility of deciding when they ought to use force in their own interest. The stipendiaries, among them Mr. Marston, were directed to assume the superintendence of their respective districts.

In truth however there was at the time no danger of a general outbreak. Although the communication between the East Indians in these colonies is mysteriously rapid, and Akaloo's memorial had been so universally signed that the whole of the Coolies were in thorough accord, there had been no time to concoct a serious rebellion, or to ascertain on what local leaders and local forces such men as Dilloo and the Sepoy, even were they disposed to attempt a rising, could rely. The only real danger was that in some quarter,

owing to the suspicions or terror of the whites, a local riot might occur, and set the match to a larger blaze. And of all places in the Colony where such a riot might happen, the estates of Belle Susanne and Hofman's Lust, with the seething questions of difference between men and masters, were the most likely. Accordingly at Belle Susanne, Drummond and all his overseers, aided by some friends from Georgetown, had joined with Mr. Fluyschutz of the neighbouring estate, to arrange a common defence. The Coolies of these two plantations were, as usual, to hold their festival together. The headquarters therefore of both parties was at Belle Susanne.

As early as four o'clock in the morning, when the inmates of the planter's house

and the overseers in their cribs were starting up after short and troubled rest, at the call of sable women carrying cups of smoking coffee, the murmur of gathering people and the thrum-thrum of the Indian drums could be heard through the quiet darkness, from the Negro-yard a few hundred feet off.

In this singular holiday the Coolies of all religions indifferently join. The West Indian *Tadja* is said to be nothing more nor less than the Mohammedan feast of the Mohurrun, adapted to a new country and to novel circumstances. In those circumstances it apparently ceases to have any religious meaning, and becomes, like the Christian's Christmas, an excuse for a holiday, a carouse, and even a half-Carnival rout. Yet the Coolies are very

jealous of allowing white people to witness its ceremonies or to inquire into their meaning. Hence they arise early in the morning and begin the chief rites before daylight, rites which probably vary on different estates.

At Belle Susanne, on this morning of alarm, the excitement in the village appeared to the listening whites in Drummond's verandah, where the overseers had been ordered to report themselves, to increase most ominously from moment to moment. This however was soon explained by the arrival of the manager of Hofman's Lust and his party, with the information that all their Coolies had marched off to join their friends at Belle Susanne. This was about an hour and a half before sunrise.

The spot where the preliminary ceremonies of the festival were to be performed, was an open space of ground behind the Negro-yard, such as is usually allotted by the manager to the Coolies for exercise and amusement. Parts of it were carpeted with grass, but most of its surface was simply clay, smooth-trodden by the frequent prints of naked feet. In one corner of this ground there always stood a tall pole, at the top of which, from a little cross-yard a couple of feet in length, there hung, for there was scarcely ever wind enough to blow it out, a streamer of white calico. A space of ground around this pole, about ten feet square, was fenced in with bamboos, and was usually kept inviolate by the Hindoos.

Near this, on the morning of the festival, stood a curious and prominent object,

towards which the crowd of gathering Coolies, already showing signs of excitement, began to draw. The air was chill and heavy, and the blackness of the night, made deeper by the unhealthy mists that rose from the ground, was unrelieved except by a single torch of cotton dipped in oil, which swung in a half-cocoanut from the top of a bamboo stuck into the ground at one corner of the small enclosure. The flaring light played weirdly over the brown faces of the men and women, pricking out with its gleams their flashing eyes, glancing on their well-oiled skins, lighting up their fair white cambric and calico garments, or glittering now and then on their silver ornaments.

Within the enclosure, tied to the bottom of the pole, were two or three kids. Not

far off a dozen Coolies or more, with drums of hide stretched over calabashes or hollow cylinders, thrummed monotonously with fingers and thumbs, and broke out occasionally into a dismal croon or chant, which appeared to make the poor kids eminently unhappy, for they struggled to get free and bleated piteously.

The light also fell dimly on the object before mentioned, which was the centre of attraction to the arriving Coolies. It was a huge pyramidal, or, perhaps more correctly, conical structure, arranged in stages, which rose from the ground at a diameter of six or eight feet, to an apex at the height of about twenty feet. The decoration was of tinsel and brightly-coloured papers. In form it resembled a pagoda, pierced with many windows, and fluttering

with little flags of coloured cotton or silk or paper. This was the "*Tadjah*," which gives the name to the feast.

Before the dark shades of the sky began to be flecked with the first grey gleams of dawn nearly the whole of the Coolies of the two estates had assembled on the ground. Dilloo was there and Lutchmee, and Hunoomaun and Ramdoolah; and altogether nearly a thousand Hindoos, arrayed in their best attire, had come to the celebration. The drums now began to beat with increasing energy. The song of the drummers grew louder and more strident. The people, under the influence of natural and artificial excitement, moved uneasily to the measured beat and steady monotone of the music. An old man with a short white beard, and robed in white from head to foot,

walked into the enclosure followed by two young Indians, simply bound round the loins with their white babbas. One of these bore a sharp knife, the other a bowl of clay. For a moment there was a dead silence while the old man laid his hand on the head of one of the kids, and taking the knife from the youth, drew the blade dexterously across the victim's neck. As the other youth adroitly caught the spouting life-stream, the people set up a shout and the drummers yelled and thrummed with intenser energy. The kid was soon dead, and its body, along with the bowl of blood, was borne into the village. The other kids were killed in the same way. The victims were afterwards cut up and distributed to those who cared to buy flesh for the day's feasting, the ceremony not

being regarded as of a sacred character.

By the time this simple performance had been concluded, old Phœbus, who in those equatorial latitudes gives short notice of his coming, began to throw long rosy streaks of light across the hemisphere, and very soon after his great ruddy shoulder came hurtling up above the long line of the distant horizon, darting the blinding rays with sudden fervour along the unobstructed landscape, and effecting a marvellous transformation in the scene. The Coolies looked round on one another, and chatting together admired their *Tadjia*, which on this special day was a particularly splendid one. For the time there was a lull in the interest, and leaving a few to guard the sacred erection from

hostile affront or injury, the rest turned to the always important, though commonplace ceremony of breakfast. Some, crowding into certain houses, began already to partake of arrack, which was provided in large quantities. Every man had with him his long, trusty hackia-stick, and it could be seen by their swagger as they walked, and by the nervous balancing of their weapons as they moved to and fro, that they were all in a humour of conceit, dangerous to anyone who should venture to offend them.

Meantime important preparations were being made by some picked men. In Dilloo's hut, he and his Sepoy friend from Hofman's Lust were adorning themselves, while Hunoomaun, with Ramdoolah's assistance, prepared his big form for the part he was to play in the coming procession.

During two or three hours everything remained quiet, except that there was a good deal of lively intercourse going on, and that the excited state of the people developed some harmless quarrels. Drummond, accompanied by his head overseer, sauntered through the village and took a look at the *Tadjá*; but seeing that all was going on as usual, and that there were no signs of trouble, he retired again to his house, and kept his garrison out of sight.

The Sepoy and Dilloo however were engaged on something far more serious than the decoration of their persons. Outside the hut, Lutchmee was cooking the rice for the morning's breakfast, which for this special occasion was to be savoured with a curry of kid. The two men speaking low

managed to carry on a conversation which she could not overhear.

Dilloo said,—

“I have sounded many of my matties. They all seem to think it is not a good day to make a fight. Akaloo sent me word last night from the big town that all the Inglees are ready for us. They have armed themselves: the soldiers are ready to march, and the police are waiting in the stations, to come forth on the slightest warning.”

“Yes,” added the Sepoy. “And they are plainly afraid of something. Could we have been overheard at any time? I told Samânee to wait behind us this morning, and watch the manager’s houses, at Hofman’s Lust. He tells me that the manager-sahib and most of the overseers as soon as we were out of sight followed us over to

this estate. Some of them have guns and others swords. They went into your buildings, and there I expect they are now, watching us very closely all this time."

"I should like to burn them out!" cried Dilloo fiercely, grinding his teeth together. "Ah! I daresay they would be glad of a chance to fire upon us. I had set my heart on burning down that magistrate's house to-night. But I fear we must keep quiet. We will wait our chance and rise when they do not look for it. But all our men say we shall have first to get rid of that rascal Hunoomaun, before we can safely strike a blow. He is a spy and a traitor. Do you know that he has volunteered to be a 'tiger' to-day? Hah! I should just like to kill him in his skin!"

"So you may!" said the other. "See!

You are a great man with the short-stick. Challenge him to fight you at the games to-night. If you look out you may get a chance to knock him on the head and finish him."

Dilloo, who had taken a morning stimulant, caught up and clutched convulsively in his powerful grasp, a short, thick stick, about two feet and a half long, and whirled it about his head with surprising rapidity.

"There, there!" said the Sepoy. "Stop. Your wife will hear you. Surely you are not going to practise on me?"

"No. But I shall have *him*! See. Do you feel the weight of that stick? I have made it heavy with metal at both ends."

"It is too heavy for me," replied the other, after taking it and poising it in his hand. "I fear you will not be able to

make quick play with it, and they say that Hunoomaun is a wonder at the game."

"I don't care how good he is," said Dilloo, stretching out his arm, along which the moving muscles under the shining skin glanced like the powerful coils of a boa-constrictor. "There is no other man in the country who can use that stick so quickly and easily as I can."

"Good," cried the Sepoy. "Then watch your opportunity: knock him on the head and settle him. It will be taken for an accident."

"No. If I kill him, they shall never take me alive. These rogues of Inglees would never give me any mercy. They would be only too glad to hang me if they could get the chance."

Dilloo undoubtedly said this in all

sincerity, and if we feel assured that his suspicion was a foolish one, we cannot deny that his experience of English administration in the Colony had given him some reason to distrust it.

The two men looked at each other moodily. Life for them had lost its hope. They were in that critical state of despondency which leads to so many and such various outbreaks of evil among men.

“Whatever comes, let us meet it bravely!” cried the Sepoy; and they went out to breakfast.

Before noon the Coolies began to swarm again into the open space where the Tadjah stood. The performers struck up at intervals a tremendous thrum-thrumming, and raised their discordant voices to the highest pitch, while the Coolies moved round in a

sort of dance, every now and then uttering shouts and clapping their hands.

By noon the whole space was filled up by the moving crowd—the men in their white dresses and snowy muslin turbans, the women in brilliantly-coloured skirts and velvet jackets, or with white sarees and chudders, their bare arms and legs, covered with silver, flashing as they moved. Here and there little half-naked children, some brown as berries, others black as coal, danced around their parents, uttering sharp cries of pleasure.

Presently the old white-headed man came out from his house and approached the *Tadjá*. Fifteen or twenty strong men, among whom was the Sepoy, stripped to their babbas, followed him. Then amidst the acclamations of the crowd two long

powerful bamboos were run through rings on either side of the platform on which the *Tadja* was built, and the bearers, bending to the work, raised it to their shoulders. The drums struck up more frantically than ever; the people shouted and stirred about with wild excitement; the bearers, shaking the light structure into its place on their shoulders, moved forward, the great temple vibrating from base to pinnacle as the sun played brightly on its gaudy hues and flashing tinsel decorations.

The ancient took his place in the van, and then suddenly, with hideous cries, two figures rushed into the crowd, which gave way before them right and left with shrieks of real or feigned alarm. They were two magnificent men, stripped to the skin, with loin-cloths of coloured calico. Their bodies

were painted in stripes of bright red and yellow. Over their heads were two frightful masks made to resemble the heads of tigers, and to ligatures bound round their waists were attached tails ringed and curled to resemble those of the animals they presented. The movements of these two figures were singularly soft, agile and graceful. Every play of their muscles was distinctly visible through the thin covering of paint, as they crouched, and leaped, now on all fours, now on their legs. They kept immediately in front of the *Tadjá*, as if to make way for it. Behind came the whole body of Coolies in loose order; some of whom threw off part of their dresses, and wild with excitement or drunkenness danced round it, flourishing their latties. In this order they carried the *Tadjá* to a spot

where a tomb of plaster had been prepared to imitate masonry. This was intended to represent the tomb of the Prophet's sons. After further ceremonies of a simple character, around this object, the *Tadja* was again lifted, the drums and shoutings increased in their resonant and vocal intensity, and the procession moved off, passing slowly along the high road by the village of Guineatown, to the river which flows about a mile on the other side of it.

The Negroes of the village looked curiously on from a distance, as the excited Coolies passed along the road, many of them (both men and women) by this time far gone in intoxication. At certain intervals the bearers rested and sometimes were changed; but, always in front of the *Tadja*, never resting, running, creeping,

leaping, imitating the stealthy and cat-like movements of tigers, went the two strong figures. They were Hunoomaun and Dilloo. In jumping about, neither of them very sober, they came sharply against each other by an accident.

“ Devil ! ” said Dilloo, glaring through his mask at the Sirdar ; “ I would I had you by yourself at this moment that I might kill you ! ”

“ Were I alone with thee, O cowardly dog,” replied Hunoomaun, “ thou wouldst not say so.”

“ To-night then,” cried Dilloo in the other’s ear, “ let us try our strength before all the people, and let him who is beaten die.”

“ Good,” answered the other, whose courage was at the moment up to the point.

On either side they leaped from each other, no one having noticed their altercation, and they continued to flash their gaudy colours with increasing activity before the slowly moving temple. In this way the procession approached a spot which had been selected upon the banks of the river. It was a point at which the deep, dark stream ran round a bluff or elevated platform, which rose not more than fifteen or eighteen feet above it—a rapid, brown-tinged, eddying stream, rolling on strong though silent, with the ribbed and roving muscles rising up upon its surface. Here the people arranged themselves near the bank to watch the last of the *Tadja*. The scene was strange. The sultry day was beginning to darken towards its close. The crowd, with its bright and varied

dresses, was stirring with restless motion. Above them towered the tinsel pagoda, which quivered on the backs of the weary bearers. The huge sun from afar just peeping over the horizon tinted all the scene with magic hues, while beneath lay the weird and polished darkness of the gliding river. Suddenly the old man, standing out before the people, raised his hand. The bearers, aided by many bystanders, braced themselves for a great effort. There was an instant of deathly stillness. Then the drums struck up—the huge *Tadjá* swung to and fro. Another instant and it was thrown over the bank sheer out into the deep, dark, whirling water. The crowd gave a long acclamation, and rushing to the edge watched the floating wreck. The main part, whether

weighted by stones or by the plaster tomb, before described, one cannot be positive which, had sunk out of sight.

While every one crowding upon the bank was breathlessly watching the spot where the temple had disappeared, a loud shriek suddenly startled every ear, and a woman, either drunk or frenzied, was seen to cast herself from the bank into the silently seething waters. She instantly disappeared. There was a groan of surprise and horror.

“Who is it? Who was it?”

“She was heavy with silver—she will never rise.”

“Ramdoolah! Ramdoolah!” shouted those who had been near the miserable woman, when she rushed forward to take her fatal leap.

One of the tigers bounded into the air.

“Are you sure it was Ramdoolah?” he cried through his tigerish mask.

“Yes, yes!” cried a chorus of voices.

Hunoomaun groaned. Not a little of his savings had gone down on the woman’s body, irredeemable from the clutch of the insatiable river. He drank a draught of arrack supplied by a friend, and then approached his fellow-actor.

“She has taken all my money with her!” he said through his teeth. “Cursed be the body of the she-dog! I am ready for anything. To-night we fight to the death!”

“Be it so,” replied Dilloo. And gambling away he ranged himself near his wife and danced around her, with an activity and skill that won the plaudits of the spectators. Ramdoolah was very soon forgotten.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A FIGHT.

WHILE these events occupied the Coolies during the day, the managers and overseers at Belle Susanne passed their time in a restless suspense. Mr. Marston had sent his daughter into Georgetown, to the house of a friend. Not giving any credit to the idea of a projected outbreak, he was content to rely for his own protection upon Craig and two black policemen, with such aid as could be rendered by the mercurial Sarcophagus. In the morning, accompanied by the Scotch overseer, he

walked over to Belle Susanne to view the scene of the festival, and was received with no unfriendly demonstrations. Late in the afternoon, hearing the shouts of the returning crowd as it passed Guineatown in the dusk, the magistrate with Craig went out again to see the people go by. The procession had then broken up into a loose and disorderly rout. The Indians were hastening back in small bodies. The bottles which some of them were flourishing amply accounted for the irregularity of their order and the noise of their progress. It was almost dark as the magistrate and his companion stood a few paces from the main dam, upon the road leading to his house, and took note of the straggling crowd.

“I see no signs of wickedness there,”

said Mr. Marston, *sotto voce*. "They are just the same as usual, most part drunk, the rest looking at them, all hurrying back to their evening games."

As he said this a body of Coolies, among whom were several women, approached, in the gloom. Before them danced a tiger-like figure. The Scotchman's quick eye picked out from among them the lithe form and stately step of Lutchmee.

"Ha!" he said. "There's my nurse Lutchmee. I wonder where her husband is?"

As he spoke one or two of the crowd approached and recognised them. An exclamation instantly went round. "See! there is the Magistrate Sahib!" Both Dilloo and Lutchmee heard it. She felt a quick, instinctive thrill of alarm. The

truth was that Lutchmee would fain have been safe at home, for the rude fun of her companions terrified her. And when she saw the magistrate standing so near the road, she immediately appreciated the danger of a collision. Dilloo's quick eye seeing Mr. Marston, his heart beat furiously within him. His lattey had been left at home, being out of keeping with the character he was playing; and the knife—alas! the knife of the Sepoy was upon that worthy's person, and where that person was at the moment who could say? While this was passing through Dilloo's mind, Craig advanced and shook hands with Lutchmee. The people knew him well, and regarded him not unkindly, while Lutchmee greeted him with intentional warmth. She called to Dilloo,—

“Here is Craig Sahib.”

This broke Dilloo's reverie, and with a rather shambling gait for a tiger, he came up and put out his paw to the Scotchman. Craig looked with admiration at the supple and powerful form of the Coolie, which he could fairly distinguish in the dusk. At this moment a number of others joined the crowd. Among them was the Wahabee. Craig's eyes were all round him, and Marston, standing close by, keenly watched every motion. The Sepoy was well known to both of them. As his tall form came up his eyes flashed with quick intelligence, and pushing through the crowd he drew up close to Dilloo. He was intensely excited.

“See!” he said, in their own language, but in a loud whisper. “There is your

enemy. Let us take him now while we have him."

Only a moment passed, when Lutchmee uttered a loud scream, and Craig's quick, nervous grasp had seized the Wahabee's hand at the wrist with an iron clench that left it powerless. The Sepoy's knife dropped to the ground. Before Dilloo could stoop to seize it Lutchmee had caught it up and thrown it towards the magistrate, who instantly secured it. At the same time he drew a revolver, and the click of the lock was heard, but he immediately restored it to its pouch again.

"Let the man go, Craig," he said. "He is only drunk." Then addressing the Sepoy he said, "I know you, and shall see you again. You must not carry knives. Go home quietly all of you and finish your

games, but take care not to make any row."

The Sepoy and Dilloo, abashed, rapidly pushed on homewards. The crowd followed. Lutchmee remained behind. A great cloud was over her. The fire that shot from her husband's eyes at the instant when she had put beyond his reach the means of vengeance, told her of love driven out by injury not of her inflicting, to make way for a rage that threatened to fall upon her innocent shoulders. She shuddered as she recalled Dilloo's deadly look, and then covering her face she sat down and sobbed aloud.

The two men conversed apart.

"It will not be safe for her to go home to-night," said Marston. "The fellow is drunk and excited. To-morrow he will have forgotten it."

“I almost fear not,” replied Craig, who knew the man better. “It is most unfortunate that he should have suffered such injustice. He is wonderfully changed of late. I cannot help feeling, Mr. Marston, that he and the Sepoy are quite capable of something desperate. We must take Lutchmee to a place of safety, and I earnestly advise you to have a few more police up to your house. Meantime I will go over and warn Mr. Drummond.”

It was now so dark that moving figures looked like shadows. The magistrate raised Lutchmee kindly and supported her towards his house, as Craig took the shortest path to Belle Susanne.

By this time, Dilloo and the Sepoy, who as they went had been engaged in animated talk, had reached the Negro-yard, and the

former looked eagerly round for Lutchmee, among the Coolies that came dropping in. She did not appear, so postponing his wrath with a curse, he turned to get ready for his evening engagement with Hunoomaun. He washed off his gaudy stripes, doffed the tiger-head, abandoned the sinuous tail, and once more appeared with his babba round his loins, a coat above it, and a white turban on his head,—a man worthy to take his part in the athletics of the evening. His evil spirit, the Wahabee, aided these preparations. When all was ready, and the two friends had refreshed themselves with a little food and too much arrack, Dilloo seized the short thick stick, and a small round shield of strong wickerwork, and proceeded to the scene of the Indian sports.

The night was dark, although the sky was spangled with innumerable stars. From horizon to horizon throughout the vast glimmering concave not a single speck of cloud veiled from sight one gem of all the magic constellations of the equatorial hemisphere. A warm, hothouse air, un-stirred by a breath of wind, made every object clammy with its moisture. Old Ocean, not very far away, went on dribbling out his majestic forces in fretting the unresisting beach. On the other side, the swampy forest, with all its amazing life of brute and growing things, stretched far and on in immeasurable silence. But, nigh at hand, sharp cries and acclamations and drunken shouts and occasional shrieks of women and strange wild songs disturbed the stillness, while an upward glow of light,

which cut a sphere of radiance out of the gloom, was thrown out by a large number of torches fixed upon poles in a large circle, which had been formed in the middle of the exercise-ground of Belle Susanne.

Here an extraordinary scene met the eyes of the armed guards who, under cover of the night, had turned out of Drummond's house and the estate-buildings, to watch the proceedings of the immigrants. The light threw its weird illumination over the masses of excited and chattering Coolies, many of whom squatted in the front ranks of the circle, while behind them row upon row of dark faces and glistening eyes impatiently waited for the commencement of the proceedings. In the middle of the circle two or three well-known athletes, who were to open the proceedings by going

through some exercises, and who afterwards were to act as judges of the succeeding trials of skill, were standing and conversing together. The conversation in the crowd was very animated. Its main topic was the approaching combat between Hunoomaun and Dilloo. Though Hunoomaun still retained many of the friends whom he had made during his voyage, he was not a favourite on the estate either among the men or women; while Dilloo was kindly esteemed on every hand. The antipathy between the two men had been necessarily marked by their fellow labourers, and for this reason a peculiar interest was taken in the trial of skill about to take place. Of course the mob were unacquainted with the deadly nature of the proposed conflict, but they expected that very hard blows

would be given and received, and that neither of the tigers would be likely to succumb without some cruel marks of the other's power.

Drummond with two or three others had succeeded in ensconcing himself unnoticed behind the Chinese barrack more than a couple of hundred yards away from the scene, and by climbing up some steps to the edge of the roof was able through a glass to command distinctly all the countenances which came fairly under the light. Craig had seen and warned him, and after taking a glance at the crowd was soon on his way back to Mr. Marston's house. Drummond, keenly watching through the glass, said to Fluyschutz, who was beside him,—

“I wonder what those fellows in the centre are whispering about? There is a

tall man, your Sepoy I think, and a d—d rascal he is too!—going through the crowd and talking to some of the men. Chester, where is Hunoomaun? And what has become of Dilloo?”

“I have not seen Hunoomaun, sir,” replied the overseer, “nor have I heard from him. It was arranged that Ramdoolah should meet me beyond the hospital just after dusk, if she had any news, but I waited half an hour and she did not come.”

“Drunk, I suppose,” said Drummond.

“No, I scarcely think that,” replied the Barbadian. “She is on the track of some one. I do not see either Lutchmee or Dilloo among the people, sir.”

“No, nor Hunoomaun either.”

At this moment there was a movement among the people. Ramsammy left the

crowd and went out of the circle of light to meet some one. Scarcely noticed by Drummond, several strong men to whom the soldier had been talking had slipped out of the circle and followed him. He had heard the voice of Dilloo. He checked the latter a few yards beyond the reach of the light, and whispered in his ear,—

“I have arranged with ten or twelve good men to stand exactly behind you. I shall be among them. If you succeed, fall back at once among us, and we will carry you off. We are to go up the dam and turn along the road towards the village, and then you can get up the path by Hofman’s Lust to the forest. Try and find the track that leads to the Obe’s house. If we give him money he will protect us.”

Dilloo nodded, and drawing a deep breath

walked steadily forward. It was a crisis—indeed the most terrible crisis—of his life. He faced it with the boldness of an ignorant fatalism. The only feeling that might at the moment have tended to soften or unnerve his heart, namely, a sense of anxiety and love for Lutchmee, had been suddenly quenched by her act in saving the magistrate. Dilloo's wrath at this want, on her part, of concert and of obedience had blazed so strongly that, as he stepped into the arena which was to settle for him a question of life and death, his only regret in facing his doom was that he had not been able before he did so to despatch his wife! It is hardly possible to conceive how the scientific or unscientific—it matters little what we term them—arrangements of an artificial system of indenture, with the laws

that defined and regulated it, had succeeded in moulding out of a manly, tender, generous and loving character, a hard, unnatural and ferocious savage. We have not been without instances in Christian lands where circumstances and conditions have thus distorted most promising natures.

But now the lookers-on from the Chinese barrack had seen Dilloo, equipped as we have described him, march into the circle amidst the acclamations of the spectators. Not many steps behind came Hunoomaun, whose big form, the effect of which was heightened by the large white scarf he had twisted in turban fashion around his head, loomed up gigantic, and caused not a few of the friends of Dilloo to shake their heads. In truth, the Sirdar had never shown himself to such advantage. The loss of, and,

with Ramdoolah, the aggregated envies and hatreds of years, and the decisive nature of the issue he had undertaken to face in the approaching fight, all lent to Hunoomaun a nerve and courage which his naturally coward heart had never felt before. And therefore, as he stalked firmly into the middle of the light, with his basket shield hung on his arm, and his hand grasping a strong truncheon, he was able to give Dilloo a fair look of defiance.

“There’s our man, sir,” said Chester, who had been looking through the glass. “But I don’t see his wife. Can it be possible that he is going to have a bout with anyone? He is all ready for it, at all events.”

A great shout from the crowd, a great noise of beating drums and squeaking

pipes, drowned for the moment Chester's observations.

Then ensued a dead silence.

The crowd settled down steadily. All those in front sat on the ground or squatted on their hams, while those in the rear packed themselves tightly together, until, looking round the circle, it showed in the flaring light of the torches a belt of eager faces and flashing, restless eyes. On one side, the two or three men we have spoken of, quietly dropped off their upper garments, and with nothing but a cincture round the waist, two of them, taking up some heavy Indian clubs, began a series of graceful though powerful exercises. These over, with great applause, two well-known wrestlers stepped forth, and after a little fencing succeeded in getting a grip

of each other's brown and slippery bodies. Long and stern was the struggle, eager the interest, and noisy the partisanship of the crowd, until at last, after a prolonged and anxious agony, one went over the other's head and was carried off senseless by his friends. The agitation had now worked itself up to an almost uncontrollable degree. Here and there the arrack had been freely used, and many found it difficult to sustain their standing or sitting positions. The crowd from behind pressed more closely upon those in front. The flare of the blazing torches, renewed by watchful Coolies after each bout, the close moist air of the night, the heat of nearly a thousand bodies rising in such an atmosphere, made the scene appear like a round sphere of luminous mist, in which dark figures stood out strange

and almost awful to the unseen lookers-on. Drummond was eagerly gazing through his glass.

“There is something strange going on,” he said to his friends. “Dilloo and Hunoomaun are both stripping.”

“Then they are going to fight,” said Chester. “Mr. Drummond, you ought to put a stop to that. If Dilloo gets a chance at Hunoomaun he will kill him.”

“Oh! nonsense,” said Drummond. “He is not so easily killed. He is big and strong, and looks uncommonly like business. By Jove, I never saw him undressed before. He has limbs like a bull. Ha!” he continued, “the Sepcy has just taken off Dilloo’s coat. He’s a tidy man too, and every inch an athlete. We shall see some fun. I shouldn’t wonder if he took

the wind out of the big fellow after all."

"Won't you interfere?" asked Chester, anxiously.

"No," replied the manager. "They won't hurt each other. There! They are about to begin."

With the naked eye the whites could see the two figures step out into the arena, and cautiously approach each other.

We will watch the fight from the inner circle. When the rivals moved forward, the practised eyes of the athletes, who might be called the bottle-holders, were unable to determine to which of them should be awarded the palm of promise. Hunoomaun, with long and powerful limbs, great hands and feet, strongly-knit and rather ungainly joints, a broad chest and powerful ribs, in

addition to his superior height, looked a most formidable antagonist in a combat, wherein the sole protection was a wicker-work shield, and the adroitness and quickness of the parry and defence. But then it was clear that under his black and deeply-pitted skin, there were layers of fat which, however they might contribute to give a better contour to his form, were not likely to lend him any advantage in a prolonged struggle.

On the other hand, every eye that turned to Dilloo as he stepped forward easily and lightly upon the beaten ground, was instantly captivated by the perfect proportions of his form, the smooth brightness of his skin, the clear, easy-going play of his powerful muscles, and all those evidences of good condition which are the delight of connois-

seurs. There did not seem to be an ounce of unnecessary flesh over the broad brawny shoulders and breast, or on the strong ribs, over which his well-oiled skin played smoothly. His arms and legs, so finely formed and so firmly moulded, promised rapidity, intensity and exhaustless power of motion. He stood forth, poising in his right hand the heavy truncheon which had won the Sepoy's admiration, and on his left arm bearing the little shield which was his only protection. His head was uncovered, but his hair, short as it was, had been bound up by the Sepoy with a thin strip of calico. Hunoomaun, on the contrary, had come forward still wearing the large turban which gave such additional importance to his height. Dilloo, keenly watching his antagonist, said

a few words in a low tone to Ramsammy, who addressed the judges.

“Hunoomaun must take off his turban. It is not fair that he should protect his head.”

The judges nodded. With very bad grace the Sirdar lifted the white bundling from his head. He inadvertently threw it on the ground, where it fell with a thud. What made it so heavy? He had carefully lined it with some strong iron wire. Dilloo and his friend smiled significantly.

And now the two men, standing within two yards of each other, each with his left arm carrying the wicker shield advanced a little before his chest, each leaning lightly forward on the left foot, which was thrust before the right, each glowering over the edge of his shield keenly into

the other's eyes, as if to read in advance the thoughts and intents of each passing movement of the brain, and each very silently, dexterously, but deliberately twirling his truncheon in his hand, began a series of slow passes, in regular and alternate order. As they did this stepping round and round, every one in the circle could note with admiration the play of every muscle, and the trained science of the two athletes. The music, which had struck up as they commenced, gave the time to these preliminary motions, which were of a singularly graceful character. Gradually the music became more and more impatient, and with its quicker movement the steps and passes of the players increased in activity. Their eyes began to glow with excitement and their limbs to be bedewed

with the heat. Sharp and distinct through the musical brawl could be heard the regular cracks of the sticks as they struck together or fell upon the wicker shields, which had need to be strong to bear such blows. Still more rapid grew the music, yet more speedy the interchange of movement, sharper and quicker the rattle of the truncheons and the clashing of the shields, until at last so vehement and quick were the motions of the men that the passes could scarcely be distinguished one from another, and the cracking of their weapons gave forth an almost uninterrupted sound. It was then that suddenly Dilloo gave a sharp cry, and a thud was heard to break the monotony of the rattling chorus of blows. Another sharp cry, this time from Hūnoomaun; another, and another, and each time it was

clear to the spectators that one or other of the combatants had been severely hit. Yet neither stayed his hand a moment. Each kept his dark eye fixed on the other. Each seemed possessed with a serpentine quickness of movement and glance. So fierce and frequent had the blows become that it was impossible to distinguish them, or to guess even where or when a wound had been given. And now from both the combatants began to rain not only a dew of perspiration, but dark spots of blood, some of which, in their rapid evolutions, sprinkled the white dresses of the men and women who were nearest the arena. But so wild had the excitement of the crowd become that this was all unnoticed. There in the midst of the lights was something twirling, rattling, loudly breathing, occasionally crying out

sharply, but like one single monster all arms and legs and having the velocity of a machine. Round and round it spun with untiring clatter and action. More frequent and copious were the sprinklings of the crimson rain. When now and then out of the whirling fray a face gleamed for an instant under the light, men fancied they could see nothing but features of gore, with eyes flashing white and deadly. It gradually became clear to every one of the thousand spectators that this was no mere bout of amusement, but that the two men were fighting to the death. The effect of this conviction was only to intensify the agitation. The blood that now dyed the ground, and flew so freely about, appealed to the savage nature in every breast. The musicians became so excited that they ceased to play,

and a dead silence fell upon the wondering crowd, as they listened to the regular tattoo of the heavy truncheons on wood, and shield and skin,—rattle and crack and thud, then crack and rattle and thud, in cruel and monotonous sequence. The fight had gone on so long that both the men were becoming fatigued. The passes were less swiftly made, the blows less frequently given; but this gave the onlookers the opportunity to observe that the strokes when they did fall were more determined and deadly. Further, it was gradually made manifest that Hunoomaun was suffering most. He was drawing back before the rain of Dilloo's blows on his stick and shield and skin, and was acting more on the defensive—an attitude in which his superior height gave him an advantage. Moreover he was obviously distressed for

wind. Seeing this Dilloo pressed him more ardently, and being a little incautious, gave the Sirdar an opportunity. Intending to finish the conflict, he brought his stick down with fearful force, directing it at his adversary's head. Dilloo was only just able to turn his head aside, when the cruel weapon fell upon his shoulder, making a savage indentation in the skin, and disabling his left arm. But the Coolie scarcely felt the pain. Before Hunoomaun could recover himself, the terrible heavily-primed truncheon of Dilloo had struck him on the temple, and, while he was falling, a second blow crashed through his skull, and in an instant he lay on the ground, dead—and weltering in his blood.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE ESCAPE.

DILLOO, overcome by loss of blood and by the prolonged and terrible exertions of the struggle, fell back into the arms of the Wahabee.

It is very difficult to relate, with due regard to chronological order and artistic realisation, what then occurred. The reader must remember that nearly a thousand Coolies, of whom more than three-fourths were men trained to labour, most of them excited by drink, were gathered in a dense mass around the arena of the con-

flict. Within a couple of hundred yards of them, and keenly scrutinising all their proceedings, were Drummond, Fluyschutz, and some overseers, every one armed to the teeth. Farther off, at the estate-buildings, keeping a good look-out, was a large party of whites, mostly overseers. Another armed party, consisting of Martinho and two Georgetown clerks, guided by Simon Pety, the latter furnished with an old gun, dangerous chiefly to the bearer, who regarded it with wholesome suspicion, had made a wide détour, and were ensconced in a cane-piece, some four or five hundred yards up the dam on the land side, thus commanding the regular approaches to the Negro-yard from the "back," or from Guineatown and Hofman's Lust. Their position allowed them to see little but a

great sphere of illumination and men as trees moving within it. The circumstances of the fight between Hunoomaun and Dilloo were equally unknown to them and to the men in the estate-buildings.

Both these parties were startled into instant watchfulness and alarm by a sudden outcry from the mob of Coolies, followed immediately by a flash and a shot. What had happened?

Drummond had been closely watching the marvellous movements of his two Coolies. From a distance, and in the doubtful light, he could not detect the severity of the conflict or observe the free flow of blood. Knowing that the Indians were accustomed on these occasions to have exhibitions of prowess in the game of single-stick or truncheon, he supposed that the two men were

simply intent on exhibiting their superior skill ; and, a strong man himself, he could not withhold exclamations of admiration at the pluck and persistency of the two rivals. But his quick eye, aided by the glass, saw in a moment the meaning of Hunoomaun's last tremendous effort ; and even though the cracks of Dilloo's blows on the skull of the unhappy Sirdar had not sounded clearly to his ear, the manner of Hunoomaun's fall, and the second terrible stroke, delivered as he was in the act of succumbing, carried a quick conviction to the manager's brain that the driver had been seriously and intentionally hurt. The yell that followed from the crowd, their terrible outcry and agitation as they surged round the fainting Dilloo, quickened the manager's rapid suspicion that this was a pre-arranged affair

and perhaps a preliminary to an outbreak. Lifting his hand in the air he fired one of the chambers of his revolver as a signal to his forces, and then, descending from the barrack, moved forward towards the crowd seething under the glare of the torches. But the Coolies were too quick for him.

The moment Drummond's shot was fired, a voice in the crowd—it was the voice of the Sepoy—uttered a command. In an instant every flaring torch was extinguished, and the scene which had been a moment before so vivid was suddenly swallowed up by the darkness. Drummond at once checked his men, and stopped to deliberate.

In the crowd, now deprived of light, everyone was talking and everyone had a different idea. They shouted for Dilloo, they cried out against the manager, they

proposed to fire the buildings. The women, rudely pushed about, and half-crushed in the struggling mass, shrieked dismally, and some of the Chinese, drawing their knives, were in two minds whether they would not let go their savage natures, and, like Malays, "run a muck." But amidst it all a body of about a dozen kept their heads, and had a definite purpose. They were guided by Ramsammy. He, supporting Dilloo, whispered to those nearest him to force a way through the crowd in the direction of the back-dam and to get off the estate as rapidly as possible. Dilloo, though terribly wounded, was by this time recovering breath, and able to walk. The band keeping together succeeded in breaking through the press, but it was easier to do this than to separate themselves

from the people, who were ready to take any direction given to them. Thus it happened that, although Dilloo and his body-guard went on quickly, they drew after them a comet-like tail of excited Coolies. The Sepoy saw the danger. He knew that they must now be followed by Drummond's forces, and that there was a risk of a collision. Of course he had no knowledge of Martinho's ambush in the cane-piece. Therefore, as his company were directing their way, hampered by their mates, along the right bank of the estate-canal straight on towards the spot where Martinho and his party lay *perdus*, the Wahabee seized Dilloo's arm, and evading the agitated Coolies, slipped deliberately but quickly into the canal; and crossing it, proceeded, as rapidly as Dilloo's state

would allow, up the other bank. This took them towards the point where the footpath to Guineatown crossed the canal and the estate dams. As they were nearing this point, Dilloo, faint from loss of blood, stumbled, and fell upon the ground.

“Leave me,” he said hoarsely to his companion. “You must escape. I shall die here.”

“No, no,” cried the other, earnestly, trying to rouse him. “If you are found you will be hung. Come a little way farther, and I can get you help.”

While he was speaking, there was the flash and loud report of firearms a few hundred feet off on the other side of the dam, succeeded by a vast hubbub. Martinho’s party, supposing that they had been discovered, and that the mob coming

in their direction meant to attack them, had fired off their weapons to stop the advance, and had then discreetly run away. The Coolies, checked for a moment, but furious at this unexpected reception, which naturally seemed to them to be a wanton offence, charged into the cane-piece with loud cries, and becoming disordered in the eagerness of their search, soon spread themselves far into the estate, with no other result than to wear out their strength and their excitement.

But while this was going on, the Sepoy and Dilloo had a diversion of their own. The noise disturbed some one who was keeping guard at the narrow board which served as a bridge over the canal. And while Ramsammy, alarmed by the events which had occurred on the other side of

the water was endeavouring to get his friend to rouse himself and escape, a noise of footsteps running in their direction disturbed him. He was just about to rise when, some twenty feet off, a shadow could be discerned swiftly coming through the gloom; there was a sudden blaze of light, a prodigious noise, the whistle of shot, and then a yell, all sufficiently frightful. The Coolie, whose stooping position had probably saved his life, saw a few feet off a body rolling on the ground, and heard a voice which sent a thrill through the frame of Dilloo.

“ Oh—oh—oh! Pety, you smote hip and thigh. Dis time de Lord call you home, I reckon. Oh, Susey, Susey, nebber see you 'gain! Dis yere gun gone off spontaneous, and fixed me up. Oh—oh—oh, hit 'im in

de belly—all de bowel gush out! Oh——.

Splash rolled Pety into the water. The Sepoy, running along the bank, searched eagerly for the Negro's gun, in order to brain him. Fortunately, after going off unexpectedly and by the force of its recoil, as he was running along holding it loosely in front of him, hitting him in the region he had alluded to, the gun had gone under water with Simon Pety, and did not come to surface again when he scrambled up the bank, puffing and blowing like a small rhinoceros. Before the poor fellow could catch his breath or pull his wits into order, he was seized by the throat. But Pete was not to be choked off like a dog, and grappling at his adversary he gave him an unexpected kick with his knee in the wind, which made the angry Sepoy let go. Then, fearful lest

the Negro should be backed by other estate-people, the Indian, soldier as he had been, turned and fled. Simon, ejaculating, "Ha! I put to flight de army ob de wicked!" shook off the water, and feeling in his pocket for a small flask of rum, which Susey had supplied to solace his night watch, was about to prescribe it to himself, when he was startled by a groan which seemed to come from the ground only a few feet from where he was standing.

"De Lord deliber us!" he cried. "Yere's anoder ambush. No! yere's a living being on de ground. You ain't dead yit, are you?"

He knelt down beside the figure, which now lay motionless. Then putting his hand upon it, he found the body was half-naked, still warm, and wet with something the

touch of which instinctively made Pety shudder.

“Dis yere’s a case of wilful allyby. Dat oder fellow gone and done dis *felo de se*. —Hallo! dis yere man agoin’ to move! Ki! you got to surrender to me, General Simon Pety, or I kill you!”

Dilloo groaned.

“Please, yes, you go kill me—please,” said the Coolie.

Pety jumped a couple of yards off. He knew the voice. This was the formidable Dilloo, most likely laying an “ambush” in real earnest. But finding he was not followed, mingled curiosity and kindness drew Pety back to the side of the wounded man. The Negro was a very different being now from the hypocritical missionary and iconoclast who had sought to convert Rambux No. 2.

“Dilloo!” he said, kindly, “dis ain’t you?”

“Iss,” replied Dilloo. “Coolie die.”

“No—no die!” cried Pety. “Stop! yere’s rum. Wait a minute! Getty water.”

He reduced the strength of the spirit with water from the canal, and then poured some down the Coolie’s throat. This revived him.

“What you do yere?” asked the Negro, as the Coolie sat up. “Stay, you not goin’ to move yet.”

“Kill Hunoomaun!” said Dilloo, savagely. “Hit ’im head dis stick.” The truncheon was still in his grasp.

Pety shuddered. He knew that the two men were enemies. And here was the very Dilloo, who had once given him a beating, a murderer, and completely in his power. But he hardly thought of that.

“ Dou shalt not kill ! ” said Pety, solemnly.

“ Dilloo no kill Hunoomaun, Hunoomaun kill Dilloo,” said the other, simply.

“ Hum ! ” reflected Pete. Then he gave Dilloo his hand and helped him up gently. The other was greatly refreshed. Pete administered a little more rum and a piece of biscuit.

“ Dilloo gib Pety licking one time,” said the Negro. “ But de Lord say, ‘ If dine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he dirsty, gib him drink.’ I guess I go to heap coals ob fire on your head dis time ! Take some more. Now, Dilloo, dis gentleman not agoin’ to hurt you. You get away off quick, oderwise Massa Drummond ketch you—you go hang.”

Dilloo shook at the idea of that. He

took Pety's hand and squeezed it gratefully. The Coolie was not mortally wounded, and his spirit was recovering. Then he turned to go.

“ Stay ! ” said the Negro, in a whisper, “ dere's someone coming. Come in yere ! ” and he dragged Dilloo by the arm into the cane-piece on the left, and going on his hands and knees made along one of the rows for fifteen or twenty feet. Dilloo followed. They crouched down each behind a sugar-plant. Voices were heard of persons coming along the canal, and on the nearer side of it. It was Drummond's party, now joined by Martinho and others.

When, just as he was advancing on them, the torches had been put out by the Coolies, the manager turned and retreated a little to form his plans. He saw the use-

lessness of throwing himself into a crowd in which no one could distinguish friend from foe. Chester was sent round to order the buildings-party to remain in their place, and to keep strictly on the defensive; while Drummond resolved to wait, and ascertain before moving what the labourers meant to do. In a few minutes the noise and movement beyond the exercise-ground indicated that the crowd had gone up the canal towards the back-dam. The manager knew that Martinho was on the look-out in that direction, and presently he saw the flashes of the guns fired from Martinho's station, and then could discern the scattering of the immigrants over the estate. He resolved to retire and send for a body of police, and meantime to await any attack that might be made on the buildings. Immediately

after his arrival, Martinho came in with the whole of his party except Simon Pety, who had been detached to watch the cross-path we have so often mentioned. Martinho's companions had heard the report of the Negro's gun, and as by this time the sounds of the pursuing Coolies showed that the great body of them had penetrated far into the estate, Drummond resolved to make a dash to rescue Simon Pety, if he were yet alive.

Thus it was that the two men crouching in the canes heard the manager's voice as he came along the dam. His quick eye, now accustomed to the darkness, detected signs in the long grass on the side of the path which led him to stop.

“ See here, Martinho; uncover the lights, and let us have a look.”

“ Ha! see!” he continued. “ Some-

body has been lying here, and there is blood on this grass!"

"Yes, sir," said another of the party, who had gone on a few steps, and who now distracted the manager's attention from what might have led to a discovery; "and there seems to have been a scuffle here."

The lantern was brought to bear first on the scene of Pety's struggle with the Sepoy, and then of his involuntary gyrations with the gun. It was clear that some one had gone down the bank into the water, and equally clear that some one had come out of the water. On the hasty survey in the imperfect light, it was the general opinion that the person who had come out of the water had entered it again, voluntarily or involuntarily, and as drowning was out of the question he must, they concluded, have

passed over. Therefore the party resolved to get across by the bridge and examine the other side.

This search after Pety, occupying as it did all Drummond's attention; probably saved the manager from a serious collision with his labourers, and the Colony from a dangerous outbreak, for before long the Coolies, finding no opposition, and having been uninjured by Martinho's fire, dropped quietly back to their homes and went to rest.

No sooner was his master fairly on the other side of the water, than Pety, taking Dilloo's hand, and whispering to him to keep perfectly quiet, cautiously made his way through the canes towards the path leading to Hofman's Lust. It was pitch dark, but both of them knew the way perfectly. They had nearly reached the road

when Pete, who was in advance, caught his foot in some soft body lying on the ground and fell over head first. He could not restrain an exclamation. Fortunately it was inarticulate, for Drummond's quick ear heard the noise. He instantly fired in the direction from which it came. But for that the Sepoy, who was in fact Pety's stumbling-block, might have come to a quarrel with the Negro, which would have been fatal to Dilloo's escape. The sense of common danger kept the three fugitives perfectly quiet; and Drummond, after shouting Pete's name, and listening in vain for any movement, thought it discreet not to tempt the danger of an ambush, and withdrew with his small party to the buildings. Dilloo had quickly passed some explanations with Ramsammy, and

told him of the kindly part the Negro was playing. They lay quiet for some time, until they heard by the retreating voices that the danger of discovery was over, and then the three men debouched on the track to Guineatown. There Pety handed over to the Sepoy the remains of the flask of rum and some bread, that is to say, biscuit. He advised the two fugitives to go up the dam of Hofman's Lust to the edge of the wilderness, and then strike across to the plantain-grounds, and follow the path through the forest and swamp to the house of the Obe man. That person would, if properly propitiated, cure Dilloo's wounds and conceal the two men from pursuit. In sending them away Pety drew out of his belt sundry pieces of silver, which he forced on the unwilling Coolies.

The simplicity of Pety's moral views can alone account for his omission to note that while he was doing a good turn to an enemy, which seemed to be in strict accord with Scriptural injunction, he was rendering himself accessory to a felony and amenable to human laws. To his mind the refinement was inappreciable. And he would probably, if challenged, have taken pretty much the same ground as an Irish monk at Verona, who had been a prize-fighter. This person observing one day an Italian soldier behaving cruelly to a poor man, interfered, and advised the soldier to stop. On this the fellow struck him a buffet in the face.

“My friend,” said the friar, “the Saviour saith, ‘If thine enemy strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other.’ Here is my other cheek.”

“Well!” ejaculated the soldier, “there!” giving him another buffet.

“Now,” said the friar, slipping off his cloak, “having enjoined thus far, the Scripture saith no more. Wherefore I conclude it leaveth the rest to the judgment of the saint, and my judgment is to give thee a thrashing.” Which he duly performed.

Shaking Pete’s hands and thanking him warmly, the Coolies made off as quickly as possible; while the Negro slipped down the dam, and running into his house in a state of well-affected terror, nearly frightened Susey into very serious consequences. Everyone connected with the estate was too glad to see him back, and too occupied with the apprehensions of this exciting night, to examine narrowly into his account of his adventures. It was most readily

believed that he had run away, and, like the fight related by the American humorist, "His subsequent adventures interested them no more."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT.

PETY'S safe return and the escape of the two Coolies ended the second stage of the proceedings of the eventful night of the *Tadja* festival. Hunoomaun's body still lay weltering upon the ground. But Drummond, as soon as he had convinced himself that there was no danger of an attack by the Coolies, bethought him of the necessity of holding an immediate inquest, and in the middle of the night sent over to Mr. Marston a messenger with an account of what had occurred. The magistrate was on

the alert. The report of several shots had reached his ears during the evening, but unwilling to move from his post until he had been duly summoned, he had waited for news with deep anxiety. He ordered a detachment of police to Belle Susanne, with an inspector, who was directed to make the arrangements for the investigation. Mr. Marston and Craig, with another detachment, set out by way of Hofman's Lust, with the view of learning, if possible, something of Ramsammy's whereabouts. The dangerous demeanour of the Sepoy, on his way back from the immersion of the *Tadja*, added to his evident friendship for Dilloo, led the magistrate, when he came to reflect on these matters under the light of the startling news he had received, to suspect the Sepoy of complicity with the accused.

His suspicions were intensified when a search of the Sepoy's quarters yielded no sign of him, although the night was far advanced and all the other Coolies had retired to their beds. As soon as he had assured himself of Ramsammy's elopement, Mr. Marston went on to Belle Susanne. As Lutchmee was the wife of the accused, the magistrate deemed it right that she should accompany his party in charge of Craig.

Meantime, the scene of the Sirdar's death had been examined by the police. His body was found frightfully bruised, not only by Dilloo's blows, but by the trampling of the Coolies in making their escape from the ground. No one, indeed, had thought it worth while to take charge of the dead Sirdar. His corpse was carried to the open space under the hospital, and there laid out

to be viewed by the magistrate and jury. Three or four of the visitors from Georgetown, who were not connected with the estate, were then sworn in as a jury, and the Guineatown doctor, who came and conducted an autopsy with commendable rapidity, certified in the usual technical terms as to the cause of death. There could be little doubt what the verdict would be. It was one of "Wilful Murder."

In the course of the inquiry, for which several Coolies were summoned from their beds, it came out that Ramdoolah, the reputed wife of the deceased, had committed suicide, that the Sepoy had absconded, and, lastly, that Lutchmee had not returned to the estate with her husband, but had spent the evening at the magistrate's house. This last piece of in-

telligence enraged Drummond to a high degree. Marston very frankly related the passage between the Coolies and himself, admitting that, regarded in the light of later events, it bore a significance greater than he had at the time attached to it.

“I supposed they were merely drunk,” he explained; “and when I had secured the only weapon I saw, I thought it better to take no further notice. I retained Lutchmee, because I hoped that when her husband’s intoxication was over he would have forgotten the incident.”

But Drummond refused to see any justice in these explanations. The truth was, that at the bottom of his heart he was persuaded that a collision with the immigrants, followed by swift, relentless punishment, would have a salutary effect which years could not

undo. The peace of the Colony, in his view, depended on some signal example. Now, the day had passed without a rising. The preparations had been useless. The forty or fifty thousand Indians in the Colony were given time to work out those deep insidious plans of which their employers dreamed. If any one has a difficulty in conceiving how a man with any ordinary sense, not to say of humanity or justice, but of simple selfish policy, could work himself into such a frame of mind as this, let him peruse the speeches, the letters, the expressions of feeling, which gave such vivid force to all the doings of those who, in the year 1876, called themselves the "People of Barbados";—I mean not the words merely of obvious ruffians, but of putative gentlemen.

Lutchmee, when she had answered the few questions which were put to her by the jury, retired and rejoined Craig, who, talking apart with one or two friendly overseers, had thought it discreet not to intrude on Drummond's notice. Daylight was by this time not far off. As the young Scotchman was about to leave the ground, he was intercepted by Simon Pety, with a whispered invitation to his cottage, coupled with a hint that he had something important to tell. Craig assented, and he and his companion followed the Negro to his house, the shutters of which were carefully closed. In the sitting-room Mrs. D'Orsay was waiting with coffee and food supplied by Missa Nina, to which Craig's hunger enabled him to do sufficient justice. When he had finished, Pete beckoned him

into the back room, and confided to him all his adventures of the night before.

“Why should you help Dilloo to run away?” asked the Scotchman, when the Negro had finished.

“‘If dine enemy hunger, feed him’—‘it shall be an excellent ile dat shall not break his head.’ Dat’s de reason, Massa Craig.”

Craig smiled grimly; but, not being very credulous of the Negro’s good-faith, added, “Nothing else?”

“Yes, Massa Craig,” replied Pety, in a low tone, and with a confusion of manner not natural to him; “dis de true reason, Massa Craig. Before I get complete sanctification I go and tell Massa Marston a big lie about Dilloo. Dat always heavy like a piece ob lead on my conscience. So, when

I see Dilloo purloining away from pursuit, you see, Massa Craig, I want to try to help 'im off."

"Yes, I see," replied Craig, dryly. "But you know, Pety, you have made yourself liable to be had up before Mr. Marston for being an accessory to the murder, if it was one, and you *will* be had up, if they find it out, unless you tell at once what has become of Dilloo."

Pety's face grew terribly long, and assumed a strange leaden tint; but after a short struggle with himself the natural colour and expression began to revive.

"Well, Massa Craig," he said, solemnly, "by de help ob de Lord I risk it! I swear dat time before de magistrate Dilloo beat me for noting, when he only come in and save Rambux from a beating.—Rambux bad man, you know, Massa Craig. He bow

down to a graven image ob de debbil.—But I tell lie about Dilloo, and now I nebber gib up de knowledge where he gone to!”

“Hum!” said the Scotchman. “But, my friend, what am *I* to do? Does it not strike you that if I keep this quiet, I shall be doing exactly what you have done, and be in the same position, if not worse?”

Pety was astounded at this view of the transfer of moral responsibilities by a law which, like the familiar example of the transmission of force through a row of billiard-balls, operated to carry criminality through a number of intermediates to the farthest end of a series.

“Oh, Massa Craig!” he said, however, “sure you nebber go tell on de poor man, —sartain you nebber do dat!”

And truly, when Mr. Craig had to face

the duty fairly, he was agitated by conflicting emotions. But when he turned and looked into the room where Lutchmee, gathered up in a corner, sat, a picture of the most terrible suffering and sorrow, his mind was made up. With all the firmness of his nature he said to himself, "I will die before I give up the secret!"

It was arranged that Lutchmee should remain for the day at the Negro's house, awaiting any information that might be received of her husband; while Craig joined Mr. Marston, who was setting out to report to the Governor the incidents of the night. There was a good deal of excitement in Georgetown over the intelligence, but, fortunately, in all other parts of the Colony, with the exception of a few drunken broils, the *Tadja* had passed off without an insurrection.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MASSA DRUMMOND'S GOD.

THE sun had risen. His long rays traversed the flat and silent land—silent save where with sharp strident cries troops of the white and scarlet ibis sought the shore, or in the sedgy meadows the handsome clean-limbed cattle rose and shook themselves, and hailed the god of day with pious lowings. Swiftly before his burning glances mist and dew went up, like the incense of prayer, unseen to heaven. The same sun brightened the scene of bloodshed, and licked up the drops that testified of a human

life ebbed out for ever. The same sun lit up the active examination and pursuit of avenging law and the flight of guilty fugitives. The same sun woke up discontented labour and terrified capital. No work was done or attempted to be done anywhere in the Colony that day.

The Coolies gathered together and talked in anxious whispers, while the managers, overseers and police kept coming and going as if the whole country were in rebellion.

In the meantime, the two fugitives, following Pety's directions, had passed beyond cultivation and penetrated the forest and jungle. Here and there were open swamps or dry sandy strips; then came close undergrowth, and over it the shadowing foliage of large thickly-growing trees. The path which had been described to them as the

route to their destination—the lair of that strange African wizard and impostor, the Obe man,—was quite undiscoverable in the darkness, and the fugitives pursued their way guided by a brilliant star which they had noticed in the direction which they desired to pursue. Spurred on by fear, they pressed painfully forward. In the darkness they tripped over treacherous vines, or caught their arms or necks in swinging loops of the “bush-ropes,” or canoned against prickly trunks of the tree-ferns, or tumbled over and into vast nests of ants, whose action and sharp vengeance on Dilloo's wounds gave him fearful discomfort. At length, when they had pushed on for several miles, and were secure from any immediate capture, the Coolie gave way, and sank upon a ridge of sand, which hap-

pened to occupy an open space in the forest. He had only reached thus far by using up the remains of Pety's flask, and now, between his wounds, his exertions and the previous day's intoxication, he was in a fever and delirious.

The morning was just about to break. A dull light began to steal through the vast forest and up into the overhanging sky. The deep, strong darkness seemed to move about, and to be transformed into strange shapes, among which there opened up, as in a black fog, awful, mysterious vistas. Laying his friend in as comfortable a place as he could find, the Sepoy began to explore in every direction, in the hope of finding some trace of a path, but in vain. The sun had been up an hour, and he was still wearily pursuing his search when he

heard at some distance through the woods a loud, clear voice, that rang beneath the arches of the huge trees with a wonderful gush of sonorous melody. Startled by the sound, which seemed to come from a woman, the Coolie rapidly stalked from trunk to trunk, until he came in sight of a tall handsome Negress, who was following an almost imperceptible path in the forest. On her head was a basket containing fruits and provisions. Keenly glancing round, the Coolie saw that she was alone, and with cautious movements followed her. After passing through the forest for some distance, she reached a spot in its densest part, where the dampness of the ground and the luxuriance of the vegetation warned off human beings by its deep gloom and its fetid atmosphere. It was a home of poisonous

plant and teasing insect and deadly snake, and of the rankest luxuriance of vegetation. Towards the thickest part of this close the woman directed her way, and while the Coolie was wondering how she would get through the tight and tangled undergrowth, she suddenly disappeared. Following quickly on her steps, Ramsammy found himself opposite a scarcely discernible opening through the otherwise impenetrable bush, and dropping on his hands and knees glided silently onwards for ten or fifteen feet. As he crawled along, he suddenly touched with his naked body a large smooth object, which snatched itself away with startling vigour, and hissed a challenge that thrilled through his heart. It was a snake—a huge bush-master, and if it had been in the humour to tackle the Sepoy it would have saved law and admini-

stration any further trouble on his behalf. As it passed away he could hear far away through the bamboos the sway and noise of moving pythons and other snakes, disturbed by his entrance. He glided on, and found himself on the edge of a wide cleared space of considerable size, shut in with splendid vegetation, around and above. High up, supported in air by the majestic pillars of the mora and the greenheart, and tall, slender palms, and ribbed with huge branches, hung a vast canopy of dense foliage, which the rays of sunshine vainly strove to penetrate. The branches and trunks and stems of the palms and other trees below were trellised and looped all round with swinging lianas. Beneath was the dense protective circle of forest undergrowth,—mixed bamboos and tree-ferns and

young palms, and all the quick wild luxuriance of a tropical bush. The dimness of the outer forest here gave way to a deeper and more awful gloom. The chatter of paroquets and monkeys, the cry and clatter of gorgeous huge-billed toucans, did not disturb this dismal scene. It seemed fitted to be a home of silent-creeping reptiles and of death. A shudder ran through the Coolie's veins, and striving to accommodate his sight to the darkness, and to discover the movements of the woman, he observed that, in the middle of the enclosure, at the foot of a huge mora tree, which might be called the central pole of this terrible tabernacle, there was a hut of large dimensions, constructed of timber and bamboos and thatched with the leaves of the *trooly*. Out of this hut there had moved silently

a large dark figure, before which the woman had prostrated herself in presenting the basket. On a motion from the figure she rose, and they conversed together in a low voice. The Sepoy's inspection of the man from a distance had no reassuring effect. His size was extraordinary, and his vast shoulders and long arms impressed Ramsammy with the feeling that, even if this huge Negro did not possess supernatural powers, it would scarcely be desirable to engage in a struggle with him on natural grounds. Indeed, Ramsammy began to wish himself out of the place, which chilled him by its dreadful and mysterious circumstances. The gloom, the size, the silence—broken only by the uncertain movements of the reptiles,—the awe of the woman—all shattered Ramsammy's usual confidence.

The Negress and the figure, which Ramsammy did not doubt was the Obe whom the Negroes dreaded so much, disappeared into the hut. Thereupon Ramsammy turned to flee, but no sooner had he begun to creep through the foliage, than on all sides there arose a commotion among the snakes that swarmed in the underwood about the enclosure. They were indeed the wizard's bodyguard. In an instant his quick ear detected the sensation, and guessing there was some stranger in the neighbourhood he rushed out of the hut.

“Who dah? who dah?” he cried, in a terrible voice, running towards the entrance.

The Coolie, in desperation, jumped to his feet, and, facing the Obe man, made an Eastern salaam, and stood silent before him.

“What you man do heah?—You Coolie, —you no niggah!”

The woman had run out after him, and was looking on. It was no other than Simon Pety's friend, Miss Rosalind Dallas. She at once recognised the Coolie as “Indian soldiah,” familiar to her in Guineatown. In truth, having gone to consult the Obe with the object of revenging herself on Simon Pety, she had been induced to become a slave of the brutal impostor. As the latter was about to stretch out towards the poor Coolie his finger, one touch of which would have turned him in a few minutes into a corpse,* Miss Dallas intervened.

“Know dis man,” she said to her ugly lover. “Only Coolie man.—You want Obe?” she inquired of the Sepoy.

* See Charles Kingsley's “At Last.”

“Iss,” responded Master Ramsammy.
“Coolie man, Dilloo, ober dere, go die.
Obe sahib come medicine 'im?”

He pointed out of the enclosure, and the Obe, seeing that it was a genuine demand of help, said,—

“Coolie man hab money?”

“Iss, iss!” replied Ramsammy, but cautiously as regarded himself. “Plenty cash ober dere.”

This necessitated going for it, at all events, and the huge Negro accordingly set off at once with the Sepoy. Rosalind, out of curiosity, followed.

When they reached Dilloo, the Obe, empiric as he was, saw at a glance that there was little to be done for the patient. He had lost a great quantity of blood; the juice of poisonous shrubs had entered

through the open wounds; ants and flies had already begun to pasture on the helpless patient. In a few words the Coolie explained, as best he could, that Dilloo had killed a man, and was running away from justice; and then he gave the man all the money Dilloo had, not disclosing the fact that in his own babba there was hid away an adequate store of silver pieces.

The Obe was an African of the lowest type. His receding forehead, huge broad face, with its baboon-like features; enormous ears, weighed down with large metal rings; lips like those of a hippopotamus, his great trunk and powerful arms and legs, altogether made a creature whose physical characteristics were worthy of the terror inspired by his infernal profession.

He ordered Miss Rosalind and the Coolie.

to carry the delirious patient to the enclosure, and in a short time Dilloo was lying outside the hut, upon a bed of dried grass. Then the Negro, who had been preparing a warm fomentation, directed Rosalind to wash the Coolie's wounds with it, while he himself, retiring again to his hut, concocted with muttered incantations a draught to be administered to the patient. The effect of the draught was to put Dilloo to sleep.

Miss Dallas then offered Ramsammy some food, and, entering into conversation, managed to extract from him an account of the events of the night before. Among other things she learned the part that Simon Pety had played. She also found out that Dilloo had a wife living.

“Dis man die,” said she, nodding towards

the sleeping Coolie. "No want to see woman before die?"

"No," replied the Sepoy. "No see woman. She bad woman to dis man."

Ramsammy, having finished his meal, began to bethink him of his own safety, and consulted the Negro, who came out in an hour to take a look at his patient. The black assured him that he was perfectly safe there, that no Negro policeman would think of coming within a mile of the place on any hostile errand. So terrible is the superstition about these fellows that the very mention of them sends a thrill of horror through a Negro's frame.

The Sepoy thereupon sat down to watch beside his sleeping friend—a task which is admirably suited to the Indian temperament. Rosalind, having cleaned up the

few cooking utensils and extinguished the fire, loosened the solitary robe of calico which enwrapped her robust form, and went out to seek some sunny opening in the woods where she could bask and sing without disturbing the morose quiet of her dangerous mate. He remained inside the hut, the door of which was kept closed.

And now through the deep repose far away in the woods could be heard the scream and chatter of birds. The notes of Rosalind's voice just penetrated to the ear of the listening Coolie. The mysterious shadow which surrounded him seemed to be alive with the gentle motions of gliding reptiles, or sometimes a hiss could be heard, as they crossed each other's path. The only other sound was the breathing of the sleeping man, and a portentous sound

from the interior of the hut, which struck awe to the soul of the lonely Sepoy. It was, however, nothing more supernatural than the snoring of the African. Thus the day passed on until nearly four o'clock. Rosalind had sung herself to sleep in the sun-glow. The Sepoy, overcome with his fatigues, had snatched some restless repose. Suddenly Dilloo woke. His mind was perfectly clear. He was astonished at the gloom and the strange aspect of the place in which he found himself. He soon discovered and awakened his friend. He was very feeble. They conversed together in low tones. It seemed impossible to raise one's voice in such a place. The Negro, who had the instinct of an animal for sound, hearing conversation, quickly came out, and, after examining the sick Coolie,

gave a peculiar whistle. In a few minutes Rosalind entered the enclosure, going on her face before the Obe man as the Sepoy had seen her do in the morning. From this it may be supposed that Miss Dallas was in mortal fear of her companion; but, in truth, the Obe was madly devoted to her, and as she was a woman of no small nerve and acuteness, she was able to have pretty much her own way with him. Her chief ambition was to learn the secrets of his wicked craft, in order that she might succeed to his influence and power.

The couple consulted together, and she set to work to prepare some soup. Meantime, Dilloo, conscious that his strength was failing him, and now recalling only the tenderest reminiscences of the past, bethought him of Lutchmee. He earnestly

begged his friend to send for her. Ramsammy was at his wits' end what to do. He knew that for him to go and seek out Lutchmee was to run the risk of a long imprisonment, if he were to escape being found guilty as an accomplice of the capital crime. He therefore tried to explain to Rosalind, whose kindly manner encouraged him as much as the brutal appearance and strange ways of the Obe man repelled him, his friend's wish. When Miss Dallas at length succeeded in apprehending the difficulty, some residuum of good feeling which lay beneath her evil nature was stirred up. She left the Coolie and entered the hut. We have not yet described its interior. It was built of a frame of rough timber, with a pitched roof, the apex of which was about twenty feet from the ground. In the centre,

elevated upon the trunk of a tree, was a huge figure roughly resembling the head of a cock. At the end, a great black idol, which had been smeared from time to time with blood, and which was lit up by a floating wick in a glass of oil, added a grotesque horror to the wretched scene. The atmosphere of the place was close and stifling. In a corner, lying like a pig on a couch of grass, was the African. Rosalind approached him.

“De Coolie man go die?” she asked.

“Yes, die sartain,” he replied.

“He ask to see wife—Coolie woman at Belle Susanne.”

“Belle Susanne! Dat Simon Pety’s place—eh?”

“Yes, Mister D’Orsay lib dare,” replied Miss Rosalind, with a gulp.

“Hah! you want go see Mr. D’Orsay, eh?” cried the savage sharply.

“No, I don’t care ’bout it. But de big Coolie man ’fraid to go; and you berry kind dis poor Coolie. Let him see de woman before he die. You be good man. I go look out de Missionary man, tell him to go and bring de Coolie woman. While I go, you carry de Coolie out dere in de woods, and den dey all talk togedder.”

It took all Rosalind’s tact, and a good deal of time, before she could get the man to give way. At length, on her solemn assurance that she would only go to the “Missionary”—no other than that worthy clerk, the Reverend Adolphus Telfer,—the African assented, threatening her with supernatural vengeance if she failed to keep her promise. Without giving him time to

change his mind, the big girl tucked up her skirts and swiftly made her way to the home of the clergyman, which was on the edge of Guineatown, and not far from the house of Mr. Marston. The little parson was greatly disturbed by the information she brought ; but, quietly pocketing his excitement, he directed her to wait in the verandah, and, seizing his hat and stick, set off by the shortest route to Belle Susanne. It was dark, but the little minister went on as if he saw clearly before him. A kindly zeal lightened his way and braced his not over-strong limbs to active energy. He had a curious struggle with himself as he went along. Was he right in what he was doing? He had learned where an accused murderer was lying in a condition to ensure his cap-

ture, and here, instead of running off with the information to his next-door neighbour, the magistrate, he was on his way to help the criminal's wife to an interview. The little man had not satisfactorily settled the question with his conscience when he arrived, breathless and very warm, at Pety's door. Communing never so closely, he had, notwithstanding, managed to keep clear of a meeting with any of the white people of the estate. Now, early as it was in the evening, and hot as was the air, Mr. D'Orsay's door was closed. The clergyman knocked, and to him, almost immediately, Simon himself answered the summons.

“Massa Telfer!” cried Pety, astounded. The parish minister was not of Pety's persuasion.

“Hush—sh—sh—sh—!” said the little

man, darting past Mr. D'Orsay, and motioning to him violently to shut the door. The petroleum lamp disclosed to him there assembled within Mr. Craig, Mrs. D'Orsay and Lutchmee, who looked upon him with amazement.

“Oh! Mr. Craig!” he cried, shaking hands with an enthusiasm he never threw into his services; “I am so delighted to see you here! Just the man we want! A most providential coincidence. I wish to find Lutchmee, the wife of a man named Dilloo—Eh?—Oh yes!—this must be—How do you do? Eh? Quite well, I hope. Keep up! The Lord help you, my poor woman! Oh! Mr. Craig!”

While he was delivering himself of these scattered sentences, the Reverend Adolphus Telfer was spinning round the room like a

cockchafer on a pin. Craig conceived that he had lost his wits. But presently he showed signs of recovery. He drew Craig into a corner.

“Mr. Craig,” he said, “I have heard of the runaway Dilloo. There is a woman at my house—Rosalind Dallas. I know her. She is now, I believe, in the bonds of iniquity. But just at this moment, no matter. She may be useful. Dilloo is dying out in the woods, some miles beyond Guineatown, where that infamous Obe is said to lurk. He wants to see his wife. If this is the woman, as I suppose, will you get her to come?—and perhaps you will not mind accompanying us. I shall go. There may yet be a few hours of grace given him by a merciful God.”

In a very short time the party set out.

A somewhat awkward interview took place between Pety and Rosalind. She, however, insisted on his returning home, as her ferocious master would have become uncontrollable at the sight of him; and Pety, not insensible to the danger of the expedition, discreetly went back to his wife.

Poising on her head a large lanthorn, supplied by the clergyman, Miss Dallas stalked along at a rapid pace in front of the party, which consisted of Craig, Mr. Telfer and Lutchmee. They made their way in perfect silence. Each was overpowered with thought. Lutchmee could not weep. She was in a fever of sorrow and expectation. As they passed so quietly through the still scene, in the gloom of which the lanthorn shed its small gleam like a will-o'-the-wisp, the only sound that

broke the charm of the silence was the far-off knell of the campanero—the strange bell-bird of the Guianian woods.

Rosalind found that the Negro had not removed the wounded man from the enclosure, to which accordingly she led the way. They were guided by a glare which, rising from behind the lower bushes, sent up under the high roofing of the shadowy foliage an awe-inspiring glow. The light came from a large fire which Ramsammy had kindled, under the African's direction. The resinous wood threw out a balmy fragrance, and the light brought out in clear relief every object within the enclosure—the hut, the figures, the graceful form of the surrounding growth, the trellised bush-ropes and the far-up sombre arches of the majestic trees, ribbing the

thick roof of leaves. Even Craig felt a sudden thrill of wonder as he entered this mysterious place, and took in all the circumstances of the scene—the dying man stretched out beside the hut, the Sepoy watching beside him, the huge Negro leaning against the door and eyeing the flames of the huge fire as if he could feed upon them. But at sight of the visitors, the sable wizard, after exchanging a word or two with Rosalind, vanished into the house, barring the door.

Lutchmee, with a beating heart, drew near her husband. She knelt beside him and wrung her hands.

“ Oh, Dilloo, Dilloo ! ”

He held out his hand. She kissed it and pressed it to her bosom. They said little. They looked into each other's eyes,

and there was a world in their glances. Sorrow, compassion, mutual forgiveness, the old love that at this final parting takes new life and grows young again, the tender passion of these last moments of earthly intercourse—all this there was in every word and gesture of that brief interview, and one thing more—the pang that comes of the doubt “Shall we ever meet again?”

At length Craig and Mr. Telfer, who had remained apart, approached. Dilloo recognised them both. He was perfectly himself. He tried to muster words to thank them. The clergyman, touched by the evident nearness of the departing soul to the dark postern of death ventured to say a few words in vindication of his office. He tried in simple language to tell the dying man of

a long life, an endless and possibly blest hereafter; of forgiveness of sin done here; of a balm for the sorrows, weaknesses and agonies of time, a rescue from the bondage of evil, a lasting freedom of joy—a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who had opened the gates from death into life, from pain to bliss.

The Coolie listened impassive, silent. He held Lutchmee's hand tightly in his own. The moments flew by. Lutchmee watched the ebbing, dribbling life.

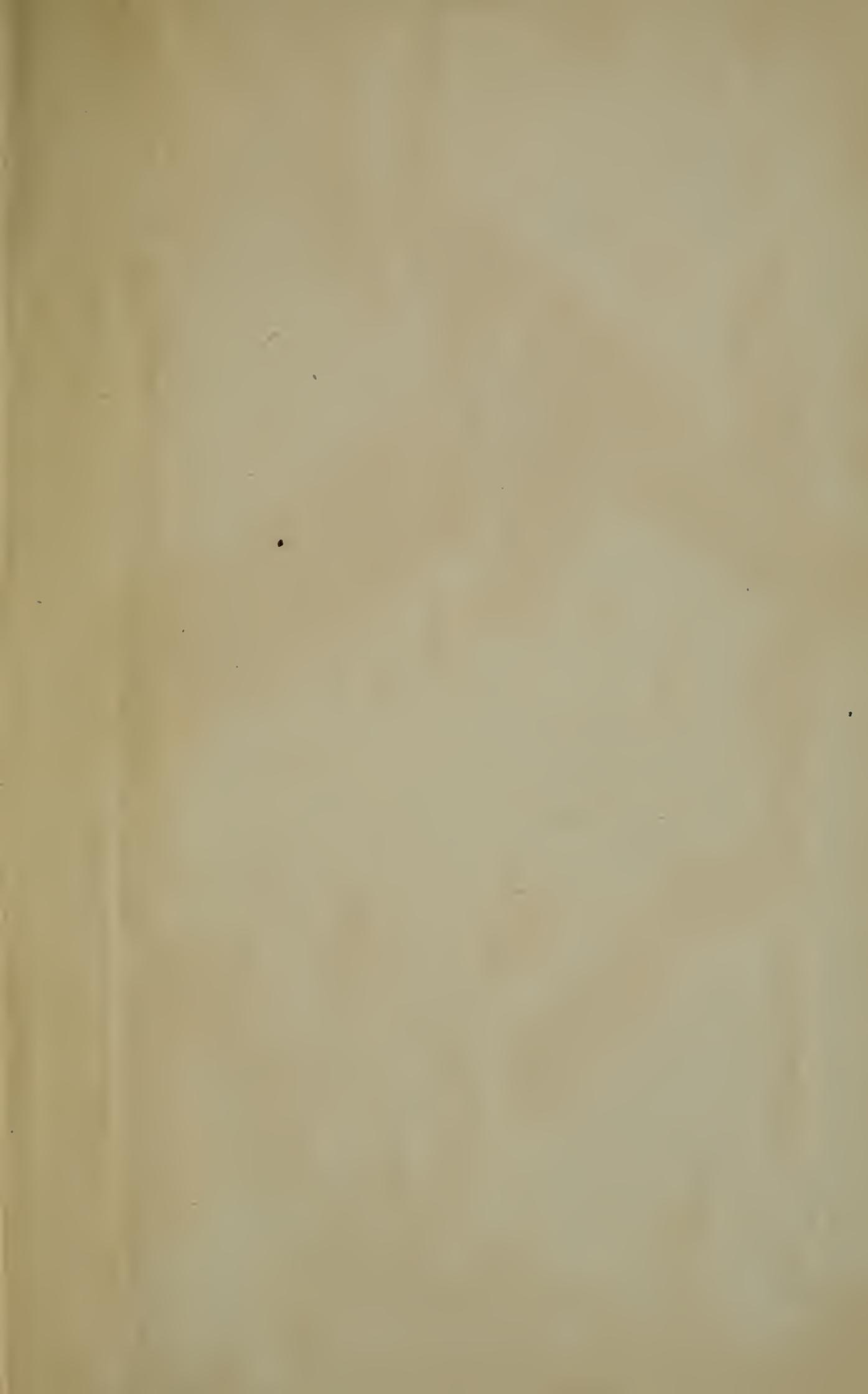
“See, Dilloo!” cried the Missionary, stirred to earnestness. “There is good and life ready for you even now. Believe in Jesus Christ—trust your soul to Him!”

“No!” cried the dying Coolie, loudly, almost fiercely, and with unconscious but terribly pointed satire, as he half raised his body. “No! No! Jesu Kriss Massa

Drummond's God—Massa Marston's God—
all Inglees God. No God for Coolie!"

And turning his face away from the
Christian, the Coolie breathed out his soul
into the bosom of the Unknown God.

THE END.



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