

Reid Mayne

The Maroon



Mayne Reid
The Maroon

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The Maroon:

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Volume One – Chapter One

A Jamaica Sugar Estate

A sugar estate, and one of the finest in the “land of springs,” is that of “Mount Welcome.”

It is situated about ten miles from Montego Bay, in a broad valley, between two rounded ridges. These ridges, after running parallel for more than a mile, and gradually increasing in elevation, at length converge with an inward sweep – at their point of convergence, rising abruptly into a stupendous hill, that fairly merits the name which it bears upon the estate —*the “mountain.”*

Both the ridges are wooded almost down to their bases; the woods, which consist of shining pimento trees, ending on each side in groves and island copses, pleasantly interspersed over a park-like greensward.

The “great house” or “buff” of the estate stands under the foot of the mountain, just at the point of union between the two ridges – where a natural table or platform, elevated several feet above the level of the valley, had offered a tempting site to the builder.

In architectural style it is not very different from other houses

of its kind, the well-known planter's dwelling of the West Indies. One storey – the lower one, of course – is of strong stone mason-work; the second and only other being simply a wooden “frame” roofed with “shingles.”

The side and end walls of this second story cannot with propriety be termed walls: since most part of them are occupied by a continuous line of Venetian shutters – the “jalousies” of Jamaica.

These impart a singular cage-like appearance to the house, at the same time contributing to its coolness – a quality of primary importance in a tropical climate.

Outside in the front centre a flight of broad stone steps, resting upon arched mason-work, and bordered by strong iron balustrades, conducts to the level of the second storey – the real dwelling-house: since the ground-floor is entirely occupied by store-rooms and other “offices.”

The entrance door is from the landing of the aforesaid *escalier*, and conducts at once into the “hall” – a spacious apartment, of crucifix-shape, running clear across the building from side to side, and end to end. The current of air admitted by the open jalousies, passing constantly through this apartment, renders it at all times delightfully cool; while the lattice-work serves to mellow the glare of light, which, under the sky of the tropics, is almost as disagreeable as the heat. An uncarpeted floor, composed of the hardest sorts of native wood, and subjected to a diurnal polish, contributes to increase the coolness.

This great hall is the principal apartment of the dwelling. It is dining and drawing-room in one – where side-boards and cheffoniers may be seen in juxta-position with lounge chairs, fauteuils, and ottomans – a grand chandelier in the centre extending its branches over all.

The bed-chambers occupy the square spaces to one side of the cross; and these also have their jalousied windows to admit the air, and exclude, as much as possible, the sultry rays of the sun.

In Mount Welcome House, as in all other country mansions of Jamaica, a stranger would remark a want of correspondence between the dwelling itself and the furniture which it contains. The former might be regarded as slight, and even flimsy. But it is this very character which renders it appropriate to the climate, and hence the absence of substantiality or costliness in the style and materials of the building.

The furniture, on the other hand – the solid tables of mahogany, and other ornamental woods – the shining carved side-boards – the profuse show of silver and cut glass that rests upon them – the elegant couches and chairs – the glittering lamps and candelabras – all combine to prove that the *quasi* meanness of the Jamaica planter's establishment extends no farther than to the walls of his house. If the case be a cheap one, the jewels contained in it are of the costliest kind.

Outside, the great house of Mount Welcome looks grand enough. Its broad façade, in which the deep green of the jalousies contrasts pleasantly with the white of the surrounding walls

– the massive stone stairway in front – the wooded mountain sweeping up and forming a background of variegated green – the noble avenue of nearly a mile in length, with its double rows of tamarinds and cocoa-palms, leading up in front from the lower end of the valley – all contribute to produce a picture of almost palatial grandeur.

Nor does a nearer view detract from the splendour of this picture. The platform on which the house is built affords space for a large garden and shrubbery, extending rearward to the mountain-foot, from which they are separated by a high wall of stone.

The *mountain* is a conspicuous feature of the landscape. Not so much from its height: for there are others of equal elevation near to it; and further off, though still within sight, many still higher. Even the famed “Blue Peak” is visible, towering hundreds of feet above the surrounding summits.

Nor is it conspicuous from being isolated. On the contrary, it is only a spur of that vast elevated chain of hills, that, separated by deep gorge-like valleys, and soaring thousands of feet above the level of the Caribbean Sea, are known as the “Blue Mountains of Jamaica.”

Covering almost the entire area of the island – which is thus broken into an endless succession of gigantic corrugations – Jamaica presents a surface rough and irregular as the crumplings upon a cabbage-leaf; and “land of mountains” would be a title as appropriate as its ancient Indian appellation, “the land of

fountains.”

The hill which overlooks the estate of Mount Welcome is less than two thousand feet above sea-level; but what renders it remarkable is the geometrical regularity of its outlines, and, still more, its singularly-shaped summit.

Viewed from the valley below, it presents the appearance of an exact and somewhat acute cone, up to within about fifty yards of its top. There the sloping outline ends – the line on each side thence trending vertically, and abruptly terminating in a square table-top, forty or fifty feet in diameter. In general appearance, this truncated summit is not unlike that of the famed “Cofre di Peroté” of Mexico.

The sloping sides of the mountain are densely wooded, especially that fronting the valley of Mount Welcome – towards which is presented a broad frowning *façade*, thickly clothed with a forest that appears primeval.

Alone at its top is it treeless – bare and bald as the crown of a Franciscan friar. There stands the square coffer-like summit, a mass of solid rock, which repels the approach of the vegetable giants that crowd closely around its base, some of them stretching out their huge arms as if to strangle or embrace it.

One tree alone has succeeded in scaling its steep rampart-like wall. A noble palm – the *areca*– has accomplished this feat, and stands conspicuously upon the table-top, its plumed leaves waving haughtily aloft, like a triumphal banner planted upon the parapet of some conquered castle.

This summit rock presents a singular appearance. Its seamed and scarred surface is mottled with a dark glaze, which during the sunlight, and even under the mellow beams of the moon, gives forth a coruscation, as if the light were reflected from scale armour.

To the denizens of the valley below it is known as the *Jumbé Rock*— a name characteristic of the superstitious ideas attached to it. Though constantly before their eyes, and accessible by an hour's climbing up the forest path, there is not a negro on the estate of Mount Welcome, nor on any other for miles around, that would venture alone to visit the Jumbé rock; and to most, if not all of them, the top of this mountain is as much of a *terra incognita* as the summit of Chimborazo!

I am speaking of a period more than half a century ago. At that time the terror, that was attached to the Jumbé Rock, did not altogether owe its origin to a mere superstition. It had been partly inspired by the remembrance of a horrid history. The rock had been the scene of an execution, which for cruel and cold-blooded barbarity rather deserves to be called a crime.

That table-summit, like the blood-stained temples of the Moctezumas, had been used as an altar, upon which a human sacrifice had been offered up. Not in times long past, neither by the sanguinary priesthood of Azteca, but by men of white skin and European race – their victim a black and an African.

This incident, illustrating Jamaica justice during the dark days of slavery, deserves to be given in detail.

Volume One – Chapter Two

The Myal-Man

In the West Indies, a few years previous to the Emancipation, there was much agitation on the subject of *Obeah-ism*.

The practice of this horrid art had become appallingly common – so common that upon almost every extensive estate in the island there was a “professor” of it; in other words, an “Obeah-man.” “Professor,” though often used in speaking of these charlatans, is not a correct title. To have *professed* it – at least in the hearing of the whites – would have been attended with peril: since it was punishable by the death penalty. *Practitioner* is a more appropriate appellation.

These mysterious doctors were almost always men – very rarely women – and usually natives of Africa. Universally were they persons of advanced age and hideous aspect: the uglier the more successful in the pursuit of their criminal calling.

There was a class of them distinguished as “myal-men,” whose chief distinction consisted in their being able to *restore life to a dead body*.

Such was the belief of their ignorant fellow slaves, who little suspected that the defunct subject had been all the while only dormant, his death-like slumber secretly brought about by the myal-man himself, assisted by a prescription of the branched

“calalue” – a species of *caladium*.

I cannot here enter into an explanation of the mysteries of Obi, which are simple enough *when understood*. I have met it in every land where it has been my lot to travel; and although it holds a more conspicuous place in the social life of the savage, it is also found in the bye-lanes of civilisation.

The reader, who may have been mystified about its meaning, will perhaps understand what it is, when I tell him that the *obeah-man* of the West Indies is simply the counterpart of the “medicine man” of the North-American Indians, the “piuche” of the South, the “rain-maker” of the Cape, the “fetish man” of the Guinea coast, and known by as many other titles as there are tribes of uncivilised men.

It is the *first dawning of religion on the soul of the savage*; but even when its malignant spirit has become changed to a purer aspiration after eternal life, it still lingers amidst the haunts of ignorance, its original form almost unaltered — *witchcraft*.

To the statement above made – that on every large plantation there was an obeah-man – the estate of Mount Welcome was no exception. It, too, was blessed, or rather cursed, by a follower of the art, an old Coromantee negro – Chakra by name – a man whose fell and ferocious aspect could not have failed to make him one of the most popular of its practitioners.

Such, to his misfortune, had he become.

He had long been suspected of having poisoned his master, the former owner of the estate, who had made an abrupt and

mysterious exit from the world. The fate of this man, however, was not much lamented, as he bore the reputation of being a cruel slave-master. The present proprietor of Mount Welcome had least reason to regret it: since it gave him possession of an estate he had long coveted.

It was greater chagrin to him, that since entering upon the enjoyment of the property, several of his most valuable slaves had terminated their existence suddenly, and in a manner which could only be accounted for by the supposition that Obi had accomplished their destruction.

Chakra, the myal-man, was suspected of causing their deaths. He was arraigned and brought to trial.

His judges were three – three justices of the neighbourhood – for that number was sufficient to pass the death-sentence upon a slave. The president of the court was the man's own master – Loftus Vaughan, Esquire, proprietor of Mount Welcome, and *custos rotulorum* of the precinct.

The substance of the crime charged against Chakra was “practising the arts of Obi.” The charge had no reference to the death of his former master.

The proofs were not very clear; but were deemed sufficiently so by the court to warrant a conviction.

Strange to say that of the three justices, the man's own master – the president of the court – appeared the most anxious to bring the trial to this termination. So anxious indeed, that he used every effort to overrule the opinions of the other two: his superior

position as *custos* giving him a certain power of controlling the decision. One of them had actually pronounced in favour of an acquittal; but after a whispering consultation with the *custos*, he retracted his former opinion, and gave his vote for the verdict.

There was a rumour at the time, that Loftus Vaughan, in this trial, was actuated by meaner motives than either a stern love of justice, or the desire to put down the practice of *Obi*. There was a whisper abroad of some secrets – family secrets – with which the *Coromantee* had become acquainted; some strange transaction, of which he was the sole living witness; and of such a character, that even the testimony of a negro would have been an inconvenience; and it was suspected that this, and not *obeahism*, was the crime for which *Chakra* had to answer with his life.

Whether this was true or not, the *Coromantee* was condemned to die.

The trial was not more irregular than the mode of execution, which these irresponsible justices thought fit to decree. It was almost as whimsical as it was cruel towards the wretched criminal.

He was to be taken to the top of the *Jumbé* rock, chained to the palm-tree, and there left to perish!

It may be asked why this singular mode of execution was selected. Why was he not hanged upon the scaffold, or burnt at the stake – a custom not unusual with condemned criminals of his kind?

The answer is easy. As already stated, at this particular period,

much unpleasant feeling prevailed on the subject of obeah-ism. In almost every district mysterious deaths had occurred, and were occurring – not only of black slaves, but of white masters, and even mistresses – all attributed to the baneful influence of Obi.

The African demon was ubiquitous, but invisible. Everywhere could be witnessed his skeleton hand upon the wall, but nowhere himself. It had become necessary to make a conspicuous example of his worshippers. The voice of all planterdom called for it; and the myal-man, Chakra, was selected for that example – in the belief that his fearful fate would terrify the votaries of the vile superstition to their very hearts' core.

The Jumbé rock suggested itself as the most appropriate place for the execution of the Coromantee. The terrors with which the place was already invested – added to those now to be inspired by the fearful form of punishment of which it was to be the scene – would exert a beneficial effect on the superstitious understandings of the slaves, and for ever destroy their belief in Obeah and Obboney.

Under this belief was the myal-man escorted up to the summit of the Jumbé rock; and, like a modern Prometheus, chained there.

No guards were placed near him – none were required to stay by the spot. His chains, and the terror inspired by the act, were deemed sufficient to prevent any interference with his fate.

In a few days, thirst and hunger, aided by the vultures, would perform the final and fatal ceremony – as surely as the rope of

the hangman, or the axe of the executioner.

It was long before Loftus Vaughan ascended the mountain to ascertain the fate of the unfortunate negro, his *ci-devant* slave. When, stimulated by curiosity, and, perhaps, a motive still stronger – he, at length, climbed to the top of the Jumbé rock, his hopes and expectations were alike confirmed. A skeleton, picked clean by the John-crows, hung suspended to the stem of the tree!

A rusty chain, warped around the bones, kept the skeleton in place.

Loftus Vaughan had no inclination to dwell long upon the spot. To him the sight was fearful. One glance, and he hurried away; but far more fearful – far more terrifying – was that which he saw, or fancied he saw, in passing homeward down the forest path – either the ghost of the myal-man, or the man himself!

Volume One – Chapter Three

A Jamaica Déjeuner

On a tranquil morning in the fair month of May – fair in Jamaica, as elsewhere on the earth – a large bell ringing in the great hall of Mount Welcome announced the hour of breakfast.

As yet there were no guests around the table, nor in the hall – only the black and coloured domestics, who, to the number of half-a-dozen, had just come up from the kitchen with trays and dishes containing the viands that were to compose the meal.

Though but two chairs were placed by the table – and the disposition of the plates, knives, and forks indicated that it had been set for only that number of guests – the profusion of dishes, thickly covering the snow-white damask cloth, might have led to the belief that a large party was expected.

It was emphatically a *déjeuner à la fourchette*. There were cutlets plain, and with *sauce piquante*, cavished fish, *entrées* of devilled fowl and duck, broiled salmon, and the like. These *hors d'oeuvres* were placed around the table, while a cold ham on one dish, and a tongue on another, occupied the centre.

Of “bread kind” there were mealy yams – some mashed with milk and butter, and dished up in shapes – roast plantains, hot rolls, toast, cassada cakes, and sweet potatoes.

But that a splendid silver tea-service, and a large glittering urn

were conspicuous, the spread might have been mistaken for a dinner, rather than the matutinal meal. The hour – nine o'clock a.m. – also precluded the idea of its being dinner.

Whoever were to be the guests at this table, it was intended they should fair sumptuously. So did they every day of their lives, for there was nothing occasional in that morning's meal. Both the style and the profuseness were of diurnal occurrence – the mode of Jamaica.

Soon after the tones of the bell had ceased to vibrate through the hall, they for whom the summons was intended made their appearance – entering from opposite sides, not together, but one coming in a little before the other.

The first was a gentleman of somewhat over middle age, of a hale complexion, and full, portly form.

He was dressed in a suit of nankeens – jacket and trousers, both of ample make – the former open in front, and displaying a shirt bosom of finest white linen, the broad plaits of which were uncovered by any vest. A wide turn-down collar was folded back, exhibiting a full development of throat – which, with the broad jaws of ruddy hue, appeared clean and freshly shaven.

From a fob in the waistband of his trousers hung a massive gold chain, with a bunch of seals and watch-keys at one end; while at the other was an immense chronometer watch of the old-fashioned “guinea gold,” with white dial, upon which the black figures were conspicuously painted. The watch itself could be seen; as, on entering, the wearer had drawn it out of its fob with

a view of ascertaining whether his servants were punctual to the minute: for the gentleman in question was a very martinet in such matters.

Loftus Vaughan, Esquire, proprietor of Mount Welcome, – Justice of the Peace, and *Custos Rotulorum*, – was the man thus characterised.

After casting a scrutinising glance at the display of viands, and apparently satisfied with what he saw, the master of Mount Welcome seated himself before the table, his face beaming with a smile of pleasant anticipation.

He had scarce taken his seat when a fair apparition appeared entering from the further end of the hall – a young virgin-like creature, looking as fresh and roseate as the first rays of the Aurora.

She was habited in a dress, or rather an undress, of purest white: a morning wrapper of fine lawn, that, fitting closely behind, displayed the waving *contour* of her back. In front, the dress fell in loose folds – scarce, however, concealing the full, bold outlines of her bosom; and then draped gracefully downward, so low as to leave nothing visible but the tips of a pair of tiny satin slippers, alternately showing themselves like white mice as the young girl glided over the polished surface of the floor.

Her throat, full and finely rounded, was encircled with a string of amber beads; and a crimson blossom – the beautiful bell of the Quamoclit – glittered amidst the ample folds of her hair. This, of

a rich chestnut colour, was parted on her forehead, and carried in a curving sweep over cheeks that rivalled the radiance of the flower.

It would have required an experienced eye – one well acquainted with the physiological characteristics of race – to have told that that young girl was not of the purest Caucasian blood. And yet the slight undulation of the hair; a rotund rather than an oval face; eyes of darkest umber, with a light gleaming perpetually in the pupils; a singular picturelike expression in the colouring of the cheeks – were all characteristics, that proclaimed the presence of the *sang-mêlée*.

Slight indeed was the *taint*; and it seems like profanation to employ the phrase, when speaking of a creature so beautifully fair – for beautifully fair was the daughter of Loftus Vaughan. She was his only daughter – the only member of his family: for the proprietor of Mount Welcome was a widower.

On entering the hall, the young girl did not proceed directly to seat herself; but, gliding behind the chair occupied by her father, she flung her arms around his neck, and imprinted a kiss upon his forehead.

It was her usual matutinal salute; and proved that, on that morning they had met for the first time.

Not that it was the first appearance of either: for both had been much earlier abroad – up with the sun, indeed, as is the universal custom in Jamaica.

Mr Vaughan had entered the hall from the front door, and the

broad-brimmed Leghorn hat, and cane carried in his hand, told that he had been out for a walk – perhaps to inspect the labour going on at the “works,” or ascertain the progress made in the cultivation of his extensive cane-fields.

His daughter, on the contrary, might have been seen entering the house some half-hour before, in riding costume – hat, habit, and whip – proving that her morning exercise had been taken on horseback.

After saluting her father as described, the young girl took her seat in front of the coffee urn, and commenced performing the duties of the table.

In this she was assisted by a girl apparently of her own age, but of widely-different appearance. Her waiting-maid it was, who, having entered at the same time, had taken her station behind the chair of her mistress.

There was something strikingly peculiar in the aspect of this personage – as well in her figure as in the colour of her skin. She was of that slender classic shape which we find in antique sculptures – like the forms of the Hindoo women known in England as “ayahs” and differing altogether from the negro outline. Her complexion, too, was not that of a negress – still less of a mulatta or quadroon. It was an admixture of black and red, resulting in a chestnut or mahogany colour; which, with the deep damask tincture upon her cheeks, produced an impression not unpleasing.

Nor were the features at all of a negro type. On the contrary,

far removed from it. The lips were thin, the face oval, and the nose of an aquiline shape – such features as may be traced on Egyptian sculptured stones, or may be seen in living forms in the lands of the Arab.

Her hair was not woolly, though it differed altogether from the hair of a European. It was straight, and jet-black, yet scarcely reaching to her shoulders. Not that it had been shortened by the scissors: for it appeared to be at its fullest growth; and, hanging, as it did, loosely over her ears, it imparted a youthful appearance to the brown-skinned damsel.

The girl was far from ill-looking; and, to an eye accustomed to her “style,” she may have appeared even handsome. Her elegant shape, exposed by the extreme scantiness of her costume – a sleeveless robe, with a Madras kerchief worn *à la toque* upon her head – her graceful attitudes, which seemed natural to her, either when in motion or standing poised behind the chair of her mistress; the quick glance of her fine, fiery eyes; and the pearl-like whiteness of her teeth; all contributed to make up a picture that was far from commonplace.

This young girl was a slave – the slave *Yola*.

Volume One – Chapter Four

Two Letters

Instead of standing in the middle of the floor, the breakfast table had been placed close to the front window – in order that, with the jalousies thrown open, the fresh air might be more freely felt, while at the same time a view could be obtained of the landscape outside. A splendid view it was, comprising the valley with its long palm-shaded avenue, a reach of the Montego river, the roofs and spires of the town, the shipping in the bay and roadstead, the bay itself, and the blue Caribbean beyond.

Striking as was this landscape, Mr Vaughan just then showed no inclination to look upon it. He was too busily occupied with the rich viands upon the table; and when he at length found time to glance over the window-sill, his glance extended no further than to the negro “gang” at work among the canes – to see if his drivers were doing their duty.

The eyes of Miss Vaughan were oftener directed to the outside view. It was at this hour that one of the servants usually returned from Montego Bay, bringing the letters from the post-office. There was nothing in her manner that betrayed any particular anxiety about his arrival; but simply that lively interest which young ladies in all countries feel when expecting the postman – hoping for one of those little letters of twelve sheets with closely-

written and crossed lines, most difficult to decipher, and yet to them more interesting than even the pages of the newest novel.

Very soon a dark object, of rudely Centaurean form, appeared coming along the avenue; and, shortly after, an imp-like negro lad upon the back of a rough pony galloped up to the front entrance. This was Quashie – the post-boy, of Mount Welcome.

If Miss Vaughan expected a billet, she was doomed to disappointment. There were only two letters in the bag, with a newspaper; and all three were for the Custos himself.

All bore the English post-mark; and the superscription of one of the letters was by him at once recognised – a pleasant smile stealing over his features as he broke open the seal.

A few moments sufficed to make him master of its contents, when the smile increased to a look of vivid gratification; and, rising from his chair, he paced for some time back and forward, snapping his fingers, and ejaculating, “Good – good! I thought so!”

His daughter regarded this behaviour with surprise. Gravity was her father’s habit, at times amounting to austerity. Such an exhibition of gaiety was rare with Loftus Vaughan.

“Some pleasing news, papa?”

“Yes, you little rogue; very.”

“May I not hear it?”

“Yes – no – no – not yet a while.”

“Papa! It is cruel of you to keep it from me. I promise I shall share your joy.”

“Ah! you will when you hear the news – that is, if you’re not a little simpleton, Kate.”

“I a simpleton, papa? I shall not be called so.”

“Why, you’ll be a simpleton if you don’t be joyful – when you – never mind, child – I’ll tell you all about it by-and-by. Good, good!” continued he, in a state of ecstatic frenzy. “I thought so – I knew he would come.”

“Then you expect some one, papa?”

“I do. Guess who it is!”

“How could I? You know I am unacquainted with your English friends.”

“Not with their names? You have heard their names, and seen letters from some of them?”

“Oh, yes, I often hear you speak of one – Mr Smythje. A very odd name it is! I wouldn’t be called Smythje for the world.”

“Ta, ta, child! Smythje is a very pretty name, especially with Montagu before it. Montagu is magnificent. Besides, Mr Smythje is the owner of Montagu Castle.”

“Oh, papa! how can that make his name sound any better? Is it he whom you expect?”

“Yes, dear. He writes to say that he will come by the next ship – the *Sea Nymph* she is called. She was to sail a week after the letter was written, so that we may look out for his arrival in a few days. Gad! I must prepare for him. You know Montagu Castle is out of repair. He is to be my guest; and, hark you, Catherine!” continued the planter, once more seating himself at the table, and

bending towards his daughter, so that his *sotto voce* might not be overheard by the domestics, “*you* must do your best to entertain this young stranger. He is said to be an accomplished gentleman, and I know he is a rich one. It is to my interest to be friendly with him,” added Mr Vaughan, in a still lower tone of voice, and as if in soliloquy, but loud enough for his daughter to hear what was said.

“Dear papa!” was the reply, “how could I be otherwise than polite to him? If only for your sake – ”

“If only for *your own*,” said the father, interrupting her, and accompanying the remark with a sly look and laugh. “But, dear Catherine,” continued he, “we shall find time to talk of this again. I must read the other letter. Who on earth can it be from? Egad! I never saw the writing before.”

The announcement of the projected visit of Mr Montagu Smythje, with the trumpet-like flourish of his many accomplishments – which Kate Vaughan had not now listened to for the first time – appeared to produce in the heart of the young lady no very vivid emotions of pleasure. She received it with perfect indifference, not seeming to care much one way or the other. If there was a balance, it was rather against him: for it so chanced that much of what she had heard in relation to this gentleman was not at all calculated to prepossess her in his favour.

She had heard that he was an exquisite – a fop, in fact – perhaps of all other characters the one most repulsive to a young

Creole: for, notwithstanding the natural disposition of these to become enamoured of fine personal appearance, it must be accompanied by certain qualities of mind, if not of the highest morality, or even intellectuality, yet differing altogether from the frivolous accomplishments of mere dandyism.

Nature, that inspires the creole maiden to give her *whole heart away and without any reserve*, has also taught her to bestow it with judgment. Instinct warns her not to lay her precious offering upon an altar unworthy of the sacrifice.

There was another circumstance calculated to beget within the heart of Kate Vaughan a certain feeling of repulsion towards the lord of Montagu Castle; and that was the conduct of her own father in regard to this matter. From time to time – when speaking of Mr Montagu Smythje – he had made use of certain expressions and innuendoes, which, though couched in ambiguous language, his daughter very easily comprehended.

The heart of woman is quick, as it is subtle, in the understanding of all that relates to the disposal of itself; and this even at the earliest age of maidenhood. It is prone to repel any effort to guide it from its natural inclinings, or rob it of its right to choose.

Mr Vaughan, in his ignorance of these rather recondite truths, was erecting a barrier to his own designs, all the while that he fancied he was successfully clearing the track of presumptive obstructions, and making the path smooth and easy.

At match-making he was likely to prove a bungler: for it was

evident that match-making was in his mind.

“Never saw the handwriting before,” said he, in repetition, as he broke open the seal of the second epistle.

If the contents of the first had filled him with joy, those of the second produced an effect directly the opposite.

“Sdeath!” exclaimed he, crushing the letter, as he finished reading it, and once more nervously springing to his feet. “Dead or living, that ill-starred brother of mine seems as if created to be a curse to me! While alive, always wanting money; and now that he is dead sending his son – a never-do-well, like himself – to trouble, and, perhaps, disgrace me.”

“Dear father!” said the young girl, startled more by his wild demeanour than what he was saying – for the words were muttered in a low voice, and rather in soliloquy – “has the other letter brought unpleasant news?”

“Ah! that it has. You may read for yourself.”

And once more seating himself, he tossed the unwelcome epistle across the table, and recommenced eating with apparent voracity – as if by that means to tranquillise his perturbed spirit.

Kate took up the rejected letter; and, smoothing out the paper, ran her eye over the contents.

The perusal did not require much time: for considering that the letter had made such a long journey, its contents were of the shortest: —

London, June 10, 18 – .

“Dear Uncle,

“I have to announce to you the melancholy intelligence that your brother, my dear father, is no more. His last words were, that I should go over to you: and, acting in accordance with his wish, I have taken passage for Jamaica. The ship is the *Sea Nymph*, and is to sail upon the 18th instant. I do not know how long we shall be at sea, but I hope it will prove a short voyage: as poor father’s effects were all taken by the sheriffs officer, and I am compelled, for want of money, to take passage in the *steerage*, which I have been told is anything but a luxurious mode of travelling. But I am young and strong, and no doubt shall be able to endure it.

“Yours affectionately,

“Herbert Vaughan.”

Whatever effect the reading of the letter may have had upon Kate Vaughan, it certainly did not produce indignation. On the contrary, an expression of sympathy stole over her face as she mastered the contents of the epistle; and on finishing it, the phrase, “poor fellow!” dropped as if involuntarily, and just audibly, from her lips.

Not that she knew anything of Herbert Vaughan, more than the name, and that he was her cousin; but the word *cousin* has an attractive sound, especially in the ears of young people, equalling in interest – at times even surpassing – that of sister or brother.

Though uttered, as we have said, in a tone almost inaudible, the words reached the ears of her father.

“Poor fellow!” he repeated, turning sharply to his daughter, and regarding her with a glance of displeasure, “I am surprised,

Kate, to hear you speak in that strain of one you know nothing about – one who has done nothing to deserve your compassion. An idle, good-for-nothing fellow – just as his father was before him. And only to think of it – coming over here a *steerage* passenger, in the very same ship with Mr Montagu Smythje! 'Sdeath! What a disgrace! Mr Smythje will be certain to know who he is – though he is not likely to associate with such *canaille*. He cannot fail to notice the fellow, however; and when he sees him here, will be sure to remember him. Ah! I must take some steps to prevent that. Poor fellow, indeed! Yes, poor enough, but not in that sense. Like his father, I suppose, who fiddled his life away among paint-brushes and palettes instead of following some profitable employment, and all for the sake of being called an *artist*! Poor fiddlestick! Bah! Don't let me hear you talk in that strain again!"

And as Mr Vaughan ended his ill-natured harangue, he tore the wrapper off the newspaper, and endeavoured, among its contents, to distract his mind from dwelling longer on the unpleasant theme either of the epistle, or him who had written it.

The young girl, abashed and disconcerted by the unusual violence of the rebuke, sat with downcast eyes, and without making any reply. The red colour had deepened upon her cheeks, and mounted to her forehead; but, notwithstanding the outrage done to her feelings, it was easy to see that the sympathy she had expressed, for her poor but unknown cousin, was felt as sensibly as ever.

So far from having stifled or extinguished it, the behaviour of her father was more likely to have given it increase and strength: for the adage of the “stolen waters” is still true; and the forbidden fruit is as tempting now as upon the morning of creation. As it was in the beginning, so will it ever be.

Volume One – Chapter Five

The Slaver

A hot West Indian sun was rapidly declining towards the Caribbean Sea – as if hastening to cool his fiery orb in the blue water – when a ship, that had rounded Pedro Point, in the Island of Jamaica, was seen standing eastward for Montego Bay.

She was a three-masted vessel – a barque – as could be told by the lateen rig of her mizen-mast – and apparently of some three or four hundred tons burden.

As she was running under one of the gentlest of breezes, all her canvas was spread; and the weather-worn appearance of her sails denoted that she was making land at the termination of a long ocean voyage. This was further manifest by the faded paint upon her sides, and the dark, dirt-coloured blotches that marked the position of her hawse-holes and scuppers.

Besides the private ensign that streamed, pennon-like from her peak, another trailed over her taffrail; which, unfolded by the motion of the vessel, displayed a blue starry field with white and crimson stripes. In this case the flag was appropriate – that is, in its stripes and their colour. Though justly vaunted as the flag of the free, here was it covering a cargo of slaves: the ship was a *slaver*.

After getting fairly inside the bay, but still at a long distance

from the town, she was observed suddenly to tack; and, instead of continuing on towards the harbour, head for a point on the southern side, where the shore was uninhabited and solitary.

On arriving within a mile of the land she took in sail, until every inch of canvas was furled upon her yards. Then the sharp rattling of the chain, as it dragged through the iron ring of the hawse-hole, announced the dropping of an anchor.

In a few moments after the ship swung round; and, drifting till the chain cable became taut, lay motionless upon the water.

The object for which the slaver had thus anchored short of the harbour will be learnt by our going aboard of her – though this was a privilege not granted to the idle or curious. Only the initiated were permitted to witness the spectacle of which her decks now became the theatre: only those who had an interest in the disposal of her cargo.

Viewed from a distance, the slaver lay apparently inert; but for all that a scene of active life was passing upon her deck – a scene of rare and painful interest.

She carried a cargo of two hundred human beings – “bales,” according to the phraseology of the slave-trader. These bales were not exactly alike. It was, as her skipper jocularly styled it, an “assorted cargo” – that is, one shipped on different points of the African coast, and, consequently, embracing many distinct varieties of the Ethiopian race. There was the tawny, but intelligent Mandingo, and by his side the Jolof of ebon hue. There the fierce and warlike Coromantee, alongside the docile

and submissive Pawpaw; the yellow Ebo, with the visage of a baboon, wretched and desponding, face to face with the cannibal Moco, or chained wrist to wrist with the light-hearted native of Congo and Angola.

None, however, appeared of light heart on board the slaver. The horrors of the “middle passage” had equally affected them all, until the dancing Congese, and the Lucumi, prone to suicide, seemed equally to suffer from dejection. The bright picture that now presented itself before their eyes – a landscape gleaming with all the gay colours of tropical vegetation – was viewed by them with very different emotions. Some seemed to regard it with indifference; others it reminded of their own African homes, from which they had been dragged by rude and ruffian men; while not a few gazed upon the scene with feelings of keen apprehension – believing it to be the dreaded *Koomi*, the land of the gigantic cannibals – and that they had been brought thither *to be eaten!*

Reflection might have convinced them that this would scarcely be the intention of the *Tobon-doo*— those white tyrants who had carried them across the ocean. The hard, unhusked rice, and coarse maize corn – their only food during the voyage – were not viands likely to fatten them for the feast of Anthropophagi; and their once smooth and shining skins now exhibited a dry, shrivelled appearance, from the surface coating of dandruff, and the scars of the hideous *cra-cra*.

The blacks among them, by the hardships of that fearful

voyage, had turned ashy grey and the yellows of a sickly and bilious hue. Males and females – for there were many of the latter – appeared to have been alike the objects of ill-usage, the victims of a starved stomach and a stifled atmosphere.

Some half-dozen of the latter – seen in the precincts of the cabin – presented a different aspect. These were young girls, picked from the common crowd on account of the superiority of their personal charms; and the flaunting vestments that adorned their bodies – contrasting with the complete nudity of their fellow-voyagers – told too plainly why they had been thus distinguished. A horrid contrast – wantonness in the midst of woe!

On the quarter-deck stood the slave-skipper – a tall, lathy individual of sallow hue – and, beside him, his mate – a dark-bearded ruffian; while a score of like stamp, but lower grade, acting under their orders, were distributed in different parts of the ship.

These last, as they tramped to and fro over the deck, might be heard at intervals giving utterance to profane oaths – as often laying violent hands upon one or other of their unfortunate captives – apparently out of the sheer wantonness of cruelty!

Immediately after the anchor had been dropped, and the ropes belayed and coiled in their places, a new scene of this disgusting drama was entered upon. The living “bales,” hitherto restrained below, were now ordered, or rather driven, upon deck – not all at once, but in lots of three or four at a time. Each individual, as he

came up the hatchway, was rudely seized by a sailor, who stood by with a soft brush in his hand and a pail at his feet; the latter containing a black composition of gunpowder, lemon-juice, and palm-oil. Of this mixture the unresisting captive received a coating; which, by the hand of another sailor, was rubbed into the skin, and then polished with a “dandybrush,” until the sable epidermis glistened like a newly-blacked boot.

A strange operation it might have appeared to those who saw it, had they not been initiated into its object and meaning. But to the spectators there present it was no uncommon sight. It was not the first time those unfeeling men had assisted at the spectacle of black bales *being made ready for the market!*

One after another were the dark-skinned victims of human cupidity brought from below, and submitted to this demoniac anointment – to which one and all yielded with an appearance of patient resignation, like sheep under the hands of the shearer.

In the looks of many of them could be detected the traces of that apprehension felt in the first hours of their captivity, and which had not yet forsaken them. Might not this process be a prelude to some fearful sacrifice?

Even the females were not exempted from this disgusting desecration of God’s image; and they too, one after another, were passed through the hands of the rough operators, with an accompaniment of brutal jests, and peals of ribald laughter!

Volume One – Chapter Six

Jowler and Jessuron

Almost on the same instant that the slave-barque had dropped anchor, a small boat shot out from the silent shore; which, as soon as it had got fairly clear of the land, could be seen to be steering in the direction of the newly-anchored vessel.

There were three men in the boat – two of whom were plying the oars. These were both black men – naked, with the exception of dirty white trousers covering their limbs, and coarse palm-leaf hats upon their heads.

The third occupant of the skiff – for such was the character of the boat – was a white, or more properly, a *whitish* man. He was seated in the stern-sheets, with a tiller-rope in each hand; and steering the craft – as his elbows held a-kimbo, and the occasional motion of his arms testified. He bore not the slightest resemblance to the oarsmen, either in the colour of his skin, or the costume that covered it. Indeed, it would not have been easy to have found his counterpart anywhere either on land or at sea.

He appeared to be about sixty years old – he might have been more or less – and had once been white; but long exposure to a West Indian sun, combined with the numerous dirt-bedaubed creases and furrows in his skin, had darkened his complexion to the hue of leaf-tobacco.

His features, naturally of an angular shape, had become so narrowed and sharpened by age as to leave scarce anything in front; and to get a view of his face it was necessary to step to one side, and scan it *en profil*.

Thus viewed, there was breadth enough, and features of the most prominent character – including a nose like the claw of a lobster – a sharp, projecting chin – with a deep embayment between, marking the locality of the lips: the outline of all suggesting a great resemblance to the profile of a parrot, but still greater to that of a Jew – for such, in reality was its type.

When the mouth was opened in a smile – a rare occurrence, however – only two teeth could be detected within, standing far apart, like two sentinels guarding the approach to the dark cavern within.

This singular countenance was lighted up by a pair of black, watery orbs, that glistened like the eyes of an otter; and eternally glistened, except when their owner was asleep – a condition in which it was said he was rarely or never caught.

The natural blackness of his eyes was rendered deeper by contrast with long white eyebrows running more than half-way around them, and meeting over the narrow ridge of the nose. Hair upon the head there was none – that is, none that was visible – a skull-cap of whitish cotton-stuff covering the whole crown, and coming down over both ears. Over this was a white beaver hat, whose worn nap and broken edges told of long service.

A pair of large green goggles, resting on the humped bridge

of his nose, protected his eyes from the sun; though they might, perhaps, have been worn for another purpose – to conceal the villainous expression of the orbs that sparkled beneath them.

A sky-blue cloth coat, whitened by long wear, with metal buttons, once bright, now changed to the hue of bronze; small-clothes of buff kerseymere glistening with grease; long stockings, and tarnished top-boots, made up the costume of this unique individual. A large blue cotton umbrella rested across his knees, as both hands were occupied in steering the skiff.

The portrait here given – or, perhaps, it should be styled profile – is that of Jacob Jessuron, the slave-merchant; an Israelite of Germanic breed, but one in whom – it would not have been truth to say – there was “no guile.”

The two oarsmen were simply his slaves.

The little craft had put out from the shore – from a secluded spot at a distance from the town, but still within view of it. It was evidently making for the newly-anchored barque; and evidently rowed at its best speed. Indeed, the steersman appeared to be urging his blacks to the exertion of their utmost strength. From time to time he was seen to twist his body half round and look towards the town – as though he expected or dreaded to see a rival boat coming from that quarter, and was desirous to reach the barque ahead of her.

If such was his design it proved successful. Although his little skiff was a considerable time in traversing the distance from shore to ship – a distance of at least a mile – he arrived at the point

of his destination without any other boat making its appearance.

“Sheep ahoy!” shouted he, as the skiff was pulled up under the larboard quarter of the barque.

“Ay, ay!” responded a voice from above. “Ish that Captain Showler I hearsh?”

“Hilloo! who’s there?” interrogated some one on the quarter-deck; and the moment after, the sallow face of Captain Aminadab Jowler presented itself at the gangway.

“Ah! Mister Jessuron, that you, eh? Determined to have fust peep at my blackeys? Well! fust kim, fust served; that’s my rule. Glad to see you, old fellow. How’d deo?”

“Fusht-rate! – fusht-rate! I hopsh you’re the same yourself, Captain Showler. How ish you for cargo?”

“Fine, old boy! got a prime lot this time. All sizes, colours, and *sexes*, too; ha! ha! You can pick and choose to suit yourself, I reckon. Come! climb aboard, and squint your eye over ’em!”

The slave-merchant, thus invited, caught hold of the rope-ladder let down for his accommodation; and scrambling up the ship’s side with the agility of an old ape, stepped upon the deck of the slaver.

After some moments spent in handshaking and other forms of gratulation; proving that the trader and merchant were old friends – and as thick as two thieves could possibly be – the latter fixed the goggles more firmly on the ridge of his nose, and commenced his inspection of the “cargo.”

Volume One – Chapter Seven

The Foolah Prince

On the quarter-deck of the slaver, and near the “companion,” stood a man of unique appearance – differing not only from the whites who composed the crew, but also from the blacks and browns who constituted the cargo.

His costume, attitude, and some, other trivial circumstances, proclaimed him as belonging neither to one nor the other.

He had just stepped up from the cabin, and was lingering upon the quarter-deck.

Having the *entrée* of the first, and the privilege of remaining upon the second, he could not be one of the “bales” of this human merchandise; and yet both costume and complexion forbade the supposition that he was of the slaver’s crew. Both denoted an African origin – though his features were not of a marked African type. Rather were they Asiatic, or, more correctly, Arabian; but, in some respects, differing also from Arab features. In truth, they were almost European; but the complexion again negated the idea that the individual in question belonged to any of the nationalities of Europe. His hue was that of a light Florentine bronze, with a tinge of chestnut.

He appeared to be about eighteen or nineteen years of age; with a person well proportioned, and possessing the following

characteristics: – A fine arched eyebrow, spanning an eye full and rotund; a nose slightly aquiline; thin, well-modelled lips; white teeth – whiter from contrast with the dark shading on the upper lip – and over all an ample *chevelure* of jet-black hair, slightly curling, but not at all woolly.

In nothing did he differ more, from the dark-skinned helots of the hold, than in his costume. While none of these had any clothing upon their bodies, or next to none, he, on the contrary, was splendidly apparelled – his face, throat, arms, and limbs, from the knee to the ankle, being the only parts not covered by a garment.

A sort of sleeveless tunic of yellow satin, with a skirt that just reached below his knees, was bound around his waist by a scarf of crimson China crape, the ends of which, hanging still lower, were adorned with a fringe-work of gold. Over the left shoulder rested loosely another scarf of blue *burnous* cloth, concealing the arm over which it hung; while half hidden beneath its draping could be perceived a scimitar in its richly-chased scabbard, with a hilt of carved ivory. A turban on the head, and sandals of Kordofan leather upon the feet, completed his costume.

Notwithstanding the Asiatic character of the dress, and the resemblance of the wearer to those East Indians known as Lascars, he was a true African – though not of that type which we usually associate with the word, and which suggests a certain *negroism* of features. He was one of a people entirely distinct from the negro – the great nation of the Foolahs (Fellattas) –

that race of shepherd warriors whose country extends from the confines of Darfur to the shores of the Atlantic – the lords of Sockatoo and Timbuctoo – those fanatic followers of the false prophet who conspired the death of Laing, and murdered Mungo Park upon the Quorra. Of such race was the individual who stood on the quarter-deck of the slaver.

He was not alone. Three or four others were around him, who also differed from the wretched creatures in the hold. But their dresses of more common material, as well as other circumstances, told that they were his inferiors in rank – in short, his attendants.

The humble mien with which they regarded him, and the watchful attention to his every look and gesture, proclaimed the habitual obedience to which they were accustomed; while the turbans which they wore, and their mode of salutation – the *salaam*– told of an obeisance Oriental and slavish.

To the richness of the young man's attire was added a certain haughtiness of mien that proclaimed him a person of rank – perhaps the chieftain of some African tribe.

And such, in reality, he was – a Foolah prince, from the banks of the Senegal.

There, neither his presence nor appearance would have attracted more than passing observation; but here, on the western side of the Atlantic, on board a slave-ship, both required explanation.

It was evident that he was not in the same category with his

unfortunate countrymen “between decks” – doomed to perpetual captivity. There were no signs that he had been treated as a captive, but the contrary.

How, then, was his presence on board the slave-barque to be accounted for? Was he a passenger? In what relationship did he stand to the people who surrounded him?

Such, though differently worded, were the interrogatories put by the slave-merchant, as, returning from the fore-deck, after completing his inspection of the cargo, his eyes for the first time fell upon the young Fellatta.

“Blesh my shtars, Captain Showler!” cried he, holding up both hands, and looking with astonishment at the turbaned individuals on the quarter-deck. “Blesh my shtars!” he repeated; “what ish all thish? S’help my Gott! theesh fellows are not shlaves, are they?”

“No, Mister Jessuron, no. They ain’t slaves, not all on ’em ain’t. That ’ere fine fellow, in silk and satin, air a owner o’ slaves hisself. He air a prince.”

“What dosh you say, Captin Showler? a prinshe?”

“Ye ain’t ’stonished at that, air ye? ’Tain’t the fust time I’ve had an African prince for a passenger. This yeer’s his Royal Highness the Prince Cingües, son o’ the Grand Sultan of Foota-toro. The other fellows you see thar by him are his attendants – courteers as waits on him. That with the yellow turban’s ‘gold stick;’ him in blue ’s ‘silver stick;’ an’ t’other fellow’s ‘groom o’ the chamber,’ I s’pose.”

“Sultan of Foota-toro!” exclaimed the slave-merchant, still

holding up the blue umbrella in surprise; “King of the Cannibal Islandsh! Aha, a good shoke, Captain Showler! But, serious, mine friend, what for hash you tricked them out in this way? They won’t fetch a joey more in the market for all theesh fine feathers.”

“Seerus, Mister Jessuron, they’re not for the market. I sw’ar to ye the fellur’s a real Afrikin prince.”

“African fiddleshtick!” echoed the slave-merchant with an incredulous shrug. “Come, worthy captin, what’sh the mashquerade about?”

“Not a bit of that, ole fellur! ’Sure ye the nigger’s a prince, and my passenger – nothing more or less.”

“S’help you gott, ish it so?”

“So help me that!” emphatically replied the skipper. “It’s just as I’ve told ye, Mister Jessuron.”

“Blesh my soul! – a passenger, you shay?”

“Yes; and he’s paid his passage, too – like a prince, as he is.”

“But what’s hish business here in Shamaica?”

“Ah! that’s altogether a kewrious story, Mister Jessuron. You’ll hardly guess his bizness, I reckon?”

“Lesh hear it, friend Showler.”

“Well, then, the story air this: ’Bout twelve months ago an army o’ Mandingoes attacked the town of Old Foota-toro, and, ’mong other plunder, carried off one o’ his daughters – own sister to the young fellur you see there. They sold her to a West India trader; who, in course, brought the girl over here to some o’ the

islands; which one ain't known. Old Foota-toro, like the rest o' 'em, thinks the slaves are all fetched to one place; and as he's half beside himself 'bout the loss of this gurl – she war his favourite, and a sort of a court belle among 'em – he's sent the brother to search her out, and get her back from whoever hez purchased her on this side. There's the hul story for you.”

The expression that had been gathering on the countenance of the Jew, while this relation was being made to him, indicated something more than a common interest in the tale – something beyond mere curiosity. At the same time, he seemed as if trying to conceal any outward sign of emotion, by preserving, as much as possible, the rigidity of his features.

“Blesh my soul!” he exclaimed, as the skipper had concluded. “Ash I live, a wonderful shtory! But how ish he ever to find hish sister? He might ash well look for a needle in a hayshtack.”

“Wall, that's true enough,” replied the slave-skipper. “As for that,” added he, with an air of stoical indifference, “taint no business o' mine. My affair hez been to carry the young fellur acrost the Atlantic; an' I'm willin' to take him back on the same tarms, and at the same price, if he kin pay it.”

“Did he pay you a goodsh price?” inquired the Jew, with evident interest in the answer.

“He paid like a prince, as I've told you. D'ye see that batch o' yellow Mandingoes by the windlass yonder?”

“Yesh-yesh!”

“Forty there air – all told.”

“Wen?”

“Twenty on ’em I’m to have for fetchin’ him acrost. Cheap enough, ain’t it?”

“Dirt sheep, friend Showler. The other twenty?”

“They are *hisn*. He’s brought ’em with him to swop for the sister – when he finds her.”

“Ah, yesh! if he finds the girl.”

“In coorse, if he finds her.”

“Ach!” exclaimed the Jew, with a significant shrug of his shoulders; “that will not be an easy bishness, Captin Showler.”

“By Christopher Columbus, old fellow!” said the trader, apparently struck with an idea; “now I think of it, you might gie him some help in the findin’ o’ her. I know no man more likely than yourself to be able to pilot him. You know everybody in the island, I reckon. No doubt he will pay you well for your trouble. I’m rayther anxious he should succeed. King Foota-toro is one of my best sources of supply; and if the gurl could be found and took back, I know the old nigger would do the handsome to me on my next trip to the coast.”

“Well, worthy captin, I don’t know that there’s any hope, and won’t hold out any to hish royal highnesh the prince. I’m not as able to get about ash I ushed to was; but I’ll try my besht for you. As you shay, I might do something towardsh putting him in the way. Well, we’ll talk it over; but let ush first settle our other bishness, or all the world will be aboard. Twenty, you shay, are his?”

“Twenty of them ’ere Mandingoes.”

“Hash he anything besides?”

“In cash? no, not a red cent. Men and women are the dollars of his country. He hez the four attendants, you see. They air his slaves like the others.”

“Twenty-four, then, in all. Blesh my soul! What a lucky fellow ish this prinsh. Maybe I can do something for him; but we can talk it over in the cabin, and I’m ready for something to drink, worthy Showler.”

“Ah!” he exclaimed, as, on turning round, he perceived the group of girls before mentioned. “Blesh my soul! Some likely wenches. Just the sort for chambermaids,” added he, with a villainously significant look. “How many of that kind hash you got, good Showler?”

“About a dozen,” jocularly responded the skipper; “some splendid breeders among ’em, if you want any for that bizness.”

“I may – I may. Gad! it’s a valuable cargo – one thing with another! Well, let ush go below,” added he, turning towards the companion. “What’s in your locker? I musht have a drink before I can do bishness. Likely wenches! Gad – a valuable cargo!”

Smacking his lips, and snapping his fingers as he talked, the old reprobate descended the companion stairway – the captain of the slaver following close behind him.

We know not, except by implication, the details of the bargaining that took place below. The negotiation was a secret one – as became the nature of any transaction between two such

characters as a slave-dealer and a slave-stealer.

It resulted, however, in the purchase of the whole cargo; and in so short a time, that just as the sun sank into the sea, the gig, cutter, and long-boat of the slaver were lowered into the water; and, under the darkness of night, the “bales” were transported to the shore, and landed in the little cove whence the skiff of the slave-merchant had put out.

Amongst them were the twenty Mandingoes, the attendants of the prince, and the “wenches,” designed for improving the breed on Jessuron’s plantation: for the slave-merchant was also a land-proprietor and planter.

The skiff was seen returning to the shore, a cable’s-length in the wake of the other boats. Now, however, a fourth personage appeared in it, seated in the stern, face to face with the owner. The gaily-coloured costume, even in the darkness, shining over the calm shadowy surface of the sea, rendered it easy to recognise this individual as the Foolah prince. The wolf and the lamb were sailing in the same boat.

Volume One – Chapter Eight

A Handsome Offer

On the day after the slave-ship had landed her cargo, and at an early hour in the morning, Mr Vaughan, looking from the front window of his house, perceived a solitary horseman approaching by the long avenue.

As the stranger drew nearer, the animal he bestrode appeared gradually to transform itself into a mule; and the rider was seen to be an old gentleman in a blue coat, with metal buttons, and ample outside pockets – under which were breeches and top-boots, both sullied by long wear. A damaged brown beaver hat upon his head, with the edge of a white cotton skull-cap showing beneath it – green goggles upon the nose – and a large blue umbrella, instead of a whip, grasped in the right hand – enabled Mr Vaughan to identify one of his nearest neighbours: the penn-keeper Jacob Jessuron, who, among other live stock, was also known as an extensive speculator in slaves.

“The old Jew!” muttered Mr Vaughan, with an accent that betokened a certain degree of discontent. “What can *he* want at this early hour? Some slave stock for sale, I suppose? That looked like a trader I saw yesterday in the offing; and he’s sure to have had a lot or two out of her. Well, he won’t find a market here. Fortunately, I’m stocked. Morning, Mr Jessuron!” continued he,

hailing his visitor as the latter dismounted by the bottom of the stairway. "As usual, you are early abroad. Business, eh?"

"Ach, yesh, Mishter Vochan! Bishness must be minded. A poor man like me can't afford to shleep late theesh hard times!"

"Ha! ha! Poor man, indeed! That's a capital joke, Mr Jessuron! Come in. Have you breakfasted?"

"Yesh, thanks, Mishter Vochan," replied the Jew, as he climbed up the steps. "I always breakfasht at six."

"Oh, that is early! A glass of swizzle, then?"

"Thanks, Mishter Vochan; you ish very kind. A glash of shwizzell will be better ash anything else. Itsh warm thish morning." The *swizzle*, a mixture of rum, sugar, water, and lime-juice, was found in a large punch-bowl that stood upon the sideboard, with a silver ladle resting across the rim, and glasses set around it. This is a standing drink in the dwelling of a Jamaica planter – a fountain that may be said never to go dry, or, at all events, renewed as soon as exhausted.

Stepping up to the sideboard, where he was attended to by a black butler, the penn-keeper briskly quaffed off a tumbler of the swizzle; and then smacking his lips, and adding the observation, "Tish goot!" he returned towards the window, where a chair had been placed for him beside the one already occupied by his host.

The visitor removed his beaver hat, though the white skull-cap – not over clean – was still permitted to keep its place upon his head.

Mr Vaughan was a man possessed of considerable courtesy,

or at least, an affectation of it. He remained silent, therefore, politely waiting for his guest to initiate the conversation.

“Well, Mishter Vochan,” began the Jew, “I hash come over to see you on a shmall bishness – a very shmall bishness it is, shcarcelly worth troubling you about.”

Here the speaker hesitated, as if to put some proposition into shape.

“Some black stock for sale, eh? I think I’ve heard that a cargo came in yesterday. You got part, I suppose?”

“Yesh, yesh, I bought a shmall lot, a very shmall lot. I hadn’t the monish to buy more. S’help me gott! the shlaves ish getting so dear ash I can’t afford to buy. This talk about shtoppin’ the trade ish like to ruin ush all. Don’t you think so, Mishter Vochan?”

“Oh, as for that, *you* needn’t fear. If the British Government should pass the bill, the law will be only a dead letter. They could never guard the whole of the African coast – no, nor that of Jamaica neither. I think, Mr Jessuron, you would still contrive to land a few bales, eh?”

“Ach, no, Mishter Vochan! dear, oh dear, no! I shouldn’t venture againsht the laws. If the trade ish to be stop, I musht give up the bishness. Slaves would be too dear for a poor Jewish man like me to deal in: s’help me, yesh! they’re too dear ash it ish.”

“Oh, that’s all nonsense about their getting dearer! It’s very well for you to talk so, Mr Jessuron: you have some to sell, I presume?”

“Not now, Mishter Vochan, not now. Possihble, I may have a

small lot to dishpose of in a day or two; but joosht now, I haven't a shingle head ready for the market. Thish morning I want to buy, instead of shell."

"To buy! From me, do you mean?"

"Yesh, Mishter Vochan, if you're disposed to shell."

"Come, that's something new, neighbour Jessuron! I know you're always ready for a trade; but this is the first time I ever heard of you buying slaves on a plantation."

"Well, the truth ish, Mishter Vochan, I hash a cushtomer, who wants a likely wench for waiting at hish table. Theresh none among my shtock, he thinks good enough for hish purposh. I wash thinking you hash got one, if you could shpare her, that would suit him nishely."

"Which do you mean?"

"I mean that young Foolah wench ash I sold you lasht year – joosh after crop time."

"Oh! the girl Yola?"

"Yesh, I think that wosh her name. Ash you had her dirt sheep, I don't mind giving you shomething on your bargain – shay ten pounds currenshy?"

"Poh, poh, poh!" replied the planter, with a deprecating shrug. "That would never do – even if I meant to sell the girl. But I have no wish to part with her."

"Shay twenty, then?"

"Nor twice twenty, neighbour. I wouldn't, under any circumstances, take less than two hundred pounds for that girl."

She has turned out a most valuable servant – ”

“Two hunder poundsh!” interrupted the Jew, starting up in his chair. “Och! Mishter Vochan, theresh not a black wench in the island worth half the monish. Two hunder poundsh! Blesh my soul, that ish a prishe! I wish I could shell some of my shtock at that prishe! I’d be glad to give any two I hash for two hunder poundsh.”

“Why, Mr Jessuron! I thought you said just now slaves were getting very dear?”

“Dear, yesh; but that is doublish dear. S’help me gott! You don’t mean it, Mishter Vochan?”

“But I do mean it; and even if you were to offer me two hundred – ”

“Don’t shay more about it,” said the slave-merchant, hurriedly interrupting the hypothetical speech; “don’t shay more; I agreesh to give it. Two hunder poundsh! – blesh my shtars! it’ll make a bankrup’ of me.”

“No, it will not do that: since I cannot agree to take it.”

“Not take two hunder poundsh?”

“No – nor twice that sum.”

“Gott help ush, Mishter Vochan; you ish shurely shokin? Why will you not take two hunder? I hash the monish in my pocket.”

“I am sorry to disappoint you, neighbour; but the fact is, I could not sell the girl Yola at any price, without the consent of my daughter – to whom I have given her.”

“Mish Vochan?”

“Yes – she is her maid; and I know that my daughter is very fond of her. It is not likely she would consent to the girl’s being sold.”

“But, Mishter Vochan! you shurely don’t let your daughter shtand between you and a good bargain? Two hunder poundsh is big monish – big monish, Cushtos. The wench ish not worth half ash much, and, for myshelf, I wouldn’t give half; but I don’t want to dishappoint a good cushtomer, who’sh not so particular ash to prishe.”

“Your customer fancies the girl, eh?” said Mr Vaughan, glancing significantly at his guest. “She is very good-looking – no wonder. But, if that be the reason for his wanting to buy her, I may as well tell you, I should myself not be inclined to part with her; and, as for my daughter, if she suspected such a purpose, all the money you have got, Mr Jessuron, wouldn’t reach the price of Yola.”

“S’help me gott, Mishter Vochan, you’re mishtaken! The cushtomer I speak of never shet hish eyes on the wench. Itsh only a waiting-maid he wants for hish table; and I thought of her, ash she’sh joost what he deshcribes. How do you know that Mish Vochan might not conshent to let her go? I promish to get her another young girl ash goot or better ash Yola.”

“Well,” replied the planter, after a moment’s reflection, and apparently tempted by the handsome offer, “since you seem so determined upon buying the wench, I’ll consult my daughter about it. But I can hold out very little hope of success. I know

that she likes this young Foolah. I have heard that the girl was some king's daughter in her own country; and I am as good as certain Kate won't consent to her being sold."

"Not if *you* wished it, Mishter Vochan?"

"Oh, if I insisted upon it, of course; but I gave my daughter a promise not to part with the girl against her wish, and I never break my word, Mr Jessuron – not to my own child."

With this rather affected profession, the planter walked out of the room, leaving the slave-merchant to his reflections.

"May the diffel strike me dead if that man ishn't mad!" soliloquised the Jew, when left to himself; "shtark shtarin mad! refuse two hunder poundsh for a she wench ash brown ash a cocoa-nut! Blesh my shtars!"

"As I told you, Mr Jessuron," said the planter, re-entering the hall, "my daughter is inexorable. Yola cannot be sold."

"Good morning, Mishter Vochan," said the slave-merchant, taking up his hat and umbrella, and making for the door. "Good morning, shir: I hash no other bishness to-day."

Then, putting on his hat and grasping his umbrella, with an air of spitefulness he was unable to conceal, he hurried down the stone steps, scrambled upon the back of his mule, and rode away in sullen silence.

"Unusually free with, his money this morning," said the planter, looking after him. "Some shabby scheme, I have no doubt. Well, I suppose I have thwarted it; besides, I am glad of an opportunity of disobliging the old curmudgeon: many's the time

he has done as much for me!”

Volume One – Chapter Nine

Judith Jessuron

In the most unamiable of tempers did the slave-speculator ride back down the avenue. So out of sorts was he at the result of his interview, that he did not think of unfolding his blue umbrella to protect himself from the hot rays of the sun, now striking vertically downward. On the contrary, he used the *parapluie* for a very different purpose – every now and then belabouring the ribs of his mule with it: as if to rid himself of his spleen by venting it on the innocent mongrel.

Nor did he go in silence, although he was alone. In a kind of involuntary soliloquy he kept muttering, as he rode on, long strings of phrases denunciatory of the host whose roof he had just quitted.

The daughter, too, of that host came in for a share of his muttered denunciations, which at times, assumed the form of a menace.

Part of what he said was spoken distinctly and with emphasis:

“The dusht off my shoosh, Loftish Vochan – I flingsh it back to you! Gott for damsch! there wash a time when you would be glad for my two hunder poundsh. Not for any monish? Bosh! Grand lady, Mish Kate – Mish Quasheby! Ha! I knowsh a thing –

I knowsh a leetle thing. Some day, may be, yourshelf sell for lesh ash two hunder poundsh. Ach! I not grudgsh twice the monish to see that day!

“The dusht off my shoosh to both of yoush!” he repeated, as he cleared the gate-entrance. “T’sh off your grounds, now; and, if I hash you here, I shay you something of my mind – something ash make you sell your wench for lesh ash two hunder poundsh! I do so, some time, pleash gott! Ach!”

Uttering this last exclamation with a prolonged aspirate, he raised himself erect in his stirrups; and, half turning his mule, shook his umbrella in a threatening manner towards Mount Welcome – his eye accompanying the action with a glance that expressed some secret but vindictive determination.

As he faced back into the road, another personage appeared upon the scene – a female equestrian, who, trotting briskly up, turned her horse, and rode along by his side.

She was a young girl, or, rather a young woman – a bright, beautiful creature – who appeared an angel by the side of that demonlike old man.

She had evidently been waiting for him at the turning of the road; and the air of easy familiarity, with the absence of any salutation as they met, told that they had not long been separated.

Who was this charming equestrian?

A stranger would have asked this question, while his eye rested upon the object of it with mingled feelings of wonder and admiration: admiration at such rare beauty – wonder at beholding

it in such rude companionship!

It was a beauty that need not be painted in detail. The forehead of noble arch; the scimitar-shaped eyebrows of ebon blackness; the dark-brown flashing pupils; the piquant prominence of the nose, with its spiral curving nostrils; were all characteristics of Hebraic beauty – a shrine before which both Moslem and Christian have oftentimes bent the knee in humblest adoration.

Twenty cycles have rolled past – twenty centuries of outrage, calumny, and wrong – housed in low haunts – pillaged and persecuted – oft driven to desperation – rendered roofless and homeless – still, amid all, and in spite of all, lovely are Judah’s dark-eyed daughters – fair as when they danced to the music of cymbal and timbrel, or, to the accompaniment of the golden-stringed harp, sang the lays of a happier time.

Here, in a new world, and canopied under an occidental sky, had sprung up a very type of Jewish beauty: for never was daughter of Judah lovelier than the daughter of Jacob Jessuron – she who was now riding by his side.

A singular contrast did they present as they rode together – this fair maid and that harsh-featured, ugly old man – unlike as the rose to its parent thorn.

Sad are we to say, that the contrast was only physical morally, it was “like father like daughter.” In external form, Judith Jessuron was an angel; in spirit – and we say it with regret – she was the child of her father – devilish as he.

“A failure?” said this fair she, taking the initiative. “Pah! I

needn't have asked you: it's clear enough from your looks – though, certes, that beautiful countenance of yours is not a very legible index to your thoughts. What says Vanity Vaughan? Will he sell the girl?"

"No."

"As I expected."

"S'help me, he won't!"

"How much did you bid for her?"

"Och! I'sh ashamed to tell you, Shoodith."

"Come, old rabbi, you needn't be backward before me. How much?"

"Two hunder poundsh."

"Two hundred pounds! Well, that is a high figure! If what you've told me be true, his own daughter isn't worth so much. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Hush, Shoodith, dear! Don't shpeak of that – for your life don't shpeak of it. You may shpoil some plansh I hash about her."

"Have no fear, good father. I never spoiled any plan of yours yet – have I?"

"No, no! You hash been a good shild, my daughter! – a good shild, s'help me gott, you hash."

"But tell me; why would the Custos not sell? He likes money almost as well as yourself. Two hundred pounds is a large price for this copper-coloured wench – quite double what she's worth."

"Ach, Shoodith dear, it wash not Vochan hishelf that refused it."

“Who then?”

“Thish very daughter you speaksh of.”

“She!” exclaimed the young Jewess, with a curl of the lip, and a contemptuous twist of her beautiful nostril, that all at once changed her beauty into very ugliness. “She, you say? I wonder what next! The conceited *mustee*— herself no better than a slave!”

“Shtop – shtop, Shoodith,” interrupted the Jew, with a look of uneasiness. “Keep that to yourshelf, my shild. Shay no more about it – at leasht, not now, not now. The trees may have earsh.”

The burst of angry passion hindered the fair “Shoodith” from making rejoinder, and for some moments father and daughter rode on in silence.

The latter was the first to re-commence the conversation.

“You are foolish, good father,” said she; “absurdly foolish.”

“Why, Shoodith?”

“Why? In offering to buy this girl at all.”

“Ay – what would you shay?” inquired the old Jew, as if the interrogatory had been an echo to his own thoughts. “What would you shay?”

“I would say that you are silly, old rabbi Jacob; and that’s what I do say.”

“Blesh my shoul! What dosh you mean, Shoodith?”

“Why, dear and worthy papa, you’re not always so dull of comprehension. Answer me: what do you want the Foolah for?”

“Och! you know what I wants her for, Thish prinshe will give hish twenty Mandingoes for her. There ish no doubt but that

she's his sister. Twenty good shtrong Mandingoes, worth twenty hunder poundsh. Blesh my soul! it'sh a fortune?"

"Well; and if it is a fortune, what then?"

"If it ish? By our fathers! you talk of twenty hunder poundsh ash if monish was dirt."

"My worthy parent, you misunderstand me."

"Mishunderstand you, Shoodith?"

"You do. I have more respect for twenty hundred pounds than you give me credit for. So much, as that I advise you to *get it*."

"Get it! why, daughter, that ish shoosht what I am trying to do."

"Ay, and you've gone about it in such a foolish fashion, that you run a great risk of losing it."

"And how would you have me go about it, mine Shoodith?"

"By *taking it*."

The slave-merchant suddenly jerked upon the bridle, and pulled his mule to a stand – as he did so darting towards his daughter a look half-puzzled, half-penetrating.

"Good father Jacob," continued she, halting at the same time, "*you* are not wont to be so dull-witted. While waiting for you at the gate of this pompous sugar-planter, I could not help reflecting; and my reflections led me to ask the question: what on earth had taken you to his house?"

"And what answer did you find, Shoodith?"

"Oh, not much; only that you went upon a very idle errand."

"Yesh, it hash been an idle errand: I did not get what I went

for.”

“And what matters if you didn’t?”

“Mattersh it? Twenty Mandingoes mattersh a great deal – twenty hunder poundsh currenshy. That ish what it mattersh, Shoodith mine darling!”

“Not the paring of a Mandingo’s toe-nail, my paternal friend.”

“Hach! what shay you, mine wise Shoodith?”

“What say I? Simply, that these Mandingoes might as well have been yours without all this trouble. They may be yet – ay, and their master too, if you desire to have a prince for your slave. *I do.*”

“Speak out, Shoodith; I don’t understand you.”

“You will presently. Didn’t you say, just now, that Captain Jowler has reasons for not coming ashore?”

“Captain Showler! He would rather land in the Cannibal Islands than in Montego Bay. Well, Shoodith?”

“Rabbi Jessuron, you weary my patience. For the Foolah prince – as you say he is – you are answerable only to Captain Jowler. Captain Jowler comes not ashore.”

“True – it ish true,” assented the Jew, with a gesture that signified his comprehension of these preliminary premises.

“Who, then, is to hinder you from doing as you please in the matter of these Mandingoes?”

“Wonderful Shoodith!” exclaimed the father, throwing up his arms, and turning upon his daughter a look of enthusiastic admiration. “Wonderful Shoodith! Joosh the very thing! – blesh

my soul! – and I never thought of it!”

“Well, father; luckily it’s not too late. *I* have been thinking of it. I knew very well that Kate Vaughan would not part with the girl Yola. I told you she wouldn’t; but, by the bye, I hope you’ve said nothing of what you wanted her for? If you have – ”

“Not a word, Shoodith! not a word!”

“Then no one need be a word the wiser. As to Captain Jowler – ”

“Showler daren’t show hish face in the Bay: that’sh why he landed hish cargo on the coast. Besides, there wash an understanding between him and me. He doeshn’t care what ish done with the prinshe – not he. Anyhow, he’ll be gone away in twenty-four hours.”

“Then in twenty-four hours the Mandingoes may be yours – prince, attendants, and all. But time is precious, papa. We had better hasten home at once, and strip his royal highness of those fine feathers before some of our curious neighbours come in and see them. People will talk scandal, you know. As for our worthy overseer – ”

“Ah, Ravener! he knowsh all about it. I wash obliged to tell him ash we landed.”

“Of course you were; and it will cost you a Mandingo or two to keep *his* tongue tied: that it will. For the rest, there need be no difficulty. It won’t matter what these savages may say for themselves. Fortunately, there’s no scandal in a black man’s tongue.”

“Wonderful Shoodith!” again exclaimed the admiring parent. “My precious daughter, you are worth your weight in golden guinish! Twenty-four shlaves for nothing, and one of them a born prinshe! Two thousand currensy! Blesh my soul! It ish a shplendid profit – worth a whole year’s buyin’ and shellin’.” And with this honest reflection, the slave-merchant hammered his mule into a trot, and followed his “precious Shoodith” – who had already given the whip to her horse, and was riding rapidly homeward.

Volume One – Chapter Ten

The Sea Nymph

On the third day after the slaver had cast anchor in the Bay of Montego, a large square-rigged vessel made her appearance in the offing; and, heading shoreward, with all sail set, stood boldly in for the harbour. The Union Jack of England, spread to the breeze, floated freely above her taffrail; and various boxes, bales, trunks, and portmanteaus, that could be seen on her deck – brought up for debarkation – as well as the frank, manly countenances of the sailors who composed her crew, proclaimed the ship to be an honest trader. The lettering upon her stern told that she was the “*Sea Nymph*, of Liverpool.”

Though freighted with a cargo of merchandise, and in reality a merchantman, the presence on board of several individuals in the costume of landmen, denoted that the *Sea Nymph* also accommodated passengers.

The majority of these were West India planters, with their families, returning from a visit to the mother country – their sons, perhaps, after graduating at an English university, and their daughters on having received their final *polish* at some fashionable metropolitan seminary.

Here and there an “attorney” – a constituent element of West Indian society, though not necessarily, as the title suggests, a

real limb of the law. Of the latter there might have been one or two, with a like number of unpractised disciples of Aesculapius; both lawyer and doctor bent on seeking fortune – and with fair prospects of finding it in a land notorious for crime as unwholesome in clime. These, with a sprinkling of nondescripts, made up the list of the *Sea Nymph's* cabin-passengers.

Among these nondescripts was one of peculiarities sufficiently distinctive to attract attention. A single glance at this personage satisfied you that you looked upon a London Cockney, at the same time a West-End exquisite of the very purest water. He was a young man who had just passed the twenty-first anniversary of his birth; although the indulgence of youthful dissipation had already brushed the freshness from his features, giving them the stamp of greater age. In complexion he was fair – pre-eminently so – with hair of a light yellowish hue, that presented the appearance of having been artificially curled, and slightly darkened by the application of some perfumed oil. The whiskers and moustache were nearly of the same colour; both evidently cultivated with an elaborate assiduity, that proclaimed excessive conceit in them on the part of their owner.

The eyebrows were also of the lightest shade; but the hue of the eyes was not so easily told: since one of them was kept habitually closed; while a glancing lens, in a frame of tortoise-shell, hindered a fair view of the other. Through the glass, however, it appeared of a greenish grey, and decidedly “piggish.”

The features of this individual were regular enough, though

without any striking character; and of a cast rather effeminate than vulgar. Their prevailing expression was that of a certain superciliousness, at times extending to an affectation of sardonism.

The dress of the young man was in correspondence with the foppery exhibited in the perfumed locks and eye-glass. It consisted of a surtout of broadcloth, of a very light drab, with a cape that scarce covered the shoulders; a white beaver hat; vest and pants of spotless huff kerseymere; kid gloves on his hands; and boots, blight as lacquer could make them, on his feet. These items of apparel, made in a style of fashion and worn with an air of *savoir faire*, loudly proclaimed the London fop of the time.

The affected drawl in which the gentleman spoke, whenever he condescended to hold communion with his fellow-passengers, confirmed this character.

Notwithstanding a certain ill-disguised contempt with which he was regarded by some of his fellow-voyagers, not a few treated him with marked deference; and the obeisance paid him by the steward and cabin boys of the *Sea Nymph* gave evidence of his capability to bestow a liberal largess. And such capability did he possess: for Mr Montagu Smythje, the individual in question, was a youth of good family and fortune – the latter consisting of a magnificent sugar estate in Jamaica, left him by a deceased relative, to visit which was the object of his voyage.

The estate he had never seen, as this was his first trip across the Atlantic; but he had no reason to doubt the existence of

the property. The handsome income which it had afforded him, during several years of his minority, and which had enabled him to live in magnificent style in the most fashionable circles of London society, was a substantial proof that Montagu Castle – such was the name of the estate – was something more than a castle in the air. During his minority, the estate had been managed by a *trustee* resident in the island: one Mr Vaughan, himself a sugar-planter, whose plantation adjoined that of Montagu Castle.

Mr Smythje had not come over the water with any intention of settling upon his Jamaica estate. “Such an ideaw,” to use his own phraseology, “nevaw entwawed ma bwain. To exchange London and its pwesyaws for a wesidence among those haw-ed niggaws – deaw, no – I could nevaw think of such a voluntawy banishment; that would be a baw – a decided baw!” “A meaw twip to see something of the twopics, of which I’ve heard such extwaor’nary stowies – have a look at my sugaw plantation and the dem’d niggaws – besides, I have a stwong desire to take a squint at these Queeole queetyaws, who are said to be so doocèd pwetty. Haw! haw!”

After such fashion did Mr Montagu Smythje explain the purpose of his voyage to such of his fellow-passengers as chanced to take an interest in it.

There were but few travellers in the steerage of the *Sea Nymph*. They who are compelled to adopt that irksome mode of voyaging across the Atlantic have but little errand to the

West Indies, or elsewhere to tropical lands – where labour is monopolised by the thews and sinews of the slave. Only three or four of this class had found accommodation on board the *Sea Nymph*; and yet among these humble voyagers was one destined to play a conspicuous part in our story.

The individual in question was a young man, in appearance of the same age as Mr Montagu Smythje, though differing from the latter in almost everything else. In stature he was what is termed “middle height,” with limbs well set and rounded, denoting activity and strength. His complexion, though not what is termed *brunette*, was dark for a native of Britain, though such was he.

His features were nobly defined; and his whole countenance sufficiently striking to attract the attention of even an indifferent observer. Dark-brown eyes, and hair of like colour, curling jauntily over his cheeks, were characteristic points of gracefulness; and, take him all in all, he was what might justly be pronounced a handsome young fellow.

The garments he wore were his best – put on for the first time during the voyage, and for the grand occasion of *landing*. A dark blue tunic frock, faced with black braid, skirting down over a pair of close-fitting tights, and Hessian boots, gave him rather a *distingué* air, notwithstanding a little threadbarishness apparent along the seams.

The occupation in which the young man was engaged betrayed a certain degree of refinement. Standing near the windlass, in the

blank leaf of a book, which appeared to be his journal, he was sketching the harbour into which the ship was about to enter; and the drawing exhibited no inconsiderable degree of artistic skill.

For all that, the sketcher was *not* a professional artist. Professionally, indeed, and to his misfortune, he was nothing. A poor scholar – without trick or trade by which he might earn a livelihood – he had come out to the West Indies, as young men go to other colonies, with that sort of indefinite hope, that Fortune, in some way or other, might prove kinder abroad than she had been at home.

Whatever hopes of success the young colonist may have entertained, they were evidently neither sanguine nor continuous. Though naturally of a cheerful spirit, as his countenance indicated, a close observer might have detected a shadow stealing over it at intervals.

As the ship drew near to the shore, he closed the book, and stood scanning the gorgeous picture of tropical scenery, now, for the first time, disclosed to his eyes.

Despite the pleasant emotions which so fair a scene was calculated to call forth, his countenance betrayed anxiety – perhaps a doubt as to whether a welcome awaited him in that lovely land upon which he was looking.

Only a few moments had he been thus occupied, when a strange voice falling upon his ear caused him to turn towards the speaker – in whom he recognised the distinguished cabin-passenger, Mr Montagu Smythje.

As this gentleman had voyaged all the way from Liverpool to Jamaica without once venturing to set his foot across the line which separates the sacred precincts of the quarter from the more plebeian for'ard deck, his presence by the windlass might have been matter of surprise.

A circumstance, however, explained it. It was the last hour of the voyage. The *Sea Nymph* was just heading into the harbour; and the passengers of all degrees had rushed forward, in order to obtain a better view of the glorious landscape unfolding itself before their eyes. Notwithstanding his often-expressed antipathy to the "abom'nable smell of taw" it was but natural that Mr Smythje should yield to the general curiosity, and go forward among the rest.

Having gained an elevated stand-point upon the top of the windlass, he had adjusted the glass to his eye, and commenced *ogling* the landscape, now near enough for its details to be distinguished.

Not for long, however, did Mr Smythje remain silent. He was not one of a saturnine habit. The fair scene was inspiring him with a poetical fervour, which soon found expression in characteristic speech.

"Doochè pwetty, 'pon honaw!" he exclaimed; "would make a spwendid dwop-scene faw a theataw! Dawnt yaw think so, ma good fwend?"

The person thus appealed to chanced to be the young steerage passenger; who, during the long voyage, had abstained from

going *abaft* of the main-mast with as much scrupulousness as Mr Smythje had observed about venturing forward. Hence it was that the voice of the exquisite was as strange to him, as if he had never set eyes on that illustrious, personage.

On perceiving that the speech was meant for himself, he was at first a little nettled at its patronising tone; but the feeling of irritation soon passed away, and he fixed his eyes upon the speaker, with a good-humoured, though somewhat contemptuous expression.

“Aw – haw – it is yaw, my young fellow,” continued the exquisite, now for the first time perceiving to whom he had made his appeal. “Aw, indeed! I’ve often observed yaw from the quawter-deck. Ba Jawve! yes – a veway stwange individwal! – incompwehensibly stwange! May I ask – pawdon the liberty – what is bwinging yaw out heaw – to Jamaica, I mean?”

“That,” replied the steerage passenger, again somewhat nettled at the rather free style of interrogation, “which is bringing yourself – the good ship *Sea Nymph*.”

“Aw, haw! indeed! Good – veway good! But, my deaw sir, that is not what I meant.”

“No?”

“No, I ashaw yaw. I meant what bisness bwings yaw heaw. P’waps you have some pwofession?”

“No, not any,” replied the young man, checking his inclination to retaliate the impertinent style of his interrogator.

“A twade, then?”

“I am sorry to say I have not even a trade.”

“No pwofession! no twade! what the dooce daw yaw intend dawing in Jamaica? P’waps yaw expect the situation of book-keepaw on a pwantation, or niggaw-dwivaw. Neithaw, I believe, requiaws much expewience, as I am told the book-keepaw has pwositively no books to keep – haw! haw! and shawly any fellow, howevaw ignowant, may dwive a niggaw. Is that yaw expectation, my worthy fwend?”

“I have no expectation, one way or another,” replied the young man, in a tone of careless indifference. “As to the business I may follow out here in Jamaica, that, I suppose, will depend on the will of another.”

“Anothaw! aw! – who, pway?”

“My uncle.”

“Aw, indeed! yaw have an uncle in Jamaica, then?”

“I have – if he be still alive.”

“Aw – haw! yaw are not shaw of that intewesting fact? P’waps yaw’ve not heard from him wately?”

“Not for years,” replied the young steerage passenger, his poor prospects now having caused him to relinquish the satirical tone which he had assumed. “Not for years,” repeated he, “though I’ve written to him to say that I should come by this ship.”

“Veway stwange! And pway, may I ask what bisness yaw uncle follows?”

“He is a planter, I believe.”

“A sugaw plantaw?”

“Yes – he was so when we last heard from him.”

“Aw, then, p’waps he is wich – a pwopwietor? In that case he may find something faw yaw to daw, bettaw than niggaw-dwiving. Make yaw his ovawseeaw. May I know yaw name?”

“Quite welcome to it. Vaughan is my name.”

“Vawrn!” repeated the exquisite, in a tone that betrayed some newly-awakened interest; “Vawn, did I understand yaw to say?”

“Herbert Vaughan,” replied the young man, with firmer emphasis.

“And yaw uncle’s name?”

“He is also called Vaughan. He is my father’s brother – or rather *was*– my father is dead.”

“Not Woftus Vawn, Esquire, of Mount Welcome?”

“Yes, Loftus Vaughan; my uncle is so called, and Mount Welcome is, I believe, the name of his estate.”

“Veway stwange! incompwehensibly stwange! D’yaw know, my young fellow, that yaw and I appeaw to be making faw the same pawt. Woftus Vawn, of Mount Welcome, is the twustwee of my own pwoperty – the veway person to whom I am consigned. Deaw me! how doocèd stwange if yaw and I should yet be guests undaw the same woof!”

The remark was accompanied by a supercilious glance, that did not escape the observation of the young steerage passenger. It was this glance that gave the true signification to the words, which Herbert Vaughan interpreted as an insult.

He was on the point of making an angry rejoinder, when the

exquisite turned abruptly away – as he parted drawling out some words of leave-taking, with the presumptive conjecture that they might meet again.

Herbert Vaughan stood for a moment looking after him, an expression of high contempt curling upon his lip. Only for a short while, however, did this show itself; and then, his countenance resuming its habitual expression of good-nature, he descended into the steerage, to prepare his somewhat scanty baggage for the debarkation.

Volume One – Chapter Eleven

Loftus Vaughan on the Look-Out

Every day, after that on which he had received the two English letters – and almost every hour during daylight – might Loftus Vaughan have been seen, telescope in hand, at one of the front windows of his house, sweeping with his glass the roadstead and offing of Montego Bay.

The object of this telescopic observation was, that he might descry the *Sea Nymph* before she had entered the harbour: in order that his carriage should be at the port to receive the distinguished Smythje on the moment of his landing.

At this period there were no steamers trading across the Atlantic, punctual to a day, and almost to an hour. Though the letter of advice had been written several days before that on which the *Sea Nymph* was to sail, there could be no calculation made upon such uncertain data as winds and waves; and the ship which carried Montagu Smythje might arrive at any hour.

That some distinguished guest was expected, was a fact that had become well-known to every domestic in the establishment of Mount Welcome. Every day saw some article or articles of costly furniture brought home from the “Bay”; and the chambers of the “great house” were being freshly decorated to receive them. The house-wenches and other indoor servants were

furnished with new dresses, some even with liveries – an unusual piece of finery in Jamaica – while shoes and stockings were forced upon feet that, perhaps, had never felt such *impedimenta* before, and whose owners would have been only too glad to have escaped the torture of wearing them.

It need scarcely be said that the planter was undergoing all this extravagant expenditure for the reception of Mr Montagu Smythje, and him alone. Had it been only his nephew that was expected, no such continuous look-out would have been kept, and no such preparations made to do him honour on his arrival.

Neither do Mr Vaughan's motives require explanation: the reader will ere this have surmised them. He was the father of a daughter ready at any moment for marriage. Mr Montagu Smythje was, in his eyes, not only an eligible, but highly desirable, specimen for a son-in-law. The young man was possessed of a splendid property, as Mr Vaughan well knew: for the worthy planter was not only Custos Rotulorum, but for many long years had been custos of Montagu Castle, and could tell its value to a shilling "currency." It lay contiguous to his own. He had looked with a longing eye upon its broad acres and black retainers, until he had become imbued with a desire, amounting indeed to a passion, to possess it – if not in his own right, at least in that of his daughter. The union of the two estates, Mount Welcome and Montagu Castle, would make a magnificent domain – one of the richest in the Island.

To accomplish this object had long been the wish of Loftus

Vaughan. It had grown and grown upon him, till it had become the most cherished purpose of his heart.

Let us not conceal a really creditable motive that Mr Vaughan had for desiring this union. He had been too long in Jamaica to be ignorant of the true social position of his daughter. However beautiful and accomplished Kate Vaughan was; however much her father loved her – and, to do him justice, his paternal affection was of the strongest – he knew that her mother was a *quadroon*, and she only a *mustee*. No matter how little trace there might be of the *taint* – however imperceptible to the outward eye – he knew that between her and the young gentlemen of his acquaintance – that is, those who would have been eligible – there was still enough to erect a certain social barrier. He knew, moreover, that young Englishmen, especially on their first arrival, make light of this barrier; in fact, altogether disregard it, until corrupted by the “society” of the island.

In his match-making designs the Jamaica planter was not more of a sinner than hundreds of other parents both at home and abroad; and there is this much in his favour: that, perhaps, his affection for his daughter, and the desire of ennobling her – for by such an alliance would the *taint be extinguished* – were the chief motives for the conduct he was pursuing in regard to Montagu Smythje.

So far Mr Vaughan’s conduct may be excused. But, unfortunately, the studied courtesy with which he was preparing to receive the lord of Montagu Castle presented a damaging

contrast to the discourtesy he had designed for his kinsman.

In the latter case, both his acts and intentions were paltry beyond parallel.

The announcement in the nephew's letter, that he had taken a *steerage passage*, had been to his uncle a source of bitter chagrin. Not that he would have cared a whit about the thing, had the young fellow voyaged in any other vessel than the *Sea Nymph*, or had he travelled unrecognised. What troubled Mr Vaughan was the fear that the relationship might become known to Mr Montagu Smythje, and thus create in the mind of the latter a suspicion of his, the planter's, respectability.

The dread of this *exposé* so preyed upon Mr Vaughan's mind that, had it been possible, he would have denied the relationship altogether.

He had conceived a hope that this recognition might not take place during the voyage: building his hope on the character of the aristocratic Cockney, which he knew to be a type of supercilious pride. Confiding in the faith that nothing might transpire on board ship to make Mr Smythje acquainted with the connection, he was determined there should be no chance on shore. To preclude the possibility of such a thing, he had conceived a design as childish as it was cruel: his nephew was to be *kept out of the way*.

The plan of action he had traced out long before the arrival of the *Sea Nymph*. Mr Montagu Smythje was to be met at the landing, and at once hurried off to Mount Welcome. Herbert

Vaughan was likewise to be conducted thither; but not direct.

A different means of transport was to be provided for him; and on his arrival within the bounds of the plantation, he was to be taken by a private road to the house of the overseer – which stood in a secluded corner of the valley, nearly half a mile distant from the “Buff.”

Here he was to remain as the guest of the latter, until such time as his uncle could find a way of disposing of him – either by procuring some employment for him at Montego Bay, or the situation of book-keeper on some distant plantation.

With this ingenious contrivance did Mr Vaughan await the arrival of his guests.

It was upon the third day after receiving his letters of advice, and near the hour of noon, that the planter, playing as usual with his telescope, perceived in the offing of Montego Bay, and standing in for the port, a large square-rigged vessel – a ship.

It might be the *Sea Nymph*, and it might not; but, taking into consideration some circumstances, known to Mr Vaughan, the probabilities were that it was the expected vessel.

Whether or no, the planter was determined that the programme, he had so ingeniously sketched out, should *not* be spoiled by any mismanagement in the performance; and its execution was ordered upon the instant.

Bells were rung for a general muster of the domestics; a horn was sounded to summon the overseer; and, in less than half an hour afterwards, the family barouche – a handsome equipage,

drawn by a pair of splendidly-caparisoned horses – was on the road to the Bay, with the overseer on horseback, riding as an escort behind it.

In rear of this went a waggon, to which eight large oxen were attached; and behind the waggon appeared an escort *sui generis*: a rough negro boy, mounted on the shaggiest of steeds, who was no other than the post-boy already mentioned – the identical Quashie.

Quashie was not on his usual diurnal duty: his present errand was one of a far more important character, and the duty confided to him of an exceedingly delicate nature.

At this hour the great hall of Mount Welcome exhibited a scene that, to the eye of a stranger to West Indian customs, might have appeared curious enough.

Scattered over the floor, at certain distances from each other, were some six or eight negro girls, or “wenches,” as they are called, most of them being of the younger brood of the plantation blacks. All were down on their knees – each one having by her side, and within reach of her hand, an orange freshly cut in halves, some bees’-wax, and a portion of the fibrous pericarp of a coconut.

The floor itself was without carpet of any kind; but instead of being of plain deal, it presented a mosaic of hard woods, of different colours – among which might be recognised the mahogany and heart-wood, the bread-nut and bully-tree.

To give the tessellated surface a polish was the business of

the dark damsels on their knees; and for that purpose were the oranges and cocoa-husks provided.

To an islander the sight was one of common, indeed daily, occurrence. The lustre of his hall floor is a matter of pride with a Jamaica planter; as much so as the quality or pattern of his drawing-room carpet to a householder at home; and every day, and at the same hour, the dark-skinned housemaids make their appearance, and renew the glitter of the surface, whose gloss has been tarnished by the revels of the preceding night.

The hour set apart for this quaint custom is just before laying the cloth for dinner – about three or four o'clock; and that she may not sully the polish while carrying in the dishes, the barefooted Abigail adopts a plan that deserves mention on account of its originality.

Having provided herself with two small pieces of linen or cotton cloth, she spreads them out upon the floor, and then places a foot upon each. As the toes of a West Indian house-wench are almost as prehensile as her fingers, she finds no difficulty in “cramping” the cloth and holding it between the “big toe” and its nearest neighbour; and with this simple *chaussure* she is enabled to slide over the floor without in the least degree “smoutching” its gloss, or leaving any sign of her passage over its shining surface.

While such a busy scene was transpiring in the great hall of Mount Welcome, one of a different character, but of equal activity, was going on in the kitchen. This “office” stood a little apart from the main dwelling, communicating with its lower

storey by a covered gallery. Along this passage black and yellow wenches could be seen constantly going and returning, each with her load – a haunch of venison, a ham of the wild hog, a turtle, ramier pigeons, and mountain crabs, all on their way to the spit, the stew-pan, or the chafing-dish.

A similar sight might have been witnessed at Mount Welcome any other day in the year; but perhaps with a less abundant variety in the materials, and with not half so much movement among the staff of wenches pertaining to the *cuisine*— whose excited manner in the performance of their specific duties testified, as much as the variety of luxuries lying around, that on this particular day a repast of the most sumptuous kind was expected from their skill.

Their master did not leave these preparations to be made without his own personal surveillance. From the time that the ship had been descried, he was everywhere – in the stable, to look after the sable grooms; in the kitchen, to instruct the cooks; in the great hall, to inspect the polishing of the floor; and, at last, on the landing outside, standing, telescope to his eye, and looking down the long avenue, where the carriage containing his distinguished visitor might at any moment be expected to make its appearance.

Volume One – Chapter Twelve

Kate and Yola

Occupying one corner of the mansion of Mount Welcome – that which was farthest removed from the din and clangour of the kitchen – was a small chamber, richly and elegantly furnished. The light was admitted into it on two sides through latticed windows, that, when open, left a free passage from the floor to a little balcony outside – with which each of the windows was provided.

One of these windows looked out to the rearward, commanding a view of the garden, and the wooded steep beyond. The other opened to the left side of the house, upon the shrubby grounds that extended in that direction as far as the foot of the ridge.

Even had there been no one within this little chamber, the style and character of its furniture would have told, that the person to whom it appertained was of the gentler sex.

In one corner stood a bed, with carved posts of yellow lance wood; from which hung what at first sight might have been taken for white muslin curtains, but which, on closer scrutiny, could be seen to be the gauze-like netting of a “mosquito bar.”

The size of the bed told that it was intended for but one individual. Its habitual occupant was therefore unmarried.

In the bay of one of the windows stood a dressing-table of *papier mâché*, inlaid with mother-of-pearl; and upon this was placed a mirror of circular shape on a stand of the finest Spanish mahogany.

In front of the mirror was a variety of objects of different forms – among which might be noticed the usual implements of the toilet, with many of those eccentric little articles of *luxe* and *vertu*, that bespeak the refined presence of woman.

Other pieces of furniture in the room were three or four Chinese chairs; a small marqueterie table; a work-box of tortoise-shell veneer, on a pedestal of like material; and a little cabinet of ebony wood, richly inlaid with buhl.

There was neither mantel nor fireplace – the climate of eternal summer precluding all necessity for such “fixtures.”

The window-curtains were of a thin transparent muslin, with a pattern of pink flowering woven into the stuff, and bordered with a fringe of alternate pink and white tassels.

A breeze, laden with the perfume of a thousand flowers, blowing in through the open lattice-work of the jalousies, kept these light hangings almost continually in motion, imparting an aspect of coolness to the chamber. This was further heightened by the glossy smoothness of the hard-wood floor, which glistened under foot like a mirror.

No one could have glanced into this little apartment, without being struck with its costly yet chaste adornment. Rich and elegant, however, as was the case, it was no more than worthy of

the jewel which it was accustomed to contain. It was the bedroom and boudoir of "Lilly Quasheba," the heiress *presumptive* of Mount Welcome.

But few were ever favoured with a glance into that luxurious chamber. It was a sacred precinct, into which curious eyes were not permitted to penetrate. Its polished floor was not to be trodden by vulgar feet. With the exception of her father, no man had ever intruded into that virgin shrine; and he, only on rare and extraordinary occasions. Even to the domestics it was not of free access. Only one, besides its mistress, could enter it unbidden – her brown-skinned handmaid Yola.

On that same day – shortly after the ringing of the bells had announced the arrival of the English ship, and while the dusky domestics were engaged, as described, in their ante-prandial preparations – two individuals occupied the chamber in question.

One was the young lady to whom the apartment pertained – the other her maid.

They were in different attitudes: the mistress seated upon one of the Chinese chairs in front of the window, while the maid was standing behind, occupied in arranging her mistress's hair.

The girl was just entering upon her task – if we may so designate that which many might have deemed a pleasure. Already the complicated machinery of combs and hair-pins lay strewed over the table; and the long chestnut-coloured tresses hung in luxuriant confusion around those shoulders of snow, in whose velvet-like epidermis there appeared no trace of the *taint*.

Involuntarily the maid ceased from her task, and stood gazing upon her young mistress with a look of instinctive admiration.

“Oh, beautiful!” exclaimed she, in a low, murmured voice; “you beautiful, missa!”

“Tut, Yola: ’tis only flattery of you to say so! You are as beautiful as I; only your beauty is of a different order. No doubt, in your country you would be a great belle.”

“Ah, missa, you belle anywhere – black man – white man – all think you beautiful – all the same!”

“Thank you, Yola! but I shouldn’t particularly desire to be the object of such universal admiration. For my part, I don’t know one male biped in whose eyes I care to appear attractive.”

“Perhaps missa no so say, when come young buckra from Inglis’ country!”

“Which buckra? – there are two of them expected from the English country.”

“Yola no hear two come. Massa she hear speak of one – only one.”

“Oh, you’ve heard speak of one only! Did you hear his name mentioned?”

“Yes; he grand man – great lord – Sultan of Mongew. He have other name – Yola hear it; but she no sabbey speak it.”

“Ha! ha! ha! I don’t wonder at that. It’s as much as I ‘sabbey’ myself to pronounce that second name: which I presume to be *Smythje*. Is that the name you heard?”

“That it, missa – he berry fine gentl’man, he beauty man.

Massa he so tell Massr' Trusty."

"Ah, Yola! your master is a man, and men are not always the best judges of one another's looks. Perhaps the Sultan of Mongew, as you call him, might not be such a pattern of perfection as papa describes him. But no doubt, we shall soon have an opportunity of judging for ourselves. Did you hear your master say nothing about another 'buckra' that is expected?"

"No, Missa Kate. One only he speak of – dis same one of Mongew Castle."

A low ejaculation, expressive of disappointment, escaped the lips of the young Creole, as she settled down into an attitude of silent reflection, her eyes turned upon the shining floor at her feet.

It is not easy to tell why she put the last interrogatory. Perhaps she had some suspicion of her father's plans. At all events, she knew there was some mystery, and was desirous of penetrating it.

The maid was still gazing upon her, when all at once the dark Arab-like features of the latter assumed a changed expression – the look of admiration giving place to one of earnest inquiry, as if some strange thought had occurred to her.

"Allah!" ejaculated she, still keeping her eyes fixed upon the face of her mistress.

"Well, Yola," said the latter, attracted by the exclamation, and looking up; "why do you call upon Allah? Has anything occurred to you?"

"Oh! beauty missa! you so like one man."

"I like a man! I resemble a man! Is that what you mean?"

"Yes, missa. Nebber see it before – you berry, berry like!"

"Well, Yola, you are certainly not flattering me now. Who might this man be? I pray you tell me."

"He man of the mountains – Maroon."

"Oh! worse and worse! I resemble a *Maroon*? Gracious me! Surely you are jesting, Yola?"

"Oh! missa, he beauty man; roun black eyes that glance like the fire-fly in the wood – eyes like yours – berry like you eyes, missa."

"Come, silly girl!" said the young lady, speaking in a tone of reproof, more affected than real; "do you know that it is very naughty of you, to compare me to a man – much more to a Maroon?"

"Oh! Missa Kate, he beauty man – berry beauty man."

"That I doubt very much; but even were it so, you should not speak of his resembling *me*."

"Me pardon, missa. I no more so say."

"No, you had better not, good Yola. If you do, I shall ask papa to *sell* you."

This was said in a tone of gentle raillery, which told that any intention of carrying out the threat was far from the speaker's thoughts.

"By the bye, Yola," continued the young lady, "I could get a good price for you. How much do you suppose I was offered for you the other day?"

“Missa Kate, I no know. Allah forbid me you ebber leave! If you no more my missa, I care no more live.”

“Thanks, Yola,” said the young Creole, evidently touched by the words of her attendant, the sincerity of which was proved by the tone in which they were spoken. “Be not afraid of my parting with you. As proof that I shall not, I refused a very large sum – how much, can you guess?”

“Ah! missa, I worth nothing to no one but you. If I you forced leave, I be no more happy in this world.”

“Well, there is one who thinks you worth two hundred pounds, and has offered that for you.”

“Who, missa?”

“Why – he who sold you to papa – Mr Jessuron.”

“Allah help poor Yola! Oh! missa Kate, he bad master; he berry wicked man. Yola die – Cubina kill her! Yola herself kill rather than she go back to Jew slave-dealer! Good missa! – beauty missa! – you no sell you poor slave?”

The girl fell upon her knees at the feet of her young mistress, with her hands clasped over her head, and for some moments remained in this attitude.

“Don’t fear my selling you,” said the young lady, motioning the suppliant to rise to her feet; “least of all to him – whom I believe to be what you have styled him, a very wicked man. Have no fear for that. But tell me, what name was that you pronounced just now? *Cubina*, was it not?”

“Yes, missa, *Cubina*.”

“And pray who is Cubina?”

The brown maid hesitated before making reply, while the crimson began to show itself on her chestnut-coloured cheeks.

“Oh, never mind!” said her young mistress, noticing her hesitation. “If there’s any secret, Yola, I shall not insist upon an answer.”

“Missa, from you Yola no have secret. Cubina, he mountain man – Maroon.”

“What! is he the Maroon I am supposed to resemble?”

“True, missa, he same.”

“Oh! I see how it is – I suppose that accounts for you thinking *me* beautiful? This Cubina, no doubt, is a sweetheart of yours?”

Yola lowered her eyes without making reply. The crimson appeared in deeper tint through the chestnut.

“You need not answer, good Yola,” said the young Creole, with a significant smile. “I know what your answer *ought* to be, if you were to speak your mind. I think I have heard of this Cubina. Have a care, my girl! These Maroons are a very different sort of men from the coloured people on the plantations. Like me, he is – ha! ha! ha!” and the young beauty glanced coyly at the mirror. “Well, Yola, I’m not angry with you, since it is your sweetheart with whom I am compared. Love, they say, is a wonderful beautifier; and no doubt Master Cubina is, in your eyes, a perfect Endymion.

“Come girl!” added she, coquettishly tossing the chestnut tresses over her shoulders of ivory, “I fear we have been wasting

time. If I'm not ready to receive this grand guest, I'll get into trouble with papa. Go on, and trick me out in a style becoming the mistress of Mount Welcome.”

With a peal of merry laughter at the air of grandeur she had thus jestingly assumed, the young lady bent down her head, submitting her magnificent *chevelure* to the manipulation of her maid.

Volume One – Chapter Thirteen

Quashie

In less than half an hour after the brief conversation between Mr Montagu Smythje and the young steerage passenger, the *Sea Nymph* had got warped into port, and was lying alongside the wharf.

A gangway-plank was stretched from the shore; and over this, men and women, of all shades of colour, from blonde to ebony black, and of as many different callings, came crowding aboard; while the passengers, sick of the ship and everything belonging to her, hastened to get on shore.

Half-naked porters – black, brown, and yellow – commenced wrangling over the luggage – dragging trunks, boxes, and bags in every direction but the right one, and clamouring their gumbo jargon with a volubility that resembled the jabbering of apes.

On the wharf appeared a number of wheeled vehicles, that had evidently been awaiting the arrival of the ship – not hackneys, as would have been the case in a European port, but private carriages – some of them handsome “curricles” drawn by a pair, and driven by black Jehus in livery; others only gigs with a single horse, or two-wheelers of even an inferior description – according to the wealth or style of the individual for whose transport each had been brought to the port.

Waggons, too, with teams of oxen – some having eight in the yoke – stood near the landing-place, waiting for baggage: the naked black drivers lounging silently by the animals, or occasionally calling them by their names, and talking to them, just as if their speeches had been understood!

Among the different carriages ranged along the wharf, a handsome barouche appeared conspicuous. It was attached to a pair of cream-coloured horses, splendidly caparisoned. A mulatto coachman sat upon the box, shining in a livery of lightest green, with yellow facings; while a footman, in garments of like hue, attended at the carriage-step, holding the door for some one to get in.

Herbert Vaughan, standing on the fore-deck of the *Sea Nymph*— as yet undecided as to whether he should then go ashore – had noticed this magnificent equipage. He was still gazing upon it, when his attention was attracted to two gentlemen, who, having walked direct from the vessel, had just arrived by the side of the carriage. A white servant followed them; and behind were two negro attendants, carrying a number of parcels of light luggage. One of the gentlemen and the white servant were easily recognised by Herbert: they were Mr Montagu Smythje and his valet.

Herbert now recalled the odd expression made use of, but the moment before, by his fellow-passenger – that he was “consigned” to the proprietor of Mount Welcome.

The carriage having received Mr Montagu Smythje, and the

footman having mounted the box – leaving the rumble to the English valet – was driven off at full speed; the second gentleman, who appeared to be an overseer, following on horseback as an escort.

Herbert watched the receding vehicle, until a turn in the road hid it from his view; and then, dropping his eyes towards the deck, he stood for some moments in a reflective attitude, – revolving in his mind some thoughts that were far from agreeable.

No one there to meet *him* and bid him welcome!

The countenance of the young adventurer became clouded under the influence of this thought; and he stood silently gazing upon the deck with eyes that saw not.

“Sa!” said a negro boy, at this moment stepping up and interrupting his reflections.

“Ha!” rejoined Herbert, looking up and perceiving, with some surprise, that the darkey was regarding him with a fixed stare. “What might you want, my lad? If it be money, I have none to give you.”

“Money, sa? wharra fo’ Quashie want money? He do wha’ massr bid. Young buckra ready go now?”

“Ready to go! where? – what mean you, boy?”

“Go fo’ da great house.”

“Great house! of what great house are you speaking?”

“Moun’ Welc’m’, sa – Massr Va’n. You fo’ Massr Va’n, sa?”

“What!” exclaimed Herbert, in surprise, at the same time scanning the darkey from head to foot; “how do you know that,

my boy?”

“Quashie know dat well ’nuf. Cappen ob da big ship, obaseeah say so. Obaseeah point out young buckra from de waff – he send Quashie fetch young buckra to Moun’ Welc’m’. Ready go now, sa?”

“You are from Mount Welcome, then?”

“Ya, sa – me hoss-boy da, an’ pose-boy – fetch pony for young Englis’ buckra. Obaseeah he bring b’rouche for grand Englis’ buckra. Baggage dey go in de ox-waggon.”

“Where is your pony?”

“Up yonna, sa; on de waff, sa. Ready go, sa?”

“All right,” said Herbert, now comprehending the situation of affairs. “Shoulder that portmanteau, and toss it into the waggon. Which road am I to take?”

“Can’t miss um road, sa – straight up da ribber till you come to de crossin’. Dar you take de road dat don’t lead to da leff – you soon see Moun’ Welc’m’, sa.”

“How far is it?”

“Bout sebben or eight mile, sa – reach dar long ’fore sun-down; pony go like de berry lightnin’. Sure you no keep to da left by da crossin’.”

Thus instructed, the young steerage-passenger took his departure from the ship – after bidding adieu to the friendly tars, who had treated him so handsomely during his irksome voyage.

With his gun, a single-barrelled fowling-piece, on his shoulder, he strode over the platform, and up the wooden wharf.

Then detaching the pony from the wheel of the ox-waggon, to which it had been tied, he threw himself into the saddle, and trotted off along the road pointed out as the one that would conduct him to Mount Welcome.

The excitement produced by the sudden change from ship to shore – the stir of the streets through which he had to pass – the novel sights and sounds that at every step saluted his eyes and ears – hindered Herbert Vaughan from thinking of anything that concerned himself.

Only for a short time, however, was his mind thus distracted from dwelling on his own affairs. Before he had ridden far, the road – hitherto bordered by houses – entered under a dark canopy of forest foliage; and the young traveller, all at once, found himself surrounded by a perfect solitude.

Under the sombre shadow of the trees, his spirit soon returned to its former gloomy forebodings; and, riding more slowly over a stretch of the road where the ground was wet and boggy, he fell into a train of thoughts that were anything but pleasant.

The subject of his reflections may be easily guessed. He had not failed to notice – how could he? – the distinction made between himself and his fellow-voyager. While a splendid equipage had been waiting for the latter – and his landing had been made a sort of ovation, how different was the means of transport provided for him!

“By the memory of my father!” muttered he, as he rode on, “it is an insult I shall not overlook: an insult to him more than to

myself. But for the fulfilment of *his* dying wish, I should not go one step farther and as he said this, he drew his rough roadster to a halt – as if half-resolved to put his hypothetic threat into practice.

“Perhaps,” he continued, again moving forward, with a more hopeful air, “perhaps there may be some mistake? But no,” he added with a strong emphasis on the negative monosyllable, “there can be none! This shallow fop is a young man of fortune – I a child of misfortune;” and he smiled bitterly at the antithesis he had drawn; “that is the reason why such a distinction has been made between us. Be it so!” he continued, after a pause. “Poor as I am, this churlish relative will find me as proud as himself. I shall return him scorn for scorn. I shall demand an explanation of his behaviour; and the sooner I have it the better!”

As if stimulated by a sense of the outrage, as also by a half-formed purpose of retaliation, the young adventurer gave the whip to his shaggy steed, and dashed onward at full gallop.

Volume One – Chapter Fourteen

Travelling at the Tail

For nearly an hour did the cob continue its gallop, without pause or slacking. The road was a wide one, much tracked by wheels; and, as it ran in a direct course, the rider took it for granted he was keeping the right path. Now and then he caught a glimpse of water through the trees – no doubt, the river mentioned in the directions given him by the darkey.

The crossing at length came in sight, causing him to desist from his rapid pace – in order that he might ford the stream. There was no appearance of a bridge. The water, however, was only knee-deep; and, without hesitation, the pony plunged in and waded over.

Herbert halted on the opposite bank: for there appeared in front of him a dilemma. The road forked. The negro boy had warned him of this – telling him at the same time to take the one that *didn't* lead to “da leff”; but instead of two “tines” to the fork, there were *three*!

Here was a puzzle. It was easy enough to know which of the three *not* to take – the one that *did* lead to “da leff”; but which of the other two was to be chosen was the point that appeared to present a difficulty in the solution. Both were plain, good roads; and each as likely as the other to be the one which would conduct

him to Mount Welcome.

Had his rider left the pony to its own guidance, perhaps it would have chosen the right road. In all likelihood he would have done so in the end; but, before determining on any particular line of action, he thought it better to look for the wheel-tracks of the carriage, that he knew must have passed in advance of him.

While thus cogitating, the silence occasioned by his momentary halt was all at once interrupted by a voice that sounded at his very side, and the tones of which he fancied were not new to him.

On suddenly turning in the saddle, and looking in the direction whence the voice appeared to proceed, what was his astonishment on beholding the negro boy – the veritable Quashie!

“Da, sa! das da crossin’ me you tell ’bout; you no take by de leff – dat lead to ole Jew penn; nor da right – he go to Mon’gew Cassel; de middle Massr Va’n road – he go straight na Moun’ Welc’m’.”

The young traveller sat for some moments without speaking, or making reply in any way – surprise, as by a spell, holding him silent. He had left the boy on the forward deck of the ship, to look after his luggage; and he had seen him – he could almost swear to it – still on board, as he rode away from the wharf! Moreover, he had ridden a stretch of many miles – most of the way at full gallop, and all of it at a pace with which no pedestrian could possibly have kept up! How, then, was he to account for

the lad's presence upon the spot?

This was the first question that occurred to him; and which he put to the darkey, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his surprise to be able to speak.

“Quashie foller young buckra – at him pony heels.”

The answer went but a short way towards enlightening the “young buckra;” since he still believed it utterly impossible for any human being to have travelled as fast as he had ridden.

“At the pony's heels! What, my black skin! do you mean to say you have run all the way after me from the landing-place?”

“Ya, sa: dat hab Quashie do.”

“But I saw you on board the ship as I started off. How on earth could you have overtaken me?”

“Yaw, massa, dat wa' easy 'nuf. Young buckra, he start off; Quashie, he put him porkmantle in da ox-waggon, an' den he foller. Buckra, he go slow at fuss, Quashie soon cotch up, and den easy run 'long wi' da pony – not much in dat, sa.”

“Not much! Why, you imp of darkness, I have been riding at the rate of ten miles an hour, and how you've kept up with me is beyond my comprehension! Well, you're a noble runner, that I will say! I'd back you at a foot-race against all comers, whether black ones or white ones. The middle road, you say?”

“Ya, sa, dat de way to Moun' Welc'm'; you soon see de big gate ob de plantation.”

Herbert headed his roadster in the direction indicated; and moved onward along the path – his thoughts still dwelling on the

odd incident.

He had proceeded but a few lengths of his pony, when he was tempted to look back – partly to ascertain if Quashie was still following him, and partly with the intention of putting a query to this singular escort.

A fresh surprise was in store for him. The darkey was nowhere to be seen! Neither to the right, nor the left, nor yet in the rear, was he visible!

“Where the deuce can the boy have gone?” inquired Herbert, involuntarily, at the same time scanning the underwood on both sides of the road.

“Hya, sa!” answered a voice, that appeared to come out of the ground close behind – while at the same instant the brown mop of Quashie, just visible over the croup of the cob, proclaimed his whereabouts.

How the boy had been able to keep up with the pony was at length explained: he had been *holding on to its tail!*

There was something so ludicrous in the sight, that the young Englishman forgot for a moment the grave thoughts that had been harassing him; and once more checking his steed into a halt, gave utterance to roars of laughter. The darkey joined in his mirth with a grin that extended his mouth from ear to ear – though he was utterly unconscious of what the young buckra was laughing at. He could not see anything comic in a custom which he was almost daily in the habit of practising – for it was not the first time Quashie had travelled at the tail of a horse.

Journeying about half a mile further along the main road, the entrance-gate of Mount Welcome was reached. There was no lodge – only a pair of grand stone piers, with a wing of strong mason-work on each flank, and a massive folding gate between them.

From the directions Herbert had already received, he might have known this to be the entrance to his uncle's plantation; but Quashie, still clinging to the pony's tail, removed all doubt by crying out, —

“Da's da gate, buckra gemman – da's de way fo' Moun' Welc'm'!”

On passing through the gateway, the mansion itself came in sight – its white walls and green jalousies shining conspicuously at the extreme end of the long avenue; which last, with its bordering rows of palms and tamarinds, gave to the approach an air of aristocratic grandeur.

Herbert had been prepared for something of this kind. He had heard at home that his father's brother was a man of great wealth; and this was nearly all his father had himself known respecting him.

The equipage which had transported his more favoured fellow-voyager – and which had passed over the same road about an hour before him – also gave evidence of the grand style in which his uncle lived.

The mansion now before his eyes was in correspondence with what he had heard and seen. There could be no doubt that his

uncle was one of the grandees of the island.

The reflection gave him less pleasure than pain. His pride had been already wounded; and as he looked up the noble avenue, he was oppressed with a presentiment that some even greater humiliation was in store for him.

“Tell me, Quashie,” said he, after a spell of painful reflection, “was it your master himself who gave you directions about conducting me to Mount Welcome? Or did you have your orders from the overseer?”

“Massr no me speak ’bout you, sa; I no hear him say nuffin.”

“The overseer, then?”

“Ya, sa, de obaseeah.”

“What did he tell you to do? Tell me as near as you can; and I may make you a present one of these days.”

“Gorry, massr buckra! I you tell all he say, ’zactly as he say um. ‘Quashie,’ say he, ‘Quashie,’ he say, ‘you go down board de big ship; you see dat ere young buckra’ – dat war yourseff, sa – ‘you fotch ’im up to de ox-waggon, you fotch ’im baggage, too; you mount ’im on Coco,’ – da’s de pony’s name – ‘and den you fetch him home to *my* house.’ Da’s all he say – ebbery word.”

“To *his* house? Mount Welcome, you mean!”

“No, young buckra gemman – to de obaseeah own house. And now we jess got to da road dat lead dar. Dis way, sa! dis way!”

The darkey pointed to a bye-road, that, forking off from the main avenue, ran in the direction of the ridge, where it entered into a tract of thick woods.

Herbert checked the pony to a halt, and sat gazing at his guide, in mute surprise.

“Dis way, sa!” repeated the boy. “Yonna’s de obaseeah’s house. You see wha da smoke rise, jess ober de big trees?”

“What do you mean, my good fellow? What have I to do with the overseer’s house?”

“We’s agwine da, sa.”

“Who? you?”

“Boff, sa; an’ Coco too.”

“Have you taken leave of your senses, you imp of darkness?”

“No, sa; Quashie only do what him bid. Da obaseeah Quashie bid fotch young buckra to him house. Dis yeer’s da way.”

“I tell you, boy, you must be mistaken. It is to Mount Welcome I am going – my uncle’s house – up yonder!”

“No, buckra gemman, me no mistake. Da obaseeah berry partikler ’bout dat same. He tell me you no fo’ da great house – da Buff. He say me fotch you to ’im *own* house.”

“Are you sure of that?” Herbert, as he put this interrogatory, leant forward in the saddle, and listened attentively for the reply.

“Lor, buckra gemman! I’se sure ob it as de sun am in de hebbens dar. I swa’ it, if you like.”

On hearing this positive affirmation, the young Englishman sat for a moment, as if wrapt in a profound and painful reverie. His breast rose and fell as though some terrible truth was breaking upon him, which he was endeavouring to disbelieve.

At this moment, Quashie caught the rein of the bridle, and

was about to lead the pony into the bye-path.

“No!” shouted the rider, in a voice loud and angry. “Let go, boy! let go, or I’ll give you the whip. This is *my* way.”

And, wrenching the rein from the grasp of his sable guide, he headed the pony back into the main avenue.

Then laying on the lash with all his might, he pressed forward, at full gallop, in the direction of the “great house.”

Volume One – Chapter Fifteen

A Slippery Floor

The carriage conveying Mr Montagu Smythje from Montego Bay to Mount Welcome, passed up the avenue and arrived at the great house, just one hour before Herbert Vaughan, mounted on his rough roadster, and guided by Quashie, made his appearance at the entrance-gate of the plantation.

Mr Smythje had arrived at half-past three, p.m. Four was the regular dining hour at Mount Welcome: so that there was just neat time for the valet to unpack the ample valises and portmanteaus, and dress his master for the table.

It had been the aim of Mr Vaughan to make the introduction of Mr Smythje to his daughter as effective as possible. He was sage enough to know the power of first appearances.

For this reason, he had managed to keep them apart until the moment of meeting at the dinner-table, when both should appear under the advantage of a full dress.

So far as the impression to be made on Mr Smythje was concerned, Mr Vaughan's scheme was perfectly successful. His daughter really appeared superb – radiant as the crimson quamoclit that glistened amidst the plaits of her hair; graceful as nature, and elegant as art, could make her.

The heart of the cockney felt – perhaps for the first time in his

life – that true sentiment of admiration which beauty, combined with virgin modesty, is almost certain to inspire.

For a moment, the remembrance of the ballet girl and the lewd recollections of the *bagnio* were obliterated; and a graver and nobler inspiration took their place.

Even vulgar Loftus Vaughan had skill enough to note this effect; but how long it would last – how long the plant of a pure passion would flourish in that uncongenial soil – was a question which it required an abler physiologist than Loftus Vaughan to determine.

The sugar-planter congratulated himself upon his success. Smythje was smitten, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Had the calculating father been equally anxious to perceive a *reciprocity* of this fine first impression, he would have been doomed to a disappointment. As certainly as that of Mr Smythje was a sentiment of admiration, so certainly was that of Kate Vaughan a feeling of *dégout*; or at least of indifference.

In truth, the Londoner had made a most unfortunate *début*. A *contretemps* had occurred in the ceremony of introduction – just at that crisis-moment when all eyes are sharply set, and all ears acutely bent in mutual *reconnaissance*. Mr Vaughan had committed a grand error in causing the presentation to take place in the grand hall. Ice itself was not more slippery than its floor. The consequence was unavoidable; and the cockney, essaying one of his most graceful attitudes, fell flat upon his face at the feet of her he simply intended to have saluted!

In that fall he had lost everything – every chance of winning Kate Vaughan’s heart. A thousand acts of gracefulness, a thousand deeds of heroism, would not have set him up again, after that unfortunate fall. It was a clear paraphrase of the downfall of Humpty Dumpty – the restoration alike hopeless, alike impossible.

Mr Montagu Smythje was too well stocked with self-complacency to suffer much embarrassment from a *lapsus* of so trifling a character. His valet had him upon his feet in a trice; and with a “Haw-haw!” and the remark that the floor was “demmed swippeway,” he crept cautiously to his chair, and seated himself.

Though the Londoner had been all his life accustomed to dining well, he could not help indulging in some surprise at the plentiful and luxurious repast that was placed before him.

Perhaps in no part of the world does the table groan under a greater load of rich viands than in the West Indian Islands. In the prosperous times of sugar-planting, a Jamaican dinner was deserving of the name of feast. Turtle was the common soup; and the most sumptuous dishes were arranged thickly over the board. Even the ordinary every-day dessert was a spread worthy of Apicius; and the wines – instead of those dull twin poisons, port and sherry – were south-side Madeira, champagne, claret, and sparkling hock – all quaffed in copious flagons, plenteous as small beer.

These were glorious times for the white-skinned oligarchy of the sugar islands – the days of revel and rollicky living – before

the wedge of Wilberforce split the dark pedestal which propped up their pomp and prosperity.

A dinner of this good old-fashioned style had Loftus Vaughan prepared for his English guest. Behind the chairs appeared troops of coloured attendants, gliding silently over the smooth floor. A constant stream of domestics poured in and out of the hall, fetching and removing the dishes and plates, or carrying the wine decanters in silver coolers. Young girls of various shades of complexion – some nearly white – stood at intervals around the table, fanning the guests with long peacock plumes, and filling the great hall with an artificial current of delicious coolness.

Montagu Smythje was delighted. Even in his “dear metropolis” he had never dined so luxuriously.

“Spwendid, spwendid – ’pon honaw! A dinner fit for a pwince!” he exclaimed, in compliment to his entertainer.

The savoury dishes were partaken of, and removed, and the table, arranged for *dessert*, exhibited that gorgeous profusion which a tropic clime can alone produce – where almost every order of the botanical world supplies some fruit or berry of rarest excellence. Alone in the intertropical regions of the New-World may such variety be seen – a *dessert table* upon which Pomona appears to have poured forth her golden *cornucopiae*.

The cloth having been removed from the highly-polished table, the sparkling decanters were once more passed round. In honour of his guest, the planter had already made free with his own wines, all of which were of most excellent quality. Loftus

Vaughan was at that moment at a maximum of enjoyment.

Just at that very moment, however, a cloud was making its appearance on the edge of the sky.

It was a very little cloud, and still very far off; but, for all that, a careful observer could have seen that its shadow became reflected on the brow of the planter.

Literally speaking, this cloud was an object on the earth, of shape half human, half equine, that appeared near the extreme end of the long avenue, moving towards the house.

When first seen by Loftus Vaughan, it was still distant, though not so far off but that, with the naked eye, he could distinguish a man on horseback.

From that moment he might have been observed to turn about in his chair – at short intervals casting uneasy glances upon the centaurean form that was gradually growing bigger as it advanced.

For a time, the expression on the face of Mr Vaughan was far from being a marked one. The looks that conveyed it were furtive, and might have passed unnoticed by the superficial observer. They had, in fact, escaped the notice both of his daughter and his guest; and it was not until after the horseman had made halt at the entrance of the bye-path, and was seen coming on for the house, that the attention of either was drawn to the singular behaviour of Mr Vaughan. Then, however, his nervous anxiety had become so undisguisedly patent, as to elicit from Miss Vaughan an ejaculation of alarm; while the

cockney involuntarily exclaimed, "Bless ma soul!" adding the interrogatory, —

"Anything wong, sir?"

"Oh! nothing!" stammered the planter; "only — only — a little surprise — that's all."

"Surprise, papa! what has caused it? Oh, see! yonder is some one on horseback — a man — a young man. I declare it is our own pony he is riding; and that is Quashie running behind him! How very amusing! Papa, what is it all about?"

"Tut! sit down, child!" commanded the father, in a tone of nervous perplexity. "Sit down, I say! Whoever it be, it will be time enough to know when he arrives. Kate! Kate! 'tis not well-bred of you to interrupt our dessert. Mr Smythje — glass of Madeira with you, sir?"

"Plesyaw!" answered the exquisite, turning once more to the table, and occupying himself with the decanter.

Kate obeyed the command with a look that expressed both reluctance and surprise. She was slightly awed, too; not so much by the words, as the severe glance that accompanied them. She made no reply, but sat gazing with a mystified air in the face of her father — who, hob-nobbing with his guest, affected not to notice her.

The pony and his rider were no longer visible: as they were now too close to the house to be seen over the sill of the window; but the clattering hoofs could be heard, the sounds coming nearer and nearer.

Mr Vaughan was endeavouring to appear collected, and to say something; but his *sang froid* was assumed and unnatural; and being unable to keep up the conversation, an ominous silence succeeded.

The sound of the hoofs ceased to be heard. The pony, having arrived under the windows, had been brought to a halt.

Then there were voices – earnest and rather loud. They were succeeded by the noise of footsteps on the stone stairway. Someone was coming up the steps.

Mr Vaughan looked aghast. All his fine plans were about to be frustrated. There was a hitch in the programme – Quashie had failed in the performance of *his* part.

“Aha!” ejaculated the planter, with returning delight, as the smooth, trim countenance of his overseer made its appearance above the landing. “Mr Trusty wishes to speak with me. Your pardon, Mr Smythje – only for one moment.”

Mr Vaughan rose from his seat, and hastened, as if wishing to meet the overseer, before the latter could enter the room. Trusty, however, had already stepped inside the doorway; and, not being much of a diplomatist, had bluntly declared his errand – in *sotto voce*, it is true, but still not low enough to hinder a part of his communication from being heard. Among other words, the phrase “your nephew” reached the ears of Kate – at that moment keenly bent to catch every sound.

The reply was also partially heard, though delivered in a low and apparently tremulous voice: – “Show him – summer-house

– garden – tell him to wait – there presently.”

Mr Vaughan turned back to the table with a half-satisfied air. He was fancying that he had escaped from his dilemma, at least, for the time; but the expression which he perceived on the countenance of his daughter restored his suspicions that all was not right.

Scarce a second was he left in doubt, for almost on the instant, Kate cried out, in a tone of pleased surprise, —

“Oh, papa, what do I hear? Did not Mr Trusty say something about ‘your nephew’? After all, has cousin come? Is it he who —”

“Kate, my child,” quickly interrupted her father, and appearing not to have understood her interrogatory, “you may retire to your room. Mr Smythje and I would like to have our cigar; and the smoke of tobacco don’t agree with you. Go, child — go!”

The young girl instantly rose from her chair, and hastened to obey the command — notwithstanding the protestations of Mr Smythje, who looked as if he would have much preferred her company to the cigar.

But her father hurriedly repeated the “Go, child — go!” accompanying the words with another of those severe glances which had already awed and mystified her.

Before she had passed fairly out of the great hall, however, her thoughts reverted to the unanswered interrogatory; and as she crossed the threshold of her chamber, she was heard muttering to herself:

“I wonder if cousin be come!”

Volume One – Chapter Sixteen

The Kiosk

A portion of the level platform, on which Mount Welcome was built, extended to the rear of the dwelling; and was occupied, as already described, by a garden filled with rare and beautiful plants. Near the midst of this garden, and about a dozen paces from the house, stood a small detached building – a summer-house – the materials of which were ornamental woods of various kinds, all natives of the island, famed for such products. The pieces composing this summer-house, or “kiosk,” as it was habitually called, had all been cut and carved with skilful care; and the whole structure had been designed as a representation of a miniature temple, with a cupola upon its top, surmounted by a gilded and glittering vane.

Inside there were neither stairs nor partitions – the whole space being taken up by a single apartment. There were no glass windows: but all around, the walls were open, or closed only with Venetian blinds, the laths of which were of the finest mahogany. A Chinese mat covered the floor, and a rustic table of bamboo cane pieces, with some half-dozen chairs of like manufacture, constituted the principal part of the furniture.

On the aforesaid table stood an inkstand of silver, elaborately chased, with plume pens pertaining to it. Some writing-paper

lay beside it; and on a silver tray there were wafers, red sealing-wax, and a signet seal. An escritoire stood on one side; and two or three dozen volumes placed upon the top of this – with a like number thrown carelessly on chairs – formed the library of Mount Welcome.

Some magazines and journals lay upon the centre-table, and a box of best Havannahs – open and half used – showed that the summer-house served occasionally for a smoking-room.

It was sometimes styled the “Library,” though its purposes were many. Mr Vaughan, at times, used it for the reception of visitors – such as might have come upon errands of business – such, in short, as were not deemed worthy of being introduced to the company of the grand hall.

Just at the moment when Kate Vaughan quitted the dinner-table, a young man was shown into this detached apartment, Mr Trusty, the overseer, acting as his chaperon.

It is not necessary to say that this young man was Herbert Vaughan.

How he came to be conducted thither is easily explained. On learning from Quashie the destination designed for him – aggrieved and angry at the revelation – he had hurried in hot haste up to the house. To Mr Trusty, who was keeping guard at the bottom of the stairway, he had announced his relationship with Mr Vaughan, and demanded an interview – making his requisition in such energetic terms as to disturb the habitual *sang froid* of the overseer, and compel him to the instantaneous

delivery of his message.

Indeed, so indignant did Herbert feel, that he would have mounted the steps and entered the house without further parley, had not Mr Trusty put forth his blandest entreaties to prevent such a terrible catastrophe.

“Patience, my good sir!” urged the overseer, interposing himself between the new comer and the stairway; “Mr Vaughan *will* see you, presently – not just this moment; he is engaged – company with him. The family’s at dinner.”

So far from soothing the chafed spirit of the young man, the announcement was only a new mortification. At dinner, and with company – the cabin-passenger, of course – the ward – not even a relative – while he, the nephew – no dinner for him!

In truth, Herbert recognised in this incident a fresh outrage.

With an effort, he gave up the idea of ascending the stairs. Poor though he was, he was nevertheless a gentleman; and good breeding stepped in to restrain him from this unbidden intrusion: though more than ever did he feel convinced that an insult was put upon him, and one that almost appeared premeditated.

He stood balancing in his mind whether he should turn upon his heel, and depart from his uncle’s house without entering it. A feather would have brought down the scale. The feather fell on the negative side, and decided him to remain.

On being conducted into the summer-house and left to himself, he showed no wish to be seated; but paced the little apartment backward and forward in a state of nervous agitation.

He took but slight heed of aught that was there. He was in no mood for minutely observing – though he could not help noticing the luxurious elegance that surrounded him: the grandeur of the great house itself; the splendid *parterres* and gardens filled with plants and flowers of exquisite beauty and fragrant perfume.

These fine sights, however, instead of soothing his chafed spirit, only made him more bitterly sensible of his own poor fortunes, and the immeasurable distance that separated him from his proud, rich uncle.

Through the open sides of the kiosk he merely glanced hastily at the grounds; and then his eyes became bent upon the great house – directed habitually towards an entrance at the back that by a flight of steps conducted into the garden. By this entrance he expected his uncle would come out; and in angry impatience did he await his coming.

Had he seen the beautiful eyes that were, at that moment, tenderly gazing upon him from behind the lattice-work of the opposite window, perhaps the sight would have gone far towards soothing his irate soul. But he saw them not. The jalousies were closed; and though from the shadowy interior of the chamber, the kiosk and its occupant were in full view, the young Englishman had no suspicion that he was at that moment the object of observation – perhaps of admiration – by a pair of the loveliest eyes in the island of Jamaica.

After turning, for the twentieth time, across the floor – at each turn scanning the stairs with fresh impatience – he somewhat

spitefully laid hold of a book, and opened it – in the hope of being able to kill time over its pages.

The volume which came into his hands – by chance: he had not chosen it – was but little calculated to tranquillise his troubled spirit. It was a digest of the statutes of Jamaica relating to slavery – the famous, or rather infamous, *black code* of the island.

There he read: that a man might mutilate his own image in the person of a fellow-man – torture him, even to death, and escape with the punishment of a paltry fine! That a man with a black skin – or even white, if at all tainted with African blood – could hold no real estate, no office of trust; could give no evidence in a court of law – not even had he been witness of the crime of murder; that such a man must not keep or ride a horse; must not carry a gun, or other weapon of defence; must not defend himself when assaulted; must not defend wife, sister, or daughter – even when ruffian hands were tearing them from him for the most unholy of purposes! In short, that a *man of colour* must do nothing to make himself different from a docile and submissive brute!

To the young Englishman, fresh from a Christian land – at that period ringing with the eloquent denunciations of a Wilberforce, and the philanthropic appeals of a Clarkson – the perusal of this execrable statute-book, instead of producing tranquillity, only infused fresh bitterness into his soul; and stamping his foot fiercely on the floor, he flung the detestable volume back to its place.

At that moment – just as he had reached the maximum of reckless defiance – a noise was heard in the direction of the great house, and the door of the stair-landing was seen to turn on its hinges.

Of course, he expected to see a surly old uncle, and was resolved to be as surly as he.

On the contrary, and to his pleased surprise, he beheld in the doorway a beautiful young girl, bending her eyes upon him with an affectionate look, and as if courting recognition!

A sudden revulsion of feeling passed through his whole frame; his countenance changed its angry expression to one of admiration; and, unable to utter a word, he remained silently gazing on this lovely apparition.

Volume One – Chapter Seventeen

A Bold Resolve

Far better would it have been for Mr Vaughan – at least, for the success of his schemes – had he adopted an honourable course with his nephew; and at once introduced him, openly and above-board, to his table, his daughter, and his aristocratic guest.

Had he known before dinner what he was made aware of in less than five minutes after it, he would, in all likelihood, have adopted this course. It would have spared him the chagrin he was made to feel, on Mr Smythje reporting to him the encounter he had had on board ship – which the latter proceeded to do, the moment after Kate had been so unceremoniously dismissed from the hall.

Smythje had also overheard the communication of the overseer – the word “nephew,” at least – and this recalled to his mind – not without some unpleasant remembrance of the satire from which he had suffered – the steerage passenger who had treated him so brusquely on board the *Sea Nymph*.

The miserable bubble was burst; and the onus of a somewhat bungling explanation was put upon the shoulders of the pompous planter – into whose heart a bitter drop of gall was infused by the disclosure.

As the deception could be sustained no longer, the relationship

was necessarily acknowledged; but the spark of ire thus introduced boded a still more unwelcome reception to the unlucky nephew.

The planter partially cleared himself of the scrape by a false representation. In other words, he told a lie, in saying that his nephew had not been expected. Smythje knew it was a lie, but said nothing; and the subject was allowed to drop.

Loftus Vaughan was a common man; and the course he had followed – shallow and self-defeating – was proof of an intellect as low as its morality.

By his shabby treatment of his nephew, he was investing that young man with a romantic interest in the eyes of his daughter, that perhaps might never have been felt, or, at all events, not so readily. Misfortune – especially that which springs from persecution – is a grand suggester of sympathy – that is, when the appeal is made to noble hearts; and the heart of Kate Vaughan was of this quality.

Moreover, this surreptitious dealing with the poor relative – smuggling him into the house like a bale of contraband goods – was sufficient of itself to pique the curiosity of those whom it was meant to mystify.

So far as Kate Vaughan was concerned, that very effect it produced: for, on leaving the dining-room – from which, to say the truth, she was only too happy to escape – the young girl glided at once to that window that opened out upon the garden; and, parting the lattice with her fingers, looked eagerly through.

In the brief undertone that had passed between her father and the overseer, she had heard the command, "Show him to the summer-house." She knew that the summer-house was within view of her chamber-window. She was curious to see what in all her life she had never beheld – a *cousin*. Her curiosity was not balked. On looking through the lattice, her cousin was before her eyes – pacing the little apartment as described.

With his braided frock, buttoned tightly over his breast – glittering Hessian boots on his well-turned limbs – his neat three-cornered hat set lightly over his brown curls – he was not a sight likely to terrify a young girl – least of all a cousin. Even the bold, somewhat fierce, expression upon his countenance – at that moment reflecting the angry emotions that were stirring within him – did not, in the eyes of the young Creole, detract from the beauty of the face she saw before her.

What impression did the sight produce? Certainly not terror – certainly not dislike. On the contrary, she appeared gratified by it: else, why did she continue her gaze, and gaze so earnestly? Why became her eyes filled with fire, and fixed, as by some fascination? Why did her young bosom heave and fall, as if some new, undefinable emotion was for the first time germinating within it?

For some moments she remained in the same attitude, gazing steadfastly and silent. Then, without turning, there escaped from her lips, low murmured, and as if by an involuntary effort, the interrogatory, – "Yola! is he not beautiful?"

“Beautiful, missa,” repeated the maid, who had not yet beheld the object for whom this admiration was meant; “who beautiful?”

“Who? My cousin, Yola.”

“You cousin – what cousin, young missa?”

“Look yonder, and see! That’s my cousin.”

“I see a man.”

“Ah! and saw you ever such a man?”

“True, missa; never see man look so – he surely angry, missa?”

“Angry?”

“Berry angry. He go back, he go forward, like hyena in a cage.”

“He is only impatient at being kept waiting. My word! I think he looks all the better for it. Ah! see how his eye flashes. Oh! Yola, how handsome he is – how different from the young men of this island. Is he not a beautiful fellow?”

“He curled hair, like Cubina!”

“Cubina! ha! ha! ha! This Cubina must be a very Proteus, as well as an Adonis. Do you see any other resemblance, except in the hair? If so, my cousin may, perhaps, resemble *me*.”

“Cubina much darker in de colour ob him skin, missa.”

“Ha! ha! that is not unlikely.”

“Cubina same size – same shape – ’zactly same shape.”

“Then I should say that Cubina is a good shape; for, if I know anything of what a man ought to be, that cousin of mine is the correct thing. See those arms! they look as if he could drag down that great tamarind with them! Gracious me! he appears as if he

intended doing it! Surely, he must be very impatient? And, after his coming so far, for papa to keep him waiting in this fashion! I really think I should go down to him myself. What is your opinion, Yola? Would it be wrong for me to go and speak with him? He is my cousin.”

“What am cousin, missa?”

“Why, cousin is – is – something like a brother – only not exactly – that is – it’s not quite the same thing.”

“Brudder! Oh, missa! if he Yola brudder, she him speak; she care not who be angry.”

“True, Yola; and if he were my brother – alas! I have none – I should do the same without hesitation. But with a cousin – that’s different. Besides, papa don’t like this cousin of mine – for some reason or another. I wonder what he can have against him. I can’t see; and surely it can be no reason for *my* not liking him? And, surely, his being my cousin is just why I should go down and talk to him.

“Besides,” continued the young girl, speaking to herself rather than to the maid, “he appears very, very impatient. Papa may keep him waiting – who knows how long? since he is so taken up with this Mr Montagu What’s-his-name! Well, I may be doing wrong – perhaps papa will be angry – perhaps he won’t know anything about it! Right or wrong, I’ll go! I *shall* go!”

So saying, the young Creole snatched a scarf from the fauteuil; flung it over her shoulders; and, gliding from the chamber, tripped silently along the passage that conducted towards the rear

of the dwelling.

Volume One – Chapter Eighteen

The Encounter of the Cousins

Opening the door, and passing out, Kate Vaughan paused timidly upon the top of the stairway that led down into the garden. Her steps were stayed by a feeling of bashful reserve, that was struggling to restrain her from carrying out a resolve somewhat hastily formed.

Her hesitancy was but the matter of a moment; for on the next – her resolution having become fixed – she descended the stairs, and advanced blushing towards the kiosk.

Herbert had not quite recovered from surprise at the unexpected apparition, when he was saluted by the endearing interrogatory, – “Are you my cousin?” The question, so *naïvely* put, remained for a moment unanswered: for the tone of kindness in which it was spoken had caused him a fresh surprise, and he was too much confused to make answer.

He soon found speech, however, for the hypothetical reply: —

“If you are the daughter of Mr Loftus Vaughan – ”

“I am.”

“Then I am proud of calling myself your cousin. I am Herbert Vaughan – from England.”

Still under the influence of the slight which he believed had been put upon him, Herbert made this announcement with a

certain stiffness of manner, which the young girl could not fail to notice. It produced a momentary incongeniality, that was in danger of degenerating into a positive coolness; and Kate, who had come forth under the promptings of an affectionate instinct, trembled under a repulse, the cause of which she could not comprehend.

It did not, however, hinder her from courteously rejoicing: —

“We were expecting you – as father had received your letter; but not to-day. Papa said not before to-morrow. Permit me, cousin, to welcome you to Jamaica.” Herbert bowed profoundly. Again the young creole felt her warm impulses painfully checked; and, blushing with embarrassment, she stood in an attitude of indecision.

Herbert, whose heart had been melting like snow under a tropic sun, now became sensible that he was committing a rudeness; which, so far from being natural to him, was costing him a struggle to counterfeit.

Why should the sins of the father be visited on the child – and such a child?

With a reflection kindred to this, the young man hastened to change his attitude of cold reserve.

“Thanks for your kind welcome!” said he, now speaking in a tone of affectionate frankness; “But, fair cousin, you have not told me your name.”

“Catherine – though I am usually addressed by the shorter synonym, Kate.”

“Catherine! that is a family name with us. My father’s mother, and your father’s, too – our grandmamma – was a Catherine. Was it also your mother’s name?”

“No; my mother was called Quasheba.”

“Quasheba! that is a very singular name.”

“Do you think so, cousin? I am sometimes called Quasheba myself – only by the old people of the plantation, who knew my mother. Lilly Quasheba they call me. Papa does not like it, and forbids them.”

“Was your mother an Englishwoman?”

“Oh, no! she was born in Jamaica, and died while I was very young – too young to remember her. Indeed, cousin, I may say I never knew what it was to have a mother!”

“Nor I much, cousin Kate. My mother also died early. But are you my only cousin? – no sisters nor brothers?”

“Not one. Ah! I wish I had sisters and brothers!”

“Why do you wish that?”

“Oh, how can you ask such a question? For companions, of course.”

“Fair cousin! I should think *you* would find companions enough in this beautiful island.”

“Ah! enough, perhaps; but none whom I like – at least, not as I think I should like a sister or brother. Indeed,” added the young girl, in a reflective tone, “I sometimes feel lonely enough!”

“Ah!”

“Perhaps, now that we are to have guests, it will be different.

Mr Smythje is very amusing.”

“Mr Smythje! Who is he?”

“What! you do not know Mr Smythje? I thought that you and he came over in the same ship? Papa said so; and that *you* were not to be here until to-morrow. I think you have taken him by surprise in coming to-day. But why did you not ride out with Mr Smythje? He arrived here only one hour before you, and has just dined with us. I have left the table this moment, for papa and him to have their cigars. But, bless me, cousin! Pardon me for not asking – perhaps *you* have not dined yet?”

“No,” replied Herbert, in a tone that expressed chagrin, “nor am I likely to dine here, to-day.”

The storm of queries with which, in the simplicity of her heart, the young Creole thus assailed him, once more brought back that train of bitter reflections, from which her fair presence and sweet converse had for the moment rescued him. Hence the character of his reply.

“And why, cousin Herbert?” asked she, with a marked air of surprise. “If you have not dined, it is not too late. Why not here?”

“Because,” – and the young man drew himself proudly up – “I prefer going without dinner to dining where I am not welcome. In Mount Welcome, it seems, I am *not* welcome.”

“Oh, cousin – !”

The words, and the appealing accent, were alike interrupted. The door upon the landing turned upon its hinge, and Loftus Vaughan appeared in the doorway.

“Your father?”

“My father!”

“Kate!” cried the planter, in a tone that bespoke displeasure, “Mr Smythje would like to hear you play upon the harp. I have been looking for you in your room, and all over the house. What are you doing out there?”

The language was coarse and common – the manner that of a vulgar man flushed with wine.

“Oh, papa! cousin Herbert is here. He is waiting to see you.”

“Come you here, then! Come at once. Mr Smythje is waiting for you.” And with this imperious rejoinder Mr Vaughan reentered the house.

“Cousin! I must leave you.”

“Yes; I perceive it. One more worthy than I claims your company. Go! Mr Smythje is impatient.”

“It is papa.”

“Kate! Kate! are you coming? Haste, girl! haste, I say!”

“Go, Miss Vaughan! Farewell!”

“Miss Vaughan? Farewell?” Mystified and distressed by those strange-sounding words, the young girl stood for some seconds undecided, but the voice of her father again came ringing along the corridor – now in tones irate and commanding. Obedience could no longer be delayed; and, with a half-puzzled, half-reproachful glance at her cousin, she reluctantly parted from his presence.

Volume One – Chapter Nineteen

A Surly Reception

After the young Creole had disappeared within the entrance, Herbert remained in a state of indecision as to how he should act.

He no longer needed an interview with his uncle, for the sake of having an explanation. This new slight had crowned his convictions that he was there an unwelcome guest; and no possible apology could now retrieve the ill-treatment he had experienced.

He would have walked off on the instant without a word; but, stung to the quick by the series of insults he had received, the instinct of retaliation had sprung up within him, and determined him to stay – at all events, until he could meet his relative face to face, and reproach him with his unnatural conduct. He was recklessly indifferent as to the result.

With this object, he continued in the kiosk – his patience being now baited with the prospect of that slight satisfaction.

He knew that his uncle might not care much for what he should say: it was not likely such a nature would be affected by reproach. Nevertheless, the proud young man could not resist the temptation of giving words to his defiance – as the only means of mollifying the mortification he so keenly felt.

The tones of a harp, vibrating through the far interior of

the dwelling, faintly reached the kiosk; but they fell on his ear without any soothing effect. Rather did they add to his irritation: for he could almost fancy the music was meant to mock him in his misery.

But no; on second thoughts, that could not be. Surely, that sweet strain was not intended to tantalise him. He caught the air. It was one equally appropriate to the instrument and to his own situation. It was the “Exile of Erin.”

Presently a voice was heard accompanying the music – a woman’s voice – easily recognisable as that of Kate Vaughan.

He listened attentively. At intervals he could hear the words. How like to his own thoughts!

“‘Sad is my fate,’ said the heart-broken stranger;
‘The wild deer and wolf to the covert can flee,
But I have no refuge from famine and danger —
A home and a country remain not to me!’”

Perhaps the singer intended it as a song of sympathy for him? It certainly exerted an influence over his spirits, melting him to a degree of tenderness.

Not for long, however, did this feeling continue. As the last notes of the lay died away in the distant corridor, the rough baritones of the planter and his guest were heard joining in loud laughter – perhaps some joke at the expense of himself, the poor exile?

Shortly after, a heavy footstep echoed along the passage. The

door opened; and Herbert perceived it was his uncle, who had at length found time to honour him with an interview.

Though so joyous but the moment before, all traces of mirth had disappeared from the countenance of Loftus Vaughan, when he presented himself before the eyes of his nephew. His face, habitually red, was fired with the wine he had been drinking to the hue of scarlet. Nevertheless, an ominous mottling of a darker colour upon his broad massive brow foretold the ungracious reception his relative was likely to have at his hands.

His first words were uttered in a tone of insolent coolness: —
“So you are my brother’s son, are you?” There was no extending of the hand, no gesture – not even a smile of welcome!

Herbert checked his anger, and simply answered, —
“I believe so.”

“And pray, sir, what errand has brought you out to Jamaica?”
“If you have received my letter, as I presume you have, it will have answered that question.”

“Oh, indeed!” exclaimed Mr Vaughan, with an attempt at cynicism, but evidently taken down by the unexpected style of the reply. “And what, may I ask, do you purpose doing here?”

“Have not the slightest idea,” answered Herbert, with a provoking air of independence. “Have you any profession?”

“Unfortunately, not any.”

“Any trade? – I suppose not.”

“Your suppositions are perfectly correct.”

“Then, sir, how do you expect to get your bread?”

“Earn it, the best way I can.”

“Beg it, more likely, as your father before you: all his life begging it, and from me.”

“In that respect I shall not resemble him. You would be the last man I should think of begging from.”

“S’death! sirrah, you are impertinent. This is fine language to me, after the disgrace you have already brought upon me!”

“Disgrace?”

“Yes, sir, disgrace. Coming out here as a pauper, in the steerage of a ship! And you must needs boast of your relationship – letting all the world know that you are my nephew.”

“Boast of the relationship!” repeated Herbert, with a smile of contempt. “Ha! ha! ha! I suppose you refer to my having answered a question asked me by this pretty jack-a-box you are playing with. Boast of it, indeed! Had I known you then as well as I do now, I should have been ashamed to acknowledge it!”

“After that, sir,” shouted Mr Vaughan, turning purple with rage – “after that, sir, no more words! You shall leave my house this minute.”

“I had intended to have left it some minutes sooner. I only stayed to have an opportunity of telling you what I think of you.”

“What is that, sir? what is that?”

The angry youth had summoned to the top of his tongue a few of the strongest epithets he could think of, and was about to hurl them into his uncle’s teeth, when, on glancing up, he caught sight of an object that caused him to change his intention. It was

the beautiful face of the young creole, that appeared through the half-open lattice of the window opposite. She was gazing down upon him and his uncle, and listening to the dialogue with an anguished expression of countenance.

“He is *her* father,” muttered Herbert to himself; “for *her* sake I shall not say the words;” and, without making any reply to the last interrogatory of his uncle, he strode out of the kiosk, and was walking away.

“Stay, sir!” cried the planter, somewhat taken aback by the turn things had taken. “A word before you go – if you *are* going.”

Herbert turned upon his heel and listened.

“Your letter informs me that you are without funds. It shall not be said that a relative of Loftus Vaughan left his house penniless and unprovided. In this purse there are twenty pounds currency of the island. Take it; but on the condition that you say nothing of what has occurred here; and, furthermore, that you keep to yourself that you are the nephew of Loftus Vaughan.”

Without saying a word, Herbert took the proffered purse; but, in the next moment, the chink of the gold pieces was heard upon the gravel walk as he dashed the bag at the feet of his uncle.

Then, turning to the astonished planter, and measuring him with a look that scorned all patronage, he faced once more to the path, and walked proudly away.

The angry “Begone, sir!” vociferated after him, was only addressed to his back, and was altogether unheeded. Perhaps it was even unheard: for the expression in the eyes of the young man

told that at that moment his attention was occupied elsewhere.

As he walked towards the house – with the design of going round it to get upon the front avenue – his glance was directed upwards to the window where that beautiful face had been just seen. The lattice was now closed; and he endeavoured to pierce the sombre shadows behind it. The face was no longer there. No eyes met his.

He glanced back towards the kiosk to see if he might linger a moment. His uncle was in a bent attitude, gathering the scattered pieces of gold. In this position the shrubbery concealed him.

Herbert was about to glide nearer to the window, and summon his cousin by name, when he heard his own pronounced, in a soft whisper, and with the endearing prefix “cousin.”

Distinctly he heard “Cousin Herbert!” and as if spoken around the angle of the building.

He hastened thither: for that was his proper path by which to arrive at the front of the house.

On turning the wall, he looked up. He saw that another window opened from the same chamber. Thence came the sweet summons, and there appeared the fair face for which he was searching.

“Oh, cousin Herbert! do not go in anger! Papa has done wrong – very wrong, I know; but he has been taking much wine – he is not – Good cousin, you will pardon him?”

Herbert was about to make reply, when the young Creole continued: —

“You said in your letter you had no money. You have refused father’s – you will not refuse mine? It is very little. It is all I have. Take it!”

A bright object glistened before his eyes, and fell with a metallic chink at his feet. He looked down. A small silk purse containing coin, with a blue ribbon attached, was seen lying upon the ground.

The young man raised it, and, holding it in one hand, hesitated for a moment – as if he had thoughts of accepting it. It was not that, however, but another thought that was passing in his mind.

His resolve was soon taken.

“Thanks!” said he. “Thanks, cousin Kate!” he added, with increasing warmth. “*You* have meant kindly, and though we may never meet again – ”

“Oh, say not so!” interrupted the young girl, with an appealing look.

“Yes,” continued he, “it is probable we never shall. Here there is no home for me. I must go hence; but, wherever I may go, I shall not soon forget this kindness. I may never have an opportunity of repaying it – you are beyond the necessity of aught that a humble relative could do for you; but remember, Kate Vaughan! should you ever stand in need of a strong arm and a stout heart, there is one of your name who will not fail you!

“Thanks!” he repeated, detaching the ribbon from the bag, and flinging the latter, with its contents, back through the open window. Then, fastening the ribbon to the breast-button of his

coat, he added: "I shall feel richer with the possession of this token than with all the wealth of your father's estate. Farewell! and God bless you, my generous cousin!"

Before the young Creole could repeat her offer, or add another word of counsel or consolation, he had turned the angle of the building, and passed out of sight.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty

The Jew's Penn

While these scenes were transpiring upon the plantation of Mount Welcome, others of a still more exciting nature were being enacted on that which adjoined it – the property of Jacob Jessuron, slave-merchant and penn-keeper.

Besides a “baracoon” in the Bay, where his slaves were usually exposed for sale, the Jew was owner of a large plantation in the country, on which he habitually resided. It lay contiguous to the estate of the Custos Vaughan – separated from the latter by one of the wooded ridges already mentioned as bounding the valley of Mount Welcome.

Like the latter, it had once been a sugar estate, and an extensive one; but that was before Jessuron became its owner. Now it was in the condition termed *ruinate*. The fields where the golden cane had waved in the tropic breeze were choked up by a tangled “second growth,” restoring them almost to their primitive wildness. With that quickness characteristic of equatorial vegetation, huge trees had already sprung up, and stood thickly over the ground – logwoods, bread-nuts, cotton, and calabash trees, which, with their pendent parasites, almost usurped dominion over the soil. Here and there, where the fields still remained open, instead of cultivation, there appeared only

the wild nursery of nature – glades mottled with flowering weeds, as the Mexican horn-poppay, swallow-worts, West Indian vervains, and small *passiflorae*.

At intervals, where the underwood permitted them to peep out, might be seen stretches of “dry wall,” or stone fence, without mortar or cement, mostly tumbled down, the ruins thickly trellised with creeping plants – as convolvuli, cereus, and aristolochia; cleome, with the cheerful blossoming *lantana*; and, spreading over all, like the web of a gigantic spider, the yellow leafless stems of the American dodder.

In the midst of this domain, almost reconquered by nature, stood the “great house” – except in size, no longer deserving the appellation. It consisted rather of a *pile* than a single building – the old “sugar works” having been joined under the same roof with the dwelling – and negro cabins, stables, offices, all inclosed within an immense high wall, that gave to the place the air of a penitentiary or barrack, rather than that of a country mansion. The enclosure was a modern construction – an afterthought – designed for a purpose very different from that of sugar-making.

Garden there was none, though evidence that there *had been* was seen everywhere around the building, in the trees that still bloomed: some loaded with delicious fruits, others with clustering flowers, shedding their incense on the air. Half wild, grew citrons, and *avocado* pears, sop and custard apples, mangoes, guavas, and pawpaws; while the crown-like tops of cocoa-palms soared high above the humble denizens of this wild

orchard, their recurvant fronds drooping as in sorrow at the desolation that surrounded them.

Close to the buildings stood several huge trees, whose tortuous limbs, now leafless, rendered it easy to identify them. They were the giants of the West Indian forest – the silk-cotton-tree (*Eriodendron anfractuosum*). The limbs of these vegetable monsters – each itself as large as an ordinary tree – were loaded with parasites of many species; among which might be distinguished ragged *cactacae*, with various species of wild pines, from the noble *vriesia* to the hoary, beard-like “Spanish moss,” whose long streaming festoons waved like winding-sheets in the breeze – an appropriate draping for the eyrie of the black vultures (John-Crows) that might at all times be seen seated in solemn silence upon the topmost branches.

In the olden time, this plantation had borne the name of “Happy Valley”; but during the ownership of Jessuron, this designation – perhaps deemed inappropriate – had been generally dropped; and the place was never spoken of by any other name than that of the “Jew’s Penn.”

Into a “penn” (grazing farm) Jessuron had changed it, and it served well enough for the purpose: many of the old sugar fields, now overgrown by the valuable Guinea grass, affording excellent pasturage for horses and cattle.

In breeding and rearing the former for the use of the sugar estates, and fattening the latter for the beef markets of the Bay, the industrious Israelite had discovered a road to riches, as short

as that he had been travelling in the capacity of slave-dealer; and of late years he had come to regard the latter only as a secondary calling.

In his old age, Jessuron had become ambitious of social distinction; and for this reason, was desirous of sinking the slave-merchant in the more respectable profession of penn-keeper. He had even succeeded so far in his views as to have himself appointed a justice of the peace – an office that in Jamaica, as elsewhere, is more distinctive of wealth than respectability.

In addition to penn-keeper, the Jew was also an extensive spice-cultivator, or rather spice-gatherer: for the indigenous pimento forests that covered the hills upon his estate required no cultivation – nothing further than to collect the aromatic berries, and cure them on the *barbacoa*.

Though changed from a plantation to a penn, the estate of Jacob Jessuron was not less a scene of active industrial life.

In the fields adjacent to the house, and through the glades of Guinea grass, horses and half wild cattle might be seen in turns neighing and bellowing, pursued by mounted herdsmen, black and half-naked.

Among the groves of pimento on the hills, gangs of negro wenches could be heard screaming and chattering continually, as they picked the allspice berries from the branches; or, with the filled baskets poised on their heads, marched in long, chanting files towards the *barbacoa*.

Outside the gate-entrance, upon the broad avenue leading to

the main road, negro horse-tamers might every day be seen, giving their first lessons to rough colts fresh caught from the pastures; while inside the grand enclosure, fat oxen were being slaughtered to supply the markets of the Bay – huge, gaunt dogs holding carnival over the offal – while black butchers, naked to the waist, their brown arms reeking with red gore, stalked over the ground, brandishing blood-stained blades, and other instruments of their sanguinary calling.

Such scenes might be witnessed diurnally on the estate of Jacob Jessuron; but on the day succeeding that on which the slave-merchant had made his unsuccessful errand to Mount Welcome, a spectacle of a somewhat rarer kind was about to be exhibited at the penn.

The scene chosen for this exhibition was an inner inclosure, or courtyard, contiguous to the dwelling – the great house itself forming one side of this court, and opening upon it by a broad verandah, of a dingy, dilapidated appearance.

Vis-à-vis with the dwelling was another large building which shut in the opposite side of the court – the two being connected by high massive walls, that completed the quadrangle. A strong double gate, opening near the centre of one of these walls, was the way out – that is, to the larger enclosure of the cattle-penn.

From the absence of chimneys and windows, as well as from its plain style of architecture, the building that stood opposite the dwelling-house might have been taken for some large granary or barn. But a peep into its interior at once controverted this

idea. Inside could be seen groups of human beings, of all colours, from ebony black to jaundice yellow, in all attitudes – seated, standing, or lying upon the floor – and not a few of them, in pairs, manacled to one another. Their attitudes were not more various than the expressions upon their faces. Some looked sad and sullen; some glanced fearfully around, as if waking from horrid dreams, and under the belief that they were realities; others wore the vacant stare of idiotcy; while here and there a group – apparently regardless of past, present, or future – chattered in their barbaric language with an air of gaiety that bespoke the most philosophic *insouciance*.

The building that contained them was the baracoon – the storehouse of the slave-merchant. Its occupants were his stores!

The “stock” had been just replenished by the cargo of the slave-ship, though there were also some old “bales” on hand; and these were in the act of entertaining the new comers, and initiating them into the ways of the place. Their means, of showing hospitality had been limited – as testified by the empty calabashes and clean-scraped wooden platters that lay scattered over the floor. Not a grain of rice, not a spoonful of the pepper-pot, not a slice of plantain, was left. The emptiness of the vessels showed that the rations had been as short as the viands were coarse and common.

Outside, in the yard, were many groups, happier to escape from the stifled atmosphere of their crowded quarters; though that was freedom when compared with the ’tween-decks of the

middle passage.

Each group was gathered around some old hand – some compatriot who had preceded them across the great sea – and who, himself initiated into slavery under a western sky, was giving them some notions of what they had to expect. Eager looks of all, from time to time, directed towards the verandah, told that they were awaiting some event of more than ordinary interest.

There were white men in the courtyard – three of them. Two were of dark complexion – so swarth that many of the coloured slaves were as fair-skinned as they. These two men were lounging by the stairway of the verandah – one of them seated upon the steps. Both were sparsely clad in check shirts and trousers, having broad-brimmed palmetto hats on their heads, and rough buskins on their feet and ankles.

Each carried a long, rapier-like blade – a *macheté*– hanging over his hip in its leathern sheath; while a brace of fierce dogs – looped in cotton-rope leashes, attached to belts worn around their waists – crouched upon the ground at their feet.

The faces of these men were clean-shaven – a pointed chin-tuft, or “bigote,” alone being left; and the hair on the heads of both was close-cropped. Their sharp, angular features were thus fully displayed, denoting a high order of intelligence; which might have produced a pleasing effect, but for the pronounced expression of cruelty which accompanied it.

The exclamations that from time to time escaped from their lips, with the few words of conversation that passed between

them, bespoke them of Spanish race. Their costume – their arms and accoutrements – their comrades, the fierce dogs – plainly proclaimed, their calling, as well as the country from whence they came. They were *caçadores de negros*– negro-hunters from the Island of Cuba.

The third white man who appeared in the courtyard differed essentially from these – not so much in colour, for he was also of swarth complexion – but in size, costume, and calling. A pair of horse-skin riding-boots reached up to his thighs, on the heels of which appeared heavy spurs, with rowels three inches in diameter. A sort of monkey-jacket of thick cloth – notwithstanding its unsuitableness to the climate – hung down to his hips; under which appeared a waistcoat of scarlet plush, with tarnished metal buttons, and a wool comforter of the same flaming colour. Crowning all was a felt hat; which, like the other articles of his dress, gave evidence of exposure to all weathers – sun and rain, storm and tornado.

A thick shock of curling hair, so dark in colour as to pass for black; a heavy beard, jet-black, and running most of the way around his mouth; amber-coloured eyes, with a sinister, shining light that never seemed to pale; lips of an unnatural redness gleaming through the black beard; and a nose of aquiline oblique, were the points in the personal appearance of this man that most prominently presented themselves.

The effect of this combination was to impress you with the conviction, that the individual in question belonged to the same

nationality as the proprietor of the penn. Such was in reality the case: for the bearded man was another of the race of Abraham, and one of its least amiable specimens. His name was Ravener, his calling that of overseer: he was the overseer of Jessuron. The symbol of his profession he carried under his arm – a huge cart-whip. He had it by him at all hours – by night, as by day – for by night, as by day, was he accustomed to make use of it. And the victims of his long lash were neither oxen nor horses – they were men and *women*!

No sparing use made he of this hideous implement. “Crack, crack!” was it heard from morn to eve; “crack, crack!” from eve to midnight; if need be, from midnight to morning again: for some said that the overseer of Jessuron never slept. “Crack, crack!” did he go through the courtyard, apparently proud of exhibiting his power before the newly-arrived negroes – here and there swinging his long bitter lash among the groups, as if to break up and scatter them in sheer wantonness.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty One

A Fiery Baptism

It was about twelve o'clock in the day. Jessuron and his daughter had just stepped forth into the verandah, and taken their stand by the balustrade looking down into the court. The countenance of both betrayed a certain degree of solicitude, as if they had come out to be witnesses to some spectacle of more than common interest.

The house-wenches and other domestics, trooping behind them with curious looks, showed that some rare scene was to be enacted.

A small iron furnace, filled with live coals, had been placed in the courtyard, near the bottom of the steps. Three or four sullen-looking men – blacks and mulattoes – stood around it in lounging attitudes. One of these stooped over the furnace, turning in the fire what appeared to be a soldering iron, or some other instrument of a brazier.

It was not that, however, as the spectators well knew. All who beheld it recognised the dreaded *branding iron*: for every one present, the whites and newly-arrived Africans excepted, had, ere now, felt its hot, seething fire in their flesh.

These last had already learnt what was preparing for them; and most of them stood regarding the preparations with looks of

silent awe.

Some Coromantees there were among the number, who looked on with reckless indifference, chatting as gaily – and, at intervals, laughing as loudly – as if they awaited the beginning of some merry game. Little cared these courageous sons of Ethiopia – whose sable skins bore scars of many a native fray – little cared they for the scorching of that simple brand.

It was not long before the inhuman spectacle commenced. The entrance of Jessuron and his daughter was the cue to begin; and the bearded overseer, who was master of the ceremonies, had only been waiting till these should make their appearance. The man, from experience, knew that his master always gave his personal superintendence when such a scene was to be enacted. He knew, moreover, that his master's daughter was equally accustomed to assist at these interesting ceremonies!

“Go on, Mishter Ravener!” cried the Jew, on reaching the front of the verandah. “Theesh first,” he added, pointing towards a group of Eboes – who stood trembling with apprehension in one corner of the yard.

At a sign from the overseer, who was one of the taciturn sort, a number of old negroes – evidently used to the business – laid hands upon the Eboes, and led them up to the furnace.

As the victims were brought near to the fire, and saw the red iron glowing amid the coals, fear became strongly depicted upon their faces, and their frames shook with a convulsive terror. Some of them, the younger ones, screamed aloud, and would

have rushed away from the spot, had they not been held in the grasp of the attendants.

Their appeals, made by the most pitiful looks and gestures, were answered only by unfeeling jeers and shouts of laughter, in which the old Jew himself joined – in which, incredible to relate, joined his beautiful daughter! Nor was it a mere smile which appeared on the face of the fair Judith; clear laughter rang from her lips, exhibiting her regular rows of ivory-like teeth – as if some fiend had assumed the form of an angel!

The Eboes were led forward, and held firmly by the assistants, while their breasts were presented to receive the brand. The red-hot iron flashed for a moment in the eyes of each; and then fell with a dull clap upon the clammy skin. Smoke ascended with a hiss, till the court became filled with a smell of roasting flesh! A struggle, some wild cries, and the operation was over. The slave was marked with those indelible initials, to be carried with him to his grave.

One by one, the poor beings received this terrible baptism, and were led away from the ground.

A batch of Pawpaws – from the Whidaw country – came next. They were brought up one by one, like the Eboes; but altogether unlike these was their behaviour. They neither gave way to extreme fear, nor yet displayed extraordinary courage. They appeared to submit with a sort of docile resignation: as though they regarded it in the light of a destiny or duty.

The operation of branding them was a short work, and

afforded no mirth to the bystanders: since there was no ludicrous display of terror to laugh at. This facile disposition renders the Whidaw the most valuable of slaves.

A group of Coromantees were now to undergo the fiery ordeal. These bold and warlike indigenes of Africa evinced, by their attitudes and actions, the possession of a moral nature altogether different from that either of Pawpaw or Eboe. Instead of waiting to be led forward, each stepped boldly up, as he did so baring his breast to receive the red brand, at which he glanced with an air of lordly contempt!

One young fellow even seized the iron from the grasp of the operator; and, turning it in his hand, struck the stamp firmly against his breast, where he held it until the seething flesh told that a deep imprint had been made! Then, flinging the instrument back into the furnace, he strode away from the spot with the air of a triumphant gladiator!

At this moment there occurred a pause in the proceedings – not as if the drama was ended, but only an act. Another was yet to come.

Ravener stepped up to the verandah, in front of the place where Jessuron and his daughter stood. With the former, or indeed with both, he communicated in a voice just audible, – not as if with any design of concealing what he said – but because there was no necessity for loud talking.

The two man-hunters were the only persons there he might have had any care to be cautious about; but these were at that

moment busy with their dogs, and not heeding aught that was going on. Branding a batch of negroes was no new sight to them; and they were spectators, merely from having, at the moment, nothing better to do.

“Which next?” was the question put by Ravener to the Jew, “the Mandingoes?”

“Either them or the prinshe,” replied Jessuron; “it don’t matter which ish marked first.”

“Oh, the prince first, by all means!” suggested the amiable Judith, with a smile of satisfaction. “Bring him out first, Mr Ravener; I’m curious to see how his royal highness will stand fire.”

The overseer made no reply; but, taking the wish of the young lady as a command, proceeded to obey it.

Stepping across the court he opened a door that led into a room, separate from that in which the slaves had been lodged.

The overseer entered the room; and in a few minutes came out again, bringing with him an individual who, by his dress, it might have been difficult to recognise as the young Fellatta seen on board the slaver, but whose noble mien still rendered it possible to identify him: for it was he.

Changed, indeed, was his costume. The turban was gone, the rich silken tunic, the sandals and scimitar – all his finery had been stripped off; and in its place appeared a coarse Osnaburg shirt and trousers – the dress of a plantation negro.

He looked wretched, but not crestfallen.

No doubt he had by this time learnt, or suspected, the fate that was in store for him; but, for all that, his features exhibited the proud air of a prince; and the glances which he cast upon the overseer by his side, but oftener upon Jessuron – whose instrument he knew the other to be – were those of concentrated anger and defiance.

Not a word escaped his lips, either of protest or reproach. This had all passed before – when the first rude assault had been made upon him, to deprive him of his garments and the adornments of his person. The hour of recrimination was past. He knew he had no alternative but submission, and he was submitting – though in angry and sullen silence.

He had no idea of what was now designed for him. He had been shut up in a windowless room, and saw nothing of the spectacle that had just passed. Some new outrage he anticipated; but of what nature he could not guess.

He was not allowed to remain long in ignorance. Ravener, roughly grasping him by the wrist, led him up to the furnace.

The iron by this time was ready – glowing red-hot among the coals. The operator stood watching for the signal to use it; and on its being given, he seized the instrument in his grasp, and poised it aloft.

The prince now perceived the intention, but shrank not at the sight. His eyes were not upon the iron, but, gleaming with a fire like that of the furnace itself, were directed upon the face of the old Jew – at intervals upon that of the angel-like demon at his

side.

The Jew alone shrank from the glance; his daughter returned it with a mocking imperturbability!

In another instant the red brand hissed as it burnt into the flesh of the Fellattas bosom. Prince Cingües was the slave of Jacob Jessuron!

As if the terrible reality had now for the first time burst upon him, the young man sprang forward with a cry; and before anyone could oppose his progress, he had bounded up the steps and entered the verandah.

Then, gliding along the gallery, to the spot occupied by Jessuron and his daughter, he launched himself forward upon the Jew. As he clutched the latter by the throat, both came together to the ground, and rolled over and over in the writhings of a desperate struggle.

Fortunate it was for the slave-merchant that his victim had been disarmed: else that moment would have been fatal to him. As it was, he came very near being strangled; and had it not been for Ravener and the two Spaniards, who hastened to his rescue, the betrayal of the Foolah prince would have been the last treason of his life.

Overpowered by numbers, Cingües was at length secured; and the throat of the slave-merchant was extricated from his death-like clutch.

“Kill him!” cried the Jew, as soon as he found breath to speak. “No, don’t kill him yet,” added he, correcting himself, “not joosh

yet, till I punish him for it! an' if I don't punish him – ach!”

“Flog the savage!” shouted the beautiful Judith; “make an example of him, Mr Ravener: else those others will be rising upon us in the same style.”

“Yesh, flog him! that'll do to begin with. Flog him now, goot Ravener. Give him a hundred lashes thish minute!”

“Ay, ay!” responded the overseer, dragging the victim down the steps; “I'll give him his full dose – never fear you!”

Ravener was as good as his word. The spectacle that followed was even more horrible to behold than that which has been described: for the punishment of the lash is among the most fearful of exhibitions.

The young Foolah was tied to a post – one that stood there for the purpose. A strong *headman* wielded the cruel *quirt*; and as the last stripe was administered, completing that horrid hundred, the poor victim sank fainting against the blood-stained stake.

The occupants of the verandah showed not the slightest signs of having been moved to pity by this horrid spectacle. On the contrary, both father and daughter seemed to draw delight from it; and, instead of retiring when the fearful scene was over, both, seemingly with perfect unconcern, remained to witness the *finale* of the day's work – the marking of the Mandingoes!

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Two

A Couch of Silk-Cotton

On parting from the presence of his fair cousin, and, at the same time, from the house of his inhospitable relative, Herbert Vaughan struck off through the shrubbery that stretched towards the ridge on the right.

Notwithstanding the storm that was raging in his breast, a reflection had occurred to him, which hindered him from going by the main avenue. Suffering from a keen sense of humiliation, he had no desire to meet with any of his uncle's people: since the very slaves seemed to be privy to his false position. Still less desirous was he of being observed, while making the long traverse of the avenue, by eyes that might be directed upon him from the windows of the great house.

On reaching the limits of the level platform, he leaped a low wall, that separated the shrubbery from the outer fields; and then, under cover of the pimento groves, commenced ascending the slope of the ridge.

For some time the conflicting emotions that were stirring in his soul hindered him from anything like tranquil reflection. Conflicting, I say: for two very opposite sentiments had been aroused by the two individuals with whom he had just held interview; opposite as darkness from light – as sorrow from joy

– perhaps, as hate from love.

The conflict might have lasted longer, had there been an opportunity to give way to idle emotions. But there was not. The young man felt too forlorn and friendless to indulge in the luxury of passionate thought; and, on this account, the sooner did the storm subside.

On reaching the crest of the ridge, and before plunging into the deep forest that stretched away on the other side, he endeavoured, through an opening in the trees, to catch a view of those white walls and green jalousies. In that glance there was more of regretfulness than anger – an expression of despair, such as may have appeared on the face of the fallen angel when gazing back over the golden palings of Paradise.

As the young man turned away, and entered under the sombre shadows of the forest, the expression of despair seemed to become deeper and darker.

To make Montego Bay – to seek in it such humble home as might offer – to wait there till his poorly-stocked portmanteau, now on its way to Mount Welcome, should be returned to him – these were the simple plans that suggested themselves. His mind was still too much on the rack to permit of his dwelling upon any ulterior purpose.

He walked on through the woods, without taking much heed as to the direction in which he was going. Anyone who could have seen him just then might have supposed that he had lost his way, and was wandering.

It was not so, however. He knew or believed that by keeping to the left of his former course he would get out upon the main road, by which he had reached the entrance-gate of Mount Welcome. In any case, he could not fail to find the river he had already crossed; and by following it downward, he would in time arrive at the town.

With this confidence, false as it may have been, he was not wandering; only absorbed in thought – in common parlance, absent-minded.

But this absence of mind lasted so long, that it led to the result it resembled: he lost his way in reality.

The trees hindered him from seeing the sun – now low down. But even if a view of the golden orb had been afforded him, it would have served no purpose: since, on riding out to Mount Welcome, he had taken no note of the relative directions between it and the Bay.

He was not much disconcerted by the discovery that he had lost himself. The reflection that in Montego Bay he would be no better off, hindered him from greatly regretting the circumstance. He had not the means to command the shelter of a roof – even in the midst of a whole city full – and the chances were he might find none better than that which was above him at the moment – the spreading fronds of a gigantic cotton-tree.

At the time that this reflection crossed his mind, the sun had gone quite down: for the cotton-tree stood upon the edge of an opening where he could see the sky above him; and he perceived

that it was already tinged with the purple of twilight. To find his way in the darkness would be no longer possible, and he resolved for that night to accept the hospitality of the *ceiba*.

It had even spread a couch for him: for the seed capsules had burst upon its branches; and the pale-brown staple thickly covered the ground beneath – offering a couch that, under the canopy of a West Indian summer sky, was sufficiently luxuriant.

Was there a supper as well? Herbert looked around – he was hungry. Not a morsel had he eaten since breakfast – only a piece of mess-pork and a brown wormy biscuit, on parting from the ship. Hunger had already made itself felt. During his wanderings, having his gun with him, he had looked out for game. Had any appeared, he was too good a sportsman to have let it escape. But none had shown itself – neither beast nor bird. The woods seemed deserted as himself. He could hear the voices of birds – all strange to his ear – he could see bright-winged creatures fluttering amongst the leaves; but none near enough for the range of his fowling-piece.

Now that he had come to a halt, and having nothing better to do, he took his stand, watching the open glade. Perhaps some bird might yet show itself passing from tree to tree, or flying about in pursuit of prey. It was the hour for owls. He felt hungry enough to eat one.

Neither owl nor night-jar came in sight; but his attention was attracted to an object edible as either, and which promised to relieve him from the pangs he was suffering.

Close by the cotton-tree stood another giant of the forest – rivalling the former in height, but differing from it as an arrow from its bow. Straight as a lance, it rose to the height of an hundred feet. It was branchless as a column of polished malachite or marble – up to its high summit, where its long green fronds, radiating outward, drooped gracefully over, like a circlet of reflexed ostrich plumes.

A child could have told it to be a palm; but Herbert knew more. He had heard of the noble “mountain-cabbage” of Jamaica – the kingly *areca oredoxia*. He knew that in the centre of that circlet of far-stretching fronds – in that crown – there was a jewel that had often proved more precious than gems or gold: for often had it been the means of saving human life.

How was this jewel to be obtained? Like all crowns, it was placed high – far above the reach of ordinary mortals. Young and active though he was, and a climber at school, he could never “swarm up” that tall, smooth shaft. Without a ladder a hundred feet in length, it would not be possible to reach its summit.

But, see! the palm-tree stands not alone. A great black liana stretches tortuously from the earth up to the crown, where its head is buried among the tufted leaves, as if it were some huge dragon in the act of devouring its victim.

Herbert stood for a moment reconnoitring the grand stay-cable, that, trailing from the summit of the palm, offered, as it were, a natural ladder for ascending it. Hunger stimulated him to the attempt; and, resting his gun against the trunk of the *ceiba*,

he commenced climbing upward.

Without much difficulty, he succeeded in reaching the top, and making his way among the huge *pinnae* of the leaves – each in itself a leaf of many feet in length. He arrived at the youngest of them all – that still enfolded in the envelope of the bud – and which was the object for which he had climbed.

With his knife he separated this summit leaf from the stem, flung it to the earth; and then, descending to the bottom of the tree, made his supper upon the raw but sweet and succulent shoots of the mountain-cabbage.

Supper over, he collected a quantity of the strewn fleece of the silk-cotton; and, placing it between two of the great buttress-like root-spurs of the tree, constructed for himself a couch on which, but for some hard thoughts within, he might have slept as softly and soundly as upon a bed of eider.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Three

The Tree Fountain

That he did not sleep soundly may be attributed solely to his anxieties about the morrow: for the night was mild throughout, and the composition of his improvised couch kept him sufficiently warm. His cares, however, had rendered his spirit restless. They were vivid enough to act even upon his dreams – which several times during the night awoke him, and again, finally, just after the break of day.

This time, on opening his eyes, he perceived that the glade was filled with soft blue light; and the quivering fronds of the cabbage-palm – just visible from where he lay – had caught the first trembling rays of the sun.

Only there, and among the summit-branches of the *ceiba*, far overtopping the *spray* of the surrounding forest, was the sun yet visible. Everything else was tinted with the blue grey of the morning twilight.

He could sleep no longer; and rose from his forest lair, intending to make an immediate departure from the spot.

He had no toilet to trouble him – nothing to do, further than brush off the silken floss of the tree-cotton, shoulder his gun, and go.

He felt hunger, even more than on the preceding night; and,

although the raw mountain-cabbage offered no very tempting *déjeuner*, he determined before starting, to make another meal upon it – remembering, and very wisely acting upon, the adage of “a bird in the hand.”

There was plenty left from the supper to serve him for breakfast; and, once more making a vigorous onslaught on the *chou de palmiste*, he succeeded in appeasing his hunger.

But another appetite, far more unpleasant to bear, now assailed him. In truth, it had assailed him long before, but had been gradually growing stronger; until it was now almost unendurable.

It was the kindred appetite, thirst; which the cabbage-palm, instead of relieving, had, from a certain acidity in its juice, only sharpened – till the pain amounted almost to torture.

The sufferer would have struck off into the woods in search of water. He had seen none in his wanderings; still he had hopes of being able to find the river. He would have started at once, but for an idea he had conceived that there was water near the spot where he had slept.

Where? He had observed neither stream nor spring, pond nor river; and yet he fancied he had seen water – in fact, he felt sure of it!

In a very singular situation he had seen it – so thought he at the time – since it was over his head in the cotton-tree!

On the previous evening, while upon the crown of the cabbage-palm, he had glanced slantingly across, among the

branches of the *ceiba*. This, as with all great trees in the tropical forests, was loaded with parasites — *vriesias*, long ragged-looking cacti, bromelias, epiphytical orchids, and the like. *Tillandsias* too, of the kind known as “wild pines,” grew in the forks, or on the upper surface of the great limbs, flourishing as luxuriantly as if their roots rested in the richest soil. Among them was conspicuous the most magnificent of the genus, the noble *Tillandsia lingulata*, with its spike of gorgeous crimson flowers projecting from the midst of its broad sheathing leaves. It was in the concavities of these huge leaves that Herbert had observed something which did not belong to the plant — something he believed to be *water*.

It would cost but a few seconds’ time to confirm or refute this belief — a climb among the branches of the *ceiba*. Another huge parasite, from the same root as the former, trended tortuously up to the limbs of the silk-cotton-tree — here and there touching and twisting around them. Its diagonal direction rendered it easy of ascent; and Herbert, impelled by his desire to drink, commenced climbing it.

Ere long, he had succeeded in reaching a main fork of the *ceiba*, where nestled one of the largest of the wild pines.

He had not been deceived. In a hollow formed by one of its huge ventricose leaves was the natural reservoir he had noticed — the gathering of dew and rain, which the rays of the sun could never reach.

At his approach, the green *hyla* sprang out from this aerial

pool; and leaping, frog-like, from leaf to leaf – guarded against falling by the clammy sponge-disks of its feet – soon disappeared amid the foliage. It was this singular creature whose voice Herbert had been hearing throughout the livelong night; and which, in constant chorus with others of its kind, had recalled to his memory the groaning and working of the *Sea Nymph* in a storm.

The presence of the tree-toad in this its natural haunt, did not deter the young man from drinking. Raging thirst has no scruples; and, bending over one of the leaves of the *tillandsia*, he placed his lips to the cool water, and freely quaffed it.

The labour of scrambling up the *liana* had taken away his breath, and to some extent fatigued him. Instead, therefore, of descending at once – which he knew would cost him an effort equal to that of the ascent – he determined to rest for a few minutes upon the large limb of the *ceiba* on which he had seated himself.

“Well!” muttered he, in satisfied soliloquy, “if the people of this island have proved inhospitable, I can’t say the same of its trees. Here are two of them – almost the first I have encountered. They have yielded me the three necessaries of life – meat, drink, and lodging – lodging, too, with an excellent bed, a thing not so common in many a human hostelry. What more is wanted? Under such a sky as this, who need care to have walls around, or a roof over him? Verily, to sleep here, *sub Jove*, is rather a luxury than an inconvenience! And, verily,” continued he, “were it not

that I should feel rather lonely, and that man is designed to be a social animal, I might pass my whole life in these glorious woods, without work or care of any kind. No doubt there is game; and I was told at home there are no game laws – so I might poach at pleasure. Ha! game? What do I see? A deer? No! a hog! Yes, hog it is; but such a singular fellow – prick ears, red bristles, long legs, and tusks. A boar! and why not a wild boar?”

There was no reason why it should not be, since it *was* one – a wild boar of the Jamaica forest – a true descendant of the Canarian hog, transported thither by the Spaniards.

The young Englishman, never having seen a wild boar in its native haunts, put the question conjecturally; but a moment’s observation of the animal convinced him that his conjecture was correct. The short upright ears, the long head, hams, and legs, the shaggy neck and frontlet, the foxy red colour, the quick short step as it moved onward – all these *points*, combined with a certain savage air which Herbert noticed at a glance, satisfied him that the animal under his eyes was not one of the domestic breed, but a genuine wild hog of the woods. The grunt, too, which the creature uttered as it moved across the glade – short, sharp and fierce – had but slight resemblance to the squeaking sounds of the farm-yard. A wild boar beyond a doubt!

On perceiving this noble head of game, and so near him, Herbert’s first reflection was one of extreme regret. How unlucky that he should be up in the tree, with his gun upon the ground!

It was very tantalising; but the young man saw it would be

impossible to get possession of his gun without giving the alarm. To attempt descending from the tree, or even make a movement upon the branch, would be sufficient to send the boar scampering from the spot: of course never to be seen more.

Conscious of this, Herbert preferred remaining upon his perch – the silent spectator of a scene of wild Nature, to which chance had so oddly introduced him.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Four

The Hog-Hunter

The boar had stopped over the *débris* of Herbert's breakfast – some fragments of the mountain-cabbage which had been left upon the ground. Switching his feathered tail, and uttering a short grunt, expressive of satisfaction, the animal proceeded to snap up the scattered pieces, crunching them between his formidable grinders.

All of a sudden, the tranquil tableau became transformed into a scene of a more exciting nature. As Herbert continued to gaze, he saw the boar suddenly make a start, jerk his muzzle high in the air, at the same instant uttering a peculiar cry. It was a cry of alarm, mingled with angry menace – as testified by the bristles upon his back, which had suddenly shot up into an erect spinous mane.

Herbert looked for the enemy. None was in sight – at least to his eyes. The boar, however, had either seen or heard something: for he was evidently upon the strain to spring off.

Just then, a loud report reverberated through the glade, a bullet hissed through the air, and the animal, with a shrill scream, turned over upon its back, the blood spouting from a wound in its thigh.

In an instant it was on its feet again; but rage appeared to

hinder it from attempting flight! It retreated only a few paces, taking its stand between two of the buttresses of the *ceiba*— on the very spot where the young Englishman had passed the night. There — protected on both flanks and in the rear — and uttering fierce grunts of defiance — it stood, as if awaiting an enemy.

Soon after a man emerged from the underwood, armed with what appeared to be a straight sword or cutlass.

In a dozen quick strides he crossed the glade; and, having reached the roots of the cotton-tree, became engaged in a deadly struggle with the wounded boar.

Notwithstanding the damage done to it, the creature was still a formidable antagonist; and it required all the address of the hunter — habile though he appeared to be — to avoid contact with his terrible tusks.

Each alternatively charged upon the other — the hunter endeavouring to thrust the quadruped with his long blade, while the boar in its turn would repeatedly rush towards its antagonist, suddenly rear itself upon its hind legs, and strike upwards with its armed and grinning muzzle.

It was one of the fore-legs of the animal that had been broken by the shot; but the wound, although greatly disabling it, did not hinder it from making a protracted and desperate defence. The spurs of the cotton-tree rising on each side proved its best protectors — hindering its assailant from turning its flanks and piercing it in the side. The combat, therefore, was face to face; and the blade of the hunter, repeatedly thrust forward, as often

glanced harmlessly from the hard skull, or glinted with a metallic ring against the tusks of the boar.

For several minutes did this singular contest continue – the young Englishman all the while watching it with lively interest; but without giving the slightest signs of his being a spectator. Indeed, the scene was so exciting, and had come under his eyes so unexpectedly, that he was for a time held speechless by sheer surprise.

After a while the struggle between biped and quadruped was brought to a termination. The former – who appeared to possess all the craft of his calling – put in practice a *ruse* that enabled him to give his antagonist the *coup de grace*.

It was a feat, however, accompanied by no slight danger: and so adroitly did the hunter perform it, as to create within the mind of his spectator – himself a sportsman – both surprise and admiration.

Thus was the feat accomplished. In charging forward upon his human adversary, the boar had incautiously ventured beyond the flanking buttresses of the tree. In fact, the hunter had enticed the animal outward – by making a feint of retreating from the contest.

Just then – and before the brute could divine his intention – the hunter rushed forward, and, throwing all his strength into the effort, sprang high into the air. Quite clearing the quadruped, he alighted in the angle formed by the converging spurs of the tree.

The boar had now lost his position of defence; though that of

the hunter for the moment appeared desperate. He had calculated his chances, however: for before the enraged animal – hindered by its hanging limb – could face round to assail him, he had lunged out with his long blade, and buried it up to the hilt between the creature's ribs.

With a shrill scream the boar fell prostrate to the earth – the red stream from his side spurting over and spoiling the improvised mattress of cotton-tree flock upon which the young Englishman had passed the night.

Up to this moment the latter had done nothing, either by word or gesture, to make known his presence. He was about to descend and congratulate the hunter for the performance of a feat that had filled him with admiration. A fancy, passing through his mind at the moment, determined him to remain where he was a little longer; and, in obedience to this fancy, he sat gazing down upon the successful sportsman at the bottom of the tree.

To say the least, the appearance presented by this individual was singular – especially so in the eyes of an Englishman unacquainted with West Indian characters and costumes. But, in addition to picturesqueness of attire, there was something in the carriage and features of the man that could not fail to make a remarkable impression upon the beholder.

This impression was decidedly pleasing, though the face that produced it was not that of a *white* man. Neither was it the face of a black man; nor yet the yellow countenance of the mulatto. It was a shade lighter than the last, with a dash of crimson in the

cheeks. It was this colouring of the cheeks, perhaps, combined with a well-rounded, sparkling iris, that imparted the agreeable expression.

The man was young. Herbert Vaughan might have guessed him about his own age without being many months astray; and, in point of size and shape, there was no great dissimilitude between them. In the colour of their hair, complexion, and features, there was no resemblance whatever. While the face of the young Englishman was of the oval type, that of the West Indian hunter was rotund. A prominent, well-cut chin, however, hindered it from degenerating into any expression of feebleness. On the contrary, firmness was the prevailing cast of the features; and the hold, swelling throat was a true physical index of daring.

The complexion of the hunter betokened a *sang-mêlé* between African and Caucasian, which was further confirmed by the slight crisping that appeared among the jet-black curls of hair thickly covering his head. The luxuriance of these curls was partly kept in check by a head-dress that Herbert Vaughan would have been less surprised to see in some country of the East: for, at the first glance, he had mistaken it for a turban. On closer examination, however, it proved to be a brilliant kerchief – the Madras check – ingeniously folded around the forehead, so as to sit coquettishly over the crown, with the knot a little to one side. It was a *toque* – not a turban.

The other articles of dress worn by the young hunter were an outer coat, or shirt, of sky-blue cottonade, cut somewhat blouse-

fashion; an under-shirt of fine white linen, ruffled and open at the breast; trousers of the same material as the coat; and buff coloured boots of roughly-cleaned cowskin. There were straps and strings over both shoulders, all crossing each other on the breast.

From the two that hung to the right side were suspended a powder-horn and skin shot-pouch. On the same side hung a large calabash canteen, covered with a strong network of some forest withe to protect it from injury. Under the left arm was a carved and curving cow's horn, evidently not for holding powder, since it was open at both ends. Below this, against his hip, rested a black leathern sheath – the receptacle of that long blade still reeking with the blood of the boar.

This weapon was the *macheté*— half sword, half hunting-knife – which, with its straight, short blade, and haft-like hilt of greyish horn, is to be found in every cottage of Spanish America, from California to the “Land of Eire.” Even where the Spaniards have been, but *are* no longer – as in Jamaica – the universal *macheté* may be seen in the hands of hunter and peasant – a relic of the conqueror colonists.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Five

The Runaway

Up to the moment that the boar was laid prostrate upon the ground, he in the *toque* had been kept too well employed with his fierce game to find time for looking at anything else. It was only after dealing the deathblow to his adversary that he was able to stand erect and take a survey around him.

In an instant his eye fell upon the gun of the young Englishman, and then the white pieces of palm-cabbage upon which the boar had been browsing.

“Hoh!” exclaimed he, still gasping for breath, but with a look that betrayed surprise; “A gun! Whose? Some runaway slave who has stolen his master’s fowling-piece? Nothing more likely. But why has he left the piece behind him? And what has started him away from here? Surely not the boar? He must have been gone before the animal got up? *Crambo!* a richer prize than the porker, if I could only have set eyes on him! I wonder in which direction he has tracked it? Hish! what do I see? The runaway! yes – yes, it is he! Coming back for his gun? *Crambo!* This is unexpected luck, so early in the morning – a slave capture – a *bounty!*”

As the hunter hurriedly muttered these concluding phrases, he glided with stealthy tread between the two buttresses; and, having placed himself in the extreme angle of their convergence,

remained perfectly still – as if to await the approach of some one who was advancing towards the tree.

Herbert, from his perch, had a full view of the new comer thus announced.

A young man of a copper red colour, with straight black hair, shaggily tossed and pulled over his forehead, as if some one had been tearing it from his head! His face, too – a fine one, notwithstanding its mahogany colour – appeared freshly lacerated; and his whole body bore the marks of inhuman abuse. The coarse cotton shirt that covered his shoulders was blotched with blood; and long, crimson-coloured stripes running across his back, looked like the imprints of an ensanguined lash!

The attitude in which he was advancing was as peculiar as his costume. When Herbert first set eyes on him he was *crawling* upon his hands and knees, yet going with considerable speed. This led to the belief that his bent position was assumed rather with a view towards concealment, than from the inability to walk erect.

This belief was soon after confirmed: for on entering the glade the young man rose to his feet, and trotted on – but still with body bent – towards the *ceiba*.

What could he want there?

Was he making for the huge tree as a haven of safety from some deadly pursuers? Herbert fancied so.

The hunter believed he was coming back for his gun – having no suspicion that the real owner of the piece was just over his

head.

Both remained silent; though from motives having no similitude to each other.

In a few seconds' time, the fugitive – for his actions proved him one – had reached the bottom of the tree.

“Halt!” cried the hunter, showing himself round the buttress, and stepping in front of the new comer. “You are a runaway, and my prisoner!”

The fugitive dropped upon his knees, crossed his arms over his breast, and uttered some phrases in an unknown tongue – amongst which Herbert could distinguish the word “Allah.”

His captor appeared equally at fault about the meaning of the words; but neither the attitude of the speaker, nor the expression upon his countenance, could be mistaken: it was an appeal for mercy.

“*Crambo!*” exclaimed the hunter, bending forward, and gazing for a moment at the breast of the runaway – on which the letters “J.J.” were conspicuously branded – “with that tattoo on your skin, I don’t wonder you’ve given leg-bail to your master. Poor devil! they’ve tattooed you still more brutally upon the back.”

As he said this – speaking rather to himself than to the wretched creature that knelt before him – the hunter stretched forth his hand, raised the shirt from the shoulders of the runaway, and gazed for a while upon his naked back. The skin was covered with purple wales, crossing each other like the arteries in an anatomic plate!

“God of the Christian!” exclaimed the yellow hunter, with evident indignation at the sight, “if this be your decree, then give me the fetish of my African ancestors. But no,” added he, after a pause, “J.J. is *not* a Christian – he cares for no God.”

The soliloquy of the hunter was here interrupted by a second speech from the suppliant, spoken in the same unknown tongue.

This time the gesture signified that it was an appeal for protection against some enemy in the rear: for the sympathetic looks of his captor had evidently won the confidence of the fugitive.

“They are after you – no doubt of it,” said the hunter. “Well, let them come – whoever are your pursuers. This time they have lost their chance; and the bounty is mine, not theirs. Poor devil! it goes against my grain to deliver you up; and were it not for the law that binds me, I should scorn their paltry reward. Hark! yonder they come! Dogs, as I’m a man! Yes, it’s the bay of a bloodhound! Those villainous man-hunters of Batabano – I knew old Jessuron had them in his pay. Here, *my* poor fellow, in here!” and the hunter half-led, half-dragged the fugitive over the carcass of the wild boar, placing him between the buttresses of the *ceiba*. “Stand close in to the angle,” he continued. “Leave me to guard the front. Here’s your gun; I see it’s loaded. I hope you know how to use it? Don’t fire till you’re sure of hitting! We’ll need both blade and shot to save ourselves from these Spanish dogs, that will make no distinction between you and me. Not they! *Crambo!* there they come!”

The words had scarce issued from the speaker's lips, when two large dogs broke, with a swishing noise, out of the bushes on the opposite side of the glade – evidently running on the trail of the fugitive.

The crimson colour of their muzzles showed that they had been baited with blood – which, darkening as it dried, rendered more conspicuous the white fang-like teeth within their jaws.

They were half-hound, half-mastiff; but ran as true-bred hounds on a fresh trail.

No trail could have been fresher than that of the flogged fugitive; and, in a few seconds after entering the glade, the hounds had got up to the *ceiba*, in front of the triangular chamber in which stood the runaway and his protector.

These dogs have no instinct of self-preservation – only an instinct to discover and destroy. Without stopping to bark or bay – without even slackening their pace – both dashed onward, bounding into the air as they launched themselves upon the supposed objects of their pursuit.

The first only impaled himself upon the outstretched *machete* of the yellow hunter; and as the animal came down to the earth, it was to utter the last howl of his existence.

The other, springing towards the naked fugitive, received the contents of the fowling-piece, and, like the first, rolled lifeless upon the earth.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Six

A Combat Declined

The spectator in the tree began to fancy that he was dreaming. Within the short space of twenty minutes he had been the witness of a greater number of exciting events than he might have seen, in his own land, during the same number of years!

And yet he had not witnessed the *finale* of the drama. The gestures of the runaway, and the speeches of his captor, had already warned him that there was another act to come; and, from the attitudes of both, it was evident that this act would be performed on the same stage, without any change of scene.

As yet the young Englishman saw no particular reason why he should cease to be a spectator, and become an actor, in this West Indian drama. That the yellow hunter should kill a wild boar, capture a runaway slave, and afterwards shield both his captive and himself from a brace of bloodhounds, by killing the fierce brutes, was no affair of his. The only thine: that concerned him was the unceremonious use that had been made of his fowling-piece; but it is scarce necessary to say that Herbert Vaughan, had he been asked, would have freely lent the piece for such a purpose.

Nothing, however, had yet transpired to tempt him from a strict neutrality; and, until something should, he determined to

preserve the passive attitude he had hitherto held.

Scarce had he come to this determination, when three new actors appeared upon the scene.

One, the foremost, and apparently the leader, was a tall, black-bearded man in a red plush waistcoat, and high-topped horse-skin boots. The other two were lean, lithe-looking fellows in striped shirt and trousers, each wearing broad-brimmed palm-leaf hats that shadowed their sharp Spanish physiognomies.

The bearded man was armed with gun and pistols. The others appeared to be without firearms of any kind; but each carried in his hand a long rapier-like blade, the sheath of which hung dangling from his hip. It was the *macheté*— the same kind of weapon as that which the yellow hunter had but the moment before so skilfully wielded.

On perceiving the tableau under the tree, the three new comers halted – and with no slight surprise depicted in their looks. The men of Spanish face appeared more especially astonished – indignation mingling with their surprise – when they beheld in that grouping of figures the bodies of their own bloodhounds stretched dead upon the sward!

The bearded man, who, as we have said, appeared to be the leader, was the first to give speech to the sentiment that animated all three.

“What game’s this?” he cried, his face turning purple with rage. “Who are you that has dared to interfere with our pursuit?”
“*Carajo!* he’s killed our dogs?” vociferated one of the

Spaniards.

“*Demonios!* you’ll pay for this with your lives!” added the other, raising his *macheté* in menace.

“And what if I have killed your dogs?” rejoined the yellow hunter, with an air of *sang froid*, which won the silent applause of the spectator. “What if I have? If I had not killed *them*, they would have killed *me!*”

“No,” said one of the Spaniards; “they would not have touched you. *Carrambo!* they were too well trained for that – they were after *him*. Why did you put yourself in the way to protect him? It’s no business of yours.”

“There, my worthy friend, you are mistaken,” replied he in the *toque*, with a significant sneer. “It is my business to protect him – my *interest* too: since he is my captive.”

“*Your* captive!” exclaimed one of the men, with a glance of concern.

“Certainly, he is my captive; and it was my interest not to let the dogs destroy him. Dead, I should only have got two pounds currency for his head. Living, he is worth twice that, and mileage money to boot; though I’m sorry to see by the ‘J.J.’ on his breast that the mileage money won’t amount to much. Now, what more have you to say, my worthy gentlemen?”

“Only this,” cried the man with the black beard; “that we listen to no such nonsense as that there. Whoever you may be, I don’t care. I suspect who you are; but that don’t hinder me from telling you, you’ve no business to meddle in this affair. This runaway

slave belongs to Jacob Jessuron. I'm his overseer. He's been taken on Jessuron's own ground: therefore you can't claim the captive, nor yet the bounty. So you'll have to give him up to *us*."

"*Carrambo, si!*" vociferated both the Spaniards in a breath, at the same time that the three advanced towards the runaway – the bearded overseer pistol in hand, and his two comrades with their *machetés* drawn, and ready to be used.

"Come on, then!" cried the hunter, in a taunting tone – as he spoke making signs to the runaway to stand to his defence. "Come on! but, remember! the first that lays hand upon him is a dead man. There are three of you, and we are but two – one already half-dead with your inhuman cruelty."

"Three against two! that's not a fair fight!" cried the young Englishman, dropping down from the tree, and ranging himself on the weaker side. "Perhaps it'll be a better match now," added he, taking a pistol from under the breast of his coat, and cocking it as he did so – evidently with the intention of using it, should the affair be carried further.

"And who are you, sir?" demanded the overseer, with as much arrogance as he could throw into his manner. "Who, sir, may I inquire, is the white man who thus places himself in opposition to the laws of the island? You know the penalty, sir; and by *my* word, you shall pay it!"

"If I have committed a breach of the laws," replied Herbert, "I presume I shall have to answer for it. But I have yet to learn what law I have broken; and I don't choose that you shall be my judge."

“You are aiding in the escape of a slave!”

“That’s not true,” interrupted the yellow hunter. “The slave is already captured; he could not have escaped; and this young gentleman – who is as much a stranger to me as to you – I am sure, had no intention of assisting him to escape.”

“Bah!” exclaimed the overseer; “we care not for your talk – we deny your right to capture him; and you had no business to interfere. We had already tracked him down with the dogs; and should have had him without any help from you. He is *our* prize, therefore; and I again demand of you to give him up!”

“Indeed!” sneeringly responded the yellow hunter.

“I make the demand,” continued the other, without noticing the sneer, “in the name of Jacob Jessuron – whose overseer I’ve told you I am.”

“Perhaps, were you Jacob Jessuron himself, I might resist your demand,” rejoined the hunter, coolly, and without any appearance of braggadocio.

“You refuse to surrender him, then?” said the overseer, as if making his final overture.

“I do,” was the firm reply.

“Enough – you shall repent this; and you, sir,” continued the deputy of Jessuron, turning a fierce look upon Herbert, “you shall answer before a magistrate for the part it has pleased you to play in this transaction. A pretty white man you for the island of Jamaica! A few more of your sort, and we’d have a nice time with our niggers. Don’t fear, mister; you’ll see me again.”

“I have no particular desire,” rejoined Herbert; “for, certainly,” continued he, with provoking jocularly, “an uglier-looking face than yours I have never set eyes upon; and it could be no pleasure to me to look upon it again.”

“Confusion!” cried the overseer. “You’ll repent that insult before you’re a month older – curse me if you don’t!”

And with this characteristic menace, the ruffian turned and walked sullenly away.

“*Caspita!*” cried one of the Spaniards, as the two hastened to follow their leader. “My brave dogs! Ah, *demonio!* you shall pay dearly for them. Two hundred *pesos* each – not a *cuartito* less!”

“Not a *cuartito* for either!” responded the yellow hunter, with a mocking laugh. “Haven’t I proved that they are not worth it? With all your boasting of what your bloodhounds could do, look at them now. *Vaya!* my fine fellows! Go back to your own country, and hunt runaway negroes there. Here you must leave that game to those who know how to manage it —*the Maroons!*”

Herbert observed that the hunter, on pronouncing these last words, drew himself up with an air of majestic pride – as he did so, glancing scornfully towards the crestfallen *caçadores*.

An angry “*Carrai!*” simultaneously hissed from the lips of both, was the only reply made by the two Spaniards; who, at the same instant, turned their backs upon the *ceiba*, and followed their leader across the glade.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Seven

The Maroons

As soon as they were gone out of sight, the hunter turned towards Herbert, his eyes sparkling with gratitude.

“Master!” said he, making a low obeisance as he spoke, “after that, words are but a poor way of offering thanks. If the brave white gentleman who has risked his life for a coloured outcast will let me know his name, it will not be forgotten by *Cubina, the Maroon.*”

“Cubina, the Maroon!” Struck by the oddness of the name and title – as he had already been by the appearance and behaviour of him who bore them – Herbert repeated the phrase mechanically, rather than otherwise.

“Yes, that is my name, master.” The young Englishman, though not yet enlightened as to the odd appellation, was too well-bred to press for an explanation.

“Pardon me,” said he, “for not directly replying to your request. I am an Englishman; my name Vaughan – Herbert Vaughan.”

“By that name, master, I take it you have relatives in the island. The owner of Mount Welcome estate – ”

“Is my uncle.”

“Ah! then, sir, anything a poor Maroon hunter could do for

you would not be much. All the same, you have my thanks; and if – ; but, master,” continued the speaker, suddenly changing his tone, as if in obedience to some instinct of curiosity, “may I make bold to ask why you are afoot so early? The sun is not yet ten minutes above the trees, and Mount Welcome is three miles distant. You must have tracked it here in the dark – no easy matter, through these tangled woods?”

“I passed the night here,” replied the Englishman, smiling; “that was *my* bed, where the boar is now sleeping.”

“Then the gun is yours, not his?”

The hunter nodded interrogatively towards the runaway, who, standing some paces off, was regarding both the speakers with glances of gratitude, not, however, unmingled with some signs of uneasiness.

“Yes, it is my gun. I am very glad the piece was not empty: since it enabled him to destroy the fierce brute that would otherwise have had him by the throat. Wretched as the poor fellow appears, he handled his weapon well. What is he, and what have they been doing to him?”

“Ah, Master Vaughan; by those two questions, it is easy to tell you are a stranger to the island. I think I can answer both – though I never saw the young man before. Poor wretch! The answers are written out upon his skin, in letters that don’t require much scholarship to read. Those upon his breast tell that he’s a slave – the slave of J.J.: Jacob Jessuron. You’ll excuse me from giving my opinion of *him*.”

“What have they done to you, my poor fellow?” asked Herbert of the runaway – his compassion hindering him from waiting for the more roundabout explanation of the Maroon.

The blood-bedaubed creature, perceiving that the speech was addressed to him, made a long rejoinder; but in a tongue unknown both to the hunter and Herbert. The latter could distinguish two words that he had heard before – “Foolah” and “Allah” – both of which occurred repeatedly in the speech.

“It’s no use asking him, Master Vaughan. Like yourself, he’s a stranger to the island; though, as you see, they’ve already initiated him into some of its ways. Those brands upon his breast are nearly fresh – as you may tell by the red skin around the letters. He’s just been landed from Africa, it appears. As for the marks upon his back – those have been made by a plaything, the white planters and their overseers in these parts are rather too fond of using – the cart-whip! They’ve been flogging the poor devil; and, *Crambo!* they’ve given it to him thick and sharp.”

As the Maroon made this remark, he raised the blood-stained shirt, exposing to view that back so terribly reticulated. The sight was sickening. Herbert could not bear to gaze upon it; but averted his eyes on the instant.

“From Africa, you say? He has not got negro features!”

“As to his features, that don’t signify. There are many African tribes who are not negro-featured. I can tell from his that he is a Foolah. I hear him use the word as he talks.”

“Yoy – Foolah! Foolah!” cried the runaway on hearing

pronounced the name of his people; and then he continued in a strain of the same language, accompanied by much gesticulation.

“I wish I knew his lingo,” said the hunter. “I know he’s a Foolah. It is some reason why I should take an interest in him; and may be, if only for that, I might – ”

The speaker paused, as if he had been talking to himself; and then continued the soliloquy only in thought. After a pause he resumed speech.

“*Crambo!* very little would tempt me *not* to restore him to his master.”

“And must you?”

“I must. We Maroons are bound by a treaty to deliver up all runaways we may take; and if we fail to do so – that is, *when it is known*; but these villains of old Jessuron know I have him – ”

“You will receive a bounty, you say?”

“Yes. They will try to deprive me of that; but it isn’t the bounty would tempt me in this case. There is something about this young fellow. – My word! he *is* like her! – ay, as if he were her brother.”

This last speech was delivered in soliloquy.

“Like her! Like whom?” demanded Herbert with a puzzled look.

“Your pardon,” replied the hunter. “I was struck with a resemblance between this poor fellow and one whom I know; but, Master Vaughan,” he continued, as if wishing to change the subject, “you have not said how you came to be all night in the woods? You were hunting yesterday and lost your way?”

“True, I lost my way, but not exactly while hunting.”

“Perhaps that is all the sort of breakfast you have had?” and the Maroon pointed to some pieces of the palm-cabbage that still lay on the turf.

“I have both supped and breakfasted upon it,” replied Herbert. “I had climbed the tree for water, when the boar came up to break his fast upon what remained of it.”

The Maroon smiled at this explanation of some circumstances by which even he had been mystified.

“Well,” said he, “if you are not anxious to return at once to Mount Welcome, and will give me five minutes’ time, I think I can provide you something better than raw cabbage.”

“I am not particularly in a hurry about getting back to Mount Welcome. Perhaps I may never go back!”

These words, combined with the air of the young Englishman as he uttered them, did not escape the notice of the intelligent Maroon.

“Something strange in this young man’s history!” said he to himself, though he had the delicacy not to demand an explanation of the ambiguous speech just made. “Well, it’s not my affair, I suppose!”

Then, addressing himself to Herbert, he said aloud —

“Do you agree, Master Vaughan, to eat a forest breakfast of my providing?”

“Indeed, with pleasure,” answered Herbert. “Then I must ring for my servants.” As he said this, the hunter raised his curved

horn to his lips and blew a long, tremulous blast.

“That should procure us company and something to eat, master,” said he, allowing the horn to drop back to its place.

“Hark!” he continued, the instant after, “there are some of my fellows. I thought they could not be far off.”

As he spoke the sound of a horn was heard reverberating through the woods; and then another, and another – until nearly a dozen could be distinguished, yet all in different directions. They were evidently answers to the signal he had sounded.

“So, Master Vaughan,” he resumed, with an air expressive of triumph, though in a restrained and modest way, “you see these vultures would not have had it all their own way? My hawks were too near for that. Not the less am I beholden to you, Master Vaughan. I did not think it worth while to call my people. I knew the poltroons would not venture beyond a little swaggering talk. See! they come!”

“Who?”

“The Maroons!”

Herbert heard a rustling among the bushes on the opposite side of the glade; and, at the same time, about a dozen armed men emerged from the underwood, and advanced rapidly towards the *ceiba*.

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Eight

A Forest Breakfast

The young Englishman gazed upon the advancing troop with keen curiosity. There were about a dozen of them, all black men, or nearly all – only one or two of them showing any admixture of colour. There was not a dwarfish or deformed figure in the party. On the contrary, every man of them possessed a tall stalwart form, strong muscular limbs, a skin shining with health, and eyes sparkling with a vigorous brilliance that betokened an innate sense of freedom and independence.

Their erect, upright carriage and free, forward step confirmed the belief, which Herbert had already formed, that these black men were not *bondsmen*. There was nothing of the slave either in their looks or gestures. But for the colour of their skins, he would never have thought of associating such men with the idea of slavery. Armed as they were with long knives and guns, some of them with stout spears, they could not be slaves. Besides, their equipments told that they were hunters – and warriors, if need he. All of them had horns, with pouches suspended over their shoulders; and each was provided with a netted calabash for water, like that of the yellow hunter, already described.

A few carried an equipment altogether different – consisting of a small pannier of withe-work, or palm-fibre neatly woven.

It rested upon the back, where it was held in place by a band of palm sinnet, crossing the breast, and another brought over the forehead, which thus sustained a portion of the weight. This pannier was the *cutacoo*— the depository of their provisions, and of such articles as were required in their wild forest rambles.

With regard to their costume, that was *bizarre*, though not unpicturesque. No two were dressed alike, though there was a certain idiosyncrasy in their attire, which proclaimed them all of one following. The *toqued* “bandanna” was the most common head-dress – a few having palm-leaf hats. Only some of them had a shirt with sleeves; others wanted a complete pair of trousers; and one or two were naked from the waist upward, and from the thighs downwards – the white cotton loin-cloth being the unique and only garment! All of them had their feet and ankles covered: as the stony and thorny paths they were accustomed to tread rendered necessary. The *chaussure* was the same with all; and appeared to be a tight-fitting jack-boot, of some species of raw hide, without seam or stitching of any kind. The reddish bristles standing thinly over its surface, proclaimed the character of the material. It was the skin of the wild hog: the hind leg of a boar, drawn upon the foot while fresh and warm, as it dries tightening over the instep and ankle like an elastic stocking. A little trimming with the knife is all that is necessary for this ready-made mocassin; and once on, it is never taken off till the wearing of the sole renders necessary a refit. Drawing on his boots, therefore, is no part of the diurnal duties of a Jamaica hog-

hunter.

I have said that Herbert Vaughan regarded the new comers with a feeling of curiosity as well as surprise. It was no wonder he did so. The mode in which they had been summoned into his presence, their echo-like answers to the horn signal, and their prompt, almost instantaneous appearance, formed a series of incidents that more resembled what might have been witnessed upon the stage of a theatre than in real life; and had the yellow hunter been a white man, and he and his followers clad in Lincoln green, the young Englishman might have fancied himself in Sherwood Forest, with bold Robin *redivivus*, and his merry men mustering around him!

“This white gentleman has not eaten breakfast,” said Cubina to his followers as they came up. “Well, Quaco! what have you got in your cutacoos?”

The individual thus appealed to was a jet-black negro of large dimensions, with a grave yet quizzical cast of countenance. He appeared to be a sort of lieutenant: perhaps the “Little John” of the party.

“Well, worthy capten,” answered he, saluting the yellow hunter with a somewhat awkward grace; “I believe there’s enough, one thing with another – that be, if the gen’lman has got a good appetite, and’s not too nice about what he eats.”

“What is there? Let me see!” interrupted Cubina, as he proceeded to inspect the panniers. “A ham of wild hog barbecued,” continued he, turning out the contents of a cutacoo.

“Well, that to begin with – the white gentry are rather partial to our barbecued hog! What else? a brace of soldier-crabs. So far good. Ah! better still, a pair of ramier pigeons, and a wild guinea-fowl. Who carries the coffee and sugar?”

“Here, captain,” cried another of the cutacoo men, throwing his pannier to the ground, and drawing out several bags which contained the necessary materials for coffee-making.

“A fire, and be quick!” commanded Cubina.

At the word given a tinder was struck, dry leaves and branches quickly collected, and a sparkling, crackling fire soon blazed upon the ground. Over this was erected a crane – resting horizontally on two forked sticks – which soon carried a brace of iron pots suspended in the blaze.

With so many cooks, the process of preparing the meat for the pots was very short and quick. The pigeons and guinea-fowl were singed as fast as feathers would burn; and then being “drawn and quartered,” were flung in torn fragments into the largest of the pots.

The soldier-crabs shared the same fate; and some pieces of the wild hog ham. A handful of salt was added, water, a few slices of plantain, eddoes, calaloe, and red capsicum – all of which ingredients were supplied from the cutacoos.

A strong fire of dried faggots soon brought the pot to a furious boil; and the lieutenant Quaco – who appeared also to act as *chef de cuisine*– after repeatedly testing the contents, at length declared that the *pepper-pot* was ready for serving up.

Dishes, bowls, cups, and platters made their appearance – all being shells of the calabash, of different shapes; and as soon as Herbert and the captain were helped to the choicest portions of the savoury stew, the remainder was distributed among the men: who, seating themselves in groups over the ground, proceeded to discuss the well-known viand with an avidity that showed it was also their breakfast.

The *pepper-pot* was not the sole dish of the *déjeuner*. Pork steaks, cut from the carcass of the freshly-slain boar, were added; while plantains and “cocoa-fingers,” roasted in the ashes, contributed a substitute for bread not to be despisingly spoken of.

The second pot boiling over the fire contained the coffee; which, quaffed from the calabashes, tasted as fine as if sipped out of cups of the purest Sèvres porcelain.

In this “al-fresco” feast the poor captive was not forgotten, but was supplied among the rest – the colossal Quaco administering to his wants with an air of quizzical compassion.

The young Englishman desired enlightenment about the character of his hosts; but delicacy forbade any direct inquiries. Could they be robbers – brigands with black skins? Their arms and accoutrements gave colour to the supposition. *Maroons* they called themselves, but the name was new, and helped not Herbert in his perplexity. “If robbers,” thought he, “they are the gentlest of their calling.”

Breakfast over, the Maroons gathered up their traps, and prepared to depart from the spot.

Already the wild boar had been butchered, cut up into portable flitches, and packed away in the cutacoos.

The wales upon the back of the runaway had been anointed by the hand of Quaco with some balsamic cerate; and by gestures the unfortunate youth was made to understand that he was to accompany the party. Instead of objecting to this, his eyes sparkled with a vivid joy. From the courtesy he had already received at their hands, he could not augur evil.

The Maroons, out of respect to their chief – whom they appeared to treat with submissive deference – had moved some distance away, leaving Captain Cubina alone with his English guest. The latter, with his gun shouldered, stood ready to depart.

“You are a stranger in the island?” said the Maroon, half interrogatively. “I fancy you have not been living long with your uncle?”

“No,” answered Herbert. “I never saw my uncle before yesterday afternoon.”

“*Crambo!*” exclaimed the hunter-captain in some surprise; “you have just arrived, then? In that case, Master Vaughan – and that is why I have made bold to ask you – you will scarce be able to find your way back to Mount Welcome. One of my people will go with you?”

“No, thank you. I think I can manage it alone.”

Herbert hesitated to say that he was not going to Mount Welcome.

“It is a crooked path,” urged the Maroon; “though straight

enough to one who knows it. You need not take the guide so far as the great house; though Mr Vaughan, I believe, does not object to our people going on his grounds, as some other planters do. You can leave the man when you get within sight of the place. Without a guide, I fear you will not be able to find the path.”

“In truth, Captain Cubina,” said Herbert, no longer caring what idea his words might communicate to his Maroon acquaintance, “I don’t wish to find the path you speak of. I’m not going that way.”

“Not to Mount Welcome?”

“No.”

The Maroon remained for a moment silent, while a puzzled expression played over his features. “Only arrived yesterday – out all night in the woods – not going back! Something strange in all this.”

Such were the quick reflections that passed through his mind.

He had already noticed an air of distraction – of dejection, too – in the countenance of the stranger. What could it mean? The gay ribbon knotted in the button-hole of his coat – what could that mean?

Captain Cubina was of the age – and perhaps just then in the very temper – to observe all matters that appeared indications of a certain soft sentiment; and both the blue ribbon and the thoughtful attitude were of that signification. He knew something of the white denizens of Mount Welcome – more, perhaps, of those with a coloured skin. Could the odd behaviour of the young

Englishman be attributed to some family difficulty that might have arisen there?

The Maroon mentally answered this interrogatory for himself: with the reflection that something of the kind had occurred.

Perhaps Captain Cubina was not merely guessing! Perhaps he had already listened to some whisper of plantation gossip: for electricity itself can scarce travel faster than news in the negro *quarter*!

If the hunter-captain had any suspicions as to the real position of his woodland guest, he was polite enough not to express them. On the contrary, he waived the opportunity given him by Herbert's ambiguous rejoinder, and simply said —

“If you are going elsewhere, you will need a guide all the same. This glade is surrounded by a wide stretch of tangled woods. There is no good path leading anywhere.”

“You are very kind,” answered Herbert, touched by the delicate solicitude of this man with a coloured skin. “I wish to reach Montego Bay; and if one of your men would set me on the main road, I should certainly feel under great obligations. As to rewarding him for his trouble, beyond thanking him, I am sorry to say that circumstances just now have placed it out of my power.”

“Master Vaughan!” said the Maroon, smiling courteously as he spoke, “were you not a stranger to us and our customs, I should feel offended. You speak as if you expected me to present you with a bill for your breakfast. You seem to forget that, scarce

an hour ago, you threw yourself before the muzzle of a pistol to protect the life of a Maroon – a poor outcast mulatto of the mountains! And now – but I forgive you. You know me not – ”

“Pardon me, Captain Cubina; I assure you – ”

“Say no more! I know your English heart, master – still uncorrupted by vile prejudices of caste and colour. Long may it remain so; and whether Captain Cubina may ever see you again, remember! that up yonder in the Blue Mountain,” – the Maroon pointed as he spoke to the purple outline of a mountain ridge, just visible over the tops of the trees – “up yonder dwells a man – a coloured man, it is true, but one whose heart beats with gratitude perhaps as truly as that of the whitest; and should you ever feel the fancy to honour that man with a visit, under his humble roof you will find both a friend and a welcome.”

“Thanks!” cried the young Englishman, stirred to enthusiasm by the free friendship of the yellow hunter. “I may some day avail myself of your hospitable offer. Farewell!”

“Farewell!” responded the Maroon, eagerly grasping the hand which Herbert had held out to him. “Quaco!” he cried, calling to his lieutenant, “conduct this gentleman to the main road that leads to the Bay. Farewell, Master Vaughan, and may fortune favour you!”

Volume One – Chapter Twenty Nine

Quaco

It was not without regret that Herbert parted with this new friend; and long time was he following upon the heels of Quaco, before he ceased to reflect on the circumstances that had led to his making so singular an acquaintance.

Quaco, being one of the taciturn sort, made no attempt to interrupt Herbert's meditations until the two had walked together for more than a mile. Then, however, some matter upon his mind brought the guide to a halt, and the commencement of a conversation.

"Two tracks from here, buckra. We can follow either; but dis to the right am the shortest – the best road, too."

"Why not take it, then?"

"O – a master; there may be reasons."

"What! for avoiding it?"

"Ya – a!" replied Quaco, in a thoughtful, drawling tone.

"What reasons, friend?"

"Don't you see the roof of a house – just over the tops of them pawpaws?"

"Yes – what of that?"

"That's the baracoon."

"The baracoon?"

“Ya – the penn of de Jew Jess’ron.”

“And what if it be?”

“Ah, buckra, what if it be? If we take the path to the right we must pass the Jew’s house, and some of his people are sure see us. That John Crow’s a justice of the peace, and we may get into trouble.”

“Oh! about the affair of the runaway, you mean? Your captain said he belonged to a Mr Jessuron.”

“As much ’bout the dogs as the man. Captain had a right to claim the runaway as his catch; but these Spanish cusses’ll make a muss ’bout thar dogs. They’ll say our captain killed them out o’ spite – that they’ll swar to; since it’s well-known we mountaineer men don’t like such interlopers here, meddlin’ with our business.”

“But neither you nor I killed the dogs?”

“All, buckra, all the same – you helped – your gun helped kill them. Besides, you hindered the John-Crows from pecking the hawk.”

“For what I have done I am not afraid to answer before a justice, – be it this Mr Jessuron, or any other,” said the young Englishman; conscious of having acted rightly in the part he had taken in the quarrel.

“Not much justice to be expected from Justice Jess’ron, master. My advice be to keep out of the hands of justice as long’s we can; and that we can only do by taking the road to the left.”

“Will it be much out of our way?” asked Herbert; not caring to greatly inconvenience himself for the reasons set forth by his

sable guide.

“Nothing to signify,” answered Quaco, though not speaking very truthfully: for the path he intended to take was really much longer than the one leading by Jessuron’s house.

“In that case,” assented Herbert, “take which way you please!”

Without further parley, Quaco strode forward on the path branching to the left – as before, silently followed by him whom he was guiding.

The track they had taken ran entirely through woods – in some places very difficult to traverse on account of the thorny thickets as well as the unevenness of the ground, which caused the path to be constantly ascending, or trending rapidly downward. At length, however, they arrived at the summit of a high ridge, and were moving onwards amidst groves of pimento, more open than the forest from which they had emerged.

From the top of the ridge, Herbert saw a large house shining against the verdant background of the landscape, which he at once recognised as the mansion of Mount Welcome.

They were not going towards the house, but in a diagonal direction, which would bring them out on the avenue near the entrance-gate.

Herbert called out to his guide to make halt. The young man did not like the idea of entering upon the avenue, lest he might encounter some of his uncle’s people – a circumstance which he should not wish to have reported at the great house. He therefore requested Quaco to conduct him by some way lying more to the

right – so that he might reach the main road without being seen from Mount Welcome.

The guide yielded compliance, though not without a little grumbling reluctance – as he turned off, muttering some words about giving “as wide a berth as possible to the ole Jew penn.”

He obliques, however, into a new direction; and after another traverse through the woods, Herbert had the satisfaction of finding himself on the main road leading to Montego Bay.

The young Englishman had no farther need of a guide, and Quaco was just on the point of taking leave of him, when at that moment a party of horsemen suddenly made appearance round a bend in the road. There were six or seven in all; and they were riding forward at a rapid pace, as if bent upon some serious business.

At the first sight of these strangers, Quaco shot like an arrow into the underwood – calling upon the buckra to follow his example.

Herbert, however, disdaining to hide himself, remained standing in the middle of the road.

Seeing his determination, Quaco returned to his side; as he did so, clamorously protesting against the imprudence of his *protégé*.

“Don’t like their looks,” muttered the Maroon, as he glanced apprehensively towards the horsemen. “It might be – by the Great Accompong it is! – that harpy Ravener, the overseer of Jess’ron. Golly! buckra, we’s in for it! No use tryin’ to ’scape ’em now.”

As Quaco finished speaking, the horsemen rode forward on

the ground – one and all halting as they came to the spot where the pedestrians were standing.

“Here’s our fellow!” cried the bearded man at their head, whom Herbert easily identified. “Just dropped upon him, like a duck upon a June bug. Now, Mr Tharpey, do your duty! We’ll hear what this young gentleman’s got to say before the justice.”

“I arrest you, sir,” said the person appealed to as Mr Tharpey. “I am head constable of the parish – I arrest you in the name of the law.”

“On what charge?” demanded Herbert, indignantly.

“Mr Ravener here will bring the charge. I’ve got nothing to do with that part of it. You must come before the nearest justice. I reckon the nighest justice from here is the Custos Vaughan?”

This half-interrogatory of the constable was addressed, not to Herbert, but to his own followers. Though it was spoken rather in an undertone, the young man heard it with sufficient distinctness, and with very little complacency. To be carried back into the presence of his uncle – whom he had so lately defied – and in the character of a felon; to be brought, under such humiliating circumstances, before the eyes of his fair cousin – before the eye-glass of his late fellow-passenger – was a prospect that could not fail to be unpleasant.

It was a sort of relief, therefore, when Ravener – who appeared to use some guiding influence over the constable and his *posse comitatus*– overruled the suggestion that Mr Vaughan was the nearest magistrate, and claimed that honour for Jacob Jessuron,

Esquire, of the Happy Valley.

After some discussion between the parties upon this moot legal point, the overseer's opinion was adopted: and it was determined that the case should be carried before Justice Jessuron.

Both Herbert and his guide were then formally arrested in the name of the king, and marched off in custody – not without some very vociferous protestations on the part of Quaco, with a long string of threats that he would some day make both constable and overseer pay for this outrage upon the person of a free Maroon.

Volume One – Chapter Thirty

A Jamaica Justice

Jessuron, Esquire, held court in the verandah of his dingy dwelling-house, where we have already seen him assisting at a different spectacle.

He was now seated, with a small table before him, covered with a piece of green baize, and carrying a gold snuff-box, an inkstand, pens, and some sheets of paper.

A book or two lay upon the table, one of which, by the lettering upon its cover, proclaimed its title and character — *The Jamaica Justice*. It was bound in black leather — a colour sufficiently emblematic of the chief subject on which it treated: for more than four-fifths of the laws and regulations it contained, related to creatures with black skins.

The Justice was in full costume, as the occasion required — that is, he wore his best blue body-coat with gilt buttons, his drab small-clothes and top-boots. The brownish beaver had been laid aside: as the sanctity of justice requires even the judge's head to be uncovered; but the white cotton skull-cap still remained upon his cranium; justice in Jamaica not being so rigorous as to exact its removal.

With the spectacles well set upon his nose, and his thin face screwed into an expression of pompous importance, Squire

Jessuron sate behind his bench, waiting till the parties to the suit should get well into their places.

He was sole justice present; but, of course, it was merely a “preliminary inquiry before a magistrate.” To have tried a white criminal on the serious charge brought against Herbert Vaughan, would have required a fuller bench – at least three magistrates, and one of them a *custos*.

Jessuron’s power could go no farther than to *commit* the presumed criminal to prison, until a more formal process should be organised against him.

Herbert had been brought up in front of the table – his captor, the constable, and one or two of the *posse* standing behind him. On the right side appeared Ravener, backed by the two Spanish *caçadores*; the last-mentioned worthies no longer – as had formerly been their constant custom – attended by their canine companions.

Quaco had been left in the yard below – unguarded – since there was, in reality, no charge against *him*.

There was one other witness to this magisterial trial – the daughter of the Justice himself. Yes, the fair Judith was present – as on all important occasions; but this time not conspicuously so. On the contrary, she was seated in a window that opened on the verandah, her beautiful face half-concealed behind the netted fringe-work of the curtains. The position enabled her to observe what was passing, without formally exposing her own person to view.

Her face was not altogether hidden; and her white shining forehead and dark lustrous eyes, gleaming through the gauzy muslin that veiled them, only appeared more piquantly attractive.

It was evident, from her actions, that the gentle Judith had no intention of remaining unseen. There were several rather good-looking men in the party that accompanied the constable – young planters he had picked up by the way – and who desired nothing better than a lark of this kind. From the moment that these had entered the courtyard, the fair mistress of the mansion had remained almost constantly by the window.

It was only, however, after the people had got grouped in the gallery, that she took her seat behind the curtain, and entered upon a more minute inspection of their faces and persons.

She was not long engaged in this game, when a change might have been observed passing over her countenance.

At first her eyes had wandered from face to face with rather a sneering, cynical expression – such as the Jewess well knew how to put on. All at once, however, her gaze became fixed; and the contemptuous smile gradually gave place to a look of more serious regard.

By following the direction of her eyes, the object of this regard could easily be discovered. It was the “prisoner at the bar!”

What was the meaning of that gaze? Sympathy for the accused?

She knew why the young man was there. Ravener had already informed her father of all that had transpired, and the daughter

had heard the tale. Was it a generous pity for the position in which this unknown youth was placed, that was now stirring within the breast of the fair Judith, and had produced that sudden change in the expression of her countenance? Hers was hardly the soul for such a sentiment.

Certainly, however, she was actuated by some motive different from the common: for as the trial progressed she no longer looked stealthily from behind the curtain; but having drawn it to one side, she directed her full glance on the stranger, and kept her eyes fixed upon him, apparently regardless of any observation which her conduct might call forth!

Her father, whose back was towards her, saw nothing of this; though it was not unnoticed by the others.

The young Englishman – though little disposed at that moment to the contemplation of aught beyond his own unpleasant position – could not help observing the beautiful face directly opposite to where he stood; nor did he fail to notice the peculiar glances with which he was being regarded.

Was the old man, before whom he stood on trial, the father of that fair creature at the window? Such was his interrogative reflection, as he glanced inquiringly from one to the other.

Some time had been occupied by the overseer in telling his story – to substantiate the charge he had made. That done, the prisoner was put upon his defence.

“Young man!” said the Justice, “you have heard what this witness alleges against you. What have you to say in your

defence? And first tell ush what's your name?"

"Herbert Vaughan."

Jessuron re-adjusted his spectacles, and looked at the prisoner with some show of surprise. The bystanders – stolid constable and all – seemed a little startled. Quaco, whose colossal form rose above the railings in the background, uttered a grunt of satisfaction on hearing the young man's name – which he had not known before – a name all-powerful in the district, being that of the mighty Custos himself!

There was one upon whom the words appeared to produce an impression different from that of mere surprise. A glance of anger shot from the dark eyes of the Jewess as she heard it pronounced, and the look of sympathy for the moment disappeared. Evidently, to her the name was distasteful.

"Herbert Vochan?" repeated the Justice. "Might you be any kinshman of Mishter Vochan of Mount Welcome?"

"His nephew," was the laconic reply.

"Ah! hish nephew! Bless me! ish that true?"

This announcement, as testified by his speech, produced a sudden commotion in the mind of the Jew-justice. From some little that was known of his secret hostility towards his neighbour of Mount Welcome – Ravener knew more than a little – it might have been expected that the discovery of the relationship of the prisoner would have put him in high glee. To be sitting in judgment upon the near kinsman of the Custos – accused of a serious crime, too – was a proud position for Jacob Jessuron, who

could remember many a slight he had received from the haughty lord of Mount Welcome. What a splendid *revanche*!

Certainly the manner of the Justice, on learning who was before him, seemed to indicate that such were his reflections. He rubbed his skinny hands together; helped himself from his gold snuff-box; gleefully smiled from behind his glasses, which were once more shifted upon the sharp ridge of his nose; and then, bending his face forward over the table, he remained for some moments smiling, but silent and thoughtful, as if considering how he should proceed.

After a time he raised his eyes, and freshly scrutinised the prisoner – who had already returned an affirmative answer to his last query.

“Blesh my soul! – I never knew that Mishter Vochan had a nephew! You are from England, young man? Hash your uncle any more English nephews?”

“Not that I am aware of,” replied Herbert, frankly. “I believe I am his only relative of that kind – in England, at least.”

The proviso in this reply betrayed a significant fact: that the young man was not very well acquainted with the family affairs of his colonial kinsman.

The astute Justice did not fail to notice this deficiency in the nephew’s knowledge.

“How long hash you been in Shamaica?” asked he, as if endeavouring to arrive at an explanation of some point that was puzzling him.

“A night, and part of two days – in all, about twenty-four hours,” replied Herbert, with scrupulous exactness.

“Blesh my soul!” again exclaimed the Justice; “only twenty-four hours! It’s a wonder you’re not at your uncle’s house? You hash been there?”

“Oh, yes,” answered Herbert, carelessly.

“You come to shtay at Mount Welcome, I suppose?”

Herbert made no reply to this interrogatory. “You shleep there lash night? Excushe me young man, for ashking the question, but ash a magistrate – ”

“You are perfectly welcome to the answer, *your worship*,” said Herbert, laying a satirical emphasis on the titular phrase; “I did *not* sleep there last night.”

“Where did you shleep then?”

“In the woods,” answered Herbert.

“Moshesh!” exclaimed the Jew-justice, raising his spectacles in surprise. “In the woods, you shay?”

“In the woods,” re-affirmed the young man; “under a tree; and a very good bed I found it,” he added, jocosely.

“And did your uncle know of thish?”

“I suppose my uncle knew nothing about it, and as little did he care,” replied Herbert, with a reckless indifference as to what answer he gave.

The bitter emphasis on the last words, with the tone in which they were delivered, did not escape the observation of Jessuron. A suspicion had arisen in his mind, that there was something

amiss in the relationship between the young man and his uncle; to the comprehension of which the answer of the former, aided by a knowledge of the character and affairs of the latter, was gradually giving him a clue. A secret joy sparkled in his sunken eyes, as he listened to the last answer given.

All at once he discontinued the direct examination of the prisoner; and, signing to Ravener and the constable to come near, he became engaged with these two worthies in a whispering conversation.

What passed between the trio, the young Englishman could not tell – nor indeed any one else who chanced to be present. The result, however, was to Herbert as pleasant as unexpected.

When Jessuron again returned to address him, a complete change appeared to have taken place in his manner; and, instead of the frowning Justice, Herbert now saw before him a man who appeared more in the character of a friendly protector – bland, smiling, almost obsequious!

“Mashter Vochan,” said he – rising from his magisterial seat, and extending his hand to the prisoner – “you will excushe the rough treatment you hash had from theshe people. It ish a great crime in thish country – helping a runaway shlave to eshcape; but as you hash joosh landed, and cannot be ekshpected to know our shtatutes, the law deals mershifully with a firshst offence. Besides, in thish instance, the runaway – who ish one of my own shlaves – did not eshcape. He ish in the hands of the Maroons, and will soon be brought in. The punishment I inflict upon you

– and I shall insist upon its being carried out – ish, that you eat your dinner with me, and – I think that ish punishment enough. Mishter Ravener,” added he, calling to his overseer, and at the same time, pointing to Quaco, “take that good fellow and see that he ish cared for. Now, Mashter Vochan! please to step inside, and allow me to introduce you to my daughter Shoodith.”

It would have been contrary to all human nature had Herbert Vaughan not felt gratified at the pleasant turn which this disagreeable affair had taken; and perhaps this gratification was enhanced at the prospect of the proposed introduction. Indeed, no man, however cold his nature, could have looked upon those lovely eyes – so long wistfully watching him from the window – without wishing a nearer acquaintance with their owner.

The angry glance had been evanescent. It was gone long before the conclusion of the trial scene; and as the young Englishman – in obedience to the invitation of his *ci-devant* judge – stepped across the verandah, the fair face, retreating from the window, was suffused with the sweetest and most sympathetic of smiles.

Volume One – Chapter Thirty One

An Unexpected Patron

Thus had the chapter of accidents that conducted Herbert Vaughan to the penn of Jacob Jessuron been brought to a very unexpected termination.

But the end was not yet. There was more to come – much more.

Herbert was surprised at the turn things had taken. The only explanation he could think of was, that it was to his uncle's name he was indebted for the honours that were being done to him – a mere neighbourly feeling of the penn-keeper for the great sugar-planter.

“They are friends,” thought Herbert, “and this kindness to me is the offspring of that friendship.”

The reflection did not give him pleasure, but the contrary. He felt himself in an awkward position – the recipient of a hospitality not meant for himself, but rather for one who had injured him; and who, although his own relative, he now regarded as his enemy.

His uncle would hear of it – no doubt, soon – and would be able to accuse him of taking advantage of his name. The thought caused Herbert a feeling of uneasiness.

Perhaps he would have cared less had there been no one but

his uncle to be cognisant of the false position. But there was. His short and troubled visit to Mount Welcome had made Herbert Vaughan acquainted with one whose remembrance was likely for a long time to exert an influence over his thoughts – even though lips as red, and eyes, perhaps, as brilliant as hers, were now smiling courteously upon him.

The memory of his cousin Kate was still mellow. He could fancy her soft, sweet voice yet ringing in his ears; the warm glow of her virgin presence seemed hanging like a halo around him: all urging him to preserve the heroism of his character, if only for the sake of standing well in her estimation.

Influenced by these considerations, he resolved to throw off the mask with which circumstances had momentarily invested him, and declare the true position in which he stood to his haughty relative.

It was not until the conclusion of the dinner – after the daughter of his host had retired smilingly from the table – that the young Englishman unburdened himself. Then – perhaps a little prompted by the wine – he made a full confession of the disagreeable circumstances existing between himself and the master of Mount Welcome.

Was it the wine – somewhat freely pressed upon him – that hindered him from perceiving the displeasure which his communication had produced upon his hearer? Was there any show of displeasure?

If there was, Herbert did not perceive it.

On the contrary, had the young man been closely observant, he might have noticed an effect of altogether an opposite character. Behind the green goggles, he might have seen those deep dark Israelitish eyes sparkling with joy at the revelation he had made.

"I'm exsheedingly sorry, young Mashter Vochan," said the Jew, after his surprise at Herbert's revelations had apparently subsided – "exsheedingly sorry I ish – to hear that you and your uncle are not on good terms. Ah! well; we mush hope for the besht; and ash I am one of Mishter Vochan's humble friendsh, possibly I might do somethingsh to reconshile your little quarrel. Doosh you not intend going back to Mount Welcome?"

"Never. After what has passed, never!"

"Ach! yoush musht not be too revengeful. Mishter Vochan ish a proud man; and I musht say he hash behaved badly – very badly; but still he ish your uncle."

"He has not acted as such."

"That ish true – very true – thish fine gentleman you shpeak of – shtill, that ish no reason why Mishter Vochan should treat hish own nephew so shabby. Well, well – I am sorry – exsheedingly sorry. But, Mashter Herbert," continued the penn-keeper, interrogating his guest with evident interest, "what *dosh* you intend to do? I supposhe you hash monish of your own?"

"I am sorry to say, Mr Jessuron, I have not."

"No monish at all!"

"Not a shilling," affirmed Herbert, with a careless laugh.

"That *ish* bad. Where dosh you think of going – since you shay

you will not return to Mount Welcome?”

“Well,” said Herbert, still preserving his air of jocularly, “I was making for the port again, when your worthy overseer and his friends intercepted me – luckily, I may say: since, but for their intervention, I should in all likelihood have gone without dinner to-day – at all events, I should not have dined so sumptuously.”

“A wretched dinner, Mashter Vochan – a miserably dinner to what your uncle could have given you. I’m but a poor humble man compared with the Cushtos; but what I hash ish at your service any time.”

“Thanks!” said Herbert. “I know not, Mr Jessuron, how I shall ever repay you for your hospitality. I must not tax it any longer, however. I see, by the sun, it is time I should be making for the Bay.”

As Herbert spoke, he was rising to take his departure.

“Shtop, shtop!” cried his host, pushing him back into his chair; “not to-night, Mashter Vochan, not thish night. I can’t promish you ash fine a bed as yoush might get at Mount Welcome, but I think I can give you a better ash you shleep in lash night – ha, ha! You musht stay with ush thish night; and Shoodith will make you some music. Don’t shay a word; I takesh no refushal.”

The offer was a tempting one; and, after some further pressure, Herbert acquiesced in it. He was partly influenced to stay where he was, by the poor prospect of a lodging which the Bay afforded him; and, perhaps, a little from a desire to hear the promised music.

The conversation was continued, by his host putting some further interrogatories: – How did Herbert intend to employ himself in the Bay? What prospect had he of employment; and in what line?

“I fear not much in any *line*,” replied the young man, answering both questions in one, and in a tone of sarcastic despondence.

“Hash you no profeshion?”

“Alas, no!” replied Herbert. “It was intended by my father I should have one; but he died before my education was completed; and my college – as is too often the case – has taught me little more than a knowledge of dead languages.”

“No ushe – no ushe whatever,” rejoined the intelligent Israelite.

“I can draw a landscape,” pursued the young man, modestly, “or paint a portrait tolerably well, I believe – my father himself taught me these accomplishments.”

“Ah! Mashter Vochan, neither ish of the shlightest ushe here in Shamaica. If you could paint a house, or a waggon, or a shopkeeper’s sh sign, it would bring you more monish than to make the likeneshes of every face in the island. What saysh you to the situation of book-keeper?”

“Unfortunately, I know nothing of accounts. The very useful science of book-keeping I have not been taught.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” replied Jessuron, with an encouraging chuckle, “you ish what we, in Shamaica, call *green*, Mashter Vochan. You

musht know that a book-keeper here hash no books to keep. He doesh not even put a pen to paper.”

“How is that, Mr Jessuron? I have heard the statement before, though I did not comprehend what was meant by it.”

“Then I musht explain, Mashter Vochan. There ish a law here which makes all proprietors of shlaves keep a white man on hish estate for every fifty blacksh. A very shilly law it ish; but it ish a law. Theesh white supernumeraries are called book-keepers: though, ash I’ve told you, they keepsh no books. Now you understand what it meansh.”

“Then, what duties do they perform?”

“Oh! that depends on circumshtances. Some look after the shlaves, and some do thish and some that. But, egad! now I think of it, Mashter Vochan, I am myshelf in need of a book-keeper. I have joosh bought a new lot of blacksh, and I musht not break the law. I am ushed to give my book-keepers fifty poundsh a-year, currenshy; but if you would be content to accept such a berth, I would make the salary – on account of your uncle – a hundred poundsh a-year. You would also be found in everything elshe. What dosh you shay, Mashter Vochan?”

This unexpected proposal on the part of the penn-keeper, caused his guest to hesitate and reflect.

Not long, however. His forlorn, homeless situation presented itself too forcibly to his mind, to keep him long in doubt as to what answer he should make.

Suffice it to say, that the offer – which to the young

Englishman appeared only too generous – was accepted; and from that hour the Happy Valley became his home.

Volume One – Chapter Thirty Two

A Plotting Parent

Jacob Jessuron was never known to be generous without expecting some reward. Never did he fling out a sprat without the expectation of catching a salmon.

What object had he in view in thus becoming the patron and protector of the young Englishman – an outcast adventurer, apparently incapable of making him any return? Why such liberal conditions unasked, and to all appearance unmerited – for, to say the truth, Herbert Vaughan was not the stuff for a *slave-driver*, a term almost synonymous with that of *book-keeper*.

No doubt the Jew had some deep scheme; but in this, as in most other matters, he kept his counsel to himself. Even his “precious Shoodith” was but half-initiated into his designs upon this special subject: though a conversation, which occurred between father and daughter, had placed before the latter some data calculated to assist her in guessing at them.

The date of this dialogue was upon the morning after Herbert’s arrival at the penn.

“Show the young man every kindness, Shoodith dear! Don’t shpare pains to pleashe him.”

“Why particularly *him*, my worthy parent?”

“Hush! mine Shoodith! Shpeak low, for the luf of Gott! Don’t

let him hear you talk in that shtyle. Theesh young Englishmen are not ushed to our ways. I hash a reason for being friendly to him.”

“What! because he is the nephew of Vanity Vaughan? Is that your reason, rabbi?”

“I shay, shpeak low! He’s in his shleeping room, and may hear you. A single word like that you shay might shpoil all my plans.”

“Well, father, I’ll talk in whispers, if you like. But what *are* your plans? You’ll let *me* know them, I suppose?”

“I will, Shoodith, but not shoost now. I hash an idea, mine daughter – a grand idea, it ish! And if all goes right, you, Shoodith, will be the richest woman in Shamaica.”

“Oh, I have no objection to that – to be the richest woman in Jamaica, with a prince for my footman! Who won’t envy Judith Jessuron, the daughter of the slave-merchant?”

“Shtay! a word about that, Shoodith dear. In hish presence we musht say as little ash possible upon the subject of shlaves. He musht see no shlave-whipping here – at leasht till he gets ushed to it. Ravener musht be told to behave himshelf. I knowsh of more than one young Englishmans who left his place joosh for that very thing. He needn’t go among the field handsh at all. I’ll take care of that. But, dearest Shoodith! everything depends on you; and I knowsh you can, if you will.”

“Can what, worthy father?”

“Make this young fellow satisfied to shtay with ush.”

The look which accompanied these words betokened some other meaning, than what they might have literally conveyed.

“Well,” replied Judith, affecting to understand them literally, “I fancy there will not be much difficulty about that. If he’s as poor as you say, he’ll only be too well pleased to get a good situation, and keep it, too, I should think.”

“T’sh not so sure about that. He’sh a young man of a proud spirit. That ish proved by hish leaving his uncle ash he has done – without a shilling in hish pocket – and then to defy the Cushtos faysh to faysh! Blesh my soul! what a foolish young fellow he ish! He must be managed, Shoodith, dear – he must be managed; and you’re shoost the one to do it.”

“Why, father, to hear you talk, one would think that this poor young Englishman was a rich sugar estate – to be managed for some grand profit – ”

“Aha!” exclaimed the other, interrupting her; “maybe yesh – maybe he *ish* a rich sugar estate. We shee – we shee.”

“Now, had it been the grand guest of Mount Welcome,” continued Judith, without heeding the interruption; “had it been this lord of Montagu Castle that you wished me to *manage*,” – at the word the Jewess smiled significantly – “I might have come nearer comprehending you.”

“Ah! there is no schance there – no schance whatever, Shoodith.”

“No chance of what?” abruptly inquired the Jewess.

“Why, no schance of – that ish – ”

“Come, worthy rabbi, speak out! You needn’t be afraid to tell me of what you’re thinking: I know it already.”

“Of what wash I thinking, Shoodith?” The father put this question rather with a view to escape from an explanation. The daughter instantaneously answered,

“You were thinking, and I suppose still are, that I – your daughter, the child of an old nigger-dealer as you are – would have no chance with this aristocratic stranger who has arrived – this Mr Montagu Smythje. That’s your thought, Jacob Jessuron?”

“Well, Shoodith, dear! you know he ish to be the guesht of the Cushtos; and the Cushtos, ash I hash reason to know, hash an eye on him for his own daughter. Miss Vochan is thought a great belle, and it would be no ushe for ush to ashpire – ”

“She a belle!” exclaimed the Jewess, with a proud toss of her head, and a slight upturning of her beautiful spiral nostril; “she was not the belle of the last ball at the Bay – not she, indeed; and as for *aspiring*, the daughter of a slave-dealer is at least equal to the daughter of a slave – maybe a slave herself – ”

“Hush, Shoodith! not a word about that – not a whisper in the hearing of thish young man. You know he ish her cousin. Hush!”

“I don’t care if he was her brother,” rejoined the Jewess, still speaking in a tone of spiteful indignation – for Kate Vaughan’s beauty was Judith Jessuron’s especial fiend; “and if he were her brother,” continued she, “I’d treat him worse than I intend to do. Fortunately for him, he’s only her cousin; and as he has quarrelled with them all, I suppose – has he said anything of *her*?”

The interrogatory was put as if suggested by some sudden thought – and the questioner seemed to wait with considerable

anxiety for the answer.

“Of his cousin Kate, you mean?”

“Why, who should I mean!” demanded Judith, bluntly. “There is no other *she* in Mount Welcome the young fellow is likely to be talking about; nor *you* either – unless, indeed, you’ve still got that copper-coloured wench in your head. Of course, it’s Kate Vaughan I mean. What says he of her? He must have seen her – short as his visit seems to have been; and, if so, you must have talked about her last night – since you sat late enough to have discussed the whole scandal of the island.”

With all this freedom of verbiage, the Jewess seemed not to lose sight of the original interrogatory; and her frequent repetition of it was rather intended to conceal the interest with which she looked for the answer. If her words did not betray that interest, her looks certainly did: for, as she bent forward to listen, a skilled observer might have detected in her eyes that sort of solicitude which springs from a heart where the love-passion is just beginning to develop itself – budding, but not yet blooming.

“True, Shoodith, true,” admitted the slave-merchant, thus bantered by his own bold offspring. “The young man did speak of his cousin; for I hash a wish to know what wash his opinion of her, and ashked him. I wash in hopes he had quarrelled with her too; but, ach! no – he hashn’t – he hashn’t.”

“What might that signify to you?”

“Moch, moch, daughter Shoodith; a great deal.”

“You’re a mysterious old man, father Jacob; and, though

I've been studying you for nearly a score of years, I don't half understand you yet. But what did he say of Kate Vaughan? He saw her, I suppose?"

"Yesh. He had an interview with her. He saysh she behaved very kind to him. He'sh not angry with *her*. S'help me, no!"

This information appeared to produce no very pleasant impression upon the Jewess; who, with her eyes downcast upon the floor, remained for some moments in a thoughtful attitude.

"Father," she said, in a tone half serious, half in simplicity, "the young fellow has got a bit of blue ribbon in his button-hole. You have noticed it, I suppose? I am curious to know what he means by wearing that. Is it an order, or what? Did he tell you?"

"No. I notished it; but, ash he shayed nothings about it, I did not ashk him. It'sh no order – nothing of the kind. His father was only a poor artisht."

"I wonder where he procured that piece of ribbon?" said Judith, speaking in a low tone, and half in soliloquy.

"You can ashk him for yourself, Shoodith. There ish no harm in that."

"No, not I," answered Judith, suddenly changing countenance, as if ashamed of having shown the weakness of curiosity. "What care I for him, or his ribbon?"

"No matter for that, Shoodith, dear; no matter for that, if yoush can make him *care for you*."

"Care for *me*! What, father! do you want him to fall in love with me?"

“Joosh that – joosh so.”

“For what reason, pray?”

“Don’t ash know. I hash a purpose. You shall know it in good time, Shoodith. You make him in luff with you – over head and earsh, if you like.”

The counsel did not appear averse to her who received it. Anything but displeasure was in her looks as she listened to it.

“But what,” asked she, after a reflective pause, and laughing as she spake, “what if, in luring him, I should myself fall into the lure? They say that the tarantula is sometimes taken in its own trap.”

“If you succeed in catching your fly, mine goot shpider Shoodith, that won’t signify. So much the better ish that. But fusht catch your fly. Don’t let go the shtrings of your heart, till you hash secured hish; and then you may do as you pleashe about falling in luff with him. Hush! I hear him coming from hish shamber. Now, Shoodith dear, show him every reshpect. Shower on him your sweetest of shmiles!”

And terminating the dialogue with this parental injunction, Jacob Jessuron walked off to conduct his guest into the great hall.

“Ah! worthy father!” said Judith, looking after him with a singular expression upon her countenance, “for once, you may find me a dutiful daughter; though not for you or your purpose – whatever that may be. I have my suspicion of what it is. No: not for that either – grand destiny as it might be deemed. There is something grander still – a passion perilous to play with; and

just for that peril shall I play with it. Ha – he comes! How proud his step! He looks the master, and yon old Israelite his overseer – his book-keeper – ha! ha! ha!”

“Ach!” she exclaimed, suddenly checking her laughter, and changing her smile to a frown; “the ribbon! he wears it still! What can it mean? No matter now! Ere long I shall unravel the skein of its silken mystery – even if this heart should be torn in the attempt!”

Volume One – Chapter Thirty Three

Another of the Same

On that same morning, and about the same hour, a scene of remarkable parallelism was passing at Mount Welcome. Loftus Vaughan was holding dialogue with his daughter, as Jacob Jessuron with Judith – the subject very similar – the motives of planter and penn-keeper equally mean.

“You have sent for me, papa?” said Kate, entering the great hall in obedience to a summons from her father.

“Yes, Catherine,” replied Mr Vaughan, in a tone of unwonted gravity.

The grave tone was not needed. The “Catherine” was enough to tell Kate that her father was in one of his serious moods: for it was only when in this vein, that he ever pronounced her baptismal name in full.

“Sit down there,” he proceeded, pointing to a fauteuil in front of where he was himself seated. “Sit down, my daughter, and listen: I have something of importance to say to you.”

The young lady obeyed in silence, and not without a little of that reluctant *gaucherie* which patients display when seating themselves in front of a physician, or a naughty child composing itself to listen to the parental lecture.

The natural gaiety of “Lilly Quasheba” was not easily

restrained; and though the unusual gravity depicted in her father's face might have checked it, the formality with which he was initiating the interview had an opposite effect. At the corners of her pretty little mouth might have been observed something that resembled a smile.

Her father did observe something that resembled it.

"Come, Catherine!" said he, reprovingly, "I have called you out to talk over a serious matter. I expect you to listen seriously, as becomes the subject."

"Oh! papa, how can I be serious, till I know the subject? You are not ill, I hope?"

"Tut, no – no. It has nothing to do with my health – which, thank Providence, is good enough – nor yours neither. It is our wealth, not our health, that is concerned – our wealth, Catherine!"

The last phrase was uttered with emphasis, and in a confidential way, as if to enlist his daughter's sympathies upon the subject.

"Our wealth, papa? I hope nothing has happened? You have had no losses?"

"No, child," replied Mr Vaughan, now speaking in a fond, parental tone; "nothing of the sort, thanks to fortune, and perhaps a little to my own prudence. It is not losses I am thinking about, but gains."

"Gains!"

"Ay, gains – gains, Catherine, which you can assist me in

obtaining.”

“I, papa? How could I assist you? I know nothing of business – I am sure I know nothing.”

“Business! ha! ha! It’s not business, Kate. The part which you will have to play will be one of pleasure – I hope so, at least.”

“Pray tell me what it is, papa! I am sure I’m fond of pleasure at all times – everybody knows that.”

“Catherine!” said her father, once more adopting the grave tone, “do you know how old you are?”

“Certainly, papa! at least, what I have been told. Eighteen – just past last birthday.”

“And do you know what young girls should, and generally do, think about, when they come to be of that age?”

Kate either affected or felt profound ignorance of the answer she was expected to make.

“Come!” said Mr Vaughan, banteringly, “you know what I mean, Catherine?”

“Indeed, papa, I do not. You know I keep no secrets from you; you taught me not. If I had any, I would tell them to you.”

“I know you’re a good girl, Kate. I know you would. But that is a sort of secret I should hardly expect you to declare – even to me, your father.”

“Pray what is it, papa?”

“Why, at your age, Kate, most girls – and it is but right and natural they should – take to thinking about a young man.”

“Oh! that is what you mean! Then I can answer you, papa, that

I have taken to thinking about one.”

“Ha!” ejaculated Mr Vaughan, in a tone of pleased surprise; “you have, have you?”

“Yes, indeed,” answered Kate, with an air of the most innocent *naïveté*. “I have been thinking of one – and so much, that he is scarce ever out of my mind.”

“Ha!” said the Custos, repeating his exclamation of surprise, and rather taken aback by a confession so unexpectedly candid. “Since how long has this been, my child?”

“Since how long?” rejoined Kate, musingly.

“Yes. When did you first begin to think of this young man?”

“Oh! the day before yesterday, after dinner – ever since I first saw him, father.”

“At dinner you first saw him,” said Mr Vaughan, correcting his daughter. “But, no matter for that,” he continued, gleefully rubbing his hands together, and not noticing the puzzled expression upon Kate’s countenance. “It might be, that you did not think of him in the first moments of your introduction. It’s not often people do. A little bashfulness has to be got over. And so then, Kate, you like him now – you think you like him now?”

“Oh! father, you may be sure I do – better than any one I ever saw – excepting yourself, dear papa.”

“Ah! my little chit, that’s a different sort of liking – altogether different. The one’s love – the other is but filial affection – each very well in its place. Now, as you’re a good girl, Kate, I have a bit of pleasant news for you.”

“What is it, papa?”

“I don’t know whether I should tell you or not,” said the Custos, playfully patting his daughter upon the cheek; “at least, not now, I think. It might make you too happy.”

“Oh, papa! I have told you what you wished me; and I see it has made you happy. Surely you will not conceal what you say will do the same for me? What is the news?”

“Listen, then, Kate!”

Mr Vaughan bending forward, as if to make his communication more impressive, pronounced in a whisper: —

“He reciprocates your feeling — *he likes you!*”

“Father, I fear he does not,” said the young Creole, with a serious air.

“He does – I tell you so, girl. He’s over head and ears in love with you. I know it. In fact, I saw it from the first minute. A blind man might have perceived it; but then a blind man can see better than a young lady that’s in love. Ha! ha! ha!”

Loftus Vaughan laughed long and loudly at the jest he had so unexpectedly perpetrated: for at that moment he was in the very mood for merriment. His dearest dream was about to be realised. Montagu Smythje was in love with his daughter. That he knew before. Now his daughter had more than half admitted – in fact, quite confessed – that she liked Smythje; and what was *liking* but *love*?

“Yes, Kate,” said he, as soon as his exultation had to some extent subsided, “you are blind, you little silly – else you might

have seen it before. His behaviour would show how much he cares for you.”

“Ah! father, I think that his behaviour would rather show that he cares not for either of us. He is too proud to care for any one.”

“What! too proud? Nonsense! it’s only his way. Surely he has not shown anything of that to you, Kate?”

“I cannot blame him,” continued the young girl, still speaking in a serious tone. “The fault was not his. Your treatment of him, father – you must not be angry at me for telling you of it – now that I know all, dear papa – was it not enough to make him act as he has done?”

“My treatment of him!” cried the Custos, with a self-justifying, but puzzled look. “Why, child, you rave! I could not treat him better, if I was to try ever so. I have done everything to entertain him, and make him feel at home here. As to what *he* has done, it’s all nonsense about his pride: at least, with us he has shown nothing of the kind. On the contrary, he is acting admirably throughout the whole matter. Certainly, no man could behave with more politeness to you than Mr Smythje is doing?”

“Mr Smythje!”

The entrance of this gentleman at the moment prevented Mr Vaughan from noticing the effect which the mention of his name had produced: an unexpected effect, as might have been seen by the expression which Kate’s features had suddenly assumed.

But for that interruption – hindering the *éclaircissement* which, no doubt, his daughter would on the instant have made – Mr

Vaughan might have sat down to breakfast with his appetite considerably impaired.

His guest requiring all his attention, caused him to withdraw suddenly from the dialogue; and he appeared neither to have heard the exclamatory repetition of Smythje's name, nor the words uttered by Kate in a lower tone, as she turned towards the table: —

“I thought it was Herbert!”

Volume One – Chapter Thirty Four

A Sweetheart Expected

The departure of the young Englishman, under the conduct of Quaco, was a signal for the black band to disperse.

At a word from their chief, they broke up into knots of two or three individuals each; and went off in different directions – disappearing amid the underwood as silently as they had emerged from it.

Cubina alone remained in the glade, the captured runaway cowering upon a log beside him.

For some minutes, the Maroon captain stood resting upon his gun – which one of his followers had brought up – his eyes fixed upon the captive. He appeared to be meditating what course he should pursue in relation to the unfortunate slave; and the shadow upon his countenance told that some thought was troubling him.

The Maroon captain felt himself in a dilemma. His duty was in conflict with his desires. From the first, the face of the captive had interested him; and now that he had time to scan it more narrowly, and observe its noble features, the idea of delivering him up to such a cruel master, as he whose initials he bore upon his breast, became all the more repugnant.

Duty demanded him to do so. It was the law of the land – one of the terms of the treaty by which the Maroons were bound

– and disobedience to that law would be certain to meet with punishment stringent and severe.

True, there was a time when a Maroon captain would have held obedience to this law more lightly; but that was before the conquest of Trelawney town – or rather its traitorous betrayal – followed by the basest banishment recorded among men.

That betrayal had brought about a change. The Maroons who had avoided the forced exile, and still remained in the mountain fastnesses, though preserving their independence, were no longer a powerful people – only a mere remnant, whose weakness rendered them amenable, not only to the laws of the island, but to the tyranny and caprice of such planter-justices as might choose to persecute them.

Such was the position of Cubina and his little band, who had established themselves in the mountains of Trelawney.

With the Maroon captain, therefore, it was a necessity as well as a duty, to deliver up the runaway captive. Failing to do so, he would place his own liberty in peril. He knew this, without the threat which Ravener had fulminated in such positive terms.

His interest also lay in the line of his duty. This also he could understand. The captive was a prize for which he would be entitled to claim a reward – the *bounty*.

Not for a moment was he detained by this last consideration. The prospect of the reward would have had no weight with him whatever; it would not even have cost him a reflection, but that, just then, and for a very singular purpose, Cubina required

money.

This purpose was revealed in a soliloquy that at that moment escaped from his lips.

“*Crambo!*” he muttered, using an exclamation of the Spanish tongue, still found in a corrupted form among the Maroons; “if it wasn’t that I have to make up the purchase-money of Yola — *Por Dios!* he is as like to Yola as if he was her brother! I warrant he is of the same nation – perhaps of her tribe. Two or three times he has pronounced the word *Foolah*. Besides, his colour, his shape, his hair – all like hers. No doubt of it, he’s a Foolah.”

The last word was uttered so loud as to reach the ear of the runaway.

“Yah! Foolah, Foolah!” he exclaimed, turning his eyes appealingly upon his captor. “No slave – no slave!” added he, striking his hand upon his breast as he repeated the words.

“Slave! no slave!” echoed the Maroon, with a start of surprise; “that’s English enough. They’ve taught him the ugly word.”

“Foolah me – no slave!” again exclaimed the youth, with a similar gesture to that he had already made.

“Something curious in this,” muttered the Maroon, musingly. “What can he mean by saying he is no slave – for that is certainly what he is trying to say? Slave he must be; else how did he get here? I’ve heard that a cargo has been just landed, and that the old Jew got most or all of them. This young fellow must be one of that lot. Very likely he’s picked up the words aboard ship. Perhaps he is speaking of what he was in his own country. Ah,

poor devil! he'll soon find the difference here!

“*Santos Dios!*” continued the Maroon, after a pause, in which he had been silently regarding the countenance of the newly-arrived African. “It’s a shame to make a slave of such as he – a hundred times more like a freeman than his master. Poor fellow! it’s a hard row he’ll have to hoe. I feel more than half-tempted to risk it, and save him from such a fate.”

As this half-determination passed through the mind of the Maroon, a noble and proud expression came over his features.

“If they had not seen him in my possession;” he continued to reflect; “but the overseer and those Spanish poltroons know all, and will – Well, let them! – at all events I shall not take him back till I’ve seen Yola. No doubt she can talk to him. If he’s Foolah she can. We’ll hear what he’s got to say, and what this ‘no slave’ means.”

On saying this, the speaker turned his eyes upward; and appeared for some moments to scan the sun.

“Good,” he exclaimed. “It is near the hour. I may expect her at any moment. Oh! I must have him out of sight, and these dead dogs, too, or my timid pet will be frayed. There’s been so much doing about here – blood and fire – she will scarcely know the old trysting-place. Hark you, Foolah! Come this way, and squat yourself in here till I call you out again.”

To the runaway the gestures of his captor were more intelligible than his words. He understood by them that he was required to conceal himself between the buttresses of the *ceiba*;

and, rising from the log, he readily obeyed the requisition.

The Maroon captain seized the tail of one of the dead bloodhounds; and, after trailing the carcass for some distance across the glade, flung it into a covert of bushes.

Returning to the *ceiba*, in a similar manner he removed the other; and then, once more cautioning the runaway to remain silent in his concealment, he awaited the approach of her who had given him assignation.

Volume One – Chapter Thirty Five

A Love Scene under the Ceiba

The lover who is beloved need never fear disappointment. True to her tryst, and punctual to the time, did the expected sweetheart make her appearance within the glade.

With shy but graceful mien, she advanced towards the *ceiba*, and with sufficient firmness of step to show that she came not in doubt. A smile, confident and slightly coquettish, dancing in her dark eyes, and playing upon her prettily-curved lips, told of a love already plighted – at the same time betokening full faith in the vows that had been exchanged.

Cubina stepped forth to receive her; and the lovers met in the open ground, at some distance from the tree. Their demeanour at meeting told that it was not their first assignation; but that oftentimes before had they been together in that same rendezvous.

The presence of the runaway – not seen, however, from the spot – did not hinder Cubina from saluting his sweetheart with a kiss, nor prevent him from folding her for a short moment in his arms.

That spasm of exquisite pleasure passed, the dialogue began. The girl spoke first.

“Oh, Cubina! news I have tell.”

“Come, my love – what news? Ah! you are looking grave,

Yola; your news is not very joyful, I fear?"

"No, not joyful – bad news."

"Let me hear them, love. Something Cynthy has been saying to you? You shouldn't heed what that girl says."

"No, Cubina, I no care what her me tell. I her know, wicked, bad girl. Not Cynthy say that thing me trouble now. Missa Kate me tell."

"Ah! something Miss Vaughan has told you? I wouldn't look for bad news from her. But what is it, dear Yola? Maybe, after all, it's nothing?"

"Ah! yes, Cubina, something. I fear me keep from you long, long time."

"Keep you from me! Surely Miss Vaughan don't object to your meeting me?"

"No – not that. Something I fear me hinder from be – ."

"Be what?" inquired the lover, seeing that his sweetheart hesitated to pronounce some word, the thought of which was causing her to blush. "Come, dear Yola, don't fear to tell *me*. You know we're engaged. There should be no secret between us. What were you going to say?"

In a low, murmured voice, and looking lovingly in his eyes as she spoke, the girl pronounced the word "marry."

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed the lover, in a confident tone. "I think nothing can occur to hinder that – at least, for a very long time. I have now nearly a hundred pounds laid by, and a lucky capture I've just made this morning will help still further to make up

that sum. Surely the Custos will not require more than a hundred pounds; though if you were once mine," continued the speaker, casting a look of smiling fondness upon his sweetheart's face, "all the money in the world wouldn't tempt me to part with you. I hope," added he, speaking in a jocular air, "a hundred pounds will be enough to make you *my slave?*"

"You slave, Cubina?"

"Yes, Yola, as I am yours now."

"Ah – that way, Yola yours; yours ever – evermore."

"I will believe you, dear girl," rejoined the lover, gazing, with a gratified look, in the face of his beloved. "I am very happy to think that in that way you are mine; and that I have, as you assure me, your heart and soul. But, dearest Yola, so long as another is the owner of your body – not with the right, but the powder to do, ay – indeed, almost as he might please – for who can hinder these proud planters from committing crimes of which they are their own judges? Ah! Yola, girl, it is fearful to reflect on their wicked doings. This very morning I have come across a sample of their cruelty; and when I think of you being in the power of one, it makes me feel as if every hour was a day until I can obtain your freedom. I am always in fear lest something may happen to hinder me.

"Just to-day I am in high hopes," continued the lover, evincing the truth of his words by a pleasant smile. "I have succeeded in raising nearly the hundred pounds; and the bounty I expect to receive for the runaway I have caught will make it quite that."

The girl returned no reply to this speech of her lover, but stood gazing upon him silently, and as if half reproachfully. Something of this kind he read, or fancied he read, in her looks.

“What, Yola, you are not satisfied with what I have said? You reproach me? Ah! true. I confess it is not a very creditable way of procuring your purchase-money. *Maldito!* what can I do? We Maroons have no other way of raising money, except by hunting the wild hogs, and selling their barbecued flesh. But that barely gives us a living. *Crambo!* I could never have got together a hundred pounds in that way. So do not reproach me, dear Yola, for what I’ve done. I assure you it goes against my grain, this man-hunting business. As for the young fellow I caught this morning, I’d risk a good real rather than give him up – if it wasn’t for the purpose of procuring your freedom. For that I must have the hundred pounds, which it is to be hoped will be enough to satisfy your master.”

“All, Cubina!” replied his slave-love, with a sigh, “that the bad news I you bring. Hundred pound no more enough. Only two days go, he have him offer twice so much for poor slave Yola.”

“Two hundred pounds offered for *you!*” exclaimed the Maroon, with a start of surprise, his brow becoming suddenly clouded. “Is that what you mean, Yola?”

“Ah, yes!” answered the slave, repeating her sad sigh.

“And who – who is he?” demanded the lover, in a quick earnest tone, at the same time that a gleam of jealous thought flashed from his dark eyes, like forked lightning across a clouded

sky.

He knew that no man would have bid two hundred pounds for a slave – even for Yola – without some wicked motive. The girl's beauty, combined with the extravagant offer, would have suggested the motive to one disinterested in her fate. How much more was it calculated to arouse the suspicions of a lover!

“A white man,” continued he, without waiting for the reply to his first question. “I need not ask that. But tell me, Yola, who is he that's so desirous of becoming your owner. You know, I suppose.”

“Missa Kate me tell all. He Jew – wicked white man! Same who me take from big ship; and me first sell Massa Vaughan.”

“Ha!” sharply ejaculated the lover, “that old wretch it is? Wicked white man you may well call him. I know the old villain well. *Crambo!* what can he want with her?” muttered the Maroon, musingly, but with a troubled mien. “Some vile purpose, to a certainty? Oh, sure!” Then once more addressing himself to his slave sweetheart —

“You are certain, Yola, the old Jew made this offer?”

“So me say young missa.”

“Two hundred pounds! And Mr Vaughan refused it?”

“Missa Kate no allow Massa Vaughan me sell. She say ‘Never!’ Ah! young missa! she good for say so! No matter what money he give, she never let wicked white man buy Yola. She so say many time.”

“Miss Kate said this? Then she is good, she is generous! It

must have been her doing, else the Custos would never have refused such a tempting offer. Two hundred pounds! It is a large sum. Well, I must begin again. I must work night and day to get it. And then, if they should refuse *me*! Ha! what then?"

The speaker paused, not as if expecting a reply from her who stood by his side, but rather from his own thoughts.

"Never mind!" continued he, his countenance assuming an expression partly hopeful, partly reckless. "Have no fear of the future, Yola. Worst come worst, you shall yet be mine. Ay, dearest, you shall share my mountain home, though I may have to make it the home of an outlaw!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the young girl, slightly frayed by the wild look and words of her lover, her *eye* at the same instant falling upon the red pool where the hounds had been slain. "Blood, Cubina?"

"Only that of some animals – a wild boar and two dogs – just killed there. Don't let that frighten you, pet. You must be brave, my Yola; since you are to be the wife of a Maroon! Ours is a life of many dangers."

"With you Yola no fear. She go any where – far over the mountains – to Jumbé Rock – anywhere you her take, Cubina."

"Thanks, dearest! Maybe, some day, we may be forced to go far over the mountains – in *flight, too*, Yola. But we shall try to avoid that. If your master will only act right, there will be no need. If not, then you will fly with me – will you not?"

"What Cubina do, Yola do same; where he go, she go."

The passionate promise was sealed by a kiss, followed by an interval of sacred silence.

“Enough, then!” said the lover, after the pause had passed. “As a last resource, we can do that. But we shall hope for the best; and, maybe, some good fortune may befall. My followers are true, and would help me; but, alas! all are poor hunters, like myself. Well, it may take some time before I can call you my own fearlessly, in the face of the world – longer, maybe, than I expected. Never mind for that; we can meet often. And now, dear Yola, listen to what I am going to say to you – listen, and keep it in your mind! If ever a white man insults you – you know what I mean? – if you are in danger of such a thing – as you would have been, were old Jessuron to become your master – ay, and who knows how, where, or when? – well, then, fly to this glade, and wait here for me. If I do not come, some one will. Every day I shall send one of my people to this place. Don’t fear to run away. Though I may not care to get into trouble about a common slave, I shall risk all to protect you – yes, my life, dearest Yola!”

“Oh, Cubina!” exclaimed the girl, in passionate admiration. “Oh, brave, beauty Cubina! you not fear danger?”

“There is no great danger in it,” returned the Maroon, in a confident tone. “If I had made up my mind to run away with you, I could soon take you beyond the reach of pursuit. In the *Black Grounds* we could live without fear of the tyranny of white men. But I don’t want to be hunted like a wild hog. I would rather you should become mine by honest means – that is, I would rather

buy you, as I intend to do; and then we may settle down near the plantations, and live without apprehension. Perhaps, after all, the Custos may not be so hard with me as with the old Jew – who knows? Your young mistress is kind, you have told me: she may do something to favour our plans.”

“True, Cubina – she me love; she say never me part.”

“That is well; she means, she would not part with you against your will. But if I offer to buy you, it would be a different thing. Perhaps you might let her know all, after a while. But I have something to learn first, and I don’t wish you to tell her till then. So keep our secret, dear Yola, for a little longer.

“And now,” continued the Maroon, changing his tone, and turning towards the *ceiba* as he spoke, “I’ve got something to show you. Did you ever see a runaway?”

“Runaway!” said the girl; “no, Cubina – never.”

“Well, my love, there’s one not far off; he that I said I had captured this morning – only a little while ago. And I’ll tell you why I’ve kept him here: because I fancied that he was like yourself, Yola.”

“Like me?”

“Yes; and that is why I felt for the poor fellow something like pity: since it is to this cruel old Jew he belongs. From what I can make out, he must be one of your people; and I’m curious to know what account he will give of himself.”

“He Foolah, you think?” inquired the African maiden, her eyes sparkling with pleasure at the anticipation of seeing one of

her own race.

“Yes; I am as good as sure of that. In fact, he has called himself a Foolah several times, though I can’t make out what he says. If he is one of your tribe, you will be able to talk to him. There he is!”

Cubina had by this time conducted his sweetheart round the tree, to that side on which the runaway was concealed between the two spurs.

The young man was still crouching within the angle, close up to the trunk of the *ceiba*. The moment the two figures came in front of him, and his eyes fell upon the face of the girl, he sprang to his feet, uttering a cry of wild joy. Like an echo, Yola repeated the cry; and then both pronouncing some hurried phrases in an unknown tongue, rushed together, and became folded in a mutual embrace!

Cubina stood transfixed to the spot. Surprise – something more – held him speechless. He could only think: —

“She knows him! Perhaps her lover in her own land!”

A keen pang of jealousy accompanied the thought.

Rankling it remained in the breast of the Maroon, till Yola, untwining her arms from the fond embrace, and pointing to him who had received it, pronounced the tranquillising words: —

“*My brother!*”

End of Volume One

Volume Two – Chapter One

Smythje in Shooting Costume

Several days had elapsed since that on which Mr Montagu Smythje became the guest of Mount Welcome; and during the time neither pains nor expense had been spared in his entertainment. Horses were kept for his riding – a carriage for his driving – dinners had been got up – and company invited to meet him. The best society of the Bay and the neighbouring plantations had been already introduced to the rich English exquisite – the owner of one great sugar estate, and, as society began to hear it whispered, the prospective possessor of another.

The matrimonial projects of the worthy Custos – that had been suspected from the first – soon became the subject of much discussion.

It may be mentioned – though it is scarce necessary – that in his designs upon Smythje, Mr Vaughan was not left all the field to himself. There were other parents in the planter fraternity of the neighbourhood blessed with good-looking daughters; and many of them, both fathers and mothers, had fixed their eyes on the lord of Montagu Castle as a very eligible sample for a son-in-law. Each of these aspiring couples gave a grand dinner; and, in turn, trotted out their innocent lambs in presence of the British “lion.”

The exquisite smiled amiably upon all their efforts – adopting

his distinguished position as a matter of course.

Thus merrily passed the first fortnight of Smythje's sojourn in Jamaica.

On a pleasant morning near the end of this fortnight, in one of the largest bed-chambers of Mount Welcome house – that consecrated to the reception of distinguished strangers – Mr Smythje might have been seen in front of his mirror. He was engaged in the occupation of dressing himself – or, to speak more correctly, permitting himself to be dressed by his *valet de chambre*.

In the extensive wardrobe of the London exquisite there were dresses for all purposes and every occasion: suits for morning, dinner, and evening; one for riding, and one for driving; a shooting dress, and one for the nobler sport of the *chasse au cheval*; a dress for boating, *à la matelot*; and a grand *costume de bal*.

On the occasion in question, Mr Smythje's august person was being enveloped in his shooting dress; and, although a West India sportsman or an English squire would have smiled derisively at such a "rig," the Cockney regarded it with complacency as being "just the thing."

It consisted of a French tunic-shaped coatee of green silk velvet, trimmed with fur; a helmet-shaped hunting-cap to match; and a purple waistcoat underneath, embroidered with cord of gold bullion.

Instead of breeches and top-boots, Mr Smythje fancied he

had improved upon the costume, by encasing his limbs in long trousers. These were of dressed fawn-skin, of a straw colour, and soft as the finest chamois leather. They fitted tightly around the legs, notwithstanding that the wearer was rather deficient in that quarter. Moreover, they were strapped at the bottoms, over a pair of brightly-shining lacquered boots – another error at which a true sportsman would have smiled.

Mr Smythje, however, was well satisfied with the style of his dress: as appeared from the conversation carried on between him and his valet Thoms, while the latter was making him ready for the field.

“Pon honaw! a demmed becoming costume!” exclaimed he, surveying himself from head to foot in the mirror. “Dawnt yaw think so, Thoms?”

“Pe Cod! it’s all that, yer honner!” replied Thoms, with just enough of an Irish accent to show that he was a Welshman.

The object, for which Mr Smythje was thus having his person apparelled, was a shooting excursion to the hills, which he designed making, in order to vary his pleasures by committing havoc among the ramier pigeons and wild guinea-fowl which, he had been told, abounded there.

The projected expedition was not any grand affair by appointment – merely an ordinary, improvised thing. The sportsman intended going alone – as the Custos on that day had some important business at the Bay; and Mr Smythje, by a ramble through the neighbouring woods, fancied he might kill the time

between breakfast and dinner pleasantly enough. This was all that was intended; and a darkey to guide him all that was needed.

“Weally!” resumed the exquisite, after some moments spent in enthusiastic admiration of his person, “weally, Thoms, these Queeole queetyaws are chawming – positively chawming! Nothing in the theataw or opwa at all to compare with them. Such lovely eyes! such divine figaws! and such easy conquests! Ba Jawve! I can count a dozen already! Haw, haw!” added he, with a self-gratulatory giggle, “it’s but natywal that – dawnt yaw think so, Thoms?”

“Perfectly natyeral, your honner,” replied Thoms, “considherin’ yer honner’s good looks.”

“Aw haw! that’s it, Thoms – that’s it. They can’t wesist.”

Either the lady-killer was not content with his twelve easy conquests, and wished to have the number more complete by making it “the baker’s dozen” – either this, or he was uncertain about his victory over one of the twelve – as would appear by the dialogue that followed between him and his confidential man.

“Hark yaw, Thoms!” said he, approaching the valet in a more serious way; “yaw are an exceedingly intelligent fellow – yaw are, ’pon honnaw.”

“Thank yer honner. It’s keepin’ yer honner’s company has made me so.”

“Nevaw mind – nevaw mind what – but I have observed yaw intelligence.”

“It’s at yer honner’s humble sendee.”

“Ve-well, Thoms; ve-well! I want you to employ it.”

“In what way, yer honner? anything yer honner may desire me to do.”

“Yaw know the niggaw girl – the bwown girl with the tawban, I mean?”

“Miss Vaghan’s waitin’-maid?”

“Exactly – ya-as. Yolaw, or something of the sawt, is the queetyaw’s name.”

“Yis – Yowla; that’s her name, yer honner.”

“Well, Thoms, I pwesume you have excellent oppwotunities of holding convawsation with haw – the niggaw, I mean?”

“Plenty of oppurtunity, yer honner. I’ve talked with her scores of times.”

“Good. Now, the next time yaw talk with haw, Thoms, I want you to pump haw.”

“Pump her! what’s that, yer honner?”

“Why, dwaw something out of haw!”

“Feth! I don’t understan’ yer honner.”

“Not undawstand! yaw are stoopid, Thoms.”

“Keeping yer honner’s company – ”

“What, fellow? keeping my company make yaw stoopid?”

“No, yer honner; ye didn’t hear me out. I was goin’ to say, that keeping yer honner’s company would soon take that out o’ me.”

“Haw – haw – that’s diffwent altogethaw. Well, listen now, and I’ll make yaw undawstand me. I want you to talk with this Yolaw, and dwaw some seek wets out of haw.”

“Oah!” answered Thoms, dwelling a long time upon the syllable, and placing his forefinger along the side of his nose. “*Now* I comprehend yer honner.”

“All wight – all wight.”

“I’ll manage that, don’t fear me; but what sort of saycrets does yer honner want me to draw out af her?”

“I want yaw to find out what she says about *me*– not the niggaw, but haw mistwess.”

“What the negur says about her mistress?”

“Thoms, yaw are intolawably stoopid this mawning. Not at all – not at all; but what haw mistress says about *me* – *me*.”

“Oh! fwhat Miss Vaghan says about yer honner?”

“Pwecisely.”

“Faith! I’ll find that out – ivery word af it.”

“If yaw do, Thoms, I shall be your debtaw faw a guinea.”

“A guinea, yer honner!”

“Ya-as; and if yaw execute yaw commission clevawly, I shall make it two – two guineas, do yaw heaw?”

“Never fear, yer honner. I’ll get it out of the negur, if I should have to pull the tongue from between thim shinin’ teeth af hers!”

“No, Thoms – no, my good fellow! There must be no woodness. Wemember, we are guests heaw, and Mount Welcome is not an hotel. Yaw must work by stwategy, not stwength, as Shakespeaw or some other of those skwibbling fellows has said. No doubt stwategy will win the day.”

And with this ambiguous observation – ambiguous as to

whether it referred to the issue of Thoms's embassy, or his own success in the wooing of Miss Vaughan – Mr Montagu Smythje closed the conversation.

Thoms now gave the last touch to the sportsman's toilet, by setting the hunting-cap on his head, and hanging numerous belts over his shoulders – among which were included a shot-pouch, a copper powder-horn, a pewter drinking flask with its cup, and a hunting-knife in its leathern sheath.

Thus equipped, the sportsman strode stiffly from the apartment; and wended his way towards the great hall, evidently with the design of encountering the fair Kate, and exhibiting himself in his killing costume.

Volume Two – Chapter Two

A Cockney Sportsman

That he had obtained the interview he sought, and that its result had gratified him, might be inferred from the complacent smile that played upon his countenance as he sallied forth from the house. Moreover, in crossing the two or three hundred yards of open ground which separated the dwelling from the wooded slope of the ridge, he walked with an exalted, gingerly step – occasionally glancing back over his shoulder, as if conscious of being observed.

He *was* observed. Two faces could be seen at a window, one of which Mr Smythje knew to be that of Kate Vaughan. The other, of darker hue, was the face of the maid Yola.

Both were set in smiles. It did not matter to Mr Smythje whether the maid smiled or not; but he fondly fancied he could distinguish a pleased expression on the countenance of the mistress. He was at too great a distance to be certain; but he had little doubt of its being a look of intense admiration that was following him through his fine paces.

Had he been near enough to translate the expression more truly, he might have doubted whether he was the object of so much admiration; and had the remark made by Yola to her mistress reached his ear, with the clear ringing laughter it called

forth, his doubts would have had a melancholy confirmation.

“He berry gran’, missa!” said the maid. “He like cock-a-benny turned yellow-tail!” – a plantation proverb, which, translated into plain English, means, that the coarse and despised little fish, the “cock-a-benny,” had become metamorphosed into the splendid and esteemed species known among the negroes as the “yellow-tail.”

As the sportsman neither heard the remark nor the laugh it elicited, he was enabled to carry his self-esteem into the woods unhurt and undiminished.

At his heels walked an attendant – a negro boy, whose sole costume consisted of an Osnaburgh shirt, with a huge game-bag slung over his shoulders, and hanging down to his hams. It was the veritable Quashie, post-boy, horseboy, and factotum.

Quashie’s duties on the present occasion were to guide the English buckra to the best shooting ground among the hills, and carry the game when killed. As there was no dog – pigeon and pintado shooting not requiring the aid of this sagacious animal – Quashie was to act also as finder and retriever.

For a full mile over hill and dale, through “brake, brush, and scaur,” tramped the ardent sportsman – his Ethiopian attendant, keeping like a shadow at his heels. Still not a head of game had as yet been bagged. Ramiers were scarce and shy, and as for the beautiful speckled hen – the exotic *Numida meleagris* – not as much as the crest of one could be seen. Their shrill skreek, like the filing of a frame saw, could be occasionally heard afar off;

and the hope of getting sight of one enticed the sportsman still further into the forest.

Another mile was passed over, and another hour spent, almost equally unfruitful in events. A few ramiers had been sighted and shot at; but the thick corselet of feathers, that covers the bold breasts of these beautiful birds, seemed impenetrable to the shot of a gun; at least, they proved so to the double-barrelled "Manton" of the London sportsman.

Another mile traversed – another hour spent – still nothing bagged!

His want of success did not hinder the sportsman from growing hungry; and, at the end of his third mile, he began to feel a certain void about the epigastric region that called for viands. He knew that the bag which Quashie carried contained a luncheon that had been carefully provided and packed by the major-domo of Mount Welcome. It was time to examine this luncheon; and, seating himself under the shadow of a spreading tree, he directed the darkey to draw it forth.

Nothing loth was Quashie to respond to this request; for the weight of the bag, which he had been wincing under for some hours, and its distended sides, promised pickings for himself – after the grand buckra should satisfy his hunger.

Certainly, there appeared enough for both, and to spare: for on "gutting" the game-bag, a whole capon was turned out upon the grass, with sundry slices of bread, ham, and tongue, and all the paraphernalia of salt, pepper, and mustard.

A bottle of – claret was found at the bottom of the bag; which, in addition to the flask of *eau de vie* that the sportsman himself carried, and which he now laid aside to disencumber him, was liquid enough to wash down the savoury solids which the thoughtful steward had provided.

A knife and fork were also turned out; and, as Mr Montagu Smythje was more habile in the handling of these weapons than he was in the use of a gun, in a trice the capon was cut into convenient pieces. In an equally short space of time, many of these pieces had disappeared between his teeth, in company with sundry slices of the ham and tongue.

Quashie was not invited to partake; but sat near the grand buckra's feet, wistfully watching his movements, as a dog would his master similarly occupied.

As the masticatory powers of the Cockney sportsman appeared to be of no mean order, Quashie's look began to betray astonishment, mingled with a growing dread that the "oughts" he might be called upon to eat would be neither very numerous nor very bulky. Half the capon had already disappeared, with a large proportion of the odd slices of ham and tongue!

"I b'lieve de dam buckra glutton za gwine eat 'um all up – ebbery bit!" was Quashie's mental, and not very good-humoured, soliloquy. "Ay, an' drink 'um up too – ebbery drop!" continued he, in thought, as he saw Mr Smythje quaff off a full cup of the claret without taking the vessel from his lips.

Shortly after, another cup was poured into the same capacious

funnel: for the exercise he had undergone, combined with the warmth of the day, had rendered the sportsman *drouthy*.

To the great chagrin of Quashie, and the no small mortification of Smythje himself, a worse misfortune than that of its being drunk befell the remainder of the claret. On setting down the bottle, after filling his cup for the second time, the sportsman had performed the act in an unskilful manner. The consequence was that the bottle, losing its balance, toppled over; and the *balance* of the claret trickled out upon the grass.

Both Quashie's temper and patience were put to a severe test; but the buckra's appetite being at length appeased, the *débris* of the feast – still a considerable quantity – remained to Quashie's share; and he was directed to fall to and make his best of it.

The darkey was not slow in complying with the order; and, from the manner in which he went to work, it was evident, that unless Mr Smythje should make better shooting after luncheon than he had done before it, the game-bag would go back to the house much lighter than it had left it.

While Quashie was masticating his meal, the refreshed sportsman – his spirits elevated by the claret he had quaffed – bethought him of taking a stroll by himself. There was no time to be wasted – as the contingency of having to return to Mount Welcome with an empty bag had already begun to suggest itself; and after the sanguine expectations which his grand sporting costume must have given rise to – assisted by some little bravado he had indulged in while leave-taking – his failing to fulfil these

expectations could not be otherwise than humiliating.

He resolved, therefore, to return to his shooting with a more serious earnestness, and, if possible, make up for the deficiencies of the morning.

Slinging on his horn and pouch, and laying hold of his gun, the sportsman once more started off, leaving his retriever busily employed in polishing off the “drumsticks” of the capon.

Volume Two – Chapter Three

Stalking a Turkey

It almost seemed as if the divine patron of the chase – the good Saint Hubert – had regarded the spilt wine as an oblation to himself, and, in return, had consented to give the sportsman success.

Scarce had the latter advanced two hundred yards from the spot where he had lunched, when his eyes were gratified by the spectacle of a large, fine-looking bird, perched upon the top of a tree stump.

At first he believed it to be a guinea-hen, but its dusk colour – it was brownish-black – forbade that supposition. It had a naked head and neck, just like a turkey; and in several other respects it resembled this well-known bird.

“A tawkey it is!” exclaimed Smythje, after scanning it a little. “A wild tawkey, by Jawve!”

The London exquisite had heard, somehow or somewhere, that the wild turkey was indigenous to America, and, of course, also to Jamaica – since Jamaica is part of America.

However erroneous the deduction, the reasoning satisfied Smythje; and, firmly convinced that he saw before him a wild turkey, he determined on taking measures to *circumvent* it.

The stump upon which the bird was perched, stood upon the

edge of an opening, about a hundred yards from the spot where Smythje first came in sight of it.

To insure success, the sportsman dropped upon his knees, and crawled forward impressively, but with due caution. If he could only make thirty yards in advance, he knew his gun was good for the other seventy.

In fine, after considerable damage done to his fawn-skin trousers, the thirty yards were accomplished, and still the turkey remained upon its perch.

The gun was brought to bear upon the bird; Joe Manton did the work; and, simultaneously with the "bang," the turkey was seen to tumble over, disappearing as it did so from the top of the stump.

The overjoyed sportsman hastened forward to secure his game; and soon arrived at the spot where he expected to find it.

To his surprise it was not there!

Had it taken to wing and escaped?

Impossible! He had seen it fall, and without a flutter. It must have been shot quite dead? It could not have come to life again?

He searched all about – going round the stump at least a dozen times, and carefully scrutinising every inch of the ground for a score of yards on each side – but no turkey could be found!

Had the unlucky sportsman been at all doubtful of the fact of his having killed the bird, he would have given up the search in despair. But upon this point he was as certain as of his own existence; and it was that which rendered him so pertinacious

in his endeavours to find it. He was determined to leave neither stick nor stone unturned; and, to aid him in the prosecution of his search, he called loudly for his retriever Quashie.

But to his repeated calls no Quashie came; and Mr Smythje was forced to the conclusion that the darkey had either gone to sleep, or had strayed away from the spot where he had left him.

He had some thoughts of going back to look for Quashie; but, while he was meditating on the matter, an idea occurred to him, which promised to explain the mysterious disappearance of the bird.

The stump upon which the “turkey” had been perched could scarcely have been termed a *stump*. It was rather the trunk of a large tree, that had been abruptly broken off below the limbs, and still stood some fifteen or twenty feet in height, erect and massive as the tower of some ruined castle. Though quite a dead-wood, and without any branches of its own, it was, nevertheless, garnished with verdure. A complete matting of vines that grew around its roots, and parasites that sprang from its decaying sides, inclosed it with a tortuous trellis-work – so that only near its top could the shape of the old tree be distinguished.

At first the sportsman supposed that his game had dropped down among the ragged shrubbery; and he searched the whole of this with elaborate minuteness, but in vain.

It now occurred to him – and this was the idea that promised the *éclaircissement* spoken of – that the bird had *not* fallen from the stump, but had dropped dead upon the top of it, and there

might still be lying!

The dead-wood, which, at its broken summit, appeared to be some five or six feet in diameter, rendered this conjecture probable enough; and Smythje resolved upon putting it to the proof, by climbing to the top. He would have appointed Quashie to the performance of this feat; but Quashie *non esset inventus*.

Several thick, cable-like vines, that struggled up to the summit, promised an easy means of ascent; and, although the Cockney could climb about as dexterously as a shod cat, he fancied there could be no great difficulty in attaining the top of the dead-wood.

Throwing aside his gun, he entered enthusiastically upon the attempt.

The feat was not so easy of performance but that it cost him an exertion. Stimulated, however, by the desire to *retrieve* his game and the reflections about the game-bag, already alluded to, he put forth his utmost energies, and succeeded in reaching the summit.

His conjecture proved correct. There lay the bird – not *on* the stump, but *in* it – at the bottom of a large cylinder-shaped concavity, which opened several feet down into the heart of the dead-wood. There it was, dead as the tree itself.

The sportsman could not restrain himself from uttering a cry of joy – as he saw his fine game at length secure within his reach.

It proved not exactly within his reach, however: as, upon kneeling down and stretching his arm to its full length, he found that he could not touch the bird, even with the tips of his fingers.

That signified little. It would only be necessary for him to descend into the cavity, and this he could easily do: as it was wide enough, and not over four feet in depth.

Without further reflection, he rose to his feet again and leaped down into the hole.

It would have been a wiser act if he had remembered the prudent counsel of the paternal frog, and looked before leaping. That was one of the most unfortunate leaps Mr Smythje had ever made in his life. The brown surface upon which the bird lay, and which looked so deceptively solid, was nothing more than a mass of rotten heartwood, honeycombed with long decay. So flimsy was it in structure, that though supporting a dead bird, it gave way under the weight of a living man; and the lord of Montagu Castle shot as rapidly out of sight as if he had leaped feet foremost from the mainyard of the *Sea Nymph* into the deepest soundings of the Atlantic!

Volume Two – Chapter Four

Smythje Embarrassed by his Boots

Rapid as was the pitch, and dark the abyss into which it was made, the sportsman was not killed. Neither was he much hurt: for the “punk” through which he had pitched, though not firm enough to support him, had offered some resistance to the velocity of his descent; and towards the bottom he had settled down more gradually.

But though neither killed nor yet stunned by the fall, he was for awhile as completely deprived of his senses as if he had been both. Surprise had bereft him not only of the power of speech, but of thought as well; and for some moments he was as quiet as Jack, after being jerked into his box.

After a time, however, feeling that, though badly scared, he was not much hurt, his consciousness began to return to him; and he made a scramble to recover his legs: for in going down, he had somehow got doubled up in a sort of tailor-fashion.

He found his feet after an effort; and, as he saw that light came from above, he raised his eyes in that direction.

It took him some time to make out the exact character of the place in which he was: for a thick “stoor” was swimming around him, that not only impeded his sight, but having entered his mouth and nostrils, had inducted him into a violent fit of

sneezing.

The dust however gradually thinned away; and Smythje was enabled to “define his position.”

Above his head was a clear circular patch, which he knew to be the sky; whilst all around him was a dark brown wall, rising many feet beyond the reach of his outstretched arms. He became conscious that he was standing in the concavity of a huge upright cylinder, with a surface of corrugated rotten wood circling all around him.

As his senses grew clearer – along with the atmosphere – he arrived at a better understanding of the mishap that had befallen him. He did not, at first, regard it in the light of a *misfortune*— at least, not a very heavy one – and he was rather disposed to laugh at it as a ludicrous adventure.

It was not till he began to think of climbing out, and had actually made the attempt, that he became aware of a difficulty hitherto unsuspected; and the contemplation of which at once inspired him with a feeling of alarm.

A second attempt to get out was unsuccessful as the first; a third equally so; a fourth had no better issue; a fifth was alike a failure; and after the sixth, he sank down upon the rotten rubbish in a state bordering on despair.

Well might he have exclaimed,

“Facilis descensus Averni, sed revocare gradum.”

But the mind of Mr Smythje was now under the influence of an indescribable awe, which excluded all thoughts of the classic.

When reflection came to his aid, it was only to make more certain the fearful reality of his situation. The more he reflected upon it, the more he became convinced of the peril into which his rash leap had precipitated him.

It was not simply a slight mishap – a ludicrous adventure – he no longer saw it in that light. Neither was it a mere misfortune; but a positive danger – the danger of his life.

Yes, his life was most certainly in danger; and he was not slow in arriving at this knowledge. The chain of inductive reasoning that led to it was but too palpably clear – every link of it – from premisses to conclusion. If he could not help himself out of the prison, in which by his unlucky leap he had incarcerated himself, who was to help him?

Hope could not long dwell upon Quashie. The darkey had been left some distance off; and since he had not answered to his calls, he must be asleep or straying. In either case – or even if awake and still on the ground of the bivouac – what chances would Quashie have of finding him?

Who was to find him, if not Quashie? Ah! who else? Who was likely to come that way?

Not a soul! The tree that contained him stood in the midst of a wild tract – a solitary forest all around – no roads, no paths – he had observed none. He might be there for a month without a human being approaching the place; and a week would be enough to finish him! Yes, in one week, perhaps far less, he might expect to die of starvation! The prospect was appalling.

And it so appalled him, that again his mind gave way under it, and relapsed into the stupor of despondence.

It is not natural that one should sink at once into utter despair, without making an extreme effort. The instinct of self-preservation – common to the lowest animals – will nerve even the weakest spirit of man. That of Montagu Smythje was none of the strongest, and had given way at the first shock; but, after a time, a reaction arose, stimulating him to make a fresh effort for his life.

Once more starting to his feet, he attempted to scale the steep walls that encircled him; but the attempt, as before, proved a failure.

In this last trial, however, he discovered that his exertions were greatly hindered by three special *impedimenta*– the tight fawn-skin trousers that, moistened with perspiration, clung closely around his legs; his boots; but, above all, the straps that bound boots and trousers together.

To get rid of these obstacles became his next thought; and the execution of such a design might appear easy enough.

On trial, however, it proved a most difficult undertaking.

From the confined space in which he stood, he could not get into a stooping attitude, so as to reach down to the straps and unbutton them; and so long as these remained buttoned, it was impossible to take off the boots. He could squat down tailor-fashion, as he had already done; but, in that posture the straps became so tightened, that to unbutton them was clearly out of

the question. The delicate fingers of the dandy were unequal to the effort.

“Necessity is the mother of invention.” This adage held good in Smythje’s case: for it just then occurred to him to unfasten his *suspenders* instead of his straps, and divest himself of his undergarments all at once!

For this purpose he rose to his feet; but in doing so, a better idea suggested itself: to cut off his fawn-skin inexpressibles just above the knees, and thus free boots, straps, and pantaloon bottoms all together!

He had left his hunting-knife by his brandy-flask, and both on the ground of the bivouac. Fortunately, however, a penknife, which he carried in his waistcoat pocket, would answer even better; and, drawing it forth, he proceeded to execute his design.

A cross section of the fawn-skins, just above the knees, was at once made; and then – by the alternate application of toe to heel – boots, trouser-bottoms, and all, were cast simultaneously, and Smythje stood in his stockings!

He did not remain long inactive. Danger urged him to exert himself; and once more he essayed to scale the walls of his tree-prison.

Alas! after many efforts – many oft-repeated, but unsuccessful clamberings – he was forced back to the appalling conviction that the thing was impossible.

He could get up within about four feet of the orifice; but there the surface, which had been long open to the atmosphere, was

worn so smooth by the weather – besides being still wet and slippery from late rains – that he could find no holding place upon it; and at every endeavour to grasp the rotten wood, he lost his balance, and fell backward to the bottom.

These falls frequently stunned him, almost knocking the breath out of his body. They were from a considerable height – ten or twelve feet – and, but for the soft rubbish below, that modified the shock as he came down, one such descent would have been sufficient to cripple him for life.

Once more his spirit sank within him. Once more Smythje yielded to despair.

Volume Two – Chapter Five

A Tropic Shower

When reflection again favoured the unfortunate man – which it did after a short time had passed over – his thoughts took a new turn.

He made no further attempt at climbing out. Repeated trials had fully convinced him of the impracticability of that; and he was now satisfied that his only hope lay in the chance of Quashie or some one else coming that way.

It is true that this chance appeared grievously doubtful. Even should one pass near the dead-wood, how was he to know that he, Smythje, was inside it? Who would suspect that the old tree was hollow? and, least of all, that a human being was inclosed within its cylindrical cell – buried alive, as it were, in this erect wooden sarcophagus?

A person passing might see the gun lying upon the ground outside; but that would be no clue to the whereabouts of its owner.

After all, some one *might* be passing, and as he could not be *seen*, his only hope lay in making himself *heard*.

The moment this thought came into his mind, he commenced crying out at the highest pitch of his voice.

He regretted that he had not done so before: since some one

might have passed in the interim.

After falling in, he had shouted several times during the moments of his first surprise: but while making his attempts to clamber out, he had desisted – the earnestness of his exertions having reduced him to silence.

Now that he comprehended the necessity of making a noise, he determined to make up for his former remissness; and he continued to send forth scream after scream with all the power of his lungs, at intervals varying his voice from an abrupt sharp screech, to the more prolonged and dismal monotone of a groan.

For nearly an hour did he continue this melancholy *cavatina*, without receiving any response beyond the echoes of his own voice, which reverberated through the concavity in hollow, sepulchral tones – a mournful monologue of alternate groanings and howlings, interrupted at intervals as the utterer paused to listen for a response.

But none came. No change took place in his situation, except one that was calculated to make it still more deplorable and forlorn. As if his lugubrious appeals had invoked the demon of the storm, the sky above became suddenly overcast with heavy black clouds; from which came pouring rain, such as might have fallen during the forty days of the deluge!

It was one of those tropic showers, where the water gushes from the sky, not in single, isolated drops, but in long, continuous streams; as if heavens canopy was one great shower-bath, of which the string had been jerked and tied down.

Though well sheltered from wind, the unfortunate Smythje had no roof – no cover of any kind – to shield him from the rain, which came down upon his devoted head, as though the spout of a pump had been directed into the hollow of the dead-wood. Indeed, the funnel-shaped orifice, which was wider than the rest of the concavity, aided in conducting a larger quantity of rain into it; and, but that the water found means of escape, by percolating through the mass of dry rubbish below, Mr Smythje might have been in danger of a more sudden death than by starvation: since, as he himself afterwards asserted, there fell sufficient water to have “drowned” him.

If not drowned, however, he was well *douched*. There was not a stitch of clothing upon his person that was not wetted through and through: the silk velvet shooting-coat, the purple vest, and what remained of the fawn-skin trousers, all were alike soaked and saturated. Even his whiskers had parted with their crisp rigidity; the curls had come out of the tails of his moustaches; his hair had lost its amplitude; and all – hair, whiskers, and moustaches – hung dripping and dragged.

In that melancholy image of manhood that stood shivering in the hollow tree, it would have required a quick imagination to have recognised Mr Montagu Smythje, the *débonnaire* sportsman of the morning.

Lugubrious as were his looks, they were nothing to compare with his thoughts. There were moments when he felt angry – angry at his ill-fortune – angry at Quashie – angry at Mr

Vaughan, for having provided an attendant so inattentive to his duties. There were moments when he felt spiteful enough to swear. Yes, in that fearful crisis, Smythje *swore*— the owner of Mount Welcome and Quashie being alternately the object of his abjurations. Jamaica, too, came in for a share of his spite — its pigeons and guinea-hens, its trees, and, above all, its wild turkeys!

“The howwid Island!” he cried, in his anguish; “would to ma Makeaw I had nevaw set foot on its shaws!”

What, at that moment, would he not have given to be once more in his “deaw metwopolis?” Gladly would he have exchanged his tree-prison for a chamber in the King’s Bench — for a corner in the meanest cell which the Old Bailey could have afforded him!

Poor Smythje! he had not yet reached the climax of his sorrows. A new suffering was in store for him — one in comparison with which all he had undergone was but a mild endurance. It was only when that slimy thing came crawling over his feet, and began to entwine itself round his ankles — its cold clammy touch painfully perceptible through his silk stockings — it was only then that he felt something like a sensation of real horror!

He was on his legs at the moment; and instantly sprang upward, as if coals had been suddenly applied to the soles of his feet. But springing upward did not avail him, since it only resulted in his dropping down again on the same spot; and, as he did so, he felt writhing beneath his feet the slippery form of a *serpent*!

Volume Two – Chapter Six

A Dangerous Dance

Beyond the shadow of a doubt was Smythje standing upon a snake, or rather, *dancing* upon one: for as he felt the scaly creature crawling and writhing under his feet with a strong muscular action, it was contrary to human nature that he should remain at rest upon such a perilous pedestal.

For some moments he hopped about upon this dangerous *dais*, expecting every instant to feel the sharp sting of a bite. Any one who could have looked on him at that crisis would have seen a face white with horror, eyes starting from their watery sockets, and dripping hair and whiskers doing their best to stand on end.

Through his dark sky of dread a gleam of light flashed upon his spirit: he remembered having heard that in Jamaica there is no *poisonous* serpent.

It was but a spark of consolation. If the reptile could not *sting*, it could *bite*; and, being such an enormous creature as to cover with its coils the whole floor of his *cylindric* chamber, its bite should be a formidable one.

Perhaps, after all, it was not a single snake? Perhaps there was a whole family of serpents, crawling one over another, and wreathing fantastic figures of eight beneath his feet?

If so – and this was probable enough – he might be bitten by

all; repeatedly bitten – torn to pieces – devoured!

What matter whether they were poisonous or not? He might as well perish from their fangs, as by their teeth!

Fortunate it was for Smythje that the snakes – for his conjecture that there were more than one was correct – fortunate for him that they were still half asleep, else the danger he dreaded might have come to pass. As it was, the whole band of reptiles had just been aroused from a state of torpidity – the wash of cold rain having reached them in their crushed cave, and scattered the mutual coil in which they had been cosily slumbering. Still only half awakened, in the confusion of their ideas they could not distinguish friend from foe; and to this was Mr Smythje indebted for the circumstance that his skin, and even his silk stockings, still remained intact.

Notwithstanding this, his dread remained undiminished, and incited him to a fresh effort at escape.

Only one mode suggested itself: to clamber up the “chimney” as far as he could go, and by that means get out of reach of the reptiles.

On conceiving this new design, he sprang upward, shaking the serpent coils from his feet; and, after a few seconds of scratching and scrambling, he arrived at an elevation of some ten feet from the bottom of the tree.

Here a slight projection offered a tolerable support for his posteriors; and, setting his toes well against the opposite side, he did his very best to sustain himself in position.

It was an irksome effort, and could not have lasted long – as to his consternation he soon discovered.

His strength would soon give way, his toes become cramped and nerveless; and then, losing his hold, he must inevitably drop down among the monsters below – who, perhaps, in a second collision with him, would be less chary about using their teeth?

The prospect of such a terrible fate stimulated him to put forth all his energies in preserving his balance and his place – at the same time that it drew from him cries of the keenest anguish.

His cries at this crisis proved his salvation. His strength was well-nigh exhausted; and he was on the point of letting go, when, just then, an object came before his upturned eyes that determined him to hold on a little longer – even should his toes be torn out of their joints.

Above him, and half filling the orifice of the hollow, appeared an enormous head, with a face black as Erebus, and two yellowish-white eyes shining in the midst of it. No other feature was at first seen; but presently a double row of great white teeth appeared, gleaming between a pair of freshly-opened purplish lips, of a massive, cartilaginous structure.

In the confusion of his senses Smythje was, for the moment, inclined to believe himself between two demons – one below, in the shape of a monstrous serpent, and the other above him, in human form: for the grinning white teeth, and yellow eyeballs rolling in sockets of sable ground, presented an appearance sufficiently demoniac.

Of the two demons, however, he preferred the company of the one who bore something of his own shape; and when a huge black arm – like the trunk of a young tree – with the hand of a Titan attached to it, was stretched down to him, he did not decline to take it; but eagerly clutching at the gigantic paw thus proffered, he felt himself raised upward, as lightly as if elevated upon the extremity of a “see-saw!”

In another instant he found himself upon the summit of the dead-wood, his deliverer standing by his side.

So much light rushing all at once into the eyes of the rescued Smythje, instead of enabling him to see distinctly, quite blinded him; and it was only by the touch that he knew a man was by his side, who, the next moment, lifting him with one arm carried him down to the bottom of the tree, with as much apparent facility as if he, Smythje, had been a little infant!

On reaching the ground, Smythje’s eyes had become sufficiently strengthened to bear the light; and then he saw, in full length, the individual who had rescued him from his perilous dilemma. He was a jet-black negro of colossal size, nearly naked, with a number of straps and strings passing over his shoulders, to which were suspended horns, bullet-pouches, and other accoutrements of a more mysterious kind. His head-dress was equally odd as the rest of his costume, and consisted simply of the crown of an old beaver hat, with the brim closely trimmed off just above the ears. This gave a ludicrous-comic expression to the face, which, though black as ebony, was otherwise not

disagreeable.

Still there was a wild look about the man, which, combined with his gigantic size, was calculated to impress one with the idea of his being no ordinary character.

Nor was he, for the deliverer of Mr Smythje was no other than our old acquaintance Quaco.

Smythje knew nothing of the Maroon. It might be a robber into whose hands he had fallen; but even so, the Cockney was no longer in a condition to be frightened. All fear had been scared out of him by his adventure with the snakes; and perceiving, from his amiable smiles, that his deliverer meant him no harm, he proceeded to give the latter a full account of all that had befallen him.

As soon as the sportsman had finished his narrative, Quaco, without saying a word, scrambled back to the summit of the dead-wood.

Fastening a cord, which he carried up with him, around the top of the stump, he fearlessly let himself down into the dark, snake-tenanted chamber, which Mr Smythje had been so glad to get out of!

He had not been more than half a minute out of sight, when a glittering object was seen projected above the top of the stump. It was of serpent form, and bright yellow colour. Wriggling and writhing, it hung, for a moment, suspended in the air; and then, yielding to the laws of gravitation, it came down with a thump upon the turf. Its large size, and its lines of black and gold,

rendered it easy of identification as the “yellow snake” of Jamaica (*chilabothrus inornatus*).

Scarce had it touched the ground when a second and similar projectile was ejected from the hollow stump; and then a third – and another, and yet another, until no less than a dozen of these hideous reptiles lay scattered over the grass, to the no small consternation of Smythje, who, however, took care to keep well out of their reach.

After the dead-wood had been delivered of its last snake, an object of a far different character was seen to issue forth in a similar manner. It was a misshapen mass, of a dirty buff colour, and proved, upon inspection, to be one of Mr Smythje’s boots, still incased in its fawn-skin covering! Its mate soon followed; and then, the “wild turkey,” which had led the sportsman into his deplorable dilemma, and which now, with half its plumage gone, and the other half “drooked” and bedraggled, offered but a poor chance for the garnishing of his game-bag.

Smythje, however, too well contented at escaping with his life, thought no more of his game-bag, nor of anything else, but getting back to Mount Welcome by the shortest route possible.

His boots being restored to him, he lost no time in drawing them on, leaving the bottoms of his trousers in the companionship of the worthless “turkey,” which Quaco, better acquainted with the ornithology of Jamaica, on coming out of the hollow tree, assured him, was, after all, no turkey, but only a turkey-buzzard – a John Crow – in short, a stinking vulture!

Volume Two – Chapter Seven

Quashie in a Quandary

During all this time, where was Quashie?

Mr Smythje did not know, and no longer did he care. Too glad to get away from the scene of his unpleasant adventure, he made no inquiry about his negligent squire; nor did he even think of going back to the place where he had left him. His deliverer had offered himself as a guide; and the road by which he conducted the sportsman from the dead-wood led in quite another direction. As to the empty game-bag left with Quashie, it made no difference what became of that; and, for the hunting-knife and brandy-flask, no doubt the darkey would see to them.

In this conjecture Mr Smythje hit the nail upon the head – at least so far as regarded the brandy-flask. It was by seeing too well to it, that Quashie had lost all sight of everything else – not only of the duties he had been appointed to perform, but of the whole earth and everything upon it. The buckra had not been twenty minutes out of his presence, when Quashie, by repeated application of the brandy-flask to his lips, brought his optical organs into such a condition, that he could not have told the difference between a turkey and a turkey-buzzard any more than Mr Smythje himself.

The drinking of the *eau de vie* had an effect upon the negro the

very reverse of what it would have had upon an Irishman. Instead of making him noisy and quarrelsome, it produced a tendency towards tranquillity – so much so, that Quashie, in less than five minutes after his last suck at the flask, coggled over upon the grass, and fell fast asleep.

So soundly slept he, that not only did he fail to hear the report of Smythje's gun, but the discharge of a whole battery of field-pieces close to his ear would not, at that moment, have awakened him.

It is scarce possible to say how long Quashie would have continued in this state of half-sleep, half-inebriety, had he been left undisturbed; nor was he restored to consciousness by human agency or living creature of any kind. That which brought him to himself – waking and, at the same time, partially sobering him – was the rain; which, descending like a cold shower-bath on his semi-naked skin, caused him to start to his feet.

Quashie, however, had enjoyed more than an hour's sleep, before the rain began to fall; and this may account for the *eau de vie* having in some measure lost its influence when he awoke.

He was sensible that he had done wrong in drinking the buckra's brandy; and as the temporary courage with which it had inspired him was now quite gone, he dreaded an encounter with the white "gemman." He would have shunned it, had he known how; but he knew very well that to slink home by himself would bring down upon him the wrath of massa at Mount Welcome – pretty sure to be accompanied by a couple of dozen from the

cart-whip.

After a while's reflection, he concluded that his most prudent plan would be to wait for the young buckra's return and tell him the best tale he could.

To say he had been searching for him, and that was how he had spent the time – was the story that suggested itself to the troubled imagination of Quashie.

To account for the disappearance of the cognac – for he had drunk every drop of it – the darkey had bethought him of another little bit of fabrication – suggested, no doubt, by the mischance that had befallen the bottle of claret. He intended to tell the grand buckra – and “thrape” it down his throat if need be – that he, the buckra, had left out the stopper of the flask, and that the brandy had followed the example set by the “heel-tap” of wine.

Thus fortified with a plausible story, Quashie awaited the return of the sportsman.

The sky cleared after a time, but no buckra came; nor yet, after a considerable spell of fine weather had transpired, did he make his appearance.

Quashie became impatient, and slightly anxious. Perhaps the English “gemman” had lost himself in the woods; and if so, what would be done to him, the guide? Massa Vaughan would be sure to punish him. In fancy he could hear the crack of the cart-whip resounding afar off over the hills.

After waiting a while longer, he determined to put an end to his anxiety, by going in search of the sportsman; and taking up

the empty bag, along with the equally empty flask, and hunting-knife, he set forth.

He had seen Mr Smythje go towards the glade, and so far he could follow his trail; but once arrived at the open ground, he was completely at fault.

He had not the slightest idea of what direction to take.

After pausing to reflect, he took the right – that which would conduct him to the dead-wood, which was visible from the point where he had entered the glade.

It was not altogether accident that conducted him thither; but rather that, in that direction, he heard, or fancied he heard, voices.

As he drew near to the decapitated tree, a glittering object on the ground caught his eye. He halted, thinking it might be a snake – a creature of which most plantation negroes have a wholesome dread.

On scrutinising the object more closely, Quashie was surprised to perceive that the glittering object was a gun; and, on a still nearer acquaintance with it, he saw that it was the gun of the buckra sportsman!

It was lying upon the grass near the bottom of the dead-wood. What was it doing there?

Where was the buckra himself? Had some accident happened to him? Why had he abandoned his gun? Had he shot himself? Or had somebody else shot him?

Just at that moment the most lugubrious of sounds fell upon

Quashie's ear. It was a groan, long-drawn and hollow – as if some tortured spirit was about taking its departure from the earth! It resembled the voice of a man, as of some one speaking from the interior of a tomb!

The darkey stood horrified – his black epidermis turning to an ashy-grey colour, quick as the change of a chameleon.

He would have taken to his heels, but a thought restrained him. It might be the buckra still alive, and in trouble? In that case he, Quashie, would be punished for deserting him.

The voice appeared to issue from behind the dead-wood. Whoever uttered it must be there. Perhaps the sportsman lay wounded upon the other side?

Quashie screwed up his courage as high as it would go, and commenced moving round to the other side of the stump. He proceeded cautiously, step by step, scrutinising the ground as he went.

He reached the other side. He looked all over the place. Nobody there – neither dead nor wounded!

There were no bushes to conceal an object so large as the body of a man – at least, not within twenty yards of the stump. The groan could not have come from a greater distance!

Nor yet could a man be hidden under the trellis of climbing plants that clung around the underwood. Quashie had still enough courage left to peep among them and see. There was nobody there!

At this moment, a second groan sounded in the darkey's ear,

increasing his terror. It was just such a one as the first – long, protracted, and sepulchral, as if issuing from the bottom of a well.

Again it came from behind the stump; but this time from the side which he had just left, and where he had seen no one!

Had the wounded man crawled round to the other side, while he, Quashie, was proceeding in the opposite direction?

This was the thought that occurred to him; and to determine the point, he passed back to the side whence he had come – this time going more rapidly, lest the mysterious moaner might again escape him.

On reaching the spot from which he had originally set out, he was more surprised than ever. Not a soul was to be seen. The gun still lay in its place as he had left it. No one appeared to have touched it – no one was there!

Again the voice – this time, however, in a shrill treble, and more resembling a shriek! It gave Quashie a fresh start; while the perspiration spurted out from his forehead, and ran down his cheeks like huge tears.

The shriek, however, was more human-like – more in the voice of a man; and this gave the darkey sufficient courage to stand his ground a little longer. He had no doubt but that the voice came from the other side of the dead-wood; and once more he essayed to get his eyes upon the utterer.

Still in the belief that the individual, whoever it was, and for whatever purpose, was dodging round the tree, Quashie now

started forward with a determination not to stop till he had run the dodger to earth. For this purpose he commenced circling around the stump, going first at a trot; but hearing now and then the groans and shrieks – and always on the opposite side – he increased his pace, until he ran with all the speed in his power.

He kept up this exercise, till he had made several turns around the tree; when, at length, he became convinced that no human being could be running before him without his seeing him.

The conviction brought him to an abrupt halt, followed by a quick reflection. If not a human being, it must be a “duppy, or de debbil hisself!”

The evidence that it was one or the other had now become overpowering. Quashie could resist it no longer.

“Duppy! Jumbé! de debbil!” cried he, as with chattering teeth, and eyeballs protruding from their sockets, he shot off from the stump, and “streaked it” in the direction of Mount Welcome, as fast as a pair of trembling limbs were capable of carrying him.

Volume Two – Chapter Eight

A Scarcity of Trousers

Following his gigantic guide, Mr Smythje trudged unhappily homeward.

How different his craven, crestfallen look, from the swell, swaggering sportsman of the morning! while the condition of his person was not more dilapidated than that of his spirit.

It was no longer the disgrace of returning with an empty game-bag, but the chagrin which he expected to have to undergo, presenting himself at Mount Welcome in the “pickle” in which his adventure had left him.

He was now even in a more ludicrous plight than when Quaco had extracted him from the hollow tree: for the rain, that had long since ceased, had been succeeded by a blazing hot sun, and the atmosphere acting upon what remained of his wet fawn-skin trousers, caused them to shrink until the ragged edges had crept up to mid-thigh; thus leaving a large section of thin knock-kneed legs between them and the tops of his boots!

In truth, the sportsman had become the *beau ideal* of a “guy”; and, more than half conscious of this fact, he would at that moment have given the situation of book-keeper on his estate to any individual who should have presented him with a pair of pantaloons.

His guide could do nothing for him. In the line of inexpressibles Quaco was no better provided than himself.

Verily, the prospect was appalling!

Could he reach the house, and steal to his own chamber unseen? What chance was there of his doing so?

On reflection, not much. Mount Welcome, like all other mansions in Jamaica, was a cage – open on every side. It was almost beyond the bounds of probability that he could enter the house unobserved.

Still, he could try, and on the success of that trial rested his only hope. Oh, for that grand secret known only to the jealous Juno – the secret of rendering one's-self invisible! What would Smythje not have given for a ten minutes' hire of that Carthaginian cloud?

The thought was really in his mind; for Smythje, like all young Englishmen of good family, had studied the classics.

The idea, moreover, proved suggestive. If there was no probability of being provided with the nimbus of Juno, there was the possibility of shadowing himself under the nimbus of night. Darkness once on, he might enter the house, reach his chamber unperceived, and thus escape the unpleasant exposure he so much dreaded.

Smythje stopped, looked at his guide, looked at the sun, and lastly at his naked knees – now, from the enfeebled state of his limbs, oscillating towards each other.

Mount Welcome was in sight. The guide was about to leave

him; and, therefore, in whatever way he might choose to act, there would be no witness.

Just then the Maroon made his adieus, and the *ci-devant* sportsman was left to himself.

Once more he scanned the sun, and consulted his watch. In two hours it would be twilight. The crepusculous interval would enable him to approach the house; and in the first moments of darkness – before the lamps were lit – he *might* enter unobserved – or, at all events, his plight might not very plainly be perceived.

The scheme was feasible, and having determined to adopt it, Smythje cowered down in the covert, and awaited the setting of the sun.

He counted the hours, the half-hours, and minutes – he listened to the voices coming up from the negro village – he watched the bright-winged birds that fluttered among the branches overhead, and envied them their *complete* plumage.

Notwithstanding many rare sights and sweet sounds that reached him, the two hours spent in his secret lair were not passed pleasantly – solicitude about the success of his scheme robbing him of all zest for the enjoyment of that fair scene that surrounded him.

The hour of action drew nigh. The sun went down over the opposite ridge, where lay Montagu Castle, his own domain. The twilight, like a purple curtain, was gently drawn over the valley of Mount Welcome. It was time to start.

Smythje rose to his feet; and, after making a *reconnoissance*

of the ground before him, set off in the direction of the house.

He aimed at keeping as much as possible under cover of the woods; and this he was enabled to do – the pimento groves on that side stretching down to the shrubbery that surrounded the dwelling.

He had got past the negro village – keeping it upon his right – without being observed. To both the “quarter” and the sugar works he gave as wide a berth as the nature of the ground would permit.

He succeeded in reaching the platform on which the house stood – so far unperceived.

But the moment of peril was not yet past. The dangerous ground still lay before him, and had still to be traversed. This was the open *parterre* in front of the house: for it was to the front that the path had conducted him.

It was dusk; and no one appeared – at least he could see no one – either on the stair-landing or in the windows of the great hall. So far good.

A rush for the open doorway, and then on to his own chamber, where Thoms would soon clothe him in a more becoming costume.

He started to make the rush, and had succeeded in getting half-way across the *parterre*, when, all at once, a crowd of people, carrying large flaming torches above their heads, appeared, coming from the rear of the dwelling.

They were the domestics and some field hands of the

plantation, with Trusty, the overseer, at their head.

One might have fancied that they were setting out upon some ceremonious procession; but their hurried advance, and the presence of Quashie trotting in the lead, proclaimed a different purpose.

Smythje divined their errand. They were going in search of himself!

The sight filled him with despair. The torch-bearers had anticipated him. They had already reached the front of the house, and the glare of their great flambeaux illuminated every object, as if a new sun had suddenly shot up athwart the sky!

There was no chance of successfully running the gauntlet under that bright flame: Smythje saw not the slightest.

He stopped in his tracks. He would have retreated back among the bushes, and there awaited the departure of the torch-bearers, but he feared that his retrograde movement would attract their eyes upon him; and then all would be over – his adventure terminating in the most undesirable manner.

Instead of retreating, therefore, he stood where he had stopped – fixed and immobile, as if pinned to the spot.

At that moment two figures appeared on the top of the stairway – in the brilliant light easily recognisable as the planter and his daughter. The maid Yola was behind them. Mr Vaughan had come out to give some directions about the search.

All three stood facing the crowd of torch-bearers, and, of course, fronting towards Smythje.

The planter was just opening his lips to speak, when a cry from the maid, echoed by her young mistress, interrupted him. The sharp eyes of the Foolah had fallen upon Smythje, whose wan, white face, shining under the light of the links, resembled those of the statues that were set over the *parterre*.

Smythje was among the shrubbery; and as the girl knew that no statue stood there, the unexpected apparition had elicited her cry of alarm.

All eyes were instantly turned upon the spot, while the torch-bearers, with Trusty at their head, hurried towards it.

There was no chance of escape. The unfortunate sportsman was discovered and brought broadly into the light, under the fierce battery of eyes – among others, the eyes of his lady-love, that, instead of expressing sympathy for his forlorn condition, appeared rather to sparkle with satirical delight!

It was a terrible catastrophe – to be contemplated in such a plight; and Smythje, hurrying through the crowd, lost no time in withdrawing from observation by betaking himself to his chamber; where, under the consolatory encouragement of the sympathising Thoms, he was soon rendered presentable.

Volume Two – Chapter Nine

Herbert in the Happy Valley

Inappropriate as Jacob Jessuron's neighbours may have deemed the title of his estate – the Happy Valley – Herbert Vaughan had no reason to regard it as a misnomer. From the hour in which he entered upon his situation of book-keeper, it was a round of pleasures, rather than duties, that he found himself called upon to fulfil; and his new life, so far from being laboriously spent, was one continued scene, or series of scenes, of positive pastime.

Instead of keeping books, or looking after slaves – or, in short, doing anything that might be deemed useful – most of his time was spent in excursions, that had no other object than recreation or amusement. Drives to the Bay – in which he was accompanied by Jessuron himself, and introduced to his mercantile acquaintances; visits to neighbouring pens and plantations with the beautiful Judith – in which he was made acquainted with her circle; fishing parties upon the water, and picnics in the woods: all these were afforded him without stint.

He was furnished with a fine horse to ride; dogs and equipments for the chase; everything, in short, calculated to afford him the life of a gentleman of elegant leisure. A half-year's salary had been advanced to him unasked – thus delicately giving

him the means of replenishing his wardrobe, and enabling him to appear in proper costume for every occasion.

Certainly, the prospects of the poor steerage-passenger seemed to have undergone a change for the better. Through the generosity of his unexpected patron, he was playing a rôle at the Jew's penn not unlike that which his fellow-voyager was, at that very time, performing at Mount Welcome; and as there was not much difference in the social rank of the respective circles in which they were each revolving, it was by no means improbable that the two might meet again, and upon a more equal footing than formerly.

To do Herbert Vaughan justice, it should be stated that he was more surprised than gratified by the luxurious life he was leading. There was something rather extraordinary in the generous patronage of the Jew – something that puzzled him not a little. How was he to account for such kind hospitality?

Thus for days after Herbert Vaughan had made the Happy Valley his home, matters moved on smoothly enough to the superficial observer. Slight incongruities that did occur from time to time, were ingeniously explained; and the young Englishman, unsuspecting of any evil design, with the exception of the unwonted hospitality that was being bestowed upon himself, saw nothing extraordinary in the circumstances that surrounded him.

Had he been less the honoured guest of his Israelitish host, perhaps his perceptions might have been more scrupulous and

discriminative. But the Arabs have a proverb – “It is not in human nature to speak ill of the horse that has borne one out of danger;” and human nature in the East is but the counterpart of its homonym in the West. Noble as was the nature of the young Englishman, still was it human; and to have “spoken ill of the bridge that had carried him safely over” – and from that desolate shore on which he had late been stranded – would have argued a nature something more than human.

If he entertained any suspicion of his patron’s integrity, he zealously kept it to himself – not with any idea of surrendering either his independence or self-respect; but to await the development of the somewhat inexplicable courtesy of which he was the recipient.

This courtesy was not confined to his Hebrew host. As Herbert had long been aware, his daughter exercised it in an equal degree, and far more gracefully. Indeed, among other transformations that had been remarked as occurring in the Happy Valley, the spirit of the fair Jewess seemed also to have sustained a remarkable change. Though upon occasions the proud, imperious temper would manifest itself, more generally now was Judith in a sentimental vein – at times approaching to sadness. There were other times when the old spitefulness would show itself. Then the spiral nostrils would curl with contempt, and the dark Israelitish eyes flash with malignant fire.

Happily, these rather ungraceful exhibitions – like the tornadoes of her native land – were rare: for a certain name – the

cause that called them forth – was but rarely pronounced in her hearing. Kate Vaughan was the name.

Judith's dislike for the young Creole had originated in a mere rivalry of charms. Both enjoyed a wide-spread reputation for beauty – oft descanted upon, and often compared, by the idle gallants of the Bay. These discussions and comparisons reached the ears of the Jewess; and, to her chagrin, the decisions were not always in her favour. Hence the origin of her enmity.

Hitherto it had been only *envy*; and, with a toss of the head, and a slight curl of the nostril, the unpleasant theme would be dismissed. Of late, however, a stronger emotion than envy had begun to exhibit itself; and, whenever the name of Kate Vaughan was introduced into the conversation – no matter how incidentally or undesigned – the eye of the Jewess would light up with a jealous fire, her lip quiver as if muttering curses, and she, who but the moment before seemed a very angel, would become all at once transformed into the semblance of a demon!

The behaviour of the Jewess admits of easy explanation. *She was in love, and with Herbert Vaughan.*

At first the motive had been part vanity, part coquetry – blended, however, with some serious admiration. Mingled also with this was a desire to vex Kate Vaughan: for, from the first, she had suspected rivalry in that quarter. Even though she had been made aware of the very short interview between the cousins, she could not feel satisfied but that something had passed between them; and there was that bit of ribbon, which

Herbert still cherished, and of the symbolism of which she had vainly endeavoured to obtain a solution.

Her suspicions did not die out, as it might be supposed they would, in the absence of any demonstration on Herbert's part towards his cousin. On the contrary, they only grew stronger as her own interest in the young Englishman increased, for then she could not understand how a young girl – Kate Vaughan, or any other – could have looked upon the man who had impressed her, without being herself impressed.

And she had become impressed by him, not gradually, but rapidly and profoundly; until her love had grown into a fierce passion – such as a tigress might be suspected of conceiving for her tawny mate.

Herbert Vaughan had passed scarce a week under the roof of the Jew's mansion when its mistress was in love with him – to the ends of her fingers – to the very extreme of jealousy!

As for the object of this fervent passion, the young man was at this time altogether unable to analyse his own feelings.

It is true that the imperious spirit of the Jewess, aided by her endless wiles, had gained a certain ascendancy over him; but not so as to obliterate the image that had recently become impressed upon his heart.

In the short interview which he had had with his cousin Kate, Herbert Vaughan had looked, for the first time in his life, on one whom to look at was to love. The blue-eyed belle of his native village, the pretty barmaid at the inn, the sweet-faced chorister

in the church – with other boyish fancies, already half obliterated by two months of absence – were swept instantaneously into the dustbin of oblivion by that lovely apparition. He was face to face with a woman worthy of his love – one who deserved every aspiration of his soul. Intuitively and at the first glance he had felt this; and still more was he impressed with it, as he pronounced those warm words on his painful parting. Hence the ardent proffer of the strong arm and the stout heart – hence the chivalric refusal of the purse, and the preference of a piece of ribbon.

Not that he had any reason to regard the latter as a love-token. He knew that the kind words that had been spoken in that short but stormy interview – as well as the offer of gold that had ended it – were but the promptings of a pitying heart; and rather a negation of love, than a sign of its existence. Glad as he might have been to have regarded the piece of ribbon as a *guage d'amour*, he could only prize it as a *souvenir* of friendship – of no higher signification than the purse to which it had belonged, or the gold treasure which that purse had contained.

Though sensible that he had no claim upon his cousin beyond that of kinship – though not a word had been spoken by her to show that she felt for him any other kind of regard, Herbert, strange enough, had conceived a hope, that some day or other, a more endearing relationship might exist between them.

Not for long was he cheered by this sweet expectancy. It was too transitory to stand the test of time. As day

succeeded day, rumours reached him of the gay scenes that were transpiring at Mount Welcome. Especially was he informed of the contentedness of his cousin Kate in the society of the new companion which her father had provided for her.

The effect of this information was a gradual but grievous extinction of the slight hope which Herbert had conceived.

The circumstances with which chance had now surrounded him may have rendered these regrets less painful. Though his cousin cared not for him, he had no reason to feel forsaken or forlorn. By his side – and almost constantly by his side – was beauty of no common brilliance, showering smiles upon him of no ordinary attractiveness.

Had he been the recipient of those smiles only one day sooner – before the image of Kate Vaughan had made that slight impression upon his heart – he might the more readily have yielded to their influence. And, perhaps, on the other hand, could he have known how *his* image had fallen upon her heart, and made lodgment there, he might have offered a sterner resistance to the syren seductions with which he was now beset.

But lovers' hearts are not things of glass; and though at times they resemble mirrors, mentally reflecting each other, too often, by the ruling of contrarities, do the mirrors become reversed and with the reflecting images facing darkly inward.

In such a dilemma was the heart of Herbert Vaughan. No wonder he found a difficulty in effecting its analysis!

In a condition somewhat similar to Herbert's was the heart

of his cousin: though hers was easier to analyse. It was simply trembling under the influence of a first and virgin love. Two forms had been presented to it in the same hour, both in the blush of youthful manhood – one, a distinguished gentleman, the other, an humble adventurer.

The former had the additional advantage in priority of introduction; the latter was not even introduced. But the favourite does not always win. The earliest on the course may be the latest in the race; and though the heart of the young Creole, on its pure virgin page, had received love's image at first sight, it was not that of him who first presented himself to make the impression.

Nor was she kept in ignorance of outward events. Her maid Yola was the medium by which she was acquainted with them. Through this medium she had heard of Herbert's proximity – of his happiness and prosperity. The news would have given her joy, but that she had heard he was *too happy*. Strange that this should be a cause of bitterness!

The thoughts that succeeded – the hopes and fears – the dark doubts by day and by night – the dreams, often delusively bright – need not be detailed. There are none who have not known a first love; few who have not felt this chequered alternation of emotions.

As for the distinguished Smythje, he was not always in one mind. He, too, was troubled with an alternation of hopes and fears. The former, however, generally predominated; and, for the most part, he felt in his spirit the proud confidence of a

conqueror. Often, with Thoms as his audience, might Smythje be heard exultingly repeating the despatch of Caesar: – “*Veni, vidi, vici!*”

Volume Two – Chapter Ten

In Search of Justice

The mutual spite between planter and penn-keeper was of old standing – dating, in fact, from their first acquaintance with each other. Some sharp practice between them, in the sale and purchase of slaves, had given origin to it; and circumstances were always occurring to hinder it from dying out. This was more especially the case since the Jew, by the purchase of the Happy Valley estate, had become the contiguous neighbour – and, in point of wealth, almost the rival – of the proprietor of Mount Welcome.

On the side of the Custos there had been for some time past another feeling mixed up with his antipathy to his Israelitish neighbour – a vague sense of fear. This was of modern origin – dating from a period subsequent to the execution of Chakra, the myal-man – and begotten of some remarks which, as reported to Mr Vaughan, the Jew had made in connection with that ugly incident.

If nothing had of late transpired to increase this fear on the part of the Custos, a circumstance had arisen to strengthen his hostility. The protection which had been given to his discarded nephew, and the parade which his neighbour was making of him, had proved to the Custos a scandal of the most irksome kind; and

almost every day was he made aware of some unpleasant bit of gossip connected with the affair. So irritated had he become with rumours, constantly reaching him, that his hatred for the Jew had grown stronger than ever before; and he would have given a dozen hogsheads of his best *muscovado* to any one who would have provided him with the means of humiliating the detested penn-keeper.

Just at this crisis, chance or fortune stepped in to favour him, apparently offering the very opportunity he desired; and in a way that, instead of costing him a dozen hogsheads of sugar, was likely to put far more than that amount of property into his pocket.

It was the day before that on which Smythje had dropped into the dead-wood. The Custos was in his kiosk alone, smoking a plantation cigar, and conning over the statutes of the “black code” – a favourite study with him. Just at that moment Mr Trusty’s shadow was projected into the summer-house. “Well, Trusty, what is it?”

“There’s a man below wants to see your worship.”

“On what business, pray?”

“Don’t know,” answered the laconic overseer; “he won’t tell. Says it’s important, and can only communicate to yourself.”

“What sort of a man is he? Negro or white?”

“Neither, your worship. He’s a clear mulatto. I’ve seen him about before. He’s one of the Maroons that have their settlement over among the Trelawney Hills. He calls himself Cubina.”

“Ah!” said the Custos, showing a slight emotion as the name was pronounced; “Cubina! Cubina! I’ve heard the name. I fancy I’ve seen the man – at a distance. A young fellow, isn’t he?”

“Very young; though they say he’s the captain of the Trelawney band.”

“What on earth can the Maroon want with me?” muttered Mr Vaughan, half to himself. “He hasn’t brought in any runaways, has he?”

“No,” answered the overseer. “Thanks to your worship’s good management, we haven’t any of late – not since that old schemer Chakra was put out of the way.”

“Thanks to *your* good management, Mr Trusty,” said the planter, returning his overseer’s compliment, not without a show of nervous uneasiness, which the reference to Chakra had called forth. “Then it’s nothing of that kind, you think?” he hastily added, as if desirous of changing the theme.

“No, your worship. It cannot be: there’s not a runaway upon my list;” replied Trusty, with an air of triumph.

“Gad! I’m glad to hear it,” said the Custos, rubbing his hands together as an expression of his contentment. “Well; I suppose the young fellow has come to consult me in my magisterial capacity. In some scrape, no doubt? These Maroons are always getting themselves into trouble with our planters. I wonder who he’s come to complain about?”

“Well, that much I think I can tell you,” rejoined the overseer, evidently knowing more of the Maroon’s errand than he had yet

admitted – for Mr Trusty was a true disciple of the secretive school. “If I should be allowed to make a guess, your worship, I should say it is something relating to our neighbour of the Happy Valley.”

“What! the Jew?”

“Jacob Jessuron, Esquire.”

“You think so, Trusty?” inquired Mr Vaughan, with an earnest and gratified look. “Has the young fellow said anything?”

“No,” answered the overseer; “it’s not anything *he* has said. I heard something a day or two ago about a runaway the Maroons have got among them – a slave belonging to the Jew. It appears they don’t want to give him up.”

“Whom did you hear it from?”

“Why, not exactly from any one, your worship. I should rather say I *overheard* it, quite by accident. One of the Trelawney Maroons – a big fellow that comes down here occasionally after Black Bet – was telling her something. I was passing Bet’s cabin, and heard him talking about this runaway.”

“Don’t want to give him up! And for what reason do they refuse?”

“Can’t tell, your worship. I could only make out part of the conversation.”

“So you think it’s about that the young fellow has come?”

“I think it likely, your worship. He’s close, however, and I couldn’t get a word out of him about his business. He says he must see you.”

“All right, then! You can show him in here. And hark ye, Mr Trusty! See Black Bet, and get what you can out of her. This is an interesting matter. A Maroon refusing to deliver up a runaway! There must be something in it. Perhaps the mulatto will tell me all about it; but whether he does or not, you may see Bet. You can promise her a new gown, or whatever you like. Show the young fellow up at once. I am ready to receive him.”

Mr Trusty bowed, and walked off in the direction of the works, where the Maroon had remained in waiting; while the Custos, composing himself into an official attitude, awaited the approach of his visitor.

“I’d give a good round sum,” soliloquised he, “to learn that the old rascal has got into some scrape with these Maroon fellows. I shouldn’t wonder,” he added, in gleeful anticipation, “I shouldn’t wonder! I know they don’t much like him – less since he’s taken the Spaniards into his pay – and I suspect he’s been engaged in some underhand transactions of late. He’s been growing grander every day, and nobody knows where all the money comes from. Maybe Master Maroon has a tale to tell; and, if it’s against Jessuron, I’ll take care he has an opportunity of telling it. Ah, here he comes! Egad, a fine-looking fellow! So, so! This is the young man that my daughter jokes Yola about! Well, I don’t wonder the Foolah should have taken a fancy to him; but I must see that he doesn’t make a fool of her. These Maroons are dangerous dogs among the women of the plantations; and Yola, whether a princess or not in her own country-princess, ha! ha! Well, at all

events the wench is no common nigger; and it won't do for Master Maroon to be humbugging her. I shall lecture him about it, now that I've got him here."

By this time the Maroon captain – equipped just as we have seen him in the forest – had arrived in front of the kiosk; and, making a deferential bow, though without taking off his hat – which, being the *toqued kerchief*, could not conveniently be removed – stood waiting for the Custos to address him.

The planter remained for a considerable time without vouchsafing further speech than the mechanical salutation, "Good morning."

There was something in the physiognomy of his visitor that had evidently made an unpleasant impression upon him; and the gaze, with which he regarded the latter, was one which bespoke some feeling different from that of mere curiosity or admiration.

Whatever the feeling was, he seemed desirous of suppressing it; and, making an effort to that effect, appeared to succeed: for the shadow, that for an instant had shown itself on his countenance, cleared away; and, with a magisterial but courteous smile, he commenced the conversation.

Volume Two – Chapter Eleven

Magistrate and Maroon

“Well, young man,” continued the Custos, in an affable tone, “you, I believe, are one of the Maroons of Trelawney?”

“Yes, worship,” bluntly rejoined Cubina. “The captain of a town, are you not?”

“Only a few families, worship. Ours is a small settlement.”

“And your name is – ?”

“Cubina.”

“Ah! I’ve heard the name,” said the Custos. “I think,” added he, with a significant smile, “we have a young girl here on the plantation who knows you?”

Cubina blushed, as he stammered out an affirmative.

“Oh! that’s all right,” said the planter, encouragingly. “So long as there’s no harm meant, there’s no harm done. Mr Trusty tells me you have business with me. Is it about that?”

“About what, your worship?” inquired the Maroon, a little taken by surprise at the question so unexpectedly put to him.

“About your sweetheart!”

“My sweetheart, worship?”

“Ay, Yola. Is she not your sweetheart?”

“Well, Mr Vaughan,” rejoined the Maroon, “I’m not going to deny that something has passed between me and the young girl;

but it wasn't exactly about her I've come to see you, though now, bein' here, I might as well talk about that matter, too, if it so please your worship."

"Very good, Captain Cubina. I'm ready to hear what you have to say. Go on!"

"Well, then, your worship, the truth is, I want to buy Yola."

"What? Buy your own sweetheart?"

"Just so, worship. Of course, as soon as she would be mine, I'd set her free."

"That is, you would change the bonds she now wears for the bonds of matrimony? – ha! ha! ha! Is that it, Captain Cubina?" and the Custos laughed at the conceit he had so neatly expressed.

"Something of that sort, your worship," replied the Maroon, slightly participating in the worthy magistrate's mirth.

"And do you think Yola desires to become Mrs Cubina?"

"If I didn't think so, your worship, I wouldn't propose to buy her. It would be nothing to me to own the girl, if she wasn't agreeable."

"She *is* agreeable, then?"

"Well, worship, I think so. Not that she don't like the young mistress that owns her at present; but, you see, your worship – but –"

"But there's somebody she likes better than her mistress; and that's yourself, Master Cubina?"

"Well, you see, worship, that's a different sort of liking, and –"

“True enough – true enough!” interrupted Mr Vaughan, as if wishing to come to the end of the conversation – at least, upon that particular topic.

“Well, Captain Cubina,” he added, “suppose I was willing to part with Yola, how much could you afford to give for her? Mind you, I don’t say I am willing: for, after all, the girl belongs to my daughter; and *she* would have something to say in the matter.”

“Ah, sir!” exclaimed Cubina, in a tone of tender confidence, “Miss Vaughan is good and generous. I’ve often heard say so. I am sure she would never stand in the way of Yola’s being happy.”

“Oh, you think it would make Yola happy, do you?”

“I hope so, your worship,” answered the Maroon, modestly dropping his eyelids as he made the reply.

“After all,” said the planter, “it would be a matter of business. My daughter, even if she wished it, could not afford to part with the girl for less than the market price; which in Yola’s case would be a large one. How much do you suppose I have been offered for her?”

“I’ve heard two hundred pounds, your worship.”

“Just so; and I refused that, too.”

“Maybe, Mr Vaughan, you would not have refused it from another – from me, for instance?”

“Ah, I don’t know about that! But could *you* raise that large sum?”

“Not just now, your worship. I am sorry to say I could not. I had scraped together as good as a hundred – thinking that would

be enough – when, to my sorrow, I learnt I had only got half-way. But, if your worship will only allow me time, I think I can manage – in a month or two – to get the other hundred, and then – ”

“Then, worthy captain, it will be time to talk about buying Yola. Meanwhile, I can promise you that she shan’t be sold to anybody else. Will that satisfy you?”

“Oh, thank your worship! It is very kind of you, Mr Vaughan: I’ll not fail to be grateful. So long as Yola – ”

“Yola will be safe enough in my daughter’s keeping. But now, my young fellow, since you say this was not exactly the business that brought you here, you have some other, I suppose? Pray tell me what it is.”

The Custos, as he made this request, set himself to listen, in a more attentive attitude than he had yet assumed.

“Well, your worship!” proceeded Cubina, “I’ve come over to ask you for some advice about a matter I have with Mr Jessuron – he as keeps penn close by here.”

Mr Vaughan became doubly attentive.

“What matter?” asked he, in a simple phrase – lest any circumlocution might distract the speaker from his voluntary declaration.

“It’s an ugly business, your worship; and I wouldn’t bother about it, but that the poor young fellow who’s been robbed out of his rights, turns out to be neyther more nor less than the brother of Yola herself. It’s a queer story altogether; and if it wasn’t the old Jew that’s done the thing, one could hardly believe it.”

“What thing? Pray be explicit, my friend.”

“Well, your worship, if you’ll have patience to hear me, I’ll tell you the whole story from beginning to end – that is, as far as it has gone: for it ain’t ended yet.”

“Go on!” commanded the Custos. “I’ll hear it patiently. And don’t be afraid, Captain Cubina,” added he, encouragingly. “Tell me all you know – every circumstance. If it’s a case for justice, I promise you justice shall be done.”

And with this magisterial commonplace, the Custos resumed his attitude of extreme attention.

“I’ll make no secrets, your worship, whether it gets me into trouble or no. I’ll tell you all – leastwise, all that’s come to my knowledge.”

And with this proviso, the Maroon captain proceeded to detail the circumstances connected with the capture of the runaway; the singular encounter between brother and sister; and the mutual recognition that followed. Then afterwards the disclosures made by the young man: how he was an African prince; how he had been sent in search of his sister; the ransom he had brought with him; his landing from the ship, consigned by Captain Jowler to the care of Jessuron; his treatment and betrayal by the Jew; the branding of his person, and robbing him of his property; his escape from the penn; his capture by Cubina, already described; and, finally, his detention by the latter, in spite of several messages and menaces, sent by the Jew, to deliver him up.

“Good!” cried Loftus Vaughan, starting from his chair,

and evidently delighted by the recital, somewhat dramatically delivered by the Maroon. "A melodrama, I declare! wanting only one act to complete it. Egad, I shall feel inclined to be one of the actors before it's played out. Ho!" exclaimed he, as if some thought had suddenly struck him; "this may explain why the old rascal wanted to buy the wench – though I don't clearly see his purpose in that. It'll come clear yet, no doubt."

Then addressing himself once more to the Maroon: —

"Twenty-four Mandingoes, you say – twenty-four belonged to the prince?"

"Yes, your worship. Twenty regular slaves, and four others that were his personal attendants. There were more of the slaves; but these were the lawful property of the captain, the price paid for bringing him over."

"And they were all carried to the Jew's penn?"

"All of them, with the others: the whole cargo was taken there. The Jew bought all. There were some Coromantees among them; and one of my men, Quaco, who had talk with these, heard enough to confirm the young man's story."

"Ha! what a pity, now, that black tongues can't wag to any purpose! *Their* talk goes for nothing. But I'll see what may be done without it."

"Did your prince ascertain the name of the captain that brought him over?" inquired the magistrate, after considering a minute.

"Oh yes, your worship; Jowler, he was called. He trades upon

the Gambia, where the prince's father lives. The young man knows him well."

"I think I know something of him, too – that same Jowler. I should like to lay my hands upon him, for something else than this – a precious scamp! After all, it wouldn't help our case if we had him. No doubt, the two set their heads together in the business, and there's only one story between them.

"Humph! what are we to do for a *white* witness?" continued the magistrate, speaking rather to himself than his visitor. "That, I fear, will be a fatal difficulty. Stay! Ravener, you say, Jessuron's overseer, was at the landing of the cargo?"

"Oh, yes, your worship. That individual took an active part in the whole transaction. It was he who stripped the prince of his clothes, and took all his jewellery away from him."

"Jewellery, too?"

"*Crambo*, yes! He had many valuable things. Jowler kept most of his plunder aboard ship."

"A robbery! Egad, a wholesale robbery!"

"Well, Captain Cubina," proceeded the Custos, changing his tone to one of more business-like import, "I promise you that this shall not be passed over. I don't yet clearly see what course we may have to take. There are many difficulties in a prosecution of this kind. We'll have trouble about the testimony – especially since Mr Jessuron is a magistrate himself. Never mind about that. Justice shall be done, even were he the highest in the land. But there can be no move made just yet. It will be a month before

the assize court meets at Savannah; and that is where we must go with it. Meanwhile, not a word to any one – not a whisper of what you know!”

“I promise that, your worship.”

“You must keep the Foolah prince where you have him. Don’t on any account deliver him up. I’ll see that you’re protected in holding him. Considering the case, it’s not likely the Jew will go to extremities with you. *He* has a glass house over his head, and will ’ware to throw stones – so you’ve not much to fear.

“And now, young man!” added the Custos, changing his tone to one that showed how friendly he could be to him who had imparted such gratifying intelligence, “if all goes well, you’ll not have much difficulty in making up the hundred pounds for the purchase of your sweetheart. *Remember that!*”

“Thanks, worthy Custos,” said Cubina, bowing gratefully; “I shall depend upon your promise.”

“You may. And now – go quietly home, and wait till I send for you. I shall see my lawyer to-morrow. We may want you soon.”

Volume Two – Chapter Twelve

The Smythje Eclipse

The celebrated eclipse of Columbus, by which that shrewd navigator so advantageously deluded the simple savages of Don Christopher's Cove, is not the only one for which the island of Jamaica *should* be famous. It is my duty to introduce another: which, if not worthy of being recorded upon the page of history, deserves at least a chapter in our romance.

The eclipse in question, though not so important in its results as that which favoured the great world-finder, was nevertheless of considerable interest – more especially to some of the *dramatis personae* of our tale, whose fortunes it influenced in no slight degree.

Occurring about two weeks after the arrival of the distinguished Smythje, it seemed as if the sun had specially extinguished himself for the occasion: as a sort of appropriate climax to the round of brilliant *fêtes* and entertainments, of which the lord of Montagu Castle had been the recipient. It deserves, therefore, to be designated the “Smythje eclipse.”

On the day before that on which the obscuration of the sun was expected to take place, the Cockney had conceived a brilliant design – that of viewing the eclipse from the top of the mountain – from the summit of the Jumbé Rock!

There was something daringly original in this design; and for that had Smythje adopted it. Kate Vaughan was to be his companion. He had asked, and of course obtained, Mr Vaughan's consent, and hers also of course – for Kate had found of late, more than ever, that her father's will was to be her law.

Smythje was not without a purpose in the proposed ascent to the natural observatory of the Jumbé Rock. In that hour when all the earth would be in *chiaro-oscuro*— as if shrouded under the pall of infinity – in that dark and solemn hour, Smythje had determined upon *popping the question*!

Why he had selected such a place and time – both pre-eminently sombre – must for ever remain a mystery. He may have been under an impression that the poetical reputation of the place, combined with the romantic solemnity of the scene and the hour, might exercise a dissolving influence over the heart of the young Creole, and incline her to an affirmative answer. Or, perhaps, *au fait* as he was to theatrical contrivances, he may have drawn his idea from something he had seen upon the stage, and chosen his climax accordingly.

Some two hours before the expected contact between the limbs of the two great luminaries – in time to allow of leisurely walking – Smythje started out for the Jumbé Rock, of course accompanied by Kate Vaughan.

Attendants there were none; for the exquisite, on such an occasion, preferred being alone; and had so signified – declining the sable escort which his host had provided.

The morning was one of the fairest. The sun was still shining brightly. Not a speck could be distinguished upon the azure arch of a West-Indian sky; and the scenes through which the path conducted Mr Smythje and his fair companion were among the loveliest to be found in the domain of Nature.

Around the dwelling of Mount Welcome – in its gardens and *parterres*– the eye delighted to dwell upon a variety of vegetable forms, both indigenous and exotic – some planted for shade; some for the beauty of their blossoms; and others for their fruit. There could be seen the genip, the tamarind of Oriental fame, palms of several species, the native pawpaw, and the curious trumpet-tree. Distinguished for their floral beauties, were the cordia, the oleander, and South-Sea rose, the grand magnolia, and the perfumed Persian lilac. Bearing luscious fruits, were the cashew, the mango, and Malay apple; the sop, the guava, with every variety of the citron tribe – as oranges, lemons, limes, and the huge shaddock.

Climbing the standard trunks, and twining around the branches, were parasites of many species – rare and beautiful flowering plants: as the wax-like *hoya carnosa*, the crimson quamoclit, *barsavolas*, *ipomeas*, and other magnificent orchids.

It was a scene to stir the soul of a botanist to enthusiastic admiration; resembling a vast botanical garden – some grand house of palms, having for its roof the azure canopy of heaven.

To the eyes of the young creole – all her life accustomed to look upon those fair vegetable forms – there was nothing in the

sight of them to beget astonishment; and the Cockney cared but little for trees. His late adventure had cured him of all inclination for a forest life; and, in his eyes, a cabbage-palm was of no more interest than a cabbage.

Smythje, however, was not unmusical. Constant attendance at the opera had, to some extent, attuned his soul to song; and he could not help expressing some surprise at the melody of the Western songsters – so much misrepresented and maligned.

In truth, upon that morning they appeared to be giving one of their grandest concerts. In the garden groves could be heard the clear voice of the banana-bird, like the tones of a clarionet, mingled with the warbling tones of the blue quit. There, too, could be seen the tiny vervain humming-bird, seated upon the summit of a tall mango-tree, trilling out its attenuated and fairy-like lay, with as much enthusiastic energy as if its little soul was poured forth in the song.

In the dark mountain woods could be heard other songsters – the glass-eye merle singing his rich and long-continued strain; and, at intervals, the wild, plaintive cry of the solitaire, littered in sweet but solemn notes, like the cadenced chaunting of a psalm – in perfect keeping with the solitude which this singular songster affects.

Above all could be distinguished the powerful voice of the New World nightingale – the far-famed mock-bird – excelling all the other music of the groves; except when at intervals the rare May-bird condescended to fling his melody upon the breeze,

when the mock-bird himself would instantly interrupt his lay, and become a listener.

Add to these sounds the humming of bees, the continuous “skirling” of grasshoppers, lizards, and cicadas – the metallic cluckling of tree-frogs, the rustling of the breeze among the lanceolate leaves of the tall bamboos, and the sighing of a cascade among the distant hills – add these, and you may have some idea of the commingling of sounds that saluted the ear of Mr Montagu Smythje, as, with his fair companion, he ascended the mountain slope.

Cheerful as were the birds and brisk the bees, Smythje appeared cheerful and brisk as they. He was gay both in spirits and costume. Thoms had equipped him in one of his favourite suits; and his spirits were elevated by the prospect of his grand love triumph.

On arriving at the bottom of the ravine which conducted to the summit of the rock, Smythje showed his courage by boldly advancing to scale the steep path. He would have offered a hand to assist his companion; but in the difficult ascent he found full occupation for both; and in this ungallant manner was he compelled to climb upward.

Kate, however – who was accustomed to the path, and could possibly have given him assistance – found no difficulty in following; and in a few seconds both had arrived on the summit of the rock, and stood under the shadow of the palm.

The skeleton form, once chained to the tree, was no longer

there to fray them. It had been mysteriously removed.

Mr Smythje consulted his repeater. They had arrived just in the nick of time. In five minutes the eclipse would commence; and the discs of the two great heavenly orbs would appear in contact.

It was not this crisis, however, that Smythje had chosen for the cue to his important speech. Nor yet the moment of deepest darkness; but just when the sun should begin to re-appear, and, by his renewed brightening symbolise the state of the lover's own feelings.

He had prepared some pretty speeches which he meant to repeat by way of ushering in the declaration: how his own heart might be compared to the sun – now burning with passion – now darkened by deep despair; then once more brightening up, with rekindled hope, at the prospect of Kate making him the happiest of mortals.

He had prepared them pit-a-pat the night before, and gone over them with Thoms in the morning. He had rehearsed them more than a dozen times – ending with a dress rehearsal just before starting out.

Unless the eclipse should in some way deprive him of the use of his tongue, there could be no danger of his breaking down.

With perfect confidence, therefore, in his speech-making, and equally confident of the issue, the romantic Smythje restored his repeater to its fob; and, with sun-glass in hand, awaited the coming on of the eclipse.

Volume Two – Chapter Thirteen

A Proposal Postponed

Slowly, silently, and still unseen, stole the soft luminary of night towards her burning god – till a slight shadow on his lower limb betokened the contact.

“The ekwipse is commencing,” said Smythje, holding the glass to his eye. “The sun and moon are just kissing, like two lovers. How pwetty it is! Dawn’t yaw think so, fayaw Kate?”

“Rather a distant kiss for lovers, I should say – some ninety odd millions of miles between them!”

“Haw, haw! veway good, veway good indeed! And in that sawt of thing, distance dawn’t lend enchantment to the view. Much bettaw to be near, just as yaw and I are at this moment. Dawn’t yaw think so, fayaw Kate?”

“That depends upon circumstances – whether the love be reciprocal.”

“Wecipwocal! – yas, twoo enough – thaw is something in that.”

“A great deal, I should think, Mr Smythje. For instance, were I a man, and my sweetheart was frowning on me – as yonder moon seems to be upon his majesty the sun – I should keep my distance, though it were ninety millions of miles.”

Had Mr Smythje at that moment only removed the glass from

his eye, and turned towards *his* sweetheart, he might have read in her looks that the speech just made possessed a significance, altogether different from the interpretation which it pleased him to put upon it.

“Haw, haw! veway pwetty of yaw, ’pon honaw! But yaw must wemember that yondaw moon has two faces. In that she wesembles the queetyaw called woman. Her bwight face is turned towards the sun, and no doubt she is at this moment smiling upawn the fellow. Her frowns, yaw see, are faw us, and all the west of mankind; thawfo’ she wesembles a devoted queetyaw. Dawn’t yaw think so, fayaw Kate?”

Kate was compelled to smile, and for a short moment regarded Smythje with a glance which might have been mistaken for admiration. In the analogy which the exquisite had drawn there was a scintillation of intellect – the more striking that it was not expected from such a source. Withal, the glance was rather indicative of surprise than admiration, though Smythje evidently interpreted it for the latter – his self-esteem assisting him to the interpretation.

Before she could make reply, he repeated the interrogatory.

“Oh, yes!” answered she, the smile disappearing from her countenance; “I can well imagine, Mr Smythje, that your simile is just. I should think that a woman who loves devotedly, would not bestow her smiles on any other than him she loves; and though he were distant as yonder sun, in her heart she would smile on him all the same.”

The young Creole as she spoke lowered her eyes, no longer regarding the eclipse, but as if involuntarily directing her glance downward.

“Ah, yes!” continued she in thought, “and even if alike impossible for them ever to meet, still would her smiles be his. Ah, yes!”

For some seconds she remained silent and abstracted. Smythje, attracted by the altered tone of her voice, had taken the telescope from his eye, and turned towards her.

Observing this abstracted air, which he had often before remarked, he did not think of attributing it to any other cause than that which his vanity had already divined. Kate Vaughan was in love; and with whom but himself?

His sympathetic soul was ready to give way; and he was almost on the point of departing from the programme which he had so ingeniously traced out. But the remembrance of the pretty speeches he had rehearsed with Thoms – and the thought that any deviation from the original design would deprive him of the pleasure of witnessing the effects which they must undoubtedly produce – restrained him from a premature declaration, and he remained silent.

It did not hinder him from some unspoken reflections.

“Poor queetyaw! evidently suffwing! Neithaw distance nor absence can make the slightest impwession upon her love – not the slightest. Ba Jawve! I feel more than half-inclined to bwreak the spell, and reweive her fwom her miseway. But no – it would

nevaw do. I must wesist the temptation. A little more suffwing can do no harm, since the situation of the queetyaw wesembles the pwoverb: ‘The darkest hour is that which is newest the day.’ Haw! haw!”

And with this fanciful similitude before his mind, the sympathetic and self-denying lover concluded his string of complacent reflections; and returning the glass to his eye, once more occupied himself in ogling the eclipse.

The young Creole, seeing him thus engaged, withdrew to one side; and placing herself on the very edge of the cliff, stood gazing outward and downward. It was evident that the grand celestial phenomenon had no attraction for her. She cared neither to look upon the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars that would soon be visible in the fast-darkening sky. Her eyes, like her thoughts, were turned upon the earth; and as the penumbra began to cast its purple shadow over the fair face of Nature, so could a cloud be seen overspreading her beautiful countenance.

There was now deep silence below and around. In a few seconds of time a complete change had taken place. The uttering of the forest was no longer heard. The birds had suddenly ceased their songs, and if their voices came up at intervals, it was in screams and cries that denoted fear. Insects and reptiles had become silent, under the influence of a like alarm. The more melancholy sounds alone continued – the sighing of the trees, and the sough of the distant waterfall. This transformation reminded Kate Vaughan of the change which had taken place in her own

heart. Almost equally rapid had it been – the result of only a few days, or perhaps only hours: for the once gay girl had become, of late, habitually grave and taciturn. Well might she compare her thoughts to the forest sounds! The cheerful and musical were gone – those that were melancholy alone remained!

For this change there was a cause, not very different from that which Smythje had divined. He was right in assigning it to that passion – the most powerful that can dwell in a woman’s heart.

Only as to its object did Mr Smythje labour under a misconception. His self-conceit had guided him to a very erroneous conjecture. Could he have divined the thoughts at that moment passing in the mind of his companion, it would have completely cured him of the conceit that he was the maker of that melancholy.

The mansion of Mount Welcome was in sight, gaily glittering amidst gorgeous groves. It was not upon it that the eyes of Kate Vaughan were bent; but upon a sombre pile, shadowed by great cotton-trees, that lay in the adjoining valley. Her heart was with her eyes.

“Happy Valley!” soliloquised she, her thoughts occasionally escaping in low murmur from her lips. “Happy for *him*, no doubt! There has he found a welcome and a home denied him by those whose duty it was to have offered both. There has he found hospitality among strangers; and there, too – ”

The young girl paused, as if unwilling to give words to the thought that had shaped itself in her mind.

“No,” continued she, unable to avoid the painful reflection; “I need not shut my eyes upon the truth. It is true what I have been told – very true, I am sure. There has he found one to whom he has given his heart!”

A sigh of deep anguish succeeded the thought.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, resuming the sad soliloquy; “he promised me a strong arm and a stout heart, if I should ever need them. Ah, me! promise now bitter to be remembered – no longer possible to be kept! And the ribbon he was to prize so highly – which gave me such joy as he said it. Only another promise broken! Poor little souvenir! no doubt, long ere this, cast aside and forgotten! ah, me!”

Again the sigh interrupted the soliloquy. After a time it proceeded: —

“‘We may never meet more!’ These were almost his last words. Alas! too prophetic! Better, now, we never should. Better this than to meet him – with her by his side – Judith Jessuron – his wife – his wife – oh!”

The last exclamation was uttered aloud, and with an undisguised accent of anguish.

Smythje heard it, and started as he did so – letting the sun-glass fall from his fingers.

Looking around, he perceived his companion standing apart – unheeding as she was unheeded – with head slightly drooping, and eyes turned downward upon the rock – her face still bearing the expression of a profound anguish which her thoughts had

called forth.

The heart of Smythje melted within him. He knew her complaint – he knew its cure. The remedy was in his hands. Was it right any longer to withhold it? A word from him, and that sad face would be instantly suffused with smiles! Should that word be spoken or postponed?

Spoken! prompted humanity. Spoken! echoed Smythje's sympathetic heart. Yes! perish the cue and the climax! Perish the fine speech and the rehearsal with Thoms – perish everything to “relieve the deaw queetyaw fwom the agony she is suffwing!”

With this noble resolve, the confident lover stepped up to the side of his beloved, leaving a distance of some three feet between them. His movements were those of a man about entering upon the performance of some ceremonial of the grandest importance; and to Mr Smythje, in reality, it was so.

The look of surprise with which the young Creole regarded him, neither deterred him from proceeding, nor in anywise interfered with the air of solemn gravity which his countenance had all at once assumed.

Bending one knee down upon the rock – where he had dropped the glass – and placing his left hand over the region of his heart, while with the right he had raised his hat some six inches above his perfumed curls, there and then he was about to unburden himself of that speech, studied for the occasion – committed to Smythje's memory, and more than a dozen times delivered in the hearing of Thoms – there and then was he on the

eve of offering to Kate Vaughan his hand – his heart – his whole love and estate – when just at this formidable crisis, the head and shoulders of a man appeared above the edge of the rock, and behind, a black-plumed beaver hat, shadowing the face of a beautiful woman!

Herbert Vaughan! – Judith Jessuron!

Volume Two – Chapter Fourteen

The Obscuration

“Intawupted!” exclaimed Smythje, briskly restoring his person to its erect position. “What an infawnal haw!” he continued, drawing out his handkerchief, and dusting the knee on which he had been kneeling. “I wondaw who are the intwoodaws? Aw! ah! It’s the young fellow, yaw cousin! Shawly it is; and – a – a pwetty girl with him – a dooced pwetty girl, ba Jawve!”

A satirical titter, loud enough to be termed a laugh, was heard issuing from between the white teeth of the Jewess. It somewhat discomfited Smythje: since he knew that the satire could only be pointed at the ridiculous *tableau* just broken up, and of which he had himself been the conspicuous figure. His *sang froid*, however, did not quite forsake him, for the Cockney possessed considerable presence of mind – the offspring of an infinite superciliousness. This at the moment came to his relief, bringing with it an idea that promised to rescue him from his embarrassment. The spy-glass lying upon the rock suggested the idea.

Dropping back upon his knee – in an attitude similar to that from which he had just arisen – he took up the telescope, and, once more rising to his feet, presented it to Kate Vaughan, as she stood bent and blushing.

The *ruse* was well intended, and not badly executed; but Mr Smythje had to deal with one as cunning as himself. It was of no use endeavouring to throw dust in the keen, quick eyes of Judith Jessuron; and the laugh was repeated, only in a louder and more quizzical tone.

It ended in Smythje himself joining in the laughter, which, under the circumstances, was the very best course he could have pursued.

Notwithstanding the absurdity of the situation, Herbert did not seem to share in his companion's mirth. On the contrary, a shadow was visible upon his brow – not that produced by the gradually deepening twilight of the eclipse – but one that had spread suddenly over his face at sight of the kneeling Smythje.

“Miss Vaughan!” pronounced the Jewess, springing lightly upon the rock, and, with a nod of recognition, advancing towards the young Creole and her companion; “an unexpected pleasure this! I hope we are not intruding?”

“Not at all – nothing of the sawt, I ashaw yaw,” replied Smythje, with one of his profoundest bows.

“Mr Smythje – Miss Jessuron,” interposed Kate, performing the duty of introduction with dignified but courteous politeness.

“We have climbed up to view this eclipse,” continued Judith. “The same errand as yourselves, I presume?” added she, with a glance of quizzical malignity directed towards Kate.

“Aw, yes! sawtinly!” stammered out Smythje, as if slightly confused by the innuendo of the interrogative. “That is pwecisely

the pawpose which bwrought us heaw – to view this cewestial phenomenon fwom the Jumbé Wock. A spwendid observatowy it is, ba Jawve!”

“You have had the advantage of us,” rejoined Judith. “I feared we should arrive too late. Perhaps, we are soon enough?”

The satirical tone and glance were reiterated.

Perhaps Kate Vaughan did not perceive the meaning of this ambiguous interrogatory, though addressed to her even more pointedly than the former; at all events, she did not reply to it. Her eyes and thoughts were elsewhere.

“Quite in time, Miss Jessuwon!” answered Smythje. “The ekwipse is fawst assuming a most intewesting phase. In a few minutes the sun will be in penumbwa. If yaw will step this way, yaw may get a bettaw standing-place. Pawmit me to offaw yaw the tewescope? Aw, haw!” continued he, addressing himself to Herbert, who had just come forward, “aw, how do, ma fwierend? Happy to have the pwesyaw of meeting you again!”

As he said this, he held out his hand, with a single finger projecting beyond the others.

Herbert, though declining the proffered finger, returned the salutation with sufficient courtesy; and Smythje, turning aside to attend upon Judith, escorted her to that edge of the platform facing towards the eclipse.

By this withdrawal – perhaps little regretted by either of the cousins – they were left alone.

A bow, somewhat stiff and formal, was the only salutation

that had yet passed between them; and even for some seconds after the others had gone aside, they remained without speaking to each other.

Herbert was the first to break the embarrassing silence.

“Miss Vaughan!” said he, endeavouring to conceal the emotion which, however, his trembling voice betrayed, “I fear our presence here will be considered an intrusion? I would have retired, but that my companion willed it otherwise.”

“*Miss Vaughan!*” mentally repeated the young creole, as the phrase fell strangely upon her ear, prompting her, perhaps, to a very different rejoinder from that she would otherwise have made.

“Since you could not follow your *own* inclination, perhaps it was wiser for you to remain. Your presence here, so far as I am concerned, is no intrusion, I assure you. As for *my* companion, he appears satisfied enough, does he not?”

The rapid exchange of words, with an occasional cachinnation, heard from the other side of the rock, told that a gay conversation was going on between Smythje and the Jewess.

“I regret that our arrival should have led even to your temporary separation. Shall I take Mr Smythje’s place and permit him to rejoin you?”

The reply was calculated to widen the breach between the two cousins.

It was indebted for its character to the interpretation which Herbert had placed upon Kate’s last interrogatory.

“Certainly, if it would be more agreeable to you to do so,” retorted Kate, in a tone of defiant bitterness.

Here a pause occurred in the conversation, which from the first had been carried on defiance against defiance. It was Herbert’s turn to speak; but the challenge conveyed in Kate’s last words placed him in a position where it was not easy to make an appropriate rejoinder, and he remained silent.

It was now the crisis of the eclipse – the moment of deepest darkness. The sun’s disc had become completely obscured by the opaque orb of the night, and the earth lay lurid under the sombre shadow. Stars appeared in the sky, to show that the universe still existed; and those voices of the forest heard only in nocturnal hours, came pealing up to the summit of the rock – a testimony that terrestrial nature was not yet extinct.

It was equally a crisis between two loving hearts. Though standing near, those wild words had outlawed them from each other, far more than if ten thousand miles extended between them. The darkness without was naught to the darkness within. In the sky there were stars to delight the eye; from the forest came sounds to solace the soul; but no star illumined the horizon of their hearts with its ray of hope – no sound of joy cheered the silent gloom that bitterly embraced them.

For some minutes not a word was exchanged between the cousins, nor spoken either to those who were their sharers in the spectacle. These, too, were silent. The solemnity of the scene had made its impression upon all; and, against the dark

background of the sky, the figures of all four appeared in sombre *silhouette*— motionless as the rock on which they stood.

Thus for some minutes stood Herbert and Kate without exchanging word or thought. Side by side they were, so near and so silent, that each might have heard the breathing of the other.

The situation was one of painful embarrassment, and might have been still more so, but for the eclipse; which, just then complete, shrouded both in the deep obscurity of its shadow, and hindered them from observing one another.

Only for a short while did the darkness continue; the eclipse soon re-assuming the character of a penumbra.

One by one the stars disappeared from the canopy of the sky — now hastening to recover its azure hue. The creatures of darkness, wondering at the premature return of day, sank cowering into a terrified silence; and the god of the heavens, coming forth triumphantly from the cloud that had for a short while concealed him, once more poured his joyous effulgence upon the earth.

The re-dawning of the light showed the cousins still standing in the same relative position — unchanged even as to their attitudes.

During the interval of darkness Herbert had neither stirred nor spoken; and after the harsh rejoinder to which, in the bitterness of her pique, the young Creole had given words, it was not her place to continue the conversation.

Pained though Herbert was by his cousin's reply, he

nevertheless remembered his indebtedness to her – the vows he had made – the proud proffer at parting. Was he now to repudiate the debt of gratitude and prove faithless to his promise? Was he to pluck from his breast that silken *souvenir*, still sheltering there, though in secret and unseen?

True, it was but the memorial of an act of friendship – of mere cousinly kindness. He had never had reason to regard it in any other light; and now, more than ever, was he sure it had no higher signification.

She had never said she loved him – never said a word that could give him the right to reproach her. On her side there was no repudiation, since there had been no compromise. It was unjust to condemn her – cruel to defy her, as he had done.

That she loved another – was that a crime?

Herbert now knew that she loved another – was as sure of it as that he stood upon the Jumbé Rock. That interrupted *tableau* had left him no loop to hang a doubt on. The relative position of the parties proclaimed the purpose – a proposal.

The kneeling lover may not have obtained his answer; but who could doubt what that answer was to have been? The situation itself proclaimed consent.

Bitter as were these reflections, Herbert made an effort to subdue them. He resolved, if possible, to stifle his spleen; and, upon the ruin of his hopes, restore that relationship – the only one that could now exist between himself and his cousin – friendship.

With a superhuman effort he succeeded; and this triumph of

virtue over spite, backed by the strongest inclinations of the heart, for a moment solaced his spirit, and rendered it calmer.

Alas! that such triumph can be only temporary. The struggle upon which he was entering was one in which no man has ever succeeded. Love undenied, may end in friendship; but love thwarted or unreciprocated, never!

“Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves its way between
Heights, that appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted;
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life’s bloom – ”

Herbert Vaughan was perhaps too young – too inexperienced in the affairs of the heart – to have ever realised the sentiment so expressed; else would he have desisted from his idle attempt, and surrendered himself at once to the despair that was certain to succeed it.

Innocent – perhaps happily so – of the knowledge of these recondite truths, he yielded to the nobler resolve – ignorant of the utter impracticability of its execution.

Volume Two – Chapter Fifteen

An Encounter of Eyes

While Herbert Vaughan was making these reflections, the light began to re-dawn – gradually, as it were, raising the veil from the face of his cousin. He could not resist turning to gaze upon it. During the interval of the obscurity, a change had passed over the countenance of the young girl, both in its hue and expression. Herbert noticed the change. It even startled him. Before, and during the unhappy dialogue, he had looked upon a flushed cheek, a fiery eye, an air proud and haughty, with all the indices of defiant indifference.

All were gone: Kate's eye still sparkled, but with a milder light; a uniform pallor overspread her cheeks, as if the eclipse had robbed them of their roses; and the proud expression had entirely disappeared, replaced by one of sadness, or rather of pain.

Withal, the face was lovely as ever – lovelier, thought Herbert.

Why that sudden transformation? What had caused it? Whence sprang that painful thought, that was betraying itself in the pale cheek and lips compressed and quivering? Was it the happiness of another that was making that misery? Smythje seemed happy – very happy, to judge from his oft-repeated “Haw! haw!”

Was this the cause of that expression of extreme sadness that

displayed itself on the countenance of his cousin?

So did Herbert interpret it.

Making a fresh effort to subdue within himself the same spirit which he believed to be actuating her, he remained silent – though unable to withdraw his glance from that lorn but lovely face.

While still gazing upon it, a sigh escaped him. It could scarce have been heard by her who stood nearest; nor hers by him: for she had also sighed, and at the same instant of time! Perhaps both were moved by some secret sympathetic instinct?

Herbert had succeeded in obtaining another momentary triumph over his emotions: and was once more on the eve of uttering words of friendship, when the young girl looked up and reciprocated his gaze. It was the first time during the interview their eyes had met: for up to that moment Kate had only regarded her cousin with furtive glances.

For some seconds they stood face to face – each gazing into the eyes of the other, as if both were the victims of some irresistible fascination.

Not a word passed between them – their very breathing was stilled. Both seemed to consider the time too important for speech: for they were seeking in one another's eyes – those faithful mirrors of the soul – those truest interpreters of the heart – the solution of that, the most interesting enigma of their existence.

This silent interrogation was instinctive as mutual –

uncorrupted by a shadow of coquetry. It was bold and reckless as innocence itself – unregarding outward observation. What cared they for the eclipse? What for the sun or the moon, or the waning stars? What for the universe itself? Less – far less for those human forms that chanced to be so near them!

Drew they gratification from that mutual gaze? They must – else why did they continue it?

Not for long: not for long were they allowed. An eye was upon them – the eye of that beautiful demon.

Ah! fair Judith, thy flirtation has proved a failure! The *ruse* has recoiled upon thyself!

The golden sunlight once more fell upon the Jumbé Rock, revealing the forms of four individuals – all youthful – all in love, though two only were beloved!

The returning light brought no joy to Judith Jessuron.

It revealed to her that glance of mutual fascination, which, with a quick, sharp cry, she had interrupted.

A bitter embarrassment seemed all at once to have seized upon her proud spirit, and dragged it into the dust.

Skilled in the silent language of the eyes, she had read in those of Herbert Vaughan, as he bent them upon his cousin, an expression that stung her, even to the utterance of a scream!

From that moment the flirtation with Smythje ceased; and the Cockney exquisite was forsaken in the most unceremonious manner left to continue his telescopic observations alone.

The conversation was no longer *dos y dos*, but at once changed

to a *trio*; and finally restored to its original *quartette* form – soon, however, to be broken up by an abrupt separation of the parties.

The Jewess was the first to propose departure – the first to make it. She descended from the Jumbé Rock in a less lively mood than that in which she had climbed up to it; inwardly anathematising the eclipse, and the fortune that had guided her to the choice of such an ill-starred observatory.

Perhaps, had the interview been prolonged, the cousins might have separated with a better understanding of each other than was expressed in that cold, ceremonious adieu with which they parted.

Smythje and Kate Vaughan were once more alone upon the summit of the rock; and the supercilious lover was now free to continue the declaration.

One might suppose that he would have instantly dropped back upon his knees, and finished the performance so vexatiously interrupted.

Not so, however. The spirit of Smythje's dream seemed equally to have undergone a change; as if he, too, *had seen something*.

His air of high confidence had departed, as also the climax on which he had counted: for the sun's disc was now quite clear of the eclipse, and the pretty speeches, intended for an anterior time, would now have been pointless and inappropriate.

Whether it was this that influenced him, or a presentiment that the offer of his heart and hand might just then stand some

chance of a rejection, can never be known: since Smythje, who alone could divulge it, has left no record of the reason.

Certain it is, however, that the proposal did not take place on the Jumbé Rock on the day of the eclipse; but was postponed, *sine die*, to some future occasion.

Volume Two – Chapter Sixteen

The Smythje Ball

As if the eclipse had not been a sufficient climax to the round of *fêtes* got up for the express amusement of Mr Smythje, only a few days – or, rather, nights – after, still another was inaugurated, to do honour to this young British lion.

Unlike the eclipse, it was a terrestrial phenomenon – one of the most popular of sublunary entertainments – a ball – a complimentary ball – Mr Smythje the recipient of the compliment.

Montego Bay was to be the place; which, notwithstanding its *provinciality*, had long been celebrated for its brilliant assemblies – from the time that fandangoes were danced by the old Spanish pork-butchers, down to that hour when Mr Montagu Smythje had condescended to honour its *salons* by the introduction of some very fashionable steps from the world's metropolis.

The hall was to be a grand affair – one of the grandest ever given in the Bay – and all Planterdom was expected to be present.

Of course, Kate Vaughan would be there; and so, too, the Custos himself.

Mr Smythje would be the hero of the night; and, as such, surrounded by the fairest of the fair – hedged in by a galaxy of beautiful belles, and beset by an army of matchmaking parents,

all seeking success with as much eagerness as Loftus Vaughan himself.

Under these circumstances, it would be but simple prudence that Kate should be there to look after him: for the worthy Custos was not unacquainted with the adage, that “the sweetest smelling flower is that nearest the nose.”

Mr Vaughan would have rejoiced at the opportunity thus offered, of letting all the *monde* of Jamaica know the relationship in which he stood, and was likely to stand, to the distinguished individual to whom the entertainment was dedicated. He had no doubt but that Kate would be chosen as the conspicuous partner: for well knew he the condition of Mr Smythje’s mind upon that subject. To him the latter had made no secret of his affections; and the cunning Custos, who had been all along warily watching the development of the passion, now knew to a certainty that the heart of Montagu’s lord was not only smitten with his daughter, but was irretrievably lost – so far as such a heart could suffer love’s perdition.

No doubt, then, Mr Vaughan would have looked forward to the Smythje ball with pleasant anticipation – as likely to afford him a social triumph – but for a little circumstance that had lately come to his knowledge. It was the incident which had transpired on the Jumbé Rock – the meeting between his daughter and nephew on the day of the eclipse.

The Custos had been the more particular in obtaining the details of that interview from his presumptive son-in-law, on

account of a suspicion that had arisen in his mind as to the inclinations of his daughter's heart. Something she had said – during the first days after Herbert's *brusque* dismissal from Mount Welcome – some sympathetic expressions she had made use of – unguarded and overheard, had given rise to this suspicion of her father.

He was sufficiently annoyed about Kate having met Herbert on the Jumbé Rock; and believed it quite possible that the latter had come there in the hope of encountering his cousin.

In Mount Welcome the name of Herbert Vaughan was no longer heard. Even Kate – whether it was that she had grown more sage – for she had been chided more than once for introducing it into the conversation – or whether she had ceased to think of him – even she never pronounced his name.

For all that, Mr Vaughan was still vexed with some lingering suspicion that in that direction lurked danger; and this determined him to prevent, as far as possible, any further interview between his daughter and nephew.

After the encounter on the Jumbé Rock, he had taken his daughter to task upon this subject; and, using the full stretch of parental authority, compelled her to a solemn promise, that she was not again to speak to her cousin, nor even acknowledge his presence!

It was a hard promise for the poor girl to make. Perhaps it would have been still harder, had she known Herbert's disposition towards her.

There can be no doubt that her father, in extracting this promise, had in view the event about to take place – the grand Smythje ball. There an encounter between the cousins was not only possible, but probable; so much so as to render Mr Vaughan apprehensive. Judith Jessuron was sure to be present – perhaps the Jew himself; and Herbert, of course.

The nephew was now cordially disliked. Stung by the defiant speeches which the young man had made on the day of his arrival, his uncle even detested him: for the proud planter was himself too poor in spirit to admire this quality in any one else.

The Custos had heard all about the hospitality which his neighbour was extending to Herbert, and the kindnesses which the patron was lavishing upon his protégé. Though not a little mystified by what was going on, he availed himself of the ordinary explanation – that it was done to vex himself; and, if so, the stratagem of the Jew was proving perfectly successful: for vexed was Mr Vaughan to his very heart's core.

The night of the Smythje ball came round in due course. The grand ball-room of the Bay was decorated as became the occasion. Flags, festoons, and devices hung around the walls; and over the doorway a large transparency – supported by the loyal emblems of the Union Jack and banner of Saint George, and surmounted by the colonial colours – proclaimed, in letters of eighteen inches diameter: —

“Welcome to Smythje!”

The hour arrived; the band shortly after; close followed by

strings of carriages of every kind current in the Island, containing scores – ay, hundreds of dancers. Twenty miles was nothing to go to a Jamaica ball.

The grand barouche of Loftus Vaughan arrived with the rest, only fashionably behind time, bringing the Custos himself, his truly beautiful daughter, but, above all – as before all perhaps should have been mentioned – the hero of the night.

“Welcome to Smythje!”

How his proud heart swelled with triumph under the magnificent ruffles of his shirt, as he caught sight of the flattering transparency! How conquering his smile, as he turned towards Kate Vaughan, to note the effect which it could not fail to produce!

“Welcome to Smythje!” pealed from a hundred pairs of lips, as the carriage drove up to the door; and then a loud cheer followed the words of greeting; and then the distinguished stranger was ushered into the hall-room; and, after remaining a few moments in a conspicuous position – the cynosure of at least two hundred pairs of eyes – the great man set the example by pairing off with a partner.

The hand struck up, and the dancing began.

It need scarce be said who was Smythje’s first partner – Kate Vaughan, of course. The Custos had taken care of that.

Smythje looked superb. Thoms had been at him all the afternoon. His hay-coloured hair was in full curl – his whiskers in amplest bush – his moustache crimped spirally at the points;

and his cheek pinked with just the slightest tinting of vermillion.

Arrived a little late, the Jewess had not appeared in the first set. In the waltz she was conspicuous: not from her dress of rich purple velvet – not from the splendid tiara of pearls that glistened against the background of her glossy raven hair – not from the dazzling whiteness of her teeth, that gleamed between lips like curved and parted rose-leaves – not from the damask tinting of her cheeks; nor the liquid light that flashed incessantly from her black, Israelitish eyes – not from any of these was she conspicuous; but from all combined into one, and composing a grand and imperious picture.

It was a picture upon which more than one eye gazed with admiration; and more than one continued to gaze.

The partner of Judith was not unworthy to embrace such beauty.

She was in the arms of a young man, a stranger to most in the room; but the glances bestowed upon him by bright eyes – some interrogative, some furtive, some openly admiring – promised him an easy introduction to any one he might fancy to know.

Not that this stranger appeared to be conceitedly conscious of the graces which nature had so lavishly bestowed upon him; or even sensible of the good fortune that had given him such a partner.

On the contrary, he was dancing with despondency in his look, and a cloud upon his brow that even the exciting whirl of the waltz was failing to dissipate!

The partner of Judith Jessuron was Herbert Vaughan.

A ball-room may be likened to a kaleidoscope: the personages are the same, their relative positions constantly changing. Design it or not, either during the dance or the interregnum – one time or another – you will find yourself face to face, or side by side, with every individual in the room.

So in the ball-room of Montego Bay came face to face two sets of waltzers – Smythje and Kate, Herbert and Judith.

The situation arose as they were resting from the dizzy whirl of a waltz.

Smythje bent profoundly towards the floor – Judith, with an imperious sweep, returned the salutation – Herbert bowed to his cousin, with a half-doubting, half-appealing glance; but the nod received in return was so slight, so distant, that even the keen-eyed Custos, closely watching every movement of the quartette, failed to perceive it!

Poor Kate! She knew that the paternal eye, severely set, was upon her. She remembered that painful promise.

Not a word passed between the parties. Scarce a moment stood they together. Herbert, stung by Kate's salutation – unexpectedly cold, almost insultingly distant – warped his arm around the waist of his willing partner, and spun off through the unobservant crowd.

Though often again upon that same night Smythje and Kate, Herbert and the Jewess were respectively partners – so often as to lead to general observation – never again did the four stand

vis-à-vis or side by side. Whenever chance threatened to bring them together, design, or something like it, stepped in to thwart the approximation!

Almost all the night did Herbert dance with the Jewess – no longer with despondency in his look, but with the semblance of a gay and reckless joy. Never had Judith received from the young Englishman such ardent attention; and for the first time since their introduction to each other did she feel conscious of something like a correspondence to her own fierce love. For the moment her proud, cruel heart became dissolved to a true feminine tenderness; and in the spiral undulations of the waltz, as she coiled round the robust form of her partner, her cheek rested upon his shoulder, as if laid there to expire in the agony of an exquisite bliss.

She stayed not to question the cause of Herbert's devotedness. Her own heart, blinded by love, and yearning for reciprocity, threw open its portals to receive the passion without challenge or scrutiny – without knowing whether it was real or only apparent.

A wild anguish would she have experienced at that moment, could she have divined what was passing in Herbert's mind. Little did she suspect that his devotedness to her was only a demonstration intended to act upon another. Little dreamt she that real love for another was the cause and origin of that counterfeit that was deceiving herself. Happily for her heart's peace she knew not this.

Herbert alone knew it. As the kaleidoscope evolved the

dazzling dancers one after another, often did the face of Kate Vaughan flit before the eyes of her cousin, and his before her eyes. On such occasions, the glance hastily exchanged was one of defiant indifference: for both were playing at piques! The cold salutation had given *him* the cue, ignorant as he was of its cause. *She* had begun the game only a little later – on observing the attitude of extreme contentment which Herbert had assumed towards his companion. She knew not that it was studied. Her skill in coquetry, although sufficient for the pretence of indifference, was not deep enough to discern it in him; and both were now behaving as if each believed the love of the other beyond all hope.

Before abandoning the ball-room, this belief – erroneous as it might be on both sides – received further confirmation. A circumstance arose that strengthened it to a full and perfect conviction.

From the gossip of a crowded ball-room many a secret may be learnt. In those late hours, when the supper champagne has untied the tongue, and dancers begin to fancy each other deaf, he who silently threads his way or stands still among the crowd, may catch many a sentence not intended to be overheard, and often least of all by himself. Many an involuntary eavesdropper has fallen into this catastrophe. At least two instances occurred at the Smythje hall; and to the two individuals in whom, perhaps, we are most interested – Herbert and Kate Vaughan.

Herbert for a moment was alone. Judith, not that she had

tired of her partner, but perhaps only to save appearances, was dancing with another. It was not Smythje, whom all the evening she had studiously avoided. She remembered the incident on the Jumbé Rock; and feared that dancing with him might conduct to a similar disposition of partners as that which had occurred on the day of the eclipse.

It was not flirtation in any way. On that night Judith had no need. Confident in her success with Herbert, she was contented; and cared not to do anything that might hazard a rupture of the blissful chain she believed she had woven around him.

Herbert was standing alone in the crowd. Two young planters were near him, engaged in conversation. They had mixed their liquor, and therefore talked loud.

Herbert could not help hearing what they talked of; and, having heard, could not help heeding it. He was interested in the subject, though not from its singularity; for it was the common topic of the ball-room, and had been throughout the night. The theme was Smythje; and coupled with his name was that of Kate Vaughan.

On hearing these names, Herbert was no longer an involuntary listener. He strained his ears to catch every word. He had not heard the beginning of the dialogue, but the introduction was easily inferred.

“When is it to come off?” inquired the least knowing of the planters, from him who was imparting the information.

“No time fixed yet,” was the reply; “at least, none has been

mentioned. Soon, I suppose.”

“There’ll be a grand spread upon the occasion – breakfast, dinner, supper, and ball, no doubt?”

“Sure to be all that. The Custos is not the man to let the ceremony pass without all the *éclat*.”

“Honeymoon tour afterwards?”

“Of course. He takes her to London. I believe they are to reside there. Mr Smythje don’t much relish our colonial life: he misses the opera. A pity: since it’ll make one beautiful woman less in the Island!”

“Well, all I’ve got to say is, that Loff Vaughan has sold his nigger well.”

“Oh, for shame! to use such a word in speaking of the beautiful – the accomplished Miss Vaughan. Come, Thorndyke! I’m shocked at you.”

Thorndyke, by the expression, had hazarded the punching of his head – not by his companion, but by a stranger who stood near.

Herbert curbed his indignation. Kate cared not for him! Perhaps she would not have accepted him even as her champion!

Almost at that same moment Kate, too, was listening to a dialogue painfully analogous. Smythje could not dance all the night with her. Too many claimed the honour of his partnership; and for a set or two she had been forsaken by him – left under the guardianship of the watchful Custos.

“Who can he be?” inquired one of two gentle gossips within

earshot of Kate.

“A young Englishman, I have heard: a relative of Vaughans of Mount Welcome; though, for some reason, not acknowledged by the Custos.”

“That bold girl appears willing enough to acknowledge him. Who is she?”

“A Miss Jessuron. She is the daughter of the old Jew penn-keeper, who used to deal largely in blacks.”

“Faugh! she is behaving as if she belonged to a – ”

The last word was whispered, and Kate did not hear it.

“True enough!” asserted the other; “but, as they are engaged, that, I take it, is nobody’s business but their own. He’s a stranger in the Island; and don’t know much about certain people’s position, I suppose. A pity! He seems a nice sort of a young fellow; but as he makes his bed, so let him lie. Ha! ha! If report speaks true of Miss Judith Jessuron, he’ll find no bed of roses there. Ha! ha! ha!”

What causes merriment to one may make another miserable. This was true of the words last spoken. From the speaker and her companion they elicited a laugh – from Kate Vaughan they drew a sigh, deep and sad.

She left the ball with a bleeding heart.

“Lost! lost for ever!” murmured she, as she laid her cheek upon a sleepless pillow.

“Won!” triumphantly exclaimed Judith Jessuron, flinging her majestic form on a couch. “Herbert Vaughan is mine!”

“Lost! lost for ever!” soliloquised Herbert, as he closed the door of his solitary sleeping-room.

“Won!” cried the victorious Smythje, entering his elegant bed-chamber, and, in the fervour of his enthusiasm, dropping his metropolitan *patois*. “Kate Vaughan is mine!”

Volume Two – Chapter Seventeen

After the Ball

The time was rapidly drawing nigh when the ambitious scheme of the Custos Vaughan was either to be crowned with success, or end in failure.

Of the latter he had little apprehension. Though Smythje, having lost the opportunity of the eclipse, had not yet declared himself, Mr Vaughan knew it was his intention to do so on an early occasion. Indeed, the declaration was only postponed by the advice of the Custos himself, whose counsel had been sought by his intended son-in-law.

Not that Mr Vaughan had any fear of Kate's giving a negative answer. The stern father knew that he had his daughter too well in hand for that. His wish would be her will – on that point was he determined; and it was less the fear of a refusal than some other circumstances that had hindered him from bringing the matter earlier to a crisis.

As for Smythje, he never dreamt of a rejection. Kate's behaviour at the ball had confirmed him in the belief that she was entirely his own; and that without him her future existence would be one of misery. Her pale cheek, and sad, thoughtful air, as she appeared next morning at the breakfast-table, told him too plainly that she would never be happy under any other name than

that of Mrs Smythje.

Again, upon that morning, it occurred to him that the proposal should be made. It would be an appropriate *finale* to the *fête* of the preceding night.

His brow still glowing with the laurels that had bedecked it, like a second Antony he would approach his Cleopatra, triumphantly irresistible.

After breakfast, Mr Smythje drew the Custos into a corner, and once more expressed his solicitude to become his son-in-law.

Whether, because Kate's behaviour at the ball had also impressed Mr Vaughan with the appropriateness of the time, or for some other reason, Smythje found him agreeable. Only first, the father desired to have a few words with his daughter, in order to prepare her for the distinguished honour of which she was so soon to be the recipient.

Kate had gone out into the kiosk. There Mr Vaughan sought her, to bring about the proposed preliminary interview. Smythje also stepped into the garden; but, instead of going near the summer-house, he sauntered along the walks at a distance, occasionally plucking a flower, or chasing the butterflies, bright and gay as his own thoughts.

Kate's countenance still preserved the air of melancholy that had clouded it all the morning; and the approach of the Custos did nothing to dissipate it. On the contrary, its shadows became deeper, as if the ponderous presence of her father, coming between her and the sun, was about to shut out the little light left

shining in her heart.

From what she had heard that morning, she presumed that the time had arrived when she must either submit to the wishes of her father, and resign herself to an unhappy fate; or, by disobedience, brave his anger, and perhaps – she knew not what.

She only knew that she did not like Mr Smythje, and never could. She did not hate the man – she did not detest him. Her feeling towards him was that of indifference, slightly tintured with contempt. Harmless she deemed him; and, no doubt, a harmless husband he would make; but that was not the sort to suit the taste of the young Creole. Far different was the hero of her heart.

Neither the lover nor his prospective father-in-law could have chosen a time more opportune for making their approaches. Although at that time Kate Vaughan felt towards Smythje more indifference – perhaps more contempt – than she had ever done, at that very hour was she wavering in the intention, hitherto cherished, of refusing him.

Though both lover and father had erroneously interpreted her air of dejection, it was nevertheless in their favour. It was not love for Smythje under which she was suffering; but despair of this passion for another; and in that despair lay the hope – the only hope – of the lord of Montagu Castle.

It was a despair not unmingled with pique – with anger; that proud rage, which painfully wringing the heart, prompts it to desperate resolves: even to the utter annihilation of all future

hope – as if happiness could be obtained by destroying the happiness of the one only being who could give it!

Yes, the heart of Kate Vaughan had reached, or almost reached, that fearful phase of our moral nature, when love, convinced of its unrequital, seeks solace in revenge!

The Smythje ball, which had crowned the hopes of him to whom the compliment was given, had been fatal to those of Kate Vaughan.

Certain it was that she had conceived hopes that pointed to Herbert Vaughan. Love could scarce have been kindled without them. They were founded upon those fond words spoken at their first parting. Slight as was the foundation, up to that night had they endured: for she had treasured and cherished them in spite of absence, and calumny, and false report.

True, as time passed they had waxed fainter, with longer intervals of doubt, until the day in which had occurred the unexpected incident of their meeting upon the Jumbé Rock.

Then they had become revived, and since then they had lived with more or less intermission until that fatal night – the night of the Smythje ball – when they were doomed to utter extinction.

All night long he had come but once near her – only that once by the mere chance of changing positions. And that bow – that single salutation, friendly as it might have been deemed, she could only remember as being cold – almost cynical!

She did not think how cold and distant had been her own – at least, how much so it must have appeared to him. Though

her eyes had often sought him in the crowd, and often found him, she did not know that his were equally following her, and equally as often fixed upon her. Both were ignorant of this mutual espionage: for each had studiously declined responding to the glance of the other.

Never more that night had he come near – never again had he shown a desire or made an attempt to address her; though opportunities there were – many – when no paternal eye was upon her to prevent an interview.

All night long had his attentions been occupied by another – apparently engrossed – and that other, a bold, beautiful woman – just such an one as Herbert might love.

“He loves her! I am sure he loves her!” was the reflection that passed often and painfully through the thoughts of Kate Vaughan, as she swept her eye across that crowded ball-room.

And then came the climax – that half-whispered gossip that reached her ear, falling upon it like a knell of death. They were to be married: they were already betrothed!

It needed no more. In that moment the hopes of the young creole were crushed – so cruelly, so completely, that, in the dark future before her, no gleam of light arose to resuscitate them.

No wonder the morning sun shone upon a pale cheek – no wonder that an air of deep dejection sat upon the countenance of Kate Vaughan.

In this melancholy mood did the father find his daughter on entering the kiosk.

She made no attempt to conceal it – not even with a counterfeit of a smile. Rather with a frown did she receive him; and in her eyes might have been detected the slightest scintillation of anger, whether or not he was its object.

It is possible that just then the thought was passing through her mind that but for him her destiny might have been different; but for him, Herbert Vaughan, not Montagu Smythje, might have been on the eve of offering for her hand, which would then have gone with her heart. Now, in the contingency of her consenting to the proposal she expected, would she and Herbert be separated, and for ever!

Never more was she to experience that supreme happiness – the supremest known upon earth, and perhaps, equalling the joys of heaven itself – never more could she indulge in that sweet delicious dream – a virgin's love – with the hope of its being returned. Her love might remain like a flower that had lost its perfume, only to shed it on the solitary air; no more a sweet passion, but a barren, bitter thought, without hope to cheer it till the end of time.

Ah, Custos Vaughan! proud, foolish parent! Could you have known how you were aiding to destroy the happiness of your child – how you were contributing to crush that young heart – you would have approached less cheerfully to complete the ceremony of its sacrifice!

Volume Two – Chapter Eighteen

Paving the Way

“Katherine!” gravely began the father, on stepping inside the kiosk.

“Father!”

The parental appellation was pronounced in a low murmur, the speaker not uplifting her eyes from the object upon which she had been gazing.

That object was a small silken purse that lay upon the table. Stringless it was, though the broken strands of a blue ribbon attached to it showed that it had not always been so.

Loftus Vaughan knew not the history of that purse, neither why it lay there, what had stripped it of its string, or why his daughter was so sadly gazing upon it. This last circumstance he noticed on entering the kiosk.

“Ah, your pretty purse!” said he, taking it up, and examining it more minutely.

“Some one has torn the string from it – a pity! who can have done it?”

Little did he care for an answer. As little did he suspect that the rape of that bit of ribbon had aught to do with his daughter’s dejection, which he had observed throughout the morning. The surprise he had expressed, and the question put, were only

intended to initiate the more serious conversation he was about to introduce.

“Oh, papa! it don’t signify,” said Kate, avoiding a direct answer; “tis but a bit of ribbon. I can easily replace it by another.”

Ah, Kate! you may easily replace the ribbon upon the purse, but not so easily that peace of mind which parted from your bosom at the same time. When that string was torn, torn, too, were the strings of your heart!

Some such reflection must have passed through her mind as she made the reply; for the shadow visibly deepened over her countenance.

Mr Vaughan pursued the subject of the purse no further, but looking through the lattice-work and perceiving Smythje in chase of the butterflies, endeavoured to draw his daughter’s attention to that sportive gentleman.

This was the more easily done as Mr Smythje was at the moment humming a tune, and could be heard as well as seen.

“‘I’d be a butterfly,’ – ”

sang Smythje —

“‘born in a bower,
Where lilies, and roses, and violets meet;
Sporting for ever, from flower to flower;
And – ”

And then, as if to contradict this pleasant routine of insect life, he was at that instant seen seizing a splendid *vanessa*, and crushing the frail creature between his kid-gloved fingers!

“Isn’t he a superb fellow?” said Mr Vaughan, first gazing enthusiastically on Smythje, and then fixing his eyes upon his daughter, to note the character of the reply.

“I suppose he must be, papa – since everybody says so.”

There was no enthusiasm in Kate’s answer – nothing to encourage the Custos.

“Don’t *you think so*, Kate?”

This was coming more directly to the point; but the response proved equally evasive.

“*You think so*, papa – and that should do for both of us.”

The melodious voice of Smythje again interrupted the dialogue, and turned it into a new channel.

Smythje, singing, —

“I’d never languish for wealth nor for power,
I’d never sigh to see slaves at my feet!”

“Ah, Mr Smythje!” exclaimed the Custos, in a kind of soliloquy, though meant for the ear of Kate; “you have no need to sigh for them – you have them; five hundred of them. And beauties, too! Wealth and power, indeed! You needn’t languish for either one or the other. The estate of Montagu Castle provides you with both, my boy!”

Smythje, still chantant: —

“Those who have wealth may be watchful and wary,
Power, alas! nought but misery brings.”

“Do you hear that, Kate? What fine sentiments he utters!”

“Very fine, and *apropos* to the occasion,” replied Kate, sarcastically. “They are not his, however; but, no doubt, he feels them; and that’s just as good.”

“A splendid property!” continued Mr Vaughan, returning to what interested him more than the sentiments of the song, and not heeding the sarcasm conveyed in the speech of his daughter, — “a splendid property, I tell you; and, with mine joined to it, will make the grandest establishment in the Island. The Island, did I say? In the West Indies — ay, in the Western World! Do you hear that, my daughter?”

“I do, papa,” replied the young Creole. “But you speak as if the two estates were to be joined together? Does Mr Smythje intend to purchase Mount Welcome? or you Montagu Castle?”

These questions were asked with an air of simplicity evidently assumed. In truth, the interrogator knew well enough to what the conversation was tending; and, impatient with the ambiguity, every moment growing more painful to her, desired to bring it to its crisis.

Mr Vaughan was equally desirous of arriving at the same result, as testified by his reply.

“Ah, Kate! you little rogue!” said he, looking gratified at the opening thus made for him. “Egad! you’ve just hit the nail on the head. You’ve guessed right – only that we are both to be buyers. Mr Smythje is to purchase Mount Welcome; and what do you suppose he is to pay for it? Guess that!”

“Indeed, father, I cannot! How should I know? I am sure I do not. Only this I know, that I am sorry you should think of parting with Mount Welcome. I, for one, shall be loth to leave it. Though I do not expect *now* ever to be happy here, I think I should not be happier anywhere else.”

Mr Vaughan was too much wound-up in the thread of his own thoughts to notice the emphasis on the word “now,” or the double meaning of his daughter’s words.

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed he; “Mr Smythje’s purchase won’t dispossess us of Mount Welcome. Don’t be afraid of that, little Kate. But, come, try and guess the price he is to pay?”

“Father, I need not try. I am sure I could not guess it – not within thousands of pounds.”

“Not a thousand pounds! no, not one pound, unless his great big heart weighs that much, and his generous hand thrown into the scale – for that, Catherine, that is the price he is to pay.”

Mr Vaughan wound up this speech with a significant glance, and a triumphant gesture, expressive of astonishment at his own eloquence.

He looked for a response – one that would reciprocate his smiles and the joyful intelligence he fancied himself to have

communicated.

He looked in vain. Notwithstanding the perspicuity of his explanation, Kate obstinately refused to comprehend it.

Her reply was provokingly a "shirking of the question."

"His heart and his hand, you say? Neither seem very heavy. But is it not very little for an estate where there are many hands and many hearts, too? To whom does he intend to give his? You have not let me know that, papa!"

"I shall let you know now," replied the father, his voice changing to a more serious tone, as if a little nettled by Kate's evident design to misunderstand him. "I shall let you know, by telling you what I intend to give him for Montagu Castle. I told you we were both to be buyers in this transaction. It is a fair exchange, Kate, hand for hand, and heart for heart. Mr Smythje freely gives his, and I give *yours*."

"Mine!"

"Ay, yours. Surely, Kate, I have not made a mistake? Surely you are agreeable to the exchange?"

"Father," said the young girl, speaking in a tone of womanly gravity, "there can be no exchange of hearts between Mr Smythje and myself. He may have given his to me. I know not, nor do I care. But I will not deceive you, father. My heart he can never have. It is not in my power to give it to him."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr Vaughan, startled by this unexpected declaration; "you are deceiving yourself, my child, when you talk thus. I do not see how you can fail to like Mr

Smythje – so generous, so accomplished, so handsome as he is! Come, you are only jesting, Kate? You do like him? You do not hate him?”

“No, no! I do not hate him! Why should I? Mr Smythje has done nothing to offend me. I believe he is very honourable.”

“Why, that is almost saying that you like him!” rejoined the father, in a tone of returning gratification.

“Liking is not love,” murmured Kate, as if speaking to herself.

“It may turn to it,” said the Custos, encouragingly. “It often does – especially when two people become man and wife. Besides, it’s not always best for young married folks to be too fond of each other at first. As my old spelling book used to say, ‘Hot love soon grows cold.’ Never fear, Kate! you’ll get to like Mr Smythje well enough, when you come to be the mistress of Montagu Castle, and take rank as the grandest lady of the Island. Won’t that be happiness, little Kate?”

“Ah!” thought the young Creole, “a cabin shared with *him* would be greater happiness – far, far greater!”

It is needless to say that the “him” to whom the thought pointed was not Smythje.

“As Mrs Montagu Smythje,” proceeded the Custos, with a design of painting the future prospects of his daughter in still more glowing tints, “you will have troops of friends – the highest in the land. *And remember, my child, it is not so note.* You know it, Catherine?”

These last words were pronounced in a tone suggestive of

some secret understanding between father and daughter.

Whether the speech produced the desired effect, he who made it did not stay to perceive; but continued on in the same breath to finish the rose-coloured picture he had essayed to paint.

“Yes, my little Kate! you will be the observed of all observers – the *cynosure* of every eye, as the poets say. Horses, slaves, dresses, carriages at will. You will make a grand tour to London – egad! I feel like going myself! In the great metropolis you will hob-nob with lords and ladies; visit the operas and balls, where you will be a belle, my girl – a belle, do you hear? Every one will be talking of Mrs Montagu Smythje! How do you like it now?”

“Ah, papa!” replied the young Creole, evidently unmoved by these promises of pomp and grandeur, “I should not like it at all. I am sure I should not. I never cared for such things – you know I do not. They cannot give happiness – at least, not to me. I should never be happy away from our own home. What pleasure should I have in a great city? None, I am sure; but quite the contrary. I should miss our grand mountains and woods – our beautiful trees with their gay, perfumed blossoms – our bright-winged birds with their sweet songs! Operas and balls! I dislike balls; and to be the belle of one – papa, I detest the word!”

Kate, at that moment, was thinking of the Smythje ball, and its disagreeable souvenirs – perhaps the more disagreeable that, oftener than once, during the night she had heard the phrase “belle of the ball” applied to one who had aided in the desolation of her heart.

“Oh! you will get over that dislike,” returned Mr Vaughan, “once you go into fashionable society. Most young ladies do. There is no harm in balls – after a girl gets married, and her husband goes with her, to take care of her – no harm whatever. But now, Kate,” continued the Custos, betraying a certain degree of nervous impatience, “we must come to an understanding. Mr Smythje is waiting.”

“For what is he waiting, papa?”

“Tut! tut! child,” said Mr Vaughan, slightly irritated by his daughter’s apparent incapacity to comprehend him. “Surely you know! Have I not as good as told you? Mr Smythje is going to – to offer you his heart and hand; and – and to ask yours in return. That is what he is waiting to do. You will not refuse him? – you cannot: you *must* not!”

Loftus Vaughan would have spoken more gracefully had he omitted the last phrase. It had the sound of a command, with an implied threat; and, jarring upon the ear of her to whom it was addressed, might have roused a spirit of rebellion. It is just possible that such would have been its effect, had it been spoken on the evening before the Smythje ball, instead of the morning after.

The incidents occurring there had extinguished all hope in the breast of the young Creole that she should ever share happiness with Herbert Vaughan – had, at the same time, destroyed any thought of resistance to the will of her father; and, with a sort of apathetic despair, she submitted herself to the sacrifice which

her father had determined she should make.

“I have told you the truth,” said she, gazing fixedly in his face, as if to impress him with the idleness of the arguments he had been using. “I cannot give Mr Smythje my heart; I shall tell *him* the same.”

“No – no!” hastily rejoined the importunate parent; “you must do nothing of the kind. Give him your hand; and say nothing about your heart. That you can bestow afterwards – when you are safe married.”

“Never, never!” said the young girl, sighing sadly as she spoke. “I cannot practise that deception. No, father, not even for you. Mr Smythje shall know all; and, if he choose to accept my hand without my heart – ”

“Then you promise to give him your hand?” interrupted the Custos, overjoyed at this hypothetical consent.

“It is *you* who give it; not *I*, father.”

“Enough!” cried Mr Vaughan, hastily turning his eyes to the garden, as if to search for the insect-hunter. “I *shall* give it,” continued he, “and this very minute. Mr Smythje!”

Smythje, standing close by the kiosk, on the *qui vive* of expectation, promptly responded to the summons; and in two seconds of time appeared in the open doorway.

“Mr Smythje – sir!” said the Custos, putting on an air of pompous solemnity befitting the occasion; “you have asked for my daughter’s hand in marriage; and, sir, I am happy to inform you that she has consented to your becoming my son-in-law. I

am proud of the honour, sir.”

Here Mr Vaughan paused to get breath.

“Aw, aw!” stammered Smythje. “This is a gweat happiness – veway gweat, indeed! Quite unexpected! – aw, aw! – I am shure, Miss Vawn, I never dweamt such happiness was in store faw me.”

“Now, my children,” playfully interrupted the Custos – covering Smythje’s embarrassment by the interruption – “I have bestowed you upon one another; and, with my blessing, I leave you to yourselves.”

So saying, the gratified father stepped forth from the kiosk; and, wending his way along the walk, disappeared around an angle of the house.

We shall not intrude upon the lovers thus left alone, nor repeat a single word of what passed between them.

Suffice it to say, that when Smythje came out of that same kiosk, his air was rather tranquil than triumphant. A portion of the shadow that had been observed upon Kate’s countenance seemed to have been transmitted to his.

“Well?” anxiously inquired the intended father-in-law.

“Aw! all wight; betwothed. Yewy stwange, thaw – inexpwicably stwange!”

“How, strange?” demanded Mr Vaughan.

“Aw, vewy mild. I expected haw to go into hystewics. Ba Jawve! naw: she weceived ma declawation as cool as a cucumbaw!”

She had done more than that; she had given him a hand

without a heart.

And Smythje knew it: for Kate Vaughan had kept her promise.

Volume Two – Chapter Nineteen

The Duppy’s Hole

On the flank of the “Mountain” that frowned towards the Happy Valley, and not far from the Jumbé Rock, a spring gushed forth. So copious was it as to merit the name of fountain. In its descent down the slope it was joined by others, and soon became a torrent – leaping from ledge to ledge, and foaming as it followed its onward course.

About half-way between the summit and base of the mountain, a deep longitudinal hollow lay in its track – into which the stream was precipitated, in a clear, curving cascade.

This singular hollow resembled the crater of an extinct volcano – in the circumstance that on all sides it was surrounded by a precipice facing inward, and rising two hundred feet sheer from the level below. It was not of circular shape, however – as craters generally are – but of the form of a ship, the stream falling in over the poop, and afterwards escaping through a narrow cleft at the bow.

Preserving the simile of a ship, it may be stated that the channel ran directly fore and aft, bisecting the bottom of the valley, an area of several acres, into two equal parts – but in consequence of an obstruction at its exit, the stream formed a lagoon, or dam, flooding the whole of the fore-deck, while

the main and quarter-decks were covered with a growth of indigenous timber-trees, of appearance primeval.

The water, on leaving the lagoon, made its escape below, through a gorge black and narrow, bounded on each side by the same beetling cliffs that surrounded the valley. At the lower end of this gorge was a second waterfall, where the stream again pitched over a precipice of several hundred feet in height; and thence traversing the slope of the mountain, ended in becoming a tributary of the Montego River.

The upper cascade precipitated itself upon a bed of grim black boulders; through the midst of which the froth-crested water seethed swiftly onward to the lagoon below.

Above these boulders hung continuously a cloud of white vapour, like steam ascending out of some gigantic cauldron.

When the sun was upon that side of the mountain, an iris might be seen shining amidst the fleece-like vapour. But rare was the eye that beheld this beautiful phenomenon: for the Duppy's Hole – in negro parlance, the appellation of the place – shared the reputation of the Jumbé Rock; and few were the negroes who would have ventured to approach, even to the edge of this cavernous abysm: fewer those who would have dared to descend into it.

Indeed, something more than superstitious terror might have hindered the execution of this last project: since a descent into the Duppy's Hole appeared an impossibility. Down the beetling cliffs that encompassed it, there was neither path nor pass – not a

ledge on which the foot might have rested with safety. Only at one point – and that where the precipice rose over the lagoon – might a descent have been made: by means of some stunted trees that, rooting in the clefts of the rock, formed a straggling screen up the face of the cliff. At this point an agile individual might possibly have scrambled down; but the dammed water – dark and deep – would have hindered him from reaching the quarter-deck of this ship-shaped ravine, unless by swimming; and this, the suck of the current towards the gorge below would have rendered a most perilous performance.

It was evident that some one had tempted this peril: for on scrutinising the straggling trees upon the cliff, a sort of stairway could be distinguished – the outstanding stems serving as steps, with the parasitical creepers connecting them together.

Moreover, at certain times, a tiny string of smoke might have been seen ascending out of the Duppy's Hole; which, after curling diffusely over the tops of the tall trees, would dissolve itself, and become invisible. Only one standing upon the cliff above, and parting the foliage that screened it to its very brink, could have seen this smoke; and, if only superficially observed, it might easily have been mistaken for a stray waif of the fog that floated above the waterfall near which it rose. Closely scrutinised, however, its blue colour and soft filmy haze rendered it recognisable as the smoke of a wood fire, and one that must have been made by human hands.

Any day might it have been seen, and three times a-day – at

morning, noon, and evening – as if the fire had been kindled for the purposes of cooking the three regular meals of breakfast, dinner, and supper.

The diurnal appearance of this smoke proved the presence of a human being within the Duppy's Hole. One, at least, disregarding the superstitious terror attached to the place, had made it his home.

By exploring the valley, other evidences of human presence might have been found. Under the branches of a large tree, standing by the edge of the lagoon, and from which the silvery tillandsia fell in festoons to the surface of the water, a small canoe of rude construction could be seen, a foot or two of its stem protruding from the moss. A piece of twisted withe, attaching it to the tree, told that it had not drifted there by accident, but was moored by some one who meant to return to it.

From the edge of the lagoon to the upper end of the valley, the ground, as already stated, was covered with a thick growth of forest timber – where the eye of the botanical observer might distinguish, by their forms and foliage, many of those magnificent indigenous trees for which the *sylva* of Jamaica has long been celebrated.

There stood the gigantic cedrela, and its kindred the bastard cedar, with elm-like leaves; the mountain mahoe; the “tropic birch;” and the world-known mahogany.

Here and there, the lance-like culms of bamboos might be seen shooting up over the tops of the dicotyledons, or forming

a fringe along the cliffs above, intermingled with trumpet-trees, with their singular peltate leaves, and tall tree-ferns, whose delicate lace-like fronds formed a netted tracery against the blue background of the sky. In the rich soil of the valley flourished luxuriantly the noble cabbage-palm – the *prince* of the Jamaica forest – while, by its side, claiming admiration for the massive grandeur of its form, stood the *patriarch* of West-Indian trees – the grand *ceiba*; the hoary Spanish moss that drooped from its spreading branches forming an appropriate beard for this venerable giant.

Every tree had its parasites – not a single species, but in hundreds, and of as many grotesque shapes; some twining around the trunks and boughs like huge snakes or cables – some seated upon the limbs or in the forking of the branches; and others hanging suspended from the topmost twigs, like streamers from the rigging of a ship. Many of these, trailing from tree to tree, were loaded with clusters of the most brilliant flowers, thus uniting the forest into one continuous arbour.

Close under the cliff, and near where the cascade came tumbling down from the rocks, stood a tree that deserves particular mention. It was a *ceiba* of enormous dimensions, with a buttressed trunk, that covered a surface of more than fifty feet in diameter. Its vast bole, rising nearly to the brow of the cliff, extended horizontally over an area on which five hundred men could have conveniently encamped; while the profuse growth of Spanish moss clustering upon its branches, rather than its own

sparse foliage, would have shaded them from the sun, completely shutting out the view overhead.

Not from any of these circumstances was the tree distinguished from others of its kind frequently met with in the mountain forests of Jamaica. What rendered it distinct from those around was, that between two of the great spurs extending outwards from its trunk, an object appeared which indicated the presence of man.

This object was a hut constructed in the most simple fashion – having for its side walls the plate-like buttresses already mentioned, while in front a stockade of bamboo stems completed the inclosure. In the centre of the stockade a narrow space had been left open for the entrance – which could be closed, when occasion required, by a door of split bamboos that hung lightly upon its hinges of withe.

In front, the roof trended downward from the main trunk of the tree – following the slope of the spurs to a height of some six feet from the ground. Its construction was of the simplest kind – being only a few poles laid transversely, and over these a thatch of the long pinnate leaves of the cabbage-palm.

The hut inside was of triangular shape, and of no inconsiderable size – since the converging spurs forming its side walls extended full twelve feet outwards from the tree. No doubt it was large enough for whoever occupied it; and the platform of bamboo canes, intended as a bedstead, from its narrowness showed that only one person was accustomed to pass the night

under the shelter of its roof.

That this person was a man could be told by the presence of some articles of male attire lying upon this rude couch – where also lay a strip of coarse rush matting, and an old, tattered blanket – evidently the sole stock of bedding which the hut contained.

The furniture was scanty as simple. The cane platform already mentioned appeared to do duty also as a table and chair; and, with the exception of an old tin kettle, some calabash bowls and platters, nothing else could be seen that might be termed an “utensil.”

There were articles, however, of a different character, and plenty of them; but these were neither simple nor their uses easily understood.

Against the walls hung a variety of singular objects – some of them of ludicrous and some of horrid aspect. Among the latter could be observed the skin of the dreaded galliwasp; the two-headed snake; the skull and tusks of a savage boar; dried specimens of the ugly gecko lizard; enormous bats, with human-like faces; and other like hideous creatures.

Little bags, suspended from the rafters, contained articles of still more mysterious import. Balls of whitish-coloured clay; the claws of the great-eared owl; parrots’ beaks and feathers; the teeth of cats, alligators, and the native agouti; pieces of rag and broken glass; with a score of like odds and ends, forming a medley as miscellaneous as unintelligible.

In one corner was a wicker basket – the cutacoo – filled with

roots and plants of several different species, among which might be identified the dangerous dumb-cane; the savanna flower; and other “simples” of a suspicious character.

Entering this hut, and observing the singular collection of specimens which it contained, a stranger to the Island of Jamaica would have been puzzled to explain their presence and purpose. Not so, one acquainted with the forms of the serpent worship of Ethiopia – the creed of the Coromantees. The grotesque objects were but symbols of the African *fetish*. The hut was a temple of Obi: in plainer terms, the dwelling of an *Obeah-man*.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty

Chakra, the Myal-Man

The sun was just going down to his bed in the blue Caribbean, and tinting with a carmine-coloured light the glistening surface of the Jumbé Rock, when a human figure was seen ascending the mountain path that led to that noted summit.

Notwithstanding the gloom of the indigenous forest – every moment becoming more obscure under the fast-deepening twilight – it could be easily seen that the figure was that of a woman; while the buff complexion of her face and naked throat, of her gloveless hands, and shoeless and stockingless feet and ankles, proclaimed her a woman of colour – a mulatta.

Her costume was in keeping with her caste. A frock of cotton print of flaunting pattern, half-open at the breast: a toque of Madras kerchief of gaudy hues – these were all she wore, excepting the chemise of scarcely white calico, whose embroidered border showed through the opening of her dress.

She was a woman of large form, and bold, passionate physiognomy; possessing a countenance not altogether unlovely, though lacking in delicacy of feature – its beauty, such as it was, being of a purely sensual character.

Whatever errand she was on, both her step and glance bespoke courageous resolve. It argued courage – her being upon the

“Mountain,” and so near the Jumbé Rock, at that unusual hour.

But there are passions stronger than fear. Even the terror of the supernatural fades from the heart that is benighted with love, or wrung by jealousy. Perhaps this lone wanderer of the forest path was the victim of one or the other?

A certain expression of nervous anxiety – at times becoming more anguished – would have argued the latter to be the passion which was uppermost in her mind. Love should have looked more gentle and hopeful.

Though it was evident that her errand was not one of ordinary business, there was nothing about her to betray its exact purpose. A basket of palm wickerwork, suspended over her wrist, appeared to be filled with provisions: the half-closed lid permitting to be seen inside a congeries of yams, plantains, tomatoes, and capsicums; while the legs of a guinea-fowl protruded from the opening.

This might have argued a certain purpose – an errand to market; but the unusual hour, the direction taken, and, above all, the air and bearing of the mulatta, as she strode up the mountain path, forbade the supposition that she was going to market. The Jumbé Rock was not a likely place to find sale for a basket of provisions.

After all, she was not bound thither. On arriving within sight of the summit, she paused upon the path; and, after looking around for a minute or two – as if making a reconnoissance – she faced to the left, and advanced diagonally across the flank

of the mountain.

Her turning aside from the Jumbé Rock could not have been from fear: for the direction she was now following would carry her to a place equally dreaded by the superstitious – the Duppy's Hole.

That she was proceeding to this place was evident. There was no distinct path leading thither, but the directness of her course, and the confidence with which she kept it, told that she must have gone over the ground before.

Forcing her way through the tangle of vines and branches, she strode courageously onward – until at length she arrived on the edge of the cliff that hemmed in the cavernous hollow.

The point where she reached it was just above the gorge – the place where the tree stairway led down to the lagoon.

From her actions, it was evident that the way was known to her; and that she meditated a descent into the bottom of the valley.

That she knew she could accomplish this feat of herself, and expected some one to come to her assistance, was also evident from her proceeding to make a signal as soon as she arrived upon the edge of the cliff.

Drawing from the bosom of her dress a small white kerchief, she spread it open upon the branch of a tree that grew conspicuously over the precipice; and then, resting her hand against the trunk, she stood gazing with a fixed and earnest look upon the water below.

In the twilight, now fast-darkening down, even the white kerchief might have remained unnoticed. The woman, however, appeared to have no apprehension upon this head. Her gaze was expectant and full of confidence: as if the signal had been a preconcerted one, and she was conscious that the individual for whom it was intended would be on the look-out.

Forewarned or not, she was not disappointed. Scarce five minutes had transpired from the hanging out of the handkerchief, when a canoe was seen shooting out from under the moss-garnished trees that fringed the upper edge of the lagoon, and making for the bottom of the cliff beneath the spot where she stood.

A single individual occupied the canoe; who, even under the sombre shadow of the twilight, appeared to be a man of dread aspect.

He was a negro of gigantic size; though that might not have appeared as he sat squatted in the canoe but for the extreme breadth of his shoulders, between which was set a huge head, almost neckless. His back was bent like a bow, presenting an enormous hunch – partly the effect of advanced age, and partly from natural malformation. His attitude in the canoe gave him a double stoop: so that, as he leant forward to the paddle, his face was turned downward, as if he was regarding some object in the bottom of the craft. His long, ape-like arms enabled him to reach over the gunwale without bending much to either side; and only with these did he appear to make any exertion – his body

remaining perfectly immobile.

The dress of this individual was at the same time grotesque and savage. The only part of it which belonged to civilised fashion was a pair of wide trousers or drawers, of coarse Osnaburgh linen – such as are worn by the field hands on a sugar plantation. Their dirty yellowish hue told that they had long been strangers to the laundry: while several crimson-coloured blotches upon them proclaimed that their last wetting had been with blood, not water.

A sort of *kaross*, or cloak, made out of the skins of the *utia*, and hung over his shoulders, was the only other garment he wore. This, fastened round his thick, short neck by a piece of leathern thong, covered the whole of his body down to the hams – the Osnaburgh drawers continuing the costume thence to his ankles.

His feet were bare. Nor needed they any protection from shoes – the soles being thickly covered with a horn-like callosity, which extended from the ball of the great toe to the broad heel, far protruding backward.

The head-dress was equally *bizarre*. It was a sort of cap, constructed out of the skin of some wild animal; and fitting closely, exhibited, in all its phrenological fulness, the huge negro cranium which it covered. There was no brim; but, in its place, the dried and stuffed skin of the great yellow snake was wreathed around the temples – with the head of the reptile in front, and two sparkling pebbles set in the sockets of its eyes to give it the appearance of life!

The countenance of the negro did not need this terrific adornment to inspire those who beheld it with fear. The sullen glare of his deep-set eye balls; the broad, gaping nostrils; the teeth, filed to a point, and gleaming, sharklike, behind his purple lips; the red tattooing upon his cheeks and broad breast – the latter exposed by the action of his arms – all combined in making a picture that needed no reptiliform addition to render it hideous enough for the most horrid of purposes. It seemed to terrify even the wild denizens of the Duppy's Hole. The heron, couching in the sedge, flapped up with an affrighted cry; and the flamingo, spreading her scarlet wings, rose screaming over the cliffs, and flew far away.

Even the woman who awaited him – hold as she may have been, and voluntary as her rendezvous appeared to be – could not help shuddering as the canoe drew near; and for a moment she appeared irresolute, as to whether she should trust herself in such uncanny company.

Her resolution, however, stimulated by some strong passion, soon returned; and as the canoe swept in among the bushes at the bottom of the cliff, and she heard the voice of its occupant summoning her to descend, she plucked the signal from the tree, fixed the basket firmly over her arm, and commenced letting herself down through the tangle of branches.

The canoe re-appeared upon the open water, returning across the lagoon. The mulatta woman was seated in the stern, the man, as before, plying the paddle, but now exerting all his strength to

prevent the light craft from being carried down by the current, that could be heard hissing and groaning through the gorge below.

On getting back under the tree from which he had started, the negro corded the canoe to one of the branches; and then, scrambling upon shore, followed by the woman, he walked on towards the temple of Obi – of which he was himself both oracle and priest.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty One

The Resurrection

Arrived at the cotton-tree hut, the myal-man – for such was the negro – dived at once into the open door, his broad and hunched shoulders scarce clearing the aperture.

In a tone rather of command than request he directed the woman to enter.

The mulatta appeared to hesitate. Inside, the place was dark as Erebus: though without it was not very different. The shadow of the *ceiba*, with its dense shrouding of moss, interrupted every ray of the moonlight now glistening among the tops of the trees.

The negro noticed her hesitation.

“Come in!” cried he, repeating his command in the same gruff voice. “You me sabbey – what fo’ you fear?”

“I’se not afraid, Chakra,” replied the woman, though the trembling of her voice contradicted the assertion; “only,” she added, still hesitating, “it’s so dark in there.”

“Well, den – you ’tay outside,” said the other, relenting; “you ’tay dar wha you is; a soon ’trike a light.”

A fumbling was heard, and then the chink of steel against flint, followed by fiery sparks.

A piece of punk was set a-blaze, and from this the flame was communicated to a sort of lamp, composed of the *carapace* of a

turtle, filled with wild-hog's lard, and having a wick twisted out of the down of the cotton-tree.

"Now you come in, Cynthy," resumed the negro, placing the lamp upon the floor. "Wha! you 'till afeard! You de dauter ob Juno Vagh'n – you modder no fear ole Chakra. Whugh! she no fear de Debbil!"

Cynthia, thus addressed, might have thought that between the dread of these two personages there was not much to choose: for the Devil himself could hardly have appeared in more hideous guise than the human being who stood before her.

"O Chakra!" said she, as she stepped inside the door, and caught sight of the weird-looking garniture of the walls; "woman may well be 'fraid. Dis am a fearful place!"

"Not so fearful as de Jumbé Rock," was the reply of the myal-man, accompanied by a significant glance, and something between a smile and a grin.

"True!" said the mulatta, gradually recovering her self-possession; "true: you hab cause say so, Chakra."

"Das a fac', Cynthy."

"But tell me, good Chakra," continued the mulatta, giving way to a woman's feeling – curiosity, "how did you ebber 'scape from the Jumbé Rock? The folks said it was your skeleton dat was up there – chain to de palm-tree!"

"De folk 'peek da troof. My 'keleton it was, jess as dey say."

The woman turned upon the speaker a glance in which astonishment was mingled with fear, the latter predominating.

“Your skeleton?” she muttered, interrogatively.

“Dem same old bones – de ’kull, de ribs, de joints, drumticks, an’ all. Golly, gal Cynthy! dat ere ’pears ’stonish you. Wha fo’? Nuffin in daat. You sabbey ole Chakra? You know he *myal-man*? Doan care who know *now*– so long dey b’lieve um dead. Wha for myal-man, ef he no bring de dead to life ’gain? Be shoo Chakra no die hisseff, so long he knows how bring dead body to de life. Ole Chakra know all dat. Dey no kill *him*, nebber! Neider de white folk nor de brack folk. Dey may shoot ’im wid gun – dey may hang ’im by de neck – dey may cut off ’im head – he come to life ’gain, like de blue lizard and de glass snake. Dey *did* try kill ’im, you know. Dey ’tarve him till he die ob hunger and thuss. De John Crow pick out him eyes, and tear de flesh from de old nigga’s body – leab nuffin but de bare bones! Ha! Chakra ’lib yet – he hab new bones, new flesh! Golly! you him see? he ’trong – he fat as ebber he wa’! Ha! ha! ha!”

And as the hideous negro uttered his exulting laugh, he threw up his arms and turned his eyes towards his own person, as if appealing to it for proof of the resurrection he professed to have accomplished!

The woman looked as if petrified by the recital; every word of which she appeared implicitly to believe. She was too much terrified to speak, and remained silent, apparently cowering under the influence of a supernatural awe.

The myal-man perceived the advantage he had gained; and seeing that the curiosity of his listener was satisfied – for she

had not the slightest desire to hear more about that matter – he adroitly changed the subject to one of a more natural character.

“You’ve brought de basket ob wittle, Cynthy?”

“Yes, Chakra – there.”

“Golly! um’s berry good – guinea-hen an’ plenty ob vegable fo’ de pepperpot. Anything fo’ drink, gal? Habent forgot daat, a hope? De drink am da mose partickla ob all.”

“I have not forgotten it, Chakra. There’s a bottle of rum. You’ll find it in the bottom of the basket. I had a deal trouble steal it.”

“Who you ’teal ’im from?”

“Why, master: who else? He have grown berry partickler of late – carries all de keys himself; and won’t let us coloured folk go near de storeroom, as if we were all teevin’ cats!”

“Nebba mind – nebba you mind, Cynthy – maybe Chakra watch *him* by’m-bye. Wa, now!” added he, drawing the bottle of rum out of the basket, and holding it up to the light. “De buckra preacher he say dat ’tolen water am sweet. A ’pose dat ’tolen rum folla de same excepshun. A see ef um do.”

So saying, the negro drew out the stopper; raised the bottle to his lips; and buried the neck up to the swell between his capacious jaws.

A series of “clucks” proclaimed the passage of the liquor over his palate; and not until he had swallowed half a pint of the fiery fluid, did he withdraw the neck of the bottle from between his teeth.

“Whugh!” he exclaimed, with an aspirate that resembled the

snort of a startled hog. “Whugh!” he repeated, stroking his abdomen with his huge paw. “De buckra preacher may talk ’bout him ’tolen water, but gib me de ’tolen rum. You good gal, Cynthy – you berry good gal, fo’ fetch ole Chakra dis nice basket o’ wittle – he sometime berry hungry – he need um all.”

“I promise to bring more – whenebber I can get away from the Buff.”

“Das right, my piccaninny! An’ now, gal,” continued he, changing his tone, and regarding the mulatta with a look of interrogation, “wha fo’ you want see me dis night? You hab some puppos partickla? Dat so – eh, gal?”

The mulatta stood hesitating. There are certain secrets which woman avows with reluctance – often with repugnance. Her love is one; and of this she cares to make confession only to him who has the right to hear it. Hence Cynthia’s silent and hesitating attitude.

“Wha fo’ you no ’peak?” asked the grim confessor. “Shoo’ you no hah fear ob ole Chakra? You no need fo’ tell ’im – he know you secret a’ready – you lub Cubina, de capen ob Maroon? Dat troof, eh?”

“It is true, Chakra. I shall conceal nothing from you.”

“Better not, ’cause you can’t ’ceal nuffin from ole Chakra – he know ebbery ting – little bird tell um. Wa now, wha nex’? You tink Cubina no lub you?”

“Ah! I am sure of it,” replied the mulatta, her bold countenance relaxing into an anguished expression. “I once

thought he love me. Now I no think so.”

“You tink him lub some odder gal?”

“I am sure of it – Oh, I have reason!”

“Who am dis odder?”

“Yola.”

“Yola? Dat ere name sound new to me. Whar d’s she ’long to?”

“She belongs to Mount Welcome – she Missa Kate’s maid.”

“Lilly Quasheba, *I* call dat young lady,” muttered the myalman, with a knowing grin. “But dis Yola?” he added; “whar she come from? A nebber hear de name afo’.”

“Oh, true, Chakra! I did not think of tellin’ you. She was bought from the Jew, and fetched home since you – that is, after you left the plantation.”

“Arter I lef’ de plantation to die on de Jumbé Rock; ha! ha! ha! Dat’s wha you mean, Cynthy?”

“Yes – she came soon after.”

“So you tink Cubina lub *her*?”

“I do.”

“An’ she ’ciprocate de fekshun?”

“Ah, surely! How could she help do that?”

The interrogatory betrayed the speaker’s belief that the Maroon captain was irresistible.

“Wa, then – wha you want me do, gal? You want rebbenge on Cubina, ’cause he hab ’trayed you? You want me put de *death-pell* on him?”

“Oh! no – no! not that, Chakra, for the love of Heaven! – not

that!”

“Den you want de *lub-spell*?”

“Ah! if he could be make love me ’gain – he did once. That is – I thought he did. Is it possible, good Chakra, to make him love me again?”

“All ting possble to old Chakra; an’ to prove dat,” continued he, with a determined air, “he promise put de *lub-spell* on Cubina.”

“Oh, thanks! thanks!” cried the woman, stretching out her hands, and speaking in a tone of fervent gratitude. “What can I do for you, Chakra? I bring you everything you ask. I steal rum – I steal wine – I come every night with something you like eat.”

“Wa, Cynthy – dat berry kind ob you; but you muss do more dan all dat.”

“Anything you ask me – what more?”

“You must yourseff help in de spell. It take bof you an’ me to bring dat ’bout.”

“Only me tell what to do; and trust me, Chakra, I shall follow your advice.”

“Wa, den – lissen – I tell you all ’bout it. But sit down on da bedsed dar. It take some time.”

The woman, thus directed, took her seat upon the bamboo couch, and remained silent and attentive – watching every movement of her hideous companion, and not without some misgivings as to the compact which was about to be entered into between them.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Two

The Love-Spell

The countenance of the myal-man had assumed an air of solemnity that betokened serious determination; and the mulatta felt a presentiment that, in return for his services, something was about to be demanded of her – something more than a payment in meat and drink.

His mysterious behaviour as he passed around the hut; now stopping before one of the grotesque objects that adorned the wall, – now fumbling among the little bags and baskets, as if in search of some particular charm – his movements made in solemn silence only broken by the melancholy sighing of the cataract without; all this was producing on the mind of the mulatta an unpleasant impression; and, despite her natural courage, sustained as it was by the burning passion that devoured her, she was fast giving way to an indefinable fear.

The priest of Obi, after appearing to have worshipped each *fetish* in turn, at length transferred his devotions to the rum-bottle – perhaps the most potent god in his whole Pantheon. Taking another long-protracted potation, followed by the customary “Whugh!” he restored the bottle to its place; and then, seating himself upon a huge turtle-shell, that formed part of the plenishing of his temple, he commenced giving his devotee her

lesson of instructions.

“Fuss, den,” said he, “to put de lub-spell on anybody – eider a man or a woman – it am nessary, at de same time, to hab de *obeah*-spell go ’long wi’ it.”

“What!” exclaimed his listener, exhibiting a degree of alarm, “the *obeah*-spell? – on Cubina, do you mean?”

“No, not on *him*– dat’s not a nessary consarquence. But ’fore Cubina be made lub you, someb’dy else muss be made *sick*.”

“Who?” quickly inquired the mulatta, her mind at the moment reverting to one whom she might have wished to be the invalid.

“Who you tink fo’? who you greatest enemy you wish make sick?”

“Yola,” answered the woman, in a low muttered voice, and with only a moment of hesitation.

“Woan do – woman woan do – muss he man; an’ more dan dat, muss be free man. Nigga slave woan do. Obi god tell me so jess now. Buckra man, too, it muss be. If buckra man hab de *obeah*-pell, Cubina he take de lub-spell ’trong – he lub you hard as a ole mule can kick.”

“Oh! if he would!” exclaimed the passionate mulatta, in an ecstasy of delightful expectation; “I shall do anything for that – anything!”

“Den you muss help put de *obeah*-spell on some ob de white folk. You hab buckra enemy? – Chakra hab de same.”

“Who?” inquired the woman, reflectingly.

“Who! No need tell who Chakra enemy – you enemy too.

Who fooled you long time 'go? who 'bused you when you wa young gal? No need tell you dat, Cynthy Vagh'n?"

The mulatta turned her eyes upon the speaker with a significant expression. Some old memory seemed resuscitated by his words, – evidently anything but a pleasant one.

"Massa Loftus?" she said, in a half-whisper.

"Sartin shoo, Massa Loftus – dat ere buckra you enemy an' mine boaf."

"And you would – ?"

"Set de obeah fo' him," said the negro, finishing the interrogatory, which the other had hesitated to pronounce.

The woman remained without making answer, and as if buried in reflection. The expression upon her features was not one of repentance.

"Muss be him!" continued the tempter, as if to win her more completely to his dark project; "no odder do so well. Obi god say so – muss be de planter ob Moun' Welc'm."

"If Cubina will but love me, I care not who," rejoined the mulatta, with an air of reckless determination.

"Nuff sed," resumed the myal-man. "De obeah-spell sha' be set on de proud buckra, Loftus Vagh'n; an' you, Cynthy, muss 'sist in de workin' ob de charm."

"How can I assist?" inquired the woman, in a voice whose trembling told of a slight irresolution. "How, Chakra?"

"Dat you be tole by'm-bye – not dis night. De 'pell take time. God Obi he no act all at once, not eben fo' ole Chakra. You come

'gain when I leab de signal fo' yon on de trumpet-tree. Till den you keep dark 'bout all dese ting. You one ob de few dat know ole Chakra still 'live. Odders know ob de ole myal-man in de mask, but berry few ebber see um face, an' nebba suspeck who um be. Das all right. You tell who de myal-man am, den – ”

“Oh, never, Chakra,” interrupted his listener, “never!”

“No, berra not. You tell dat, Cynthia, you soon feel de obeah-spell on youseff.

“Now, gal,” continued the negro, rising from his seat, and motioning the mulatta to do the same, “time fo' you go. I specks one odder soon: no do fo' you to be cotch hya when dat odder come. Take you basket, an' folla me.”

So saying, he emptied the basket of its heterogeneous contents; and, handing it to its owner, conducted her out of the hut.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Three

Chakra Redivivus

The scene that had thus transpired in the depths of the Duppy's Hole requires some explanation. The dialogue which Cynthia had held with the hideous Coromantee, though couched in ambiguous phrase, clearly indicated an intention to assassinate the Custos Vaughan; and by a mode which these arch-conspirators figuratively – almost facetiously – termed the *obeah-spell!*

In the diabolical design, the woman appeared to be acting rather as coadjutor than conspirator; and her motive for taking part in the plot, though wicked enough, presents, in the language of French law, one or two “extenuating circumstances.”

A word or two of the mulatta's history will make her motive understood, though her conversation may have already declared it with sufficient distinctness.

Cynthia was a slave on the plantation of Mount Welcome – one of the house-wenches, or domestics belonging to the mansion; and of which, in a large establishment like that of Custos Vaughan, there is usually a numerous troop.

The girl, in earlier life, had been gifted with good looks. Nor could it be said that they were yet gone; though hers was a beauty that no longer presented the charm of innocent girlhood,

but rather the sensualistic attractions of a bold and abandoned woman.

Had Cynthia been other than a slave – that is, had she lived in other lands – her story might have been different. But in that, her native country – and under conditions of bondage that extended alike to body and soul – her fair looks had proved only a fatal gift.

With no motive to tread the paths of virtue – with a thousand temptations to stray from it – Cynthia, like, it is sad to think, too many of her race, had wandered into ways of wantonness. It might be, as Chakra had obscurely hinted, that the slave had been abused. Wherever lay the blame, she had, at all events, become abandoned.

Whether loving them or not, Cynthia had, in her time, been honoured with more than one admirer. But there was one on whom she had at length fixed her affections – or, more properly, her passions – to a degree of permanence that promised to end only with her life. This one was the young Maroon captain, Cubina; and although it was a love of comparatively recent origin, it had already reached the extreme of passion. So fierce and reckless had it grown, on the part of the wretched woman, that she was ready for anything that promised to procure her its requital – ready even for the nefarious purpose of Chakra.

To do Cubina justice, this love of the slave Cynthia was not reciprocated. To the levities and light speeches habitually indulged in by the Maroons, in their intercourse with the plantation people, Cubina was a singular exception; and

Cynthia's statement that he had once returned her love – somewhat doubtingly delivered – had no other foundation than her own groundless conjectures, in which the wish was father to the thought.

Some friendly words may have passed between the Maroon and mulatta – for they had often met upon their mutual wanderings; but the latter, in mistaking them for words of love, had, sadly for herself, misconceived their meaning.

Of late her passion had become fiercer than ever – since jealousy had arisen to stimulate it – jealousy of Cubina with Yola. The meeting and subsequent correspondence of the Maroon with the Foolah maiden were events of still more recent date; but already had Cynthia seen or heard enough to produce the conviction that in Yola she had found a rival. With the passionate *sang-mêlé*, jealousy pointed to revenge; and she had begun to indulge in dark projects of this nature just at that time when Chakra chanced to throw his shadow across her path.

Cynthia was one of those slaves known as *night-rangers*. She was in the habit of making occasional and nocturnal excursions through the woods for many purposes; but of late, principally in the hope of meeting Cubina, and satisfying herself in regard to a suspicion she had conceived of meetings occurring between him and Yola.

In one of these expeditions she had encountered a man whose appearance filled her with terror; and very naturally: since, as she at first supposed, it was not a *man*, but a *ghost* that she saw – the

ghost of Chakra, the myal-man!

That it was the “duppy” of old Chakra, Cynthia on sight firmly believed; and might have continued longer in that belief, had she been permitted to make her escape from the spot – as she was fast hastening to do. But the long, ape-like arms of the myal-man, flung around her on the instant, restrained her flight until she became convinced that it was not Chakra’s ghost, but Chakra himself, who had so rudely embraced her!

It was not altogether by chance this encounter had occurred – at least, on the part of Chakra. He had been looking out for Cynthia for some time before. He wanted her for a purpose.

The mulatta made no revelation of what she had seen. With all his ugliness, the myal-man had been the friend of her mother – had often dandled her, Cynthia, upon his knees. But the tongue of Juno’s daughter was held silent by stronger ties than those of affection. Fear was one; but there was also another. If Chakra wanted Cynthia for a purpose, a quick instinct told her she might stand in need of *him*. He was just the instrument by which to accomplish that revenge of which she was already dreaming.

On the instant, mulatta and myal-man became allies.

This mutual confidence had been but very recently established – only a few days, or rather nights, before that on which Cynthia had given Chakra this, her first *seance* in the temple of Obi.

The purpose for which the myal-man wanted the mulatta – or one purpose, at least – has been sufficiently set forth in the dialogues occurring between them. He required her assistance

to put the obeah-spell upon the planter, Loftus Vaughan. The character of Cynthia, which Chakra well understood – with the opportunities she had, in her capacity of housemaid – promised to provide the assassin with an agency of the most effective kind; and the pretended love-spell he was to work upon Cubina had given him a talisman, by which his agent was but too easily induced to undertake the execution of his diabolical design.

Among many other performances of a like kind, it was part of Chakra's programme, some day or other, to put the death-spell upon the Maroon himself; to "obeah" young Cubina – as it was suspected he had the old Cubina, the father – after twenty years of temptation. It was but the want of opportunity that had hindered him from having long before accomplished his nefarious project upon the son, as upon the father – in satisfaction of a revenue so old as to be anterior to the birth of Cubina himself, though associated with that event.

Of course, this design was not revealed to Cynthia.

His motive for conspiring the death of Loftus Vaughan was without any mystery whatever; and this – perhaps more than any other of his crimes, either purposed or committed – might plead "extenuating circumstances." His cruel condemnation, and subsequent exposure upon the Jumbé Rock, was a stimulus sufficient to have excited to revenge a gentler nature than that of Chakra, the Coromantee. It need scarce be said that it had stimulated his to the deadliest degree.

The resurrection of the myal-man may appear a mystery – as it

did to the slave, Cynthia. There was one individual, however, who understood its character. Not to an African god was the priest of Obi indebted for his resuscitation, but to an Israelitish man – to Jacob Jessuron.

It was but a simple trick – that of substituting a carcase – afterwards to become a skeleton – for the presumed dead body of the myal-man. The baracoon of the slave-merchant generally had such a commodity in stock. If not, Jessuron would not have scrupled to manufacture one for the occasion.

Humanity had nothing to do in the supplying of this proxy. Had there been no other motive than that to actuate the Jew, Chakra might have rotted under the shadow of the cabbage-palm.

But Jessuron had his purpose for saving the life of the condemned criminal – more than one, perhaps – and he had saved it.

Since his *resurrection*, Chakra had pursued his iniquitous calling with even more energy than of old; but now in the most secret and surreptitious manner.

He had not been long in re-establishing a system of confederates – under the auspices of a new name – but only at night, and with disguised form and masked face, did he give his clients rendezvous. Never in the Duppy's Hole; for few were sufficiently initiated into the mysteries of myalism to be introduced to its temple in that secure retreat.

Although the confederates of the obeah-man rarely reveal the secret of his whereabouts – even his *victims dreading to divulge*

it— Chakra knew the necessity of keeping as much as possible *en perdu*; and no outlaw, with halter around his neck, could have been more cautious in his outgoings and incomings.

He knew that his life was forfeit on the old judgment; and, though he had once escaped execution, he might not be so fortunate upon a second occasion. If recaptured, some surer mode of death would be provided — a rope, instead of a chain; and in place of being fastened to the trunk of a tree, he would be pretty certain of being suspended by the neck to the branch of one.

Knowing all this, Chakra *redivivus* trod the forest paths with caution, and was especially shy of the plantation of Mount Welcome. Around the sides of the mountain he had little to fear. The reputation of the Jumbé Rock, as well as that of the Duppy's Hole, kept the proximity of these noted places clear of all dark-skinned stragglers; and there Chakra had the heat to himself.

Upon dark nights, however, like the wolf, he could prowl at pleasure and with comparative safety — especially upon the outskirts of the more remote plantations: the little intercourse allowed between the slaves of distant estates making acquaintanceship among them a rare exception. It was chiefly upon these distant estates that Chakra held communication with his confederates and clients.

It was now more than a year since he had made his pretended resurrection; and yet so cautiously had he crawled about, that only a few individuals were aware of the fact of his being still alive.

Others *had seen his ghost!* Several negroes of Mount Welcome plantation would have sworn to having met the “duppy” of old Chakra, while travelling through the woods at night, and the sight had cured these witnesses of their propensity for midnight wandering.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Four

The Bargain of Obeah

For a while after the departure of Cynthia, the temple of Obi remained untenanted, except by its dumb deities: its priest having gone to ferry his neophyte across the lagoon.

In a few minutes he returned alone – having left the mulatta to make her way up the cliff, and homeward to Mount Welcome, where she belonged.

It was evident that the visit of the mulatta had given him gratification. Even in the dim light of his lard lamp an expression of demoniac joy could be distinguished upon his ferocious visage, as he re-entered the hut.

“One dead!” cried he, in an exulting tone; “anodder upon ’im death-bed; and now de third, de las’ an’ wuss ob ’em all – ha! ha! ha! – he soon feel de vengeance ob Chakra, de myal-man!”

Thrice did the wild, maniac-like laugh peal from under the spreading limbs of the *ceiba*– reverberating with an unearthly echo against the cliffs that hemmed in the Duppy’s Hole. It startled the denizens of the dark lagoon; and, like echoes, came ringing up the ravine the scream of the crane, and the piercing cry of the wood-ibis.

These sounds had scarce died away, when one of a somewhat different intonation was heard from above. It resembled a shriek;

or rather as if some one had whistled through his fingers. Whoever gave utterance to the sound was upon the top of the cliff – just over the hut.

Chakra was not startled. He knew it was a signal; and that it was given by the guest he was expecting.

“Das de ole Jew!” muttered he, taking the rum-bottle, and concealing it under the bedstead. “You stay dar till I wants ye ’gain,” added he, addressing himself in a confidential tone to this, the object of his greatest adoration. “Now for de nigga-dealer! I’se hab news fo’ him ’ll tickle ’im in de ribs like a ole guana lizzard. Not dat Chakra care fo’ him. No – only, on dis voyage, boaf am sailin’ in de same boat. Da he go ’gain!”

This last exclamation referred to a repetition of the signal heard further down: as if he who was sounding it was advancing along the cliff, towards the gorge at the lower end.

A third call proceeded from that point where the tree stairway scaled the precipice – indicating to Chakra that his visitor was there awaiting him.

Without further delay, the ferryman – grim as Charon himself – returned to his canoe; and once more paddled it across the lagoon.

While Chakra was thus occupied, a man could be seen descending the cliff, through the tangle of climbing plants, who, on the arrival of the canoe at the bottom, was standing, half concealed among the bushes, ready to step into it. The moon shone upon a blue body-coat, with bright buttons; upon a brown

beaver hat and white skull-cap; upon tarnished top-boots, green goggles, and an enormous umbrella.

Chakra did not need to scan the sharp Israelitish features of the man to ascertain who he was.

Jacob Jessuron was there by appointment; and the myal-man knew both his presence and his purpose.

Not a word of recognition passed between the two, nor sign. Only a caution from Chakra – as the Jew, swinging by a branch, let himself down into the canoe.

“Tep in lightly, Massr Jake, an’ doan’ push da canoe down ’tream. ’T am jess’ as much as I kin do to keep de ole craff out ob de eddy. Ef she get down da, den it ’ud be all up wifh boaf o’ us.”

“Blesh my soul! D’you shay so?” rejoined the Jew, glancing towards the gorge, and shivering as he listened to the hoarse groaning of the water among the grim rocks. “S’help me, I didn’t know it was dangerous. Don’t fear, Shakra! I shtep in ash light ash a feather.”

So saying, the Jew dropped his umbrella into the bottom of the boat; and then let himself down upon the top of it, with as much gentleness as if he was descending upon a basket of eggs.

The ferryman, seeing his freight safely aboard, paddled back to the mooring-place; and, having secured his craft as before, conducted his visitor up the valley in the direction of the hut.

On entering the temple of Obi, Jessuron – unlike the devotee who had just left it – showed no signs either of surprise or fear at its fantastic adornments. It was evident he had worshipped there

before.

Nor did he evince a special veneration for the shrine; but, seating himself familiarly on the bamboo bedstead, uttered as he did so a sonorous "Ach!" which appeared as if intended to express satisfaction.

At the same time he drew from the ample pocket of his coat a shining object, which, when held before the lamp, appeared to be a bottle. The label seen upon its side, with the symbolical bunch of grapes, proved it to be a bottle of cognac.

The exclamation of the myal-man, which the sight of the label had instantaneously elicited, proved that on his side equal satisfaction existed at this mode of initiating an interview.

"Hash you a glass among your belongingsh?" inquired the Jew, looking around the hovel.

"No; dis yeer do?" asked his host, presenting a small calabash with a handle.

"Fush rate. Thish liquor drinksh goot out of anything. I had it from Capten Showler on hish lasht voyage. Jesh taste it, good Shakra, before we begins bishness."

A grunt from the negro announced his willing assent to the proposal.

"Whugh!" he ejaculated, after swallowing the allowance poured out for him into the calabash.

"Ach! goot it ish!" said his guest, on quaffing off a like quantity; and then the bottle and gourd being set on one side, the two queer characters entered into the field of free conversation.

In this the Jew took the initiative.

“I hash news for you,” said he, “very shtrange news, if you hashn’t already heard it, Shakra? Who dosh you think ish dead?”

“Ha!” exclaimed the myal-man, his eye suddenly lighting up with a gleam of ferocious joy; “he gone dead, am he?”

“Who? I hashen’t told you,” rejoined the Jew, his features assuming an expression of mock surprise. “But true,” he continued, after a pause; “true, you knew he wash sick – you knew Justish Bailey wash sick, an’ *not likely to get over it*. Well – he hashen’t, poor man! – he’s dead and in hish coffin by thish time: he breathed hish lasht yesterdays.”

A loud and highly-aspirated “Whugh!” was the only answer made by the myal-man. The utterance was not meant to convey any melancholy impression. On the contrary, by its peculiar intonation, it indicated as much satisfaction as any amount of words could have expressed.

“It ish very shtrange,” continued the penn-keeper, in the same tone of affected simplicity; “so short a time shince Mishter Ridgely died. Two of the three shustices that sat on your trial, goot Shakra. It looksh ash if Providensh had a hand in it – it dosh!”

“Or de Dibbil, mo’ like, maybe?” rejoined Chakra, with a significant leer.

“Yesh – Gott or the Devil – one or t’other. Well, Shakra, you hash had your refenge, whichever hash helped you to it. Two of your enemies ish not likely to trouble you again; and ash for the

third – ”

“Nor he berry long, I’se speck’,” interrupted the negro, with a significant grin.

“What you shay?” exclaimed the Jew, in an earnest undertone. “Hash you heard anythings? Hash the wench been to see you?”

“All right ’bout her, Massr Jake.”

“Goot – she *hash* been?”

“Jess leab dis place ’bout quar’r ob an hour ’go.”

“And she saysh she will help you to set the obeah-shpell for him?”

“Hab no fear – she do all dat. Obi had spell oba her, dat make her do mose anythin – ah! any thin’ in de worl’ – satin shoo. Obi all-powerful wi’ dat gal.”

“Yesh, yesh!” assented the Jew; “I knowsh all that. And if Obi wash to fail,” added he, doubtingly, “you hash a drink, goot Shakra – I know you hash a drink, ash potent as Obi or any other of your gotsh.”

A glance of mutual intelligence passed between the two.

“How long dosh it take your shpell to work?” inquired the penn-keeper, after an interval of silence, in which he seemed to be making some calculation.

“Dat,” replied the negro, “dat depend altogedder on de saccomstance ob how long de spell am *wanted* to work. Ef ’im wanted, Chakra make ’im in tree day fotch de ’trongest indiwiddible cla out o’ ’im boots; or in tree hour he do same – but ob coorse dat ud be too soon fo’ be safe. A spell of tree hours

too 'trong. Dat not Obi work – 'im look berry like pisen.”

“Poison – yesh, yesh, it would.”

“Tree day too short – tree week am de correct time. Den de spell work 'zackly like fever ob de typos. Nobody had s'picion 'bout 'um.”

“Three weeks, you shay? And no symptoms to make schandal? You're shure that ish sufficient? Remember, Shakra; the Cushtos ish a strong man – strong ash a bull.”

“No mar'r 'bout dat. Ef he 'trong as de bull, in dat period ob time he grow weak as de new-drop calf – I'se be boun' he 'taggering Bob long 'fore dat. You say de word, Massr Jake. Obi no like to nigga. Nigga only brack man: he no get pay fo' 'im work. Obi 'zemble buckra man. He no work 'less him pay.”

“Yesh – yesh! dat ish only shust and fair. Obi should be paid; but shay, goot Shakra! how much ish his prishe for a shpell of thish kind?”

“Ef he hab no interest hisseff in de workin' ob de 'pell, he want a hunder poun'. When he hab interest, das different – den he take fifty.”

“Fifty poundsh! That ish big monish, good Shakra! In thish case Obi hash an interest – more ash anybody elshe. He hash an enemy, and wants refenge. Ish that not true, goot Shakra!”

“Das da troof. Chakra no go fo' deny 'im. But das jess why Obi 'sent do dat leetle *chore* fo' fifty poun'. Obi enemy big buckra – 'trong as you hab jess say – berry diff'cult fo' 'pell 'im. Any odder myal-man charge de full hunder poun'. Fack, no odder able do

de job – no odder but ole Chakra hab dat power.”

“Shay no more about the prishe. Fifty poundsh be it. Here’s half down.” The tempter tossed a purse containing coin into the outstretched palm of the obeah-man. “All I shtipulate for ish, that in three weeks you earn the other half; and then we shall both be shquare with the Cushtos Vochan – for I hash my refenge to shatisfy ash well as you, Shakra.”

“Nuff sed, Massr Jake. ’Fore tree day de ’pell sha’ be put on. You back come to de Duppy Hole tree night from dis, you hear how ’im work. Whugh!”

The gourd shell was again brought into requisition; and, after a parting “kiss” at the cognac, the “heel-tap” of which remained in the hut, the precious pair emerged into the open air.

The priest of Obi having conducted his fellow-conspirator across the lagoon, returned to his temple, and set himself assiduously to finish what was left of the liquor.

“Whugh!” ejaculated he, in one of the pauses that occurred between two vigorous pulls at the bottle; “ole villum Jew wuss dan Chakra – wuss dan de Debbil hisseff! Doan’ know why *he* want rebbenge. Das nuffin’ to me. *I* want rebbenge, an’, by de great Accompong! I’se a g’wine to hab it! Ef dis gal prob true, as de odder’s did – she *muss* prob true – in tree week de proud, fat buckra jussis dat condemn me to dat Jumbé Rock – ‘Cussos rodelorum,’ as de call ’im – won’t hab no more flesh on ’im bones dan de ’keleton he tink wa’ myen. And den, when ’im die – ah! den, affer ’im die, de daughter ob dat Quasheba dat twenty year

'go 'corn de lub ob de Coromantee for dat ob de yellow Maroon – maybe her dauter, de Lilly Quasheba, sleep in de arms ob Chakra de myal-man! Whugh!”

As the minister of Obi gave utterance to this hypothetical threat, a lurid light glared un in his sunken eyes, while his white, sharklike teeth were displayed in an exulting grin – hideous as if the Demon himself were smiling over some monstrous menace!

Both cognac and rum-bottle were repeatedly tasted, until the strong frame of the Coromantee gave way to the stronger spirit of the alcohol; and, muttering fearful threats in his gumbo jargon, he at length sank unconscious on the floor.

There, under the light of the lard lamp – now flickering feebly – he lay like some hideous satyr, whom Bacchus, by an angry blow, had felled prostrate to the earth!

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Five

The Mysterious Motive

The original motive of the myal-man, in conspiring the death of the Custos Vaughan, would have been strong enough to urge him on without this new instigation. As we have seen, it was one of deadly revenge – simple, and easily understood.

Not so easily understood was that which actuated the Jew. On the contrary, so secretly had he conceived his purposes, that no living man – not even Chakra himself – had been made privy to them. Up to this moment they may have appeared mysterious; and the time has arrived when it becomes necessary to reveal them. The explanation will show them to be only natural – only in keeping with the character of this crooked and cruel old man.

It is scarce necessary to say that Jacob Jessuron was no type of his race; nor, indeed, of any race. A German Jew by birth, it was not necessarily this that made him either slave-dealer or slave-stealer. Christians have taken their full share in both branches of the nefarious trade; and equally with Jews and Mohammedans have they been guilty of its most hideous enormities. It was not, therefore, because Jacob Jessuron chanced to be a Jew that he was a trafficker in human flesh and blood – any more than that he was a villainous man; but because he was Jacob Jessuron – a representative of neither race nor nation, but simply a character

sui generis.

Without dwelling upon his general demerits, let us return to the more particular theme of the motives which were instigating him to make a victim of his neighbour Vaughan – a death victim: for his conversation with Chakra showed that this was the very starting-point of his intentions.

In the first place, he was well acquainted with the domestic history of the planter – at least, with that portion of it that had transpired subsequent to the latter's coming into possession of Mount Welcome. He knew something of Mr Vaughan previously – while the latter was manager of the Montagu Castle estate – but it was only after the Custos had become his nearer neighbour, by removal to his present residence, that the Jew's knowledge of him and his private affairs had become intimate and accurate.

This knowledge he had obtained in various ways: partly by the opportunities of social intercourse, never very cordial; partly through business transactions; and, perhaps, more than all – at least, as regarded some of the more secret passages of Mr Vaughan's history – from the myal-man, Chakra.

Notwithstanding his grotesque hideousness, the Coromantee was gifted with a rare though dangerous intelligence. He was *au fait* to everything that had occurred upon the plantation of Mount Welcome for a past period of nearly forty years. As already hinted, he knew too much; and it was this inconvenient omniscience that had caused him to be consigned to the Jumbé Rock.

For more than one purpose had the Jew made use of the myalman; and if the latter was at present assisting him in his dark design, it was not the first by many, both deep and dark, in which Chakra had lent him a hand. Their secret partnership had been of long duration.

The Jew's knowledge of the affairs of Loftus Vaughan extended to many facts unknown even to Chakra. One of these was, that his neighbour was blessed with an English brother, who had an only son.

An artist was the English brother, without fortune – almost without name. Many other circumstances relating to him had come to the knowledge of Jessuron; among the rest, that the proud Custos knew little about his poor English relatives, cared less, and scarcely kept up correspondence with them.

In what way could this knowledge interest Jacob Jessuron? – for it did.

Thus, then: it was known to him that Loftus Vaughan had never been married to the quadroon Quasheba. That circumstance, however, would have signified little, had Quasheba been a white woman, or even a “quinteroon” – in Jamaica termed a *mustee*, and by some fanciful plagiarists, of late, pedantically styled “octoroon” – a title which, it may here be stated, has no existence except in the romantic brains of these second-hand *litterateurs*.

We repeat it – had the slave Quasheba been either a white woman, or even a *mustee*, the fact of a marriage, or no marriage,

would have signified little – so far as regarded the succession of her offspring to the estates of the father. It is true that, if not married, the daughter would, by the laws of Jamaica – as by those of other lands – still have been *illegitimate*; but for all that, she could have inherited her father's property, *if left to her by will*. since in Jamaica no *entail* existed.

As things stood, however, the case was widely, and for the Lilly Quasheba – Kate Vaughan – dangerously different. Her mother was *only a quadroon*; and, married or unmarried, she, the daughter, could not inherit —*even by will*— beyond the paltry legacy of 2000 pounds currency, or 1500 pounds sterling!

Kate Vaughan was herself only a *mustee*— still wanting one step farther from slavery to bring her within the protecting pale of freedom and the enjoyment of its favours.

No will that Loftus Vaughan could decree, no testamentary disposition he might make, could render his daughter his devisee – his heiress.

He might will his property to anybody he pleased: so long as that anybody was a so-called *white*; but, failing to make such testament, his estate of Mount Welcome, with all he possessed besides, must fall to the next of his own kin – in short, to his nephew Herbert.

Was there no remedy for this unspeakable dilemma? No means by which his own daughter might be saved from disinheritance?

There was. A special act might be obtained from the Assembly

of the Island.

Loftus Vaughan knew the remedy, and fully intended to adopt it. Every day was he designing to set out for Spanish Town – the capital – to obtain the *special act*; and every day was the journey put off.

It was the execution of this design that the Jew Jessuron of all things dreaded most; and to prevent it was the object of his visit to the temple of Obi.

Why he dreaded it scarce needs explanation.

Should Loftus Vaughan fail in his intent, Herbert Vaughan would be the heir of Mount Welcome; and Herbert's heart was in the keeping of Judith Jessuron.

So fondly believed the Jewess; and, with her assurance of the fact, so also the Jew.

The *love-spell* woven by Judith had been the first step towards securing the grand inheritance. The second was to be the *death-spell*, administered by Chakra and his acolyte.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Six

The Death-Spell

On the night after that on which Chakra had given reception to Jessuron, and about the same hour, the Coromantee was at home in his hut, engaged in some operation of a nature apparently important: since it engrossed his whole attention.

A fire was burning in the middle of the floor, in a rude, extemporised furnace, constructed with four large stones, so placed as to inclose a small quadrangle.

The fuel with which this fire was fed, although giving out a great quantity of smoke, burnt also with a bright, clear flame. It was not wood, but consisted of a number of black agglutinated masses, bearing a resemblance to peat or coal.

A stranger to Jamaica might have been puzzled to make out what it was; though a denizen of the Island could have told at a glance, that the dark-coloured pieces piled upon the fire were fragments detached from the nests of the Duck-ants; which, often as large as hogsheads, may be seen adhering to the trees of a tropical forest.

As the smoke emitted by this fuel is less painful to the eyes than that of a wood fire, and yet more efficacious in clearing out the mosquitoes – that plague of a southern clime – it may be supposed that the Coromantee had chosen it on that account.

Whether or not, it served his purpose well.

A small iron pot, without crook or crane, rested upon the stones of the furnace; and the anxious glances with which the negro regarded its simmering contents – now stirring them a little, now lifting a portion in his wooden spoon, and carefully scrutinising it under the light of the lamp – told that the concoction in which he was engaged was of a *chemical*, rather than *culinary* nature. As he bent over the fire – like a he-Hecate stirring her witches' cauldron – his earnest yet stealthy manner, combined with his cat-like movements and furtive glances, betrayed some devilish design.

This idea was strengthened on looking at the objects that lay near to his hand – some portions of which had been already consigned to the pot. A cutacoo rested upon the floor, containing plants of several species; among which a botanist could have recognised the branched *calalue*, the dumb-cane, and various other herbs and roots of noxious fame. Conspicuous was the “Savannah flower,” with its tortuous stem and golden corolla – a true dogbane, and one of the most potent of vegetable poisons.

By its side could be seen its antidote – the curious nuts of the “nhandiroba”: for the myal-man could *cure* as well as *kill*, whenever it became his interest to do so.

Drawing from such a larder, it was plain that he was not engaged in the preparation of his supper. Poisons, not provisions, were the ingredients of the pot.

The specific he was now concocting was from various sources,

but chiefly from the sap of the Savannah flower. It was the *spell of Obeah!*

For whom was the Coromantee preparing this precious hell-broth?

His mutterings as he stooped over the pot revealed the name of his intended victim.

“You may be ’trong, Cussus Vaugh’n – dat I doan deny; but, by de power ob Obeah, you soon shake in you shoes. Obeah! Ha! ha! ha! Dat do fo’ de know-nuffin’ niggas. My Obeah am de Sabbana flower, de branch calalue, and the allimgator apple – dem’s de ’pell mo’ powerful dan Obi hisseff – dem’s de stuff dat gib de shibberin’ body and de staggerin’ limbs to de enemies ob Chakra. Whugh!”

Once more dipping the spoon into the pot, and skimming up a portion of the boiling liquid, he bent forward to examine it.

“T am done!” he exclaimed. “Jess de right colour – jess de right tickness. Now fo’ bottle de licka!”

Saying this, he lifted the pot from the fire; and after first pouring the “liquor” into a calabash, and leaving it for some moments to cool, he transferred it to the rum-bottle – long since emptied of its original contents.

Having carefully pressed in the cork, he set the bottle to one side – not in concealment, but as if intended for use at no very distant time.

Then, having gathered up his scattered pharmacopoeia, and deposited the whole collection in the cutacoo, he stepped into

the door way of the hut, and, with a hand on each post, stood in an attitude to listen.

It was evident he expected some visitor; and who it was to be was revealed by the muttered soliloquy in which he continued to indulge. The slave Cynthia was to give him another *séance*.

“Time dat yella wench wa’ come. Muss be nigh twelve ob de night. Maybe she hab call, an’ a no hear her, fo’ de noise ob dat catrack? A bess go down b’low. Like nuf a fine her da!”

As he was stepping across the threshold to put this design into execution, a cry, uttered in the shrill treble of a woman’s voice – and just audible through the soughing sound of the cataract – came from the cliff above.

“Da’s de wench!” muttered the myal-man, as he heard it. “A make sartin shoo she’d come. Lub lead woman troo fire an’ water – lead um to de Debbil. Seed de time dat ar’ yella’ gal temp’ dis chile. No care now. But one Chakra ebber care ’brace in dese arms. Her he clasp only once, he content – he willen’ den fo’ die. Augh!”

As the Coromantee uttered the impassioned ejaculation, he strode outward from the door, and walked with nervous and hurried step – like one urged on by the prospect of soon achieving some horrible but heartfelt purpose he had been long contemplating from a distance.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Seven

The Invocation of Accompong

The canoe soon made its trip, and returned with Cynthia seated in the stern. As upon the occasion of her former visit, she carried a basket upon her arm filled with comestibles, and not forgetting the precious bottle of rum.

As before, she followed the myal-man to his hut – this time entering with more confidence, and seating herself unbidden upon the side of the bamboo bedstead.

Still, she was not without some feeling of fear; as testified by a slight trembling that might be observed when her eyes rested upon the freshly-filled bottle, that stood in a conspicuous place. The look which she turned upon it told that she possessed some previous information as to the nature of its contents – or perhaps she had only a suspicion.

“Da’s de bottle fo’ you,” said the myal-man, noticing her glance, “and dis hya,” continued he, drawing the other out of Cynthia’s basket, “dis hya am de one fo’ – ”

He was about to add “me,” but before he could pass the word out of his mouth, he had got the neck of the rum-bottle into it; and the “gluck-gluck” of the descending fluid was substituted for the personal pronoun.

The usual “Whugh!” wound up the operation, clearing the

Coromantee's throat; and then, by a gesture, he gave Cynthia to understand that he was ready to proceed with the more serious business of the interview.

"Dat bottle," said he, pointing to the one that contained his decoction, "am de obeah-'pell. It make Cubina lub you while dar's a tuff ob wool on de top o' 'im head. Dat long 'nuf, I reck'n; fo' when 'im go bald, you no care fo' 'im lub."

"Is that the love-spell you spoke of?" inquired the mulatta, with an ambiguous expression of countenance, in which hope appeared struggling with doubt.

"De lub-spell? No – not 'zackly dat. De lub-spell am different. *It* am ob de nature ob an ointment. Hya! I'se got 'im in dis coco-shell."

As Chakra said this he raised his hand, and drew out from a cranny in the thatch about three-quarters of the shell of a cocoa-nut; inside which, instead of its white coagulum, appeared a carrot-coloured paste, resembling the pulp of the *sapotammee*— for this, in reality, it was.

"Da's de lub mixture!" continued the obeah-man, in a triumphant tone; "da's for Cubina!"

"Ah! Cubina is to take that?"

"Shoo he am. He mus' take 'im. A gib it him, and den he go mad fo' you. You he lub, an' he lub you, like two turtle dove in de 'pring time. Whugh!"

"Good Chakra – you are sure it will do Cubina no harm?"

The query proved that the jealousy of the mulatta had not yet

reached the point of revenge.

“No,” responded the negro; “do ’im good – do ’im good, an’ nuffin else. Now, Cynthy, gal,” continued he, turning his eyes upon the bottle; “das for de ole Cussus ob Moun’ Welc’m – take um – put ’im in you basket.”

The woman obeyed, though her fingers trembled as she touched the bottle that contained the mysterious medicine.

“And what am I to do with it, Chakra?” she asked, irresolutely.

“Wha you do? I tole you arready wha you do. You gib to massr – you enemy and myen.”

“But what is it?”

“Why you ask daat? I tole you it am de obeah-’pell.”

“Oh, Chakra! is it poison?”

“No, you fool – ef ’twa pizen, den it kill de buckra right off. It no kill ’im. It only make um sick, an’ den, preehap, it make ’im die long time atterward. Daz no pizen! You ’fuse gib ’im?”

The woman appeared to hesitate, as if some sparks of a better nature were rising within her soul. If there were such sparks, only for a short while were they allowed to shine.

“You ’fuse gib ’im?” repeated the tempter, hastening to extinguish them. “If you ’fuse, I no put de lub-spell on Cubina. Mor’n dat – I set de obeah fo’ you – you youseff!”

“Oh, no – no, Chakra!” cried she, cowering before the Coromantee; “I not refuse – I give it – anything you command me.”

“Dere, now – das sensible ob you, Cynthy. Now I gib you de

instrukshin how fo' minister de 'pell. Lissen, an' member ebbery ting I go 'peak you."

As the hideous sorcerer said this, he sat down in front of his neophyte – fixing his eyes upon hers, as if the better to impress his words upon her memory.

"Fuss an' formoss, den, de grand buckra ob Moun' Welcome, ebbery night 'fore he go bed, hab glass ob rum punch. I know he used hab – he so 'till, eh?"

"Yes – he does," mechanically answered the mulatta.

"Berry likely – dat ere am one ob de habits neider buckra nor brack man am like break off. Ebbery night, shoo?"

"Yes – every night – one glass – sometimes two."

"Gorry! ef twa me, me hab two – not sometime, but always – 'cept when a make um tree, ha! ha! Berry well, das all right; and now, gal, who mix de punch fo' 'im? You use do dat youseff, Cynthia!"

"It is still my business. I make it for him every night."

"Good – das jess de ting. Whugh! now we know how set de 'pell ob de obeah. You see dis hya? It am de claw of de mountain crab. You see de 'cratch – dar – inside ob de machine? Well – up to dat mark it holds jess de 'zack quantum. Ebbery night you make de punch, you fill up dar out ob dis bottle. You pour in de glass – fuss de sugar an' lemon – den de water – den de rum, which am 'tronger dan de water; an' affer dat de 'pell out of dis bottle, which am de 'trongest ob dem all. You 'member all a hab tell you?"

“I shall remember it,” rejoined the woman, with a firmness of voice, partly assumed – for she dreaded to show any sign of irresolution.

“Ef you no do, den de spell turn roun’ an’ he work ’gin youseff. When de Obi once ’gins he no ’top till he hab ’im victim. Now a go fo’ ’voke de god Accompong. He come whenebba Chakra call. He make ’im ’pearance in de foam ob de catrack out yonner. Affer dat no mortal him lay not till one be promise fo’ de sacrafize. You ’tay in hya – De god muss not see *no woman*– you lissen – you hear um voice.”

Rising with a mysterious air, and taking down from its peg an old palm-leaf wallet, that appeared to contain some heavy article, the myal-man stepped out of the hut, closing the door behind him, lest – as he informed the mulatta, in *sotto voce*– the god might set his eyes on her, and get into a rage.

Cynthia seemed to consider the precaution scarce sufficient; for the moment the door was closed, in order to make herself still more secure against being seen, she glided up to the light and extinguished it. Then, groping her way back to the bedstead, she staggered down upon it, and sate shivering with apprehension.

As the myal-man had enjoined upon her, she listened; and, as he had promised her, she heard – if not the voice of Accompong – sounds that were worthy of having proceed from the throat of that Ethiopian divinity.

At first a voice reached her which she knew to be human: since it was the voice of Chakra himself. It was uttered, nevertheless, in

strange and unnatural tones, that at each moment kept changing. Now it came ringing through the interstices of the bamboos, in a kind of long-drawn solo, as if the myal-man was initiating his ceremonies with the verse of a psalm. Then the chaunt became quicker, by a sort of *crescendo* movement, and the song appeared transformed to a *recitative*. Next were heard sounds of a very different intonation, resembling the shrill, harsh call of a cow-horn or conch-shell, and gradually dying off into a prolonged bass, like the groaning of a cracked trombone.

After this had continued for some moments, there ensued a dialogue – in which the listener could recognise only one of the voices as that of Chakra.

Whose could be the other? It could only be that of Accompong. The god was upon the ground!

Cynthia trembled as she thought how very near he was. How lucky she had blown out the light! With the lamp still burning, she must have been seen: for both Chakra and the deity were just outside the door, and so near that she could not only hear their voices with distinctness, but the very words that were spoken.

Some of these were in an unknown tongue, and she could not understand them. Others were in English, or rather its synonym in the form of a negro *patois*. These last she comprehended; and their signification was not of a character to tranquillise her thoughts, but the contrary.

Chakra, chantant: —

“Open de bottle – draw de cork,
De ’pell he work – de ’pell he work;
De buckra man muss die!”

“*Muss die!*” repeated Accompong, in a voice that sounded as if from the interior of an empty hogshhead.

“De yella gal she gib ’im drink;
It make ’im sick – it make ’im sr’ink,
It send ’im to ’im grave!”

“*Him grave!*” came the response of Accompong.

“An’ if de yella gal refuse,
She ’tep into de buckra’s shoes,
An’ fill de buckra’s tomb.”

“*Buckra’s tomb!*” echoed the African god, in a sonorous and emphatic voice, that told there was no alternative to the fate thus hypothetically proclaimed.

There was a short interval of silence, and then the shrill, conch-like sound was again heard – as before, followed by the long-drawn bass.

This was the exorcism of the god – as the same sounds, previously heard, had been his invocation.

It was also the *finale* of the ceremony: since the moment after Chakra pushed open the door, and stood in the entrance of the

hut.

“Cynthy, gal,” said he, with a look of mysterious gravity, “why you blow out de light? But no matter for light. It’s all oba. Did you hear the god ’peak?”

“I did,” murmured the mulatta, still trembling at what she had heard.

“You hear wha him say?”

“Yes – yes.”

“Den he ’peak de troof. Nuffin mor’n dat. You take heed – I ’vise you, as you friend. You go troo wif de ’pell now ’im ’gun, else you life not worth so much trash ob de sugar-cane. A say no more. Ebbery night, in um fuss glass, de full ob de crab-claw, up to de mark. Now, gal, come ’lon’.”

The last command was the more readily obeyed since Cynthia was but too glad to get away from a place whose terrors had so severely tested her courage.

Taking up the basket – in which the bottle containing the dangerous decoction had been already placed – she glided out of the hut, and once more followed the Coromantee to his canoe.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Eight

Midnight Wanderers

Once more under the *ceiba*, that gigantic trysting tree, stood the Maroon and his mistress. Not, as before, in the bright noonday sun, but near the mid-hour of the night. The Foolah had dared the dangers of the forest to meet her beloved Cubina.

And there were dangers in that forest, more to be dreaded than fierce beasts or ravenous reptiles – more to be dreaded than the tusks of the wild boar, or the teeth of the scaly alligator. There were monsters in human form far more fearful to be encountered; and at that moment not very distant from the spot where the lovers had made their rendezvous.

Love recks little of dangers. Cubina knew of none; and, in Yola's belief, there was no danger while Cubina was near.

The moon was in high heaven, full, calm, and clear. Her beams filled the glade with a silvery effulgence. It was a moonlight that almost rivalled the brightness of day. The flowers over the earth, and the blossoms upon the trees, appeared full blown: as if they had opened their petals to drink in the delightful dew. Borne upon the soft, silent breeze, the nocturnal sounds of the forest fell with a tremulous cadence upon the ear; while the nightingale of the West, as if proud of the superiority of her counterfeit notes, in turns imitated them all.

The lovers stood in shadow – but it was the shadow of the *ceiba*. There was none in their hearts; and had the moonlight at that moment fallen upon their faces, no trace of a cloud could have been detected there.

It was a happy meeting – one of the happiest they had yet enjoyed. Each had brought good news to the other. Cubina, that the brother of his beloved was still safe under his protection – safe and well; Yola, that her young mistress had promised to bestow upon her her freedom.

Within the few days since they had last met, many things had transpired to interest both. Each had a tale to tell.

Yola related how the story of her brother's misfortunes, though strictly kept from the servants at Mount Welcome, had been told to her mistress; how Miss Vaughan, on hearing it, had requested her father to grant her (Yola's) manumission; and how the Custos had consented to the request. Conditionally, however. Her "free papers" were to be dated from a certain day – that on which Kate Vaughan was to become a bride, but that day was supposed not to be far distant.

It was joyous news for the Maroon. He might keep his hundred pounds for the plenishing of his mountain home!

This piece of intelligence might have taken Cubina more by surprise, but for the understanding that now existed between him and the Custos – whom he had of late frequently visited. Certain conditions had become established between the magistrate and the Maroon, which rendered the latter less apprehensive about

the future. Mr Vaughan had made some promises to himself in regard to the manumission of Yola. It is true, these had also been *conditional*; and their performance was to depend, to a great degree, on the success of the prosecution to be instituted against the Jew. But, with the Custos himself as a prosecutor, Cubina felt sanguine that the conditions would be accomplished.

These were circumstances to be kept secret. Even to his sweetheart the lover was not permitted to impart the knowledge of this affair. Only did he make known to her that steps were being taken to cause the restitution of her brother's property; but how, where, and when, could not be divulged until that day when war should be openly declared against the enemy. So had the Custos commanded.

Cubina, nevertheless, could not help being gratified by the intelligence which Yola had conveyed to him. The promise of Miss Vaughan had but one condition – her bridal day; and that was definite and certain.

“Ah!” said Cubina, turning with a proud look towards his sweetheart, “it will be a happy day for all. No, not for all,” added he, his face suddenly assuming an expression of sadness; “not for all. There is one, I fear, to whom that day will not bring happiness!”

“I know one, too, Cubina,” rejoined the girl, her countenance appearing to reflect the expression that had come over his.

“Oh, you know it, too? Miss Vaughan has told you then, I suppose? I hope she does not boast of it?”

“What she boast of, Cubina?”

“Why, of breaking his heart, as you would do mine, if you were to marry somebody else. Poor young fellow! *Crambo!* If I’m not mistaken, it will be a sad day for him!”

The girl looked up, in puzzled surprise. “Sad day for him! No, Cubina; he very happy. For her – poor missa – that day be sad.”

“*Vayate!* What do you mean, Yola?”

“No more dan I say, Cubina. Missa Kate be very unhappy that day she marry Mr Mongew – she very so now.”

“What!” exclaimed Cubina, suddenly placing himself in an attitude of unusual attention; “do I understand you to say that Miss Vaughan don’t wish to marry this Mr Smythje?”

“She no love him, Cubina. Why she wish marry him, then?”

“Ha!” significantly ejaculated the Maroon, while an expression of joy came over his countenance; “what makes you think she don’t love him? Have you a reason, Yola?”

“Missa me say so. She me tell everything, Cubina.”

“You are sure she has said that she don’t love him?”

“She laugh at him – she no care for him. Girl no love one she laugh at – never.”

“*Vaya!* I hope you will never laugh at me, then! But say, dearest; do you know why she is going to marry Mr Smythje?”

“Massa her make marry. He Mr Mongew very, very rich – he great planter. That why she him go to marry.”

“Ho! – ho!” thoughtfully ejaculated the captain of Maroons. “I suspected there was some compulsion,” continued he, not

speaking to his companion, but muttering the words to himself.

“Can you tell me, Yola,” he asked, turning again to his sweetheart; “do you know *why* your mistress does not like this grand gentleman? Has she told you any reason?”

“Very good reason, Cubina. She another love; that why she Mongew not like.”

“Ah! she’s in love with somebody else! Have you heard who it is, Yola?”

“Oh, yes; you know him yourself. He Missa Kate’s cousin; she *him* love.”

“Her cousin, Herbert Vaughan?”

“Yes, he name Herber’; he come once – never more come. No matter, she love him first time – she him love ever more! Same I you, Cubina; I you love first time, all the same for ever.”

“You are sure of all this?” inquired Cubina, in his anxiety to know more, resisting the temptation to reciprocate the endearing speech; “you are sure Miss Vaughan loves her cousin Herbert?”

“Sure, Cubina; missa say so many, many time. She have very much grief for him. She hear he marry one fine, bad lady. You know old Jew Jess’ron – his daughter he go marry.”

“I have heard so,” rejoined Cubina, evidently keeping back from his sweetheart a more definite knowledge of the subject which he himself possessed; “I have heard so. After all,” he continued, speaking reflectingly, “it might not happen – neither of these marriages. There’s a proverb, Yola, I’ve heard among the white folks – *Many a slip between the cup and the lip.*’ I hope it

won't be true of you and me; but it might come to pass between young Master Vaughan and Miss Jessuron. Who knows? I know something. *Por Dios!* you've given me good news, I think, for somebody. But tell me, Yola; have you heard them say *when* your mistress and this great gentleman are to be married?"

"Massa he say soon. He tell Missa Kate he go great journey. When he come back they get marry; he Missa Kate say so yesterday."

"The Custos going a journey? Have you heard where?"

"Spanish Town, missa me tell – a great big city far away."

"I wonder what that can be for," said Cubina to himself, in a conjectural way. "Well, Yola," he added, after a pause, and speaking more earnestly, "listen to me. As soon as Mr Vaughan has set out on this journey, you come to me. Perhaps I may have a message for your mistress. Have you heard when he intends to take the road?"

"He go morrow morning."

"Ha! so soon! Well, so much the better for us, and maybe for somebody else. You must meet me here to-morrow night. Tell your mistress it concerns herself. No, don't tell her," he added, correcting himself, "she will let you come without that excuse; besides, it might be that – never mind! Come, anyhow. I shall be waiting for you at this same hour."

Yola gave her willing promise to keep an appointment so accordant to her inclinations.

For some time longer the lovers conversed, imparting to each

other the ordinary news of life – the details of common things – to be at length succeeded by words only of love, of far, far deeper interest.

Cubina swore eternal truth – by the trees around – by the sky above – by the bright moon, and the blue heavens.

He had done the same a score of times; and as often had he been believed. But lovers never tire of such vows – neither of hearing nor repeating them.

The African maiden answered with promises of faithfulness, alike free, alike fervent. She no longer sighed for her far Gambian home – no more mourned the fate that had torn her from a court to consign her to slavery. The dark hours of her life seemed to have ended; and her future, as her present, was full of hope and bliss!

For more than an hour did the enamoured pair indulge in this sweet converse. They were about to close it with a parting kiss.

The Maroon stood with his strong arms tenderly entwined around the waist of his mistress, who willingly yielded to the embrace. Her slender form, under the shadow of the *ceiba*, looked like the statue of some Egyptian maiden in bronze antique.

The adieu had been spoken more than once; but still the lovers lingered, as if loth to give the parting kiss. There had been more than one, but not that which was to end the interview.

Ere their lips had met to achieve it, the design was interrupted. Voices fell upon their ears, and two forms emerging into the

moonlight at the lower end of the glade, rapidly advanced in the direction of the *ceiba*.

As if by a common instinct, Cubina and his mistress stepped silently and simultaneously back, retiring together between the buttresses of the tree. There it was dark enough for concealment. Only an eye bent on purposed scrutiny could have detected their presence.

The forms drew near. They were those of a man and a woman. The moonlight shining full upon them, rendered them easy of recognition; but their voices had already declared their identity. Both the intruders were known to both the lovers. They were the Jew Jessuron and the slave Cynthia.

“*Crambo!*” muttered the Maroon, as he saw who they were. “What on earth can *they* be doing together, at this time of the night, and here – so far away from any house? *Maldito!* some wicked business, I warrant.”

By this time the brace of midnight strollers had got opposite to the tree, and the Jew was delivering himself of a speech, which was plainly heard by those who stood concealed in its shadow.

“Now, Cynthia – goot wench! – you hashn’t said yet why he hash sent for me! Do you know what it ish for?”

“I don’t, Mass Jess’ron, unless it be – ”

“Unlesh what, wench?”

“Somethin’ ’bout the news I took him afore I come to you, when I went with his basket of provisions – ”

“Ah-ha! you took him some newsh – what newsh, girl?”

“Only that Massr Vagh’n am a-goin’ away in the mornin’.”

“Blesh my soul!” exclaimed the Jew, suddenly stopping in his tracks, and turning towards the mulatta with a look of troubled surprise. “Blesh my soul! You don’t shay that, dosh you?”

“Dey say so at the Buff, Massr Jess’ron. Besides, I know m’self he’s a-goin’. I help pack up him shirts in de trabbelin’ valise. He’s a-goin’ a hossaback.”

“But where, wench? where?” gasped the Jew, in hurried and anxious speech.

“Dey say to ’Panish Town – odder side ob de Island.”

“Spanish Town! ach!” cried the penn-keeper, in a tone betokening that the words had conveyed some very unwelcome intelligence. “Spanish Town! S’help me, it ish! I knew it! I knew it! ach!”

And, as he repeated the aspirated ejaculation, he struck his umbrella fiercely into the ground – as if to render more emphatic the chagrin that had been communicated by the answer.

Only for a few seconds did he make pause upon the spot.

“Come on!” cried he to his companion, hurriedly moving off from the tree; “come on, wench! If that’sh the case, ash you shay, there’sh no time to be losht – not a minute, s’help me!”

And with this elegant reflection, he ended the brief dialogue, and strode swiftly and silently onward across the glade – the woman following close upon his heels.

“*Demonios!*” muttered the Maroon, as they went off. “That John Crow and his pretty partner are on some ugly errand, I fear!”

It appears to be the Custos they're conspiring against. *Crambo!* I wonder what they are after with him! What can the old Jew have to do with his going to Spanish Town? I must follow them, and see if I can discover. There appears to be some scheme brewing, that bodes no good to Mr Vaughan. Where can they be gadding to at this time of night? *From* the Jew's penn, instead of *towards* it!"

These interrogative reflections the Maroon made to himself. Then, turning once more to his sweetheart, with a gesture that declared his intention to be gone, he said: —

"We must part, Yola, and this instant, love: else I may lose their trail. Adieu! adieu!"

And, with a quick kiss and equally hurried embrace, the lovers separated — Yola returning to Mount Welcome, by a path well-known to her; while the Maroon glided off on the track taken by the penn-keeper and his female companion.

Volume Two – Chapter Twenty Nine

Tracking the Strollers

The Maroon was but a few moments in recovering the “spoor” of the two nocturnal strollers.

At the point where they had gone out of the glade, there was a path that led up the hills in the direction of the Jumbé Rock. It was a mere cattle track – used only very occasionally by bipeds. Being the only path that went that way, and judging, moreover, that neither the Jew nor his follower would be likely to traverse the thicket at random, Cubina concluded that they had gone by this path.

Throwing himself upon it, and advancing with a quick but silent step, he soon recovered sight of them.

The shade of the gigantic trees – it was a primeval forest through which they were passing – was favourable to his design; and without much risk of being seen, he was able to keep them in view, and almost within earshot.

At that moment, the mind of the Jew was too pre-occupied to be suspicious; and the mulatta was not likely to trouble her thoughts about whether they were followed or not. Had she known, however – had she even suspected – that her steps were dogged, and by Cubina, the Maroon, it would, no doubt, have sharpened her senses.

“They appear to be making for the Jumbé Rock?” mentally soliloquised Cubina, as they commenced ascending the slope of the mountain. “*Crambo!* That is odd enough! What do they intend to do there at this hour of the night – or at any hour, I might say? And who’s the *he* that’s been sending for Jessuron? She took *him* a provision basket! By that, it ought to be some runaway. But what has the old Jew to do with a runaway? To get out of his bed at this time of the night, and tramp it three miles through the woods! For that matter, they say he don’t sleep much anyhow; and, like the owl, night’s his favourite time, I suppose. Something’s being cooked for the Custos: for that girl’s a very devil! Not that I should care about *him*, or what happened to him, at any other time. He’s not much; and is only helping me in that matter because he hates the other. No matter for him; but from what Yola’s told me, I’d go to the world’s end for his daughter. Ha! I may do her a service yet. *Valga me Dios!* what’s up now? They’ve stopped!”

The Jew and his companion, about a hundred yards ahead, had suddenly come to a stand. They appeared to be scrutinising the path.

Cubina, crouching in the shadow of the bushes, stopped likewise; and waited for the others to advance.

They did so after a short interval – hastening on as before; but in a slightly divergent direction.

“Ho, ho!” muttered the Maroon; “not for the Jumbé Rock, but the Duppy’s Hole! I remember now. The path forks up yonder.

They've taken that which goes to the Hole. Well! it don't help me to comprehend their purpose a bit clearer. *Carrai!* that Duppy's Hole! Didn't some of my fellows tell me they've heard strange noises there lately? Quaco is ready to swear he saw the ghost of the old myal-man, Chakra, standing upon the edge of the cliff. They're going there, as sure as my name's Cubina!"

And with this conjectural reflection the Maroon forsook the shadow under which he had been sheltering, and flitted forward along the path.

Another five hundred yards further on, his conjecture was confirmed. The parties dogged by him had reached the edge of the precipice that frowned down upon the Duppy's Hole, and there halted.

Cubina also made stop – as before concealing himself within the black shadow of the bushes.

He had scarcely crouched down, when his ears were saluted by a shrill whistle – not made by the lips, but proceeding from some instrument, as a reed or a common dog-call. It was plainly a signal, sounded either by Cynthia or the Jew, Cubina could not tell which.

Only once was it given. And there was no answer – for that similar sound, that came like an echo from the far forest, was a counterfeit. It was the mimic-note of the mock-bird.

Cubina, skilled in these voices of the night, knew this, and paid no heed to the distant sound. His whole attention was absorbed in watching the movements of the two individuals still standing

upon the edge of the cliff. The white sky was beyond them, against which he could see their dark *silhouettes* outlined with perfect distinctness.

After about a minute's time, he saw them once more in motion; and then both appeared to vanish from his view – not wasting into the air, but sinking into the ground, as if a trap-door had admitted them to the interior of the earth.

He saw this without much surprise. He knew they must have gone down the precipice, but how they had performed this feat was something that did surprise him a little.

It was but a short spell of astonishment. In a score of seconds he stood upon the edge of the precipice, at the spot where they had disappeared.

He looked down. He could trace, though dimly, a means of descent among the wattle of boughs and corrugated creepers that clasped the *façade* of the cliff. Even under the fantastic gleam of the moon, he could see that human hands had helped the construction of this natural ladder.

He stayed not to scrutinise it. An object of greater interest challenged his glance. On the disc of the lagoon – in the moonlight, a sheet of silver, like a mirror in its frame of dark mahogany – moved a thing of sharp, elliptical shape – a canoe.

Midships of the craft, a form was crouching. Was it human or demon?

The aspect was demon – the shape scarce human. Long, ape-like arms; a hunched back; teeth gleaming in the moonlight like

the incisors of a shark; features everything but human to one who had not seen them before!

Cubina had seen them before. To him, though not familiar, they were known. If not the ghost of Chakra, he saw Chakra himself!

Volume Two – Chapter Thirty

Cynthia in the Way

The heart of the young Maroon, though by nature bold and brave, was for a moment impressed with fear. He had known the myal-man of Mount Welcome – never very intimately – but enough to identify his person. Indeed, once seen, Chakra was a man to be remembered.

Cubina had, like every one else for miles around, heard of the trial of the Coromantee conjuror, and his condemnation to exposure on the Jumbé Rock. The peculiar mode of his execution – the cruel sentence – the celebrity of the scene where the criminal had been compelled to pass the last miserable hours of his existence – all combined to render his death even more notorious than his life; and few there were in the western end of the Island who had not heard of the myal-man of Mount Welcome, and the singular mode of atonement that justice had demanded him to make for his crimes.

In common with others, Cubina believed him dead. No wonder, then, that the heart of the Maroon should for a moment misgive him on seeing Chakra seated in a canoe, and paddling himself across the calm surface of the lagoon!

Under any circumstances, the sight of the Coromantee was not calculated to beget confidence in the beholder; but his

unexpected appearance just then produced within the mind of the Maroon a feeling somewhat stronger than astonishment, and for some seconds he stood upon the cliff overcome by a feeling of awe.

Very soon, however, he remembered the statement which his lieutenant had made, and which Quaco had put in the form of an asseveration.

Quaco, like most of his colour, a firm believer in “Duppy” and “Jumbé,” had believed it to be Chakra’s ghost he had seen; and under the terror with which the sight had inspired him, instead of making an attempt to pursue the apparition, and prove whether it was flesh and blood, or only “empty air,” he had used his utmost speed to get away from the spot, leaving the myal-man’s ghost full master of the ground.

Cubina, less given to superstitious inclinings, only for a moment permitted himself to be mystified with the idea of a “Duppy.” Quaco’s experience, along with the presence of the penn-keeper and his companion – there evidently for a purpose – guided him to the conclusion that what he saw in the canoe was no spiritual Chakra, but Chakra in the flesh.

How the Coromantee came to be still living and moving, the Maroon could not so easily comprehend; but Cubina possessed acute reasoning powers, and the presence of the Jew, evidently *en rapport* with the restored conjuror, went far towards explaining the mystery of the latter’s resurrection.

Satisfied that he saw Chakra himself, the Maroon placed

himself in a position to watch the movements both of the men in the canoe, and those who had summoned him across the lagoon.

In another moment the canoe was lost sight of. It had passed under the bushes at the bottom of the cliff, where it was not visible from above.

Voices now ascended, which could be heard, but not distinctly.

Cubina could distinguish three voices taking part in the conversation – Chakra's, the Jew's, and, at longer intervals, the shrill treble of the slave Cynthia.

He bent his ear, and listened with keen attention – in hopes of hearing what they said. He could only catch an occasional word. The roar of the cascade rising along with the voices hindered him from hearing them distinctly; and, notwithstanding his earnest desire to do so, he was unable to make out the matter of the conversation.

Only for a short while was he kept waiting. The *trialogue* came to a close, followed by a brief interval of silence – at the end of which the canoe once more made its appearance upon the open water of the lagoon.

Two persons only were in it, Chakra and the Jew. Cynthia had stayed by the bottom of the cliff.

Cubina made this observation with some chagrin. It was a circumstance that promised to frustrate the design he had suddenly conceived: of following the myal-man to his lair. This he desired to do, in order to make himself acquainted with the hiding-place of the remarkable runaway.

That it was down in the Duppy's Hole there could be no doubt; and therefore the Maroon might at any time find him there.

This reflection would have contented him; but, on seeing the Jew ferried across the lagoon, he conjectured that he and Chakra were bent upon the completion of some horrid plot, which, by following, he, Cubina, might overhear, and, perhaps, be enabled to counteract.

The Maroon was aware of the difficulty of descending into the Duppy's Hole. He knew there was but one way – by the bushes that clustered along the face of the cliff at his feet. Once, while on the chase, he and his followers, aided by a rope-ladder, had gone down; and, in search of game, had explored the wooded covert beyond. At that time, however, Chakra had not been *executed*; and the hunter had found no trace of human presence in the solitary place.

He knew that he could follow the canoe by swimming; as in this way he had crossed before, but now that Cynthia barred the way, it would be impossible for him to reach the water unobserved.

To follow the conspirators further was out of the question. His chance was cut off by the interposition of the mulatta. He could only remain on the cliff and await their return.

He was reflecting upon what course to pursue, when a rustling sound reached him from below. It was made by some one moving among the bushes that grew against the face of the precipice.

He caught one of the branches; and, supporting himself by

it, craned his neck over the cliff. His eye fell upon the brilliant chequer of a *bandanna*, visible among the leaves. It was the toque upon the head of Cynthia. It was in motion; and he could see that she was ascending by the tree stairway he had already observed.

Without staying to witness the ascent, he turned back into the underwood by the side of the path; and, crouching down, he waited to see what the woman intended doing. Perhaps her part in the performance had been played out – at least, for that night – and she was on her way homeward?

That was what Cubina conjectured, as well as just what he would have wished.

His conjecture proved correct. The mulatta, on mounting to the crest of the cliff, stopped only for a moment, to adjust upon her arm a basket she had brought up – from the half-open lid of which protruded the neck of a bottle. Then, casting her eyes forward, she struck off into the shadowy forest path, and was soon out of sight.

The moment after she had passed him, the Maroon glided silently forward to the edge of the cliff, and commenced descending the stair. Such feat was nothing to him; and in a few seconds he had reached the edge of the lagoon.

Here he paused – to make sure that the canoe had arrived at its destination, and that its late occupants had disembarked from it.

After a moment spent in this *reconnoissance*— looking sharply, and listening with all his ears – he became satisfied that the coast was clear; and, letting himself stealthily into the water, he swam

for the opposite shore of the lagoon.

Upon only about two-thirds of the surface of the lagoon did the moonlight fall – the cliff casting its shadow upon the other third. Keeping within the boundaries of this shadow, and swimming as silently as a fish, Cubina succeeded in reaching the opposite shore, without perceiving any sign that he had been observed.

Under the heavy timber, with which the upper half of the ravine was covered, the darkness was as deep as if not a ray of moonlight came down from the sky. Only on the stream itself, and here and there through a break in the umbrageous forest, could the moonbeams reach the surface of the earth. Elsewhere, from cliff to cliff, the obscurity was complete.

Cubina conjectured, and correctly, that there was a path leading from the anchorage of the canoe; and to find this was his first purpose.

Keeping around the edge of the lagoon, he soon came upon the craft – empty, and anchored under a tree.

The moonlight, entering here from the open water, showed him the *embouchure* of the path, where it entered the underwood; and, without losing a moment's time, he commenced moving along it.

Silently as a cat he stole onward, at intervals pausing to listen; but he could only bear the hissing sound of the upper cascade – to which he was now making approach.

There was a space in front of the waterfall, where the trees

stood thinly, and this opening was soon reached.

On arriving at its edge the Maroon again stopped to reconnoitre.

Scarcely a second of time did he need to pause. Light flashed in his eyes through the interstices of what appeared to be a sort of grating. It was the bamboo door of the obeah hut. Voices, too, reverberated through the bars.

Within were the men upon whom it was his purpose to play eavesdropper.

In another instant Cubina was cowering under the cotton-tree, close up to the doorpost.

Volume Two – Chapter Thirty One

Strange Disclosures

The two plotters were palavering loud enough. In that place there was no need – at least, so thought they – for restrained speech; and the listener could have heard every word, but for the hoarse hissing of the cataract. This, at times, hindered him from distinguishing what was said; and only in detached portions could he pick up the thread of the discourse. Enough, however, heard he to cause him astonishment – the greatest of all, that in the Island of Jamaica, or upon the earth, existed two such villains as Chakra, the Coromantee, and Jessuron, the Jew!

He could see the conspirators as well as hear them. The chinks between the bamboos enabled him to obtain a view of both.

The Jew, slightly blown with his long walk against the hill, had dropped into a sitting attitude upon the truck-like bedstead; while the Coromantee stood before him, leaning against the buttress of the tree which formed one side of his dwelling.

The conversation had commenced before Cubina came up. It could not have proceeded far. The lard lamp seemed recently lit. Besides, the Maroon knew that he had been only a few minutes behind them. The plot, therefore, whatever it was, had not yet made much progress.

So reasoned the listener; but it soon appeared that it was the

continuation of a plot, and not its first conception, to which he was to become privy – a plot so demoniac as to include *murder* in its design!

The Jew, when Cubina first got eyes on him, appeared as if he had just given utterance to some angry speech. His dark, weasel-like orbs were sparkling in their sunken sockets, with a fiendish light. The goggles were off, and the eyes could be seen. In his right hand the eternal umbrella was grasped, with a firm clutch, as if held in menace!

Chakra, on the other hand, appeared cowed and pleading. Though almost twice the size, and apparently twice the strength of the old Israelite, he looked at that moment as if in fear of him!

“Gorry, Massr Jake!” said he, in an appealing tone; “how ebber wa’ *I* to know de Cussus warn a gwine so soon? A nebber speered ob dat; an’ you nebber tole me you wanted de obeah-spell to work fasser dan war safe. Ef a’d a know’d dat, a kud a fotch de dam Cussus out o’ him boots in de shake ob a cat’s tail – dat cud a a’ did!”

“Ach!” exclaimed the Jew, with an air of unmistakable chagrin; “he’s going to shlip us. S’help me, he will! And now, when I wants more ash ever the shpell upon him. I’sh heard something from thish girl Cynthy of a conshpiracy against myshelf. Sheesh heard them plotting in the summer-house in the Cushtos’s garden.”

“Wha’ dey plot ’gain you, Massr Jake? Who am dey dat go plottin’?”

“The Cushtos is one, the other ish that scamp son of Cubina, the Maroon – the young Cubina. You knowsh him?”

“Dat same a know well ’nuf.”

“Ah! the proud Cushtos don’t know – though he hash his suspicions – that hish wife Quasheba wash the mishtress of a Maroon. Ha! ha! ha! And she luffed the mulatto better as ever she luffed Vanities Vochan! Ha! ha! ha!”

“Dat am berry near de troof,” observed the negro, with a thoughtful air.

“Little dosh the Cushtos think,” continued Jessuron, without heeding the interpolation, “that thish young fellow, whosh a-helpin’ him to conspire againsht me, is a sort of a son to hish consheited worship. Ha! ha! ha!”

It was startling intelligence for the listener outside the door. It was the first intimation the young Maroon ever had as to who was his mother.

Some vague hints had been conveyed to him in early childhood; but his memory recalled them only as dreams; and he himself had never allowed them expression. His father he had known well – called, as himself, Cubina, the Maroon. But his mother, who or what she had been, he had never known.

Was it possible, then, that the quadroon, Quasheba – of whose fame he, too, had heard – was it true she was his own mother? That “Lilly Quasheba,” the beautiful, the accomplished daughter of the Custos Vaughan, was his half-sister?

He could not doubt it. The conversation that followed put him

in possession of further details, and more ample proofs. Besides, such relationships were too common in the Island of Jamaica, to make them matter either of singularity or surprise.

Notwithstanding, the listener was filled with astonishment – far more than that – for the revelation was one to stir his soul to emotions of the strangest and strongest kind. New thoughts sprang up at the announcement; new vistas opened before the horoscope of his future; new ties were established within his heart, hitherto unfelt and unknown.

Stifling his new-sprung emotions as well as he was able – promising them indulgence at some other time – he re-bent his ear to listen.

He heard enough to satisfy him that he had a sister – a half-sister, it is true – but still a sister.

The next point determined on between the conspirators was equally calculated to startle and astonish him. It was no less than a design to render that sister *brotherless!*

“You musht put the shpell on *him*, too,” said the Jew; “for heesh the principal in thish plotsht me. Even if the Cushtos wash out of the way, thish Captain Cubina will go to some other magistrate to carry out hish design. There will be plenty to help him. You musht shpell *him*, and soon ash you can, Shakra. There’sh no time to lose – not a minnit, s’help me!”

“A do wha a can, Massr Jake; but a mout’s well tell ye, that it a’nt so easy to put de spell on a Maroon. It coss me more’n twenty year to put de obeah on him ole fadder, and I’s e a been

tryin' um on dis young Cubina fo' some time – ebber since him fadder die. A hate de young un, same a hated de ole un. You knows why a hate boaf.”

“I knowsh all that – I knowsh all that.”

“Wa, den! a do ma bess. Dat ar m'latta gib me no hope. She soon 'dminster de spell ef she hab chance – kase she think um de lub drink. She no hab chance, fo' Cubina he no let her come nigh o' him. Nebba mind: Chakra he find oppotunity some day; 'fore long he put de death-spell on de son ob dat quaderoom.”

“Perhaps not so soon!” was the mental rejoinder of him who listened to this confident declaration.

“It'sh less matter about him than the other!” cried the Jew, giving way to a fresh burst of rage. “S'help me! the Cushtos is going to shlip out of my fingers – the eshtate – all! Ach!” he ejaculated, as his disappointment came more palpably before him, “you hash played me false, Shakra! I b'lief you've been playin' me false!”

As the Jew gave utterance to this conjectural speech, he started to his feet – taking a tighter hold upon his umbrella, and standing before his *vis-à-vis* in a threatening attitude.

“No, Massr Jake,” replied the myal-man, without altering the air of obeisance he had hitherto assumed, – “no – nuffin ob dat – anyhow, I'se can say dar's nuffin ob dat. You yaseff sabbey well 'nuff a hab as good reezun as you to make de spell work, an' I tell you *it shall work!*”

“Yesh! when too late – too late! I don't care then. If the

Cushtos get to Spanish Town – if he procuresh the shpecial act, I’m a ruined Shew! I don’t care a shtraw if the death-shpell wash put on myshelf! I don’t!”

This speech was rather a soliloquy than addressed to Chakra, who listened to it without clearly comprehending its import: for the chief motive which was stimulating the Jew was still unknown to his fellow-conspirator.

“I tell you,” resumed Jessuron, still in threatening speech, “I believe you hash been fooling me, Shakra! You hash some interest of your own – perhaps, with thish Lilly Quasheba. Ha! never mind! I tell you thish time – I tell you, Shakra, if the shpell dosh fail – yesh, if it fail, and the Cushtos reach the capital – where he ish going – I tell you, Shakra, you may look out for shqualls! You loosh your monish I promised you. Ay, you may loosh your life ash well. I hash only to shay a word, and the Duppy’s Hole will be searched by the houndsh of the law. Now will you do your besht to keep the Cushtos from reaching the capital of the Island?”

As Jessuron finished the speech containing this conditional threat, he moved in the direction of the door, apparently with the intention of taking his departure.

The Maroon, perceiving the movement, stepped further back into the shadow of the cotton-tree – taking care to conceal himself effectually.

This change of position prevented him from hearing what subsequently passed between the two conspirators. Some more

conversation there was on both sides – an interchange of it – which lasted for several minutes; but although the listener could hear the sound of their voices, he was unable to make out the words spoken by either.

What was said by the Jew was principally a repetition of his menace – in terms the most emphatic he could employ; while Chakra, with equal emphasis, repeated his promises to accomplish the nefarious purpose already agreed upon between them.

“A promise, Massr Jake,” said the myal-man, in conclusion, “by de great Accompong, a do ma bess. Ef de Cussus ’trive ’scape, den you do wid ole Chakra whasomediver you hab mind to. ’Liver him up, ef you like! Ha! de Cussus no ’scape. Dis night Cynthy hab take bottle in her basket of de ’trongest kind. It do de bizness in ’bout twenty-fo’ hour. *Daat am de true death-spell.* Whugh!”

“In twenty-four hours? You ish shure, Shakra? you ish shure?”

“Shoo’ as a ’m now in de Duppy Hole, Massr Jake. Doan’ you hab no mo’ doubt ob ole Chakra. He hab no lub fo’ Cussus Va’ghan mo’ dan youseff. P’raps he lub de Cussus’ dau’ter, but dat am berry diffrent sort ob ’fecshun. Whugh!”

With this speech of fiendish signification the dialogue ended; and the Jew was seen stepping outside, followed by his confederate.

Both walked away from the spot, Chakra taking the lead, the Maroon closely watching their movements.

On reaching the canoe the conspirators stepped aboard, and the craft was paddled over the lagoon.

Cubina waited for its return; and then, seeing Chakra safe within his hut, he hastened back to the water; and, as before, swimming under the shadow of the rock, he re-ascended the tree stairway, and stood once more on the summit of the cliff.

Volume Two – Chapter Thirty Two

A Stormy Scene

On emerging from the Duppy's Hole, the penn-keeper tracked it, as straight as the path would permit him, towards his own home. He walked with hurried steps, as if he had some purpose before him beyond that of going to bed. Late as was the hour – or early, it should rather be said, since it was getting on for daybreak – in the eye of the old Israelite there was no sign of sleepiness; but, on the contrary, a wide-awake expression that betokened his intention to accomplish some desired object before retiring to rest.

The mutterings which fell from his lips, as he moved onward among the trees, told that his discontent still continued. Chakra's assurances, that had, for the moment, partially removed his ill-humour, on reflection failed to satisfy him. More than once before, the myal-man had given him promises which he had failed in keeping; and so might it be with the promise of the death-spell. With this thought was revived in full vigour the apprehension that his enemy might escape; and, consequently, his deep-conceived scheme would result in ignominious failure.

The measures which the myal-man had taken for administering the *spell-medicine*– that bottle of strong waters which Cynthia carried home in her basket – had been revealed to

the Jew. The revelation had been made – as suited the subject – in a low tone of voice; and it was this part of the dialogue between the two conspirators which Cubina had not heard.

But the Coromantee might be mistaken in his skill? The prescription might fail in producing the desired effect? The slave might not find the opportunity to administer it?

Considering the early hour at which the traveller was to start – Jessuron knew the hour – Cynthia might not have a chance to give the *medicine*? Or, frayed by contemplation of the fearful consequence, which she now knew would follow almost instantaneously upon the act, she might in the end shy from the dangerous duty? The intended victim might, in the meantime, have become suspicious of the mixtures prepared by the mulatta, and decline to drink the deadly draught?

There were many chances that the Custos might escape.

“There ish many a shlip between the cup and the lipsh’!” muttered the wicked old man, quoting one of his favourite proverbs. “Ach! that ish true,” he added, with bitter emphasis, as the probabilities of failure passed more palpably before his mind.

“S’help me!” continued he, with an attempt at self-consolation; “I shall not be deprived of my refenge – that ish certain – whether he goesh to Spanish Town, or shtays at home. Ach!” he exclaimed, again changing his tone to one of chagrin, “what dosh that signify, beshide the other? If he could be shtopped, it wash a grand destiny for mine Shoodith, for myself – me, old Shacob Shessuron! Mount Welcome wash mine! It

musht belong to this young fellow – he belongs to Shoodith – Shoodith belongsh to me! Ach! what a pity if my shkeme ish to fail – after all I hash done to make it succeed!

“If it fail,” he continued, the probabilities of failure presenting a new phase to him, “if it fail, I’m a ruined man! – I am! Shoodith may want to marry this young fellow. I believe she luffs him – I’m afeerd she doesh – and he hasn’t the worth of the shoosh he shstands in. Blesh my shoul! I musht try to prevent it. It musht go no further till I’m sure of the Cushtos. Not a shtep – not a shtep. She musht be seen, and thish very night. Yesh; I musht see Shoodith before I shleep.”

Urged on by the desire of the interview thus announced, the Jew hastened his steps; and soon arrived under the shadow of the dark pile that constituted his dwelling.

Admitted by the black porter at the gate – for that of the courtyard, or slave inclosure, was always kept locked – he mounted the wooden steps, and stole as silently along the verandah, as if he had been a stranger in the house instead of its owner. His object, in this stealthy movement, appeared to be to avoid disturbing some one who slept in a hammock near one end of the long gallery.

It was towards the other end, however, that he went – in the direction of a chamber through the lattice-window of which a light was streaming. It was the sleeping apartment of the Jewess.

On arriving opposite the door, he knocked, not loudly – at the same time pronouncing, in a half-whisper, the name “Shoodith!”

“That you, rabbi?” inquired a voice from within; while a footstep passing across the floor told either that the Jewess had not yet sought her couch, or had sought, and again forsaken it.

The door was opened; and the worthy father of this wakeful daughter passed inside.

“Well,” said she, as he entered, “I won’t inquire what errand you’ve been on, my good papa Jessuron: some slave speculation, I suppose? But what have I to do with it, that you should compel me to sit up for you till this time of the night? It’s now near morning; and I am precious sleepy, I can tell you!”

“Ach! Shoodith, dear,” replied the father, “everything ish goin’ wrong! s’help me, everything!”

“Well, one might think so, from that doleful phiz of yours. What’s troubling you now, my worthy parent?”

“Ach! Shoodith! Don’t dishdress me by your speeches. I hash something of importance to shay to you, before I go to shleep.”

“Say it quick, then: for I want to go to sleep myself. What is it, pray?”

“Well, Shoodith, dear, it ish this: you mushn’t trifle any more with thish young fellow.”

“What young fellow do you mean, my good man?”

“Vochan, of coursh – Mashter Vochan.”

“Ho! ho! you’ve changed your tune. What’s this about?”

“I hash reason, Shoodith; I hash reason.”

“Who said I was trifling with him? Not I, father! Anything but that, I can assure you.”

“That ish not what I mean, Shoodith.”

“Well, then, what do you mean, old gentleman? Come now! make yourself intelligible!”

“I mean thish, Shoodith: you mushn’t let things go any further with the young fellow – that ish, shoost now – till I knowsh something more about him. I thought he wash going to be lich – you know I thought that, mine daughter – but I hash found out, thish very night, that – perhaps – he may never be worth a shingle shilling; and therefore, Shoodith, you couldn’t think of marrying him – and mushn’t think of it till we knowsh more about him!”

“Father!” replied the Jewess, at once throwing aside her habitual badinage, and assuming a serious tone, “it is too late! Did I not tell you that the tarantula might get caught in its own trap? The proverb has proved true; *I* am that unhappy spider!”

“You don’t say so, Shoodith?” inquired the father, with a look of alarm.

“O do! Yonder sleeps the fly,” – and the speaker pointed along the gallery in the direction of the hammock – “secure from any harm I can ever do him. And were he as poor as he appears to be – as humble as the lowest slave on your estate – he is rich enough for me. Ah! it will be *his* fault, not *mine*, if he do not become my husband!”

The proud, determined tone in which the Jewess spoke, was only modified as she uttered the last words. The conjunctive form of the closing speech, with a certain duplexity of expression upon her countenance showed that she was not yet sure of the heart

of Herbert Vaughan. Notwithstanding his attentions at the ball – notwithstanding much that had since occurred, there appeared to be a doubt – a trace of distrust that still lingered.

“Never, Shoodith!” cried the father, in a tone of determined authority. “You mushn’t think of it! You shall never marry a pauper – never!”

“Pauper him as much as you like, father; he won’t care for that, any more than I do.”

“I shall disinherit you, Shoodith!” said the Jew, giving way to a feeling of spiteful resentment.

“As you like about that, too. Disinherit me at your pleasure. But remember, old man, it was you who began this game – you who set me to playing it; and if you are in danger of losing your stake – whatever it may be – I tell you you’re in danger of losing *me* – that is, if he – ”

The hypothetic thought – whatever it was – that at this crisis crossed the mind of the Jewess, was evidently one that caused her pain: as could be seen by the dark shadow that came mantling over her beautiful brow.

Whether or not she would have finished the speech is uncertain. She was not permitted to proceed. The angry father interrupted her: —

“I won’t argue with you now, Shoodith. Go to your bed, girl! go to shleep! Thish I promish you – and, s’help me, I keepsh my promish! – if thish pauper ish to be a pauper, he never marries you with my conshent; and without my conshent he never touches

a shilling of my monish. You understand that, Shoodith?”

And without waiting to hear the reply – which was quite as defiant as his own declaration – the Jew hurried out of his daughter’s chamber, and shuffled off along the verandah.

Volume Two – Chapter Thirty Three

Where Next?

The Maroon, after mounting to the summit of the cliff, paused for some moments to reflect upon a course of action.

In his bosom were many new emotions, springing from the strange revelations to which he had just listened. His mind was in such a state of chaotic confusion, that it required some time to determine what he ought to do next, or whither he should go.

The thought that thrilled him most, was that which related to the discovery of his maternal relationship to Miss Vaughan. But this matter, however strange it was, required no immediate action to be taken on his part; and though the semi-fraternal affection, now felt for the first time, strengthened the romantic friendship which he had conceived for the young lady – whom he had now seen several times – still, from what he had overheard of the scheme of the conspirators, his new-discovered sister did not appear to be in any danger. At least, not just then: though some horrid hints darkly thrown out by Chakra pointed to a probable peril at some future time.

That her father was in danger, Cubina could not doubt. Some demoniac plot had been prepared for the Custos, which was to deprive him even of life; and from what the Maroon could make out of the half-heard conversation of the conspirators, action was

to be taken upon it, so early as the following morning.

Mr Vaughan intended a journey. Yola had herself told him so; and the confabulation between Jessuron and Chakra confirmed it. Cynthia had been their informant; and it was evident that upon that very night she had brought the news from Mount Welcome. Evident, also, that the piece of intelligence thus conveyed had taken both the conspirators by surprise – causing them to hasten the *dénouement* of some devilish plan that before that night had not been quite ripe for execution.

All this was clear enough to the mind of the Maroon.

Equally clear was it, that the plan was no other than an atrocious plot to murder the proprietor of Mount Welcome; and that poison was the safe, silent weapon to be used – for Cubina was not unacquainted with the signification of the *death-spell of Obeah*. Before that night he had reason to believe that his own father had fallen by that secret shaft, and reasons to suspect that Chakra had shot it. What he had just heard confirmed his belief; and but that he saw the necessity of hastening to the rescue of the threatened Custos – and knew, moreover, that he could now find Chakra at any time – he would, in all probability, have avenged his father's death before leaving the Duppy's Hole.

The young Maroon, however, was a man of mild character – combining prudence with an extreme *sang froid* – that hindered him from bringing any event to a hasty or ambiguous ending. Though leaving Chakra for the time, he had determined soon to return to him.

The resurrection of the myal-man, though it at first very naturally astonished him, had soon ceased to be a mystery to the mind of the Maroon. In fact, the presence of the Jew had at once explained the whole thing. Cubina conjectured, and correctly, that Jessuron had released the condemned criminal from his chains, and substituted the body of some dead negro – afterwards to become the representative of Chakra’s skeleton.

For this the Jew, well-known for wickedness, might have many motives.

The Maroon did not stay to speculate upon them. His thoughts were directed to the present and future rather than the past – to the rescue of the Custos, over whom a fearful fate seemed to impend.

It need not be denied that Cubina felt a certain friendship for the planter of Mount Welcome. Heretofore it had not been of a very ardent character; but the relations lately established between him and the Custos – in prospect of the process to be taken against their common enemy, the penn-keeper – had, of course, occasioned a fellow-feeling between them. The revelations of that night had strengthened the interest which the Maroon had begun to feel for Mr Vaughan; and it is not to be wondered at that he now felt an honest desire to save the father of her, whom he was henceforth to regard as his own sister. To this end, then, were his thoughts directed.

He stayed not long to speculate upon the motives either of Chakra or Jessuron. Those of the myal-man he could guess to

a certainty. Revenge for the sentence that exposed him to that fearful fate on the Jumbé Rock.

The motives of the Jew were less transparent. His deepest did not appear in the confabulation Cubina had overheard. Even Chakra did not know it. It might be fear of the approaching trial, which by some means the Jew had become apprised of.

But no. On reflection, Cubina saw it could not be that: for the conversation of the conspirators betrayed that their plot had been anterior to any information which the Jew could have had of the design of the Custos. It could not be that.

No matter what. Mr Vaughan, the father of the generous young lady – she who had promised to make him a present of his beloved bride, and who now proved to be his own stepsister – her father was in danger!

Not a moment was to be lost. Without regard to motives, measures must be taken to avert that danger, and punish the miscreants who designed it.

For some minutes Cubina remained on the spot, reflecting upon what step should be first taken.

Should he go direct to Mount Welcome and warn the Custos, by reporting to him what he had heard?

That was the first idea that presented itself to his mind; but at that hour Mr Vaughan would be abed, and he – a Maroon – might not be admitted, unless, indeed, he could show, by pleading the urgency of his errand, good cause for arousing the Custos from his slumber.

This, undoubtedly, would he have done, had he known that the scheme of the conspirators had been definitely arranged. But, as already stated, he had not heard Chakra's concluding speech – referring to Cynthia and the bottle of strong medicine; and all the rest only pointed vaguely at some measures to be taken for frustrating the expedition to Spanish Town.

It would be time enough, thought he, to meet these measures by going to Mount Welcome in the morning. He could get there before Mr Vaughan should start upon his journey. He could go at an early hour, but one when his appearance would not give cause for any unnecessary remark.

It did not occur to him to reflect, that the time of the traveller's departure from Mount Welcome – of which Cubina had not been apprised – might be anterior to that of his arrival there. The Maroon, thinking that the great Custos was not likely to inconvenience himself by early rising, had no apprehension of missing him by being himself too late.

With this confidence, then, he resolved to postpone his visit to Mount Welcome until some hour after daybreak; and, in the meantime, to carry out the preliminaries of a programme, referring to a very different affair, and which had been traced out the day before.

The first scene in this programme was to be a meeting with Herbert Vaughan. It had been appointed to take place between them on the following morning; and on the same spot where the two young men had first encountered one another – in the glade,

under the great *ceiba*.

The interview was of Herbert's own seeking, for, although neither had seen the other since the day on which the runaway had been rescued, some items of intelligence had passed between them – Quaco acting as the medium of their correspondence.

Herbert had an object in seeking the interview. He desired a conference with Cubina, in hopes of obtaining from him an explanation of more than one circumstance that had lately arisen to puzzle and perplex him.

His patron's suspicious story about the red runaway was one of these circumstances. Herbert had heard from Quaco that the slave was still staying with the Maroons in their mountain town; and had been adopted into their little community – in fact, had himself become a Maroon.

This did not correspond with the account given by Jessuron. Of course, Quaco could not state the reasons. The secrecy enjoined by the Custos kept Cubina's tongue tied upon that theme; and his own men knew nothing of the design which their captain had conceived against the Jew.

This was not the only matter which mystified the young Englishman, and which he was in hopes of having cleared up by Cubina. His own position at the penn – of late developing itself in a manner to surprise and startle him – also needed elucidation. There was no one near of whom he could ask a question in regard to it, and never in his life did he stand more in need of a confidant.

In this dilemma he had thought of his old acquaintance, the

Maroon captain. The intelligent mulatto appeared to be the very man. Herbert remembered the promise made at parting, his own conditional acceptance of it, which now appeared prophetic; since the contingency then expressed had come to pass.

He had need to avail himself of the friendly proffer; and for that purpose had he made the appointment under the *ceiba*.

Equally desirous was the Maroon to meet with the young Englishman. He had preserved a grateful recollection of his generous interference in what appeared a very unequal combat; and, so far from having lost sight of his noble ally, he had been keeping him in mind – after a fashion that was calculated to show the deep gratitude with which Herbert's conduct had inspired him.

He longed for an opportunity of giving renewed expression to this gratitude; but he had other reasons for wishing to see the young Englishman just then; and the meeting with Yola on that same night had an object some what different from the mere repetition of love vows – already pronounced over and over again, upon a score of distinct occasions.

Now that the night had nearly passed, and that the morning was nigh, the Maroon, instead of returning to his mountain home, decided on going back to the glen, and spending the few hours of interval under the shadow of the *ceiba*.

Indeed, the time would not allow of his returning home. The sun would be up in three or four hours. A little after sunrise was the appointed time for the meeting with Herbert Vaughan. Before

that hour should arrive, he could scarce reach his own “town” and get back again. The thing, therefore, was not to be thought of.

To sleep under a tree, or *on* one, was no new thing for Cubina. It would never occur to him to consider such a couch as inconvenient. In his hog-hunting excursions – often continuing for days and even weeks – he was accustomed to repose upon the cold ground – upon the swirl of withered leaves – upon the naked rock – anywhere. Not much did it matter to a Maroon to be sheltered by a roof – not much, whether a tree shadowed his slumbers, or whether on his grassy couch she saw shining over him the starry canopy of the sky. These were but the circumstances of his every-day life.

Having come to the conclusion that his best plan would be to pass the remaining hours of the night under the *ceiba*, he made no further delay by the Duppy’s Hole; but turning into the path that led down the slope he proceeded back towards the glade.

He moved down the mountain road, slowly, and with some degree of circumspection. He went slowly, because there was no need for haste. It would be several hours before the young Englishman should be abroad. As already stated, a little after sunrise was the time agreed upon, through the messenger Quaco. There was no particular reason for Cubina’s being in a hurry to get to the glade – unless he wished to have more time for his nap under the tree.

For sleep, however, he had but little relish just then. Wild thoughts, consequent on the strange disclosures he had listened

to, were passing through his mind; and these were sufficient to deprive him even of the power of sleep.

He moved onward with circumspection from a different motive. He knew that Jessuron, in returning to his penn, must have taken the same path. Should the latter be loitering – since he had only started but a few minutes before – Cubina might overtake him; and he had no wish to see any more of the Jew for that night – or, at all events, to be himself seen by the latter. To avoid all chance of an encounter, he stopped at intervals, and reconnoitred the wood ahead of him.

He arrived in the glade without seeing either Jew, Christian, or living being of any kind. The penn-keeper had passed through a good while before. Cubina could tell this by an observation which he made on coming out into the open ground. A mock-bird, perched on a low tree that stood directly by the path, was singing with all its might. The Maroon had heard its melody long before entering the glade. Had any one passed recently, the bird would have forsaken its perch – as it did on the approach of Cubina himself.

On reaching the rendezvous, his first concern was to kindle a fire. Sleep in a wet shirt was not to be thought of; and every stitch upon his body had been soaked in swimming the lagoon. Otherwise, it would not have mattered about a fire. He had nothing to cook upon it; nor was he hungry – having already eaten his supper.

Kindled by a woodman's skill, a fire soon blazed up; and the

hunter stood erect beside it, turning himself at intervals to dry his garments, still dripping with water.

He was soon smoking all over, like freshly-slaked lime; and, in order to pass the time more pleasantly, he commenced smoking in another sense – the *nicotian*– his pipe and tobacco-pouch affording him an opportunity for this indulgence.

Possibly the nicotine may have stimulated his reflective powers: for he had not taken more than a dozen puffs at his pipe, when a sudden and somewhat uneasy movement seemed to say that some new reflection had occurred to him. Simultaneous with the movement, a muttered soliloquy escaped from his lips.

“*Crambo!*” exclaimed he, giving utterance to his favourite shibboleth; “say he should come an hour after sunrise – at least another we should be in getting to Mount Welcome. *Por Dios!* it may be too late then! Who knows what time the Custos may fancy to set out?” he added, after a pause; “I did not think of that. How stupid of me not to have asked Yola!

“*Crambo!*” he again exclaimed, after another interval passed in silent reflection. “It won’t do to leave things to chance, where a man’s life is in danger. Who knows what scheme these John Crows have contrived? I couldn’t hear the whole of their palaver. If Master Vaughan was only here, we might go to Mount Welcome at once. Whatever quarrel he may have with the uncle, he won’t wish to let him be murdered – no likelihood of that. Besides, the young fellow’s interference in this matter, if I mistake not, would be likely to make all right between them

– I'd like that, both for his sake and hers – ah! hers especially, after what Yola's told me. *Santa Virgen!* wouldn't that be a disappointment to the old dog of a Jew! Never mind! I'll put a spark in his powder before he's many days older! The young Englishman must know all. I'll tell him all; and after that, if he consents to become the son-in-law of Jacob Jessuron, he would deserve a dog's – . Bah! it cannot be! I won't believe it till he tells me so himself; and then – .

“*Por Dios!*” exclaimed he, suddenly interrupting the above train of reflections and passing to another. “It won't do for me to stay here till he comes. Two hours after sunrise, and the Custos might be cold. I'll go down to the Jew's penn at once, and hang about till I see young Vaughan. He'll be stirring about daybreak, and that'll save an hour, anyhow. A word with him, and we can soon cross to Mount Welcome.”

In obedience to the thought, and without staying to complete the drying of his habiliments, the Maroon stepped out from the glade; and turning into the track – little used – that led towards the Happy Valley, proceeded in that direction.

Volume Two – Chapter Thirty Four

A Dark Compact

On closing so abruptly the stormy dialogue with his daughter, Jessuron proceeded to his own sleeping apartment – like the others, opening upon the verandah.

Before entering the room, he glanced along the gallery, towards the suspended hammock.

In that hammock slept Herbert Vaughan. His long sea-voyage had accustomed him to the use of a swing couch – even to a liking for it; and as the night was warm, he had preferred the hammock to his bed in the contiguous chamber.

Jessuron had a fear that the angry conversation might have been overheard by the occupant of the hammock; for, in the excitement of temper, neither he nor Judith had observed the precaution of speaking low.

The hammock hung motionless, oscillating scarce an inch; and this only under the influence of the night breeze that blew gently along the verandah. Its occupant appeared to be in the middle of a profound slumber.

Satisfied of this, the Jew returned to his own chamber. There was no light, and on entering, he sat down in the darkness. The moon shining in through the window gave him light enough to discover a chair; and into that he had flung himself, instead of

seeking his couch.

For a time he displayed no intention either of undressing or betaking himself to bed; but remained in the high-backed chair in which he had seated himself, buried in some reflection, silent as profound. We are permitted to know his thoughts.

“S’help me, she’ll marry him!” was that which came uppermost. “She will, s’help me!” continued he, repeating the reflection in an altered form, “shpite of all I can shay or do to prevent her! She ish a very deffil when raished – and she’ll have her own way, she will. Ach! what ish to be done? – what ish to be done?”

Here a pause occurred in the reflections, while the Jew, with puzzled brain, was groping for an answer to his mental interrogatory.

“It ish of no ushe!” he continued, after a time, the expression on his face showing that he had not yet received a definite reply. “It’sh no ushe to opposhe her. She’d run away with thish young man to a certainty!”

“I might lock her up, but that ish no good. She’d contrive to escape some time. I couldn’t alwaysh keep her under lock and key? No – no, it ish impossible!

“And if she marriesh him without the monish – without the great shugar eshtate! Blesh me! that ish ruin!

“It musht not be. If she marriesh him, she musht marry Mount Welcome. She musht! she musht!

“But how ish it to be? How ish he to be made the heir?”

Again the Jew appeared to puzzle his brains for an answer to this last interrogatory.

“Ha!” he exclaimed aloud, at the same time starting from his chair, as if the solution had discovered itself; “I hash it! I hash it! – the Spaniards! I hash it!

“Yesh,” he continued, striking the ferrule of his umbrella against the floor, “theesh are the very fellows for the shob – worth a shcore of Shakra’s shpells, and hish bottles to boot! There ish no fear that their medishin will fail. S’help me, no! Now, ash I think of it,” continued he, “that ish the plan – the very besht. There ish no other safe and sure, like that ish. Ha! Cushtos! you shan’t eshcape yet. Ha! Shoodith, mine girl, you ish welcome to your way; you shall have the young man after all!”

On giving utterance to these ambiguous speeches, the Jew dropped back into his chair, and sat for some minutes in silent but earnest meditation.

The matter of his meditation may be known by the act that followed.

“There isn’t an hour to be losht!” muttered he, starting to his feet, and hurriedly making for the door; “no, not ash much ash a minute. I musht see them now. The Cushtos ish to shtart at sunrishe. The wench hash said it. They’ll jooisht have time to get upon hish track. S’help me,” he added, opening the door, and glancing up at the sky, “ash I live, it’sh mosht sunrishe now!”

Sticking his beaver firmly upon his head, and taking a fresh clutch of the everlasting umbrella, he rushed rapidly out of the

verandah, crossed the courtyard, re-passed the porter at his own gate, and then traversing the little enclosure outside, stood in the open fields.

He did not stand long – only to look around him, and see that the ground was clear of stragglers.

Satisfied on this head, he proceeded onward.

At the distance of some three or four hundred yards from the outside stockade stood a detached cabin, more than half hidden among the trees.

Towards this he directed his steps.

Five minutes sufficed for him to reach it; and, on arriving at the door, he knocked upon it with the butt of his umbrella.

“*Quien es?*” spoke a voice from within.

“It’sh me, Manuel – me – Shessuron!” replied the Jew.

“It’s the *Dueno*,” (master), was heard muttering one of the Spaniards to the other – for the cabin was the dwelling of these notable negro-hunters.

“*Carajo!* what does the old *ladron* want at this hour?” interrogated the first speaker, in his own tongue, which he knew was not understood by the Jew. “*Maldito!*” added he, in a grumbling voice; “it’s not very pleasant to be waked up in this fashion. Besides, I was dreaming of that yellow-skin that killed my dogs. I thought I had my *macheté* up to the hilt in his carcase. What a pity I was only dreaming it!”

“*Ta-ta!*” interrupted the other; “be silent, Andres. The old *ganadero* is impatient. *Vamos!* I’m coming, Señor Don Jacob!”

“Make hashte, then!” answered the Jew from without. “I hash important bishness with both of yoush.”

At this moment the door opened; and he who answered to the name of Manuel appeared in the doorway.

Without waiting for an invitation, Jessuron stepped inside the cabin.

“Does your business require a candle, señor?” inquired the Spaniard.

“No – no!” answered the Jew, quickly and impressively, as if to prevent the striking of a light. “It ish only talk; we can do it in the darknesh.”

And darkness, black and profound, was most appropriate to the conversation that followed. Its theme was *murder*– the murder of Loftus Vaughan!

The plan proposed was for the two Spaniards – fit instruments for such purpose – to waylay the Custos upon the road – in some dark defile of the forest – anywhere – it mattered not, so long as it was on this side of Spanish Town.

“Fifty poundsh apeesh; goot Island currenshy,” was the reward promised – offered and accepted.

Jessuron instructed his brace of *entrepreneurs* in all the details of the plan. He had learnt from Cynthia that the Custos intended to take the southern road, calling at Savanna-le-Mer. It was a roundabout way to the capital; but Jessuron had his suspicions why that route had been chosen. He knew that Savanna was the assize town of Cornwall; and the Custos might have business

there relating to himself, Prince Cingües, and his two dozen Mandingoes!

It was not necessary to instruct the *caçadores* in these multifarious matters. There was no time to spend on any other than the details of their murderous plan; and these were made known to them with the rapidity of rapine itself.

In less than twenty minutes from the time he had entered the cabin the Jew issued out again, and walked back, with joyous mien and agile step, towards his dark dwelling.

Volume Two – Chapter Thirty Five

Stalking the Sleeper

Cubina, on arriving near the precincts of the penn, moved forward with increased caution. He knew that the penn-keeper was accustomed to keep dogs and night-watchers around his enclosure, not only to prevent the cattle and other quadrupeds from straying, but also the black bipeds that filled his baracoons.

The Maroon was conscious, moreover, that his own attitude towards the slave-merchant was, at this time, one of extreme hostility. His refusal to restore the runaway had been a declaration of open war between them; and the steps he had since taken in conjunction with the Custos – which he now knew to be no longer a secret to the slave-stealer – could not otherwise than render him an object of the Jew's most bitter hatred.

Knowing all this, he felt the necessity of caution in approaching the place: for should the penn-keeper's people find him prowling about the premises, they would be certain to capture him, if they could, and carry him before Jacob Jessuron, J.P., where he might expect to be treated to a little "justice's justice."

With this prospect before him, in the event of being detected, he approached the Jew's dwelling as cautiously as if he had been a burglar about to break into it.

It was towards the back of the house that he was advancing from the fields – or rather, the side of it, opposite to that on which lay the cattle and slave enclosures.

He had made a short circuit to approach by this side, conjecturing that the others would be more likely to be guarded by the slave and cattle watchers.

The fields, half returned to the condition of a forest, rendered it easy to advance under cover. A thick, second growth of logwood, bread-nut, and calabash trees covered the ground; and nearer the walls the old garden, now ruinate, still displayed a profusion of fruit-trees growing in wild luxuriance, such as guavas, mangoes, paw-paws, orange and lemon, sops, custard-apples, the akee, and avocada pear. Here and there a cocoa-palm raised its tufted crown far above the topmost spray of the humbler fruit-trees, its long, feathery fronds gently oscillating under the silent zephyrs of the night.

On getting within about a hundred yards of the house Cubina formed the intention not to go any nearer just then. The plan he had traced out was to station himself in some position where he could command a view of the verandah – or as much of it as it was possible to see from one place. There he would remain until daybreak.

His conjecture was, that Herbert Vaughan would make his appearance as soon as the day broke, and this was all the more probable on account of his engagement with the Maroon himself.

The *protégé* of Jessuron would show himself in the verandah

on leaving his chamber. He could not do otherwise, since all the sleeping-rooms – and Cubina knew this – opened outward upon the gallery.

Once seen, a signal by some means – by Cubina showing himself outside, or calling the young Englishman by name – would bring about the desired interview, and hasten the execution of the project which the Maroon had conceived.

A slight elevation of the ground, caused by the crumbling ruins of an old wall, furnished the *vidette* station desired; and the Maroon mounting upon this, took his stand to watch the verandah. He could see the long gallery from end to end on two sides of the dwelling, and he knew that it extended no farther.

Though the house glistened under a clear moonlight, the verandah itself was in shade; as was also the courtyard in front – the old grey pile projecting its sombre shadow beyond the walls that surrounded it. At the end, however, the moonbeams, slanting diagonally from the sky, poured their light upon the floor of the verandah, there duplicating the strong bar-like railing with which the gallery was inclosed.

The Maroon had not been many minutes upon the stand he had taken, when an object in the verandah arrested his attention. As his eye became more accustomed to the shadowy darkness inside, he was able to make out something that resembled a hammock, suspended crosswise, and at some height above the balustrade of the verandah. It was near that end where the moonlight fell upon the floor.

As the moon continued to sink lower in the sky, her beams were flung farther along the gallery; and the object which had attracted the attention of Cubina came more into the light. It was a hammock, and evidently occupied. The taut cordage told that some one was inside it.

“If it should be the young Englishman himself!” was the conjectural reflection of Cubina.

If so, it might be possible to communicate with him at once, and save the necessity of waiting till daybreak.

How was the Maroon to be satisfied that it was he? It might be some one else! It might be Ravener, the overseer; and Cubina desired no conversation with him. What step could he take to solve this uncertainty?

As the Maroon was casting about for some scheme that would enable him to discover who was the occupant of the hammock, he noticed that the moonbeams had now crept nearly up to it, and in a few minutes more would be shining full upon it. He could already perceive, though very dimly, the face and part of the form of the sleeper inside. Could he only get to some elevated position a little nearer to the house, he might be able to make out who it was.

He scanned the ground with a quick glance. A position sufficiently elevated presented itself, but one not so easy to be reached. A cocoa-nut palm stood near the wall, whose crest of radiating fronds overlooked the verandah, drooping towards it. Could he but reach this tree unobserved, and climb up to its

crown, he might command a close view of him who slept in the swinging couch.

A second sufficed to determine him; and, crawling silently forward, he clasped the stem of the cocoa-tree, and “swarmed” upward. The feat was nothing to Cubina, who could climb like a squirrel.

On reaching the summit of the palm, he placed himself in the centre of its leafy crown – where he had the verandah directly under his eyes, and so near that he could almost have sprung into it.

The hammock was within ten feet of him; in a downward direction. He could have pitched his tobacco-pipe upon the face of the sleeper. The moonlight was now full upon it. It was the face of Herbert Vaughan!

Cubina recognised it at the first glance; and he was reflecting how he could awake the young Englishman without causing an alarm, when he heard a door turn upon its hinges. The sound came up from the courtyard; and on looking in that direction, Cubina saw that the gate leading out to the cattle enclosure was in the act of being opened.

Presently a man passed through, entering from the outside; and the gate, by some other person unseen, was closed behind him.

He who had entered walked directly towards the dwelling; and, mounting the steps, made his way into the verandah.

While crossing the courtyard, the moonlight, for a moment,

fell upon his face, discovering to Cubina the sinister countenance of the Jew.

“I must have passed him on the path!” reflected the Maroon. “But no, that couldn’t be,” he added, correcting himself; “I saw his return track in the mud-hole just by. He must have got here before me. Like enough, he’s been back, and out again on some other dark business. *Crambo!* it’s true enough what I’ve heard say of him: that he hardly ever goes to sleep. Our people have met him in the woods at all hours of the night. I can understand it now that I know the partner he’s got up there. *For Dios!* to think of Chakra being still alive!”

The Maroon paused in his reflections; and kept his eye sharply bent upon the shadowy form that, like a spirit of darkness, was silently flitting through the corridor. He was in hopes that the Jew would soon retire to his chamber.

So long as the latter remained outside, there was not the slightest chance for Cubina to communicate with the occupant of the hammock without being observed. Worse than that, the Maroon was now in danger of being himself seen. Exposed as he was upon the cocoa – with nothing to shelter him from observation but its few straggling fronds – he ran every risk of his presence being detected. It was just a question of whether the Jew might have occasion to look upwards; if so, he could scarce fail to perceive the dark *silhouette* of a man, outlined, as it was, against the light blue of the sky.

That would be a discovery of which Cubina dreaded the

consequences, and with reason. It might not only frustrate the intended interview with the young Englishman, but might end in his own capture and detention – the last a contingency especially to be avoided.

Under this apprehension the Maroon stirred neither hand nor foot; but kept himself silent and rigid. In this attitude of immobility he looked like some statue, placed in a sedentary posture upon the summit of a Corinthian column – the crushed crocus represented by the fronds of the palm-tree.

Volume Two – Chapter Thirty Six

A Mission for the Man-Hunters

Cubina for some time preserved his constrained position. He dared not derange it; since the Jew still stayed in the shadowy corridor – sometimes moving about; but more generally standing at the head of the wooden stairway, and looking across the courtyard, towards the gate through which he had come in. It seemed as if he was expecting some one to enter after him.

This conjecture of Cubina's proved correct. The great gate was heard once more turning on its hinges; and, after a word or two spoken by the black porter outside, and answered by a voice of different tone, two men were seen stepping inside the court.

As they passed under the moonlight, Cubina recognised them. Their lithe, supple forms, and swarthy angular lineaments, enabled him to identify the Cuban *caçadores*.

They walked straight up to the stairway, at the bottom of which both stopped.

The Jew, on seeing them inside the gate, had gone back into a room that opened upon the verandah.

He was gone but for an instant; and, coming out again, he returned to the top of the stairway.

One of the Spaniards, stepping up, reached out, and received something from his hand. What it was Cubina could not have

told, but for the words of the Jew that accompanied the action.

“There’sh the flashk,” said he; “it ish the besht brandy in Shamaica. And now,” he continued, in an accent of earnest appeal, “my goot fellish! you hashn’t a minute to shpare. Remember the big monish you’re to gain; and don’t let thish runaway eshcape!”

“No fear about that, Señor Don Jacob,” replied he who received the flask. “*Carrai!* he’ll have long legs to get out of our way – once we’re well on the trail of him.”

And without further dialogue or delay, the *caçador* descended the stair, rejoined his comrade, and both hurriedly re-crossing the courtyard, disappeared through the door by which they had entered.

“An expedition after some poor slave!” muttered Cubina to himself. “I hope the scoundrels won’t catch him, anyhow, and I pity him if they do. After all, they’re no great hands at the business, spite of their braggadocio.”

With this professional reflection, the Maroon once more bent his eyes upon the form that remained in the shadow of the verandah.

“Surely,” conjectured he, “the old John Crow will now go to his roost? Or has he more of the like business on hand? Till he’s out of that I can’t make a move. I durstn’t stir, not for the life of me!”

To the joy of Cubina, the Jew at that moment stepped back into his chamber – the door of which had been left standing open.

“Good!” mentally ejaculated the Maroon; “I hope he’ll stay in his hole, now that he’s in it. I don’t want to see any more of him this night. *Crambo!*”

As the exclamation indicated, the congratulatory speech was cut short by the re-appearance of the Jew; not in his blue body-coat, as before, but wrapped in a sort of gabardine, or ample dressing-gown, the skirts of which fell down to his feet. His hat had been removed – though the skull-cap, of dirty whitish hue, still clung around his temples; for it was never doffed.

To the consternation of Cubina he came out, dragging a chair after him: as if he meant to place it in the verandah and take a seat upon it.

And this was precisely his intention, for, after drawing the chair – a high-backed one – out into the middle of the gallery, he planted it firmly upon the floor, and then dropped down into it.

The moment after, Cubina saw sparks, accompanied by a sound that indicated the concussion of flint and steel. The Jew was striking a light!

For what purpose?

The smell of burning tobacco borne along the gallery, and ascending to Cubina’s nostrils upon the summit of the palm, answered that question. A red coal could be seen gleaming between the nose and chin of the Israelite. He was smoking a cigar!

Cubina saw this with chagrin. How long would the operation last? Half-an-hour – an hour, perhaps? Ay, maybe till daybreak

– now not very distant.

The situation had changed for the worse. The Maroon could not make the slightest move towards the awakening of Herbert. He dared not shift his own position, lest his presence should be betrayed to the Jew. He dared not stir upon the tree, much less come down from it!

He saw that he was in a fix; but there was no help for it. He must wait till the Jew had finished his cigar: though there was no certainty that even that would bring the *séance* to a termination.

Summoning all the patience he could command, he kept his perch, silent and motionless, though anxious, and suffering from chagrin.

For a long hour, at least, did he continue in this desperate dilemma – until his limbs ached underneath him, and his composure was well-nigh exhausted. Still the Jew stuck to his chair, as if glued to the seat – silent and motionless as Cubina himself.

The latter fancied that not only a first cigar, but a second, and, perhaps, a third, had been lighted and smoked; but in the sombre shadow, in which the smoker sat, he could not be certain how many. More than one, however, from the time spent in the operation; for during the full period of an hour a red coal could be seen glowing at the tip of that aquiline proboscis.

Cubina now perceived what troubled him exceedingly – the blue dawn breaking over the tops of the trees! By slightly turning his head he could see the golden gleam of sunlight tinting the

summit of the Jumbé Rock!

“*Crambo!* what was to be done?” so ran his reflections.

If he stayed there much longer he might be sure of being discovered. The slaves would soon be starting to their work – the overseer and drivers would soon be out and about. One or other could not fail to see him upon the tree! He would be lucky now to escape himself, without thinking any longer of the hammock or him who slept within its tight-drawn meshes.

While considering how he might slip unperceived from the tree he glanced once more towards the occupant of the chair. The gradually brightening dawn, which had been filling him with apprehension, now favoured him. It enabled him to perceive that the Jew was asleep!

With his head thrown back against the sloping upholstery, Jessuron had at last surrendered to the powerful divinity of dreams. His goggles were off; and Cubina could see that the wrinkled lids were closed over his sunken orbs.

Undoubtedly he was asleep. His whole attitude confirmed it. His legs lay loosely over the front of the chair – his arms hung down at the sides: and the blue umbrella rested upon the floor at his feet. This last evidence of somnolency was not even counterbalanced by the stump of a cigar, burnt close, and still sticking between his teeth!

End of Volume Two

Volume Three – Chapter One

A Startling Summons

On the part of Cubina it was now a struggle between prudence and a desire to carry out his original programme – whether he should not go off alone, or still try to communicate with the sleeper in the hammock.

In the former case he could return to the glade, and there await the coming of Herbert Vaughan as at first fixed. But, by so doing, at least two hours would be lost; and even then, would the young Englishman be punctual to his appointment?

Even against his inclination something might occur to cause delay – a thing all the more probable, considering the circumstances that surrounded him; considering the irregularity of events in the domicile where he dwelt.

But even a delay of two hours! In that interval, Loftus Vaughan might have ceased to live!

These thoughts coursed quickly through the mind of the Maroon – accustomed as it was to perceptions almost intuitive. He saw that he must either go by himself to Mount Welcome, or awake the sleeper at once.

Perhaps he would have decided on the former course, but that he had other motives for an interview with Herbert Vaughan, almost as immediate in their necessity as that which related to

the safety of the Custos. He had as yet no reason to believe that the peril in which the planter stood was so proximate as it really was: for it never occurred to him that the departure of the two Spaniards had any other object than that which related to their calling – the capture of some runaway slave.

Had he suspected the design of the two ruffians – had he known the mission of murder on which the slave-merchant had dispatched them – he would scarce have stayed for aught else than to have provided the means of intercepting their design.

In the dark about all this, he did not believe there was such necessity for extreme haste; though he knew something was on foot against the Custos which would not allow of much loss of time.

At that moment the occupant of the hammock turned over with a yawn.

“He is going to awake!” thought Cubina; “now is my time.”

To the disappointment of the Maroon, the limbs of the speaker again became relaxed; and he returned to a slumber profound as before.

“What a pity!” murmured the Maroon; “if I could only speak a word. But no. Yonder John Crow is more like to hear it than he. I shall throw something down into the hammock. Maybe that will awake him?”

Cubina drew out his tobacco-pipe. It was the only thing he could think of at the moment; and, guiding his arm with a good aim, he pitched it into the hammock.

It fell upon the breast of the sleeper. It was too light. It awoke him not.

“*Crambo!* he sleeps like an owl at noontide! What can I do to make him feel me? If I throw down my *macheté*, I shall lose the weapon; and who knows I may not need it before I’m out of this scrape? Ha! one of these cocoa-nuts will do. That, I dare say, will be heavy enough to startle him.”

Saying this, the Maroon bent downward; and extending his arm through the fronds beneath him, detached one of the gigantic nuts from the tree.

Poising it for a moment to secure the proper direction, he flung the ponderous fruit upon the breast of Herbert. Fortunately the sides of the hammock hindered it from falling upon the floor, else the concussion might also have awakened the sleeper in the chair.

With a start, the young Englishman awoke, at the same time raising himself upon his elbow. Herbert Vaughan was not one of the exclamatory kind, or he might have cried out. He did not, however; though the sight of the huge brown pericarp, lying between his legs, caused him considerable surprise.

“Where, in the name of Ceres and Pomona, did you rain down from?” muttered he, at the same time turning his eyes up for an answer to his classical interrogatory.

In the grey light he perceived the palm, its tall column rising majestically above him. He knew the tree well, every inch of its outlines; but the dark *silhouette* on its top – the form of a human

being *couchant*, and crouching – that was strange to him.

The light, however, was now sufficiently strong to enable him to distinguish, not only the form, but the face and features of his *ci-devant* entertainer under the greenwood tree – the Maroon captain, Cubina!

Before he could say a word to express his astonishment, a gesture, followed by a muttered speech from the Maroon, enjoined him to silence.

“Hush! not a word, Master Vaughan!” spoke the latter, in a half whisper, at the same time that he glanced significantly along the corridor. “Slip out of your hammock, get your hat, and follow me into the forest. I have news for you – important! Life and death! Steal out; and, for your life, don’t let *him* see you!”

“Who?” inquired Herbert, also speaking in a whisper.

“Look yonder!” said the Maroon, pointing to the sleeper in the chair.

“All right! Well?”

“Meet me in the glade. Come at once – not a minute to be lost! *Those who should be dear to you are in danger!*”

“I shall come,” said Herbert, making a motion to extricate himself from the hammock.

“Enough! I must be gone. You will find me under the cotton-tree.”

As he said this, the Maroon forsook his seat, so long and irksomely preserved – and, sliding down the slender trunk of the palm, like a sailor descending the mainstay of his ship, he struck

off at a trot, and soon disappeared amid the second growth of the old sugar plantation.

Herbert Vaughan was not slow to follow upon his track. Some disclosures of recent occurrence – so recent as the day preceding – had prepared him for a somewhat *bizarre finale* to the fine life he had of late been leading; and he looked to the Maroon for enlightenment. But that strange speech of Cubina stimulated him more than all. “*Those who should be dear to you are in danger!*”

There was but one being in the world entitled to this description. Kate Vaughan! Could it be she?

Herbert stayed not to reflect. His hat and cloak hung in the chamber close by; and in two seconds of time both were upon him. Another second sufficed to give him possession of his gun.

He was too active, too reckless, to care for a stairway at that moment, or at that height from the ground – too prudent to descend by that which there was in front, though guarded only by a sleeper!

Laying his leg over the balustrade, he leaped to the earth below; and, following the path taken by the Maroon, like him was soon lost among the second growth of the ruinate garden.

Volume Three – Chapter Two

Blue Dick

In making his hurried departure from the Happy Valley, Herbert Vaughan narrowly escaped observation. A delay of ten minutes longer would have led to his design being interrupted; or, at all events, to his being questioned as to the object of his early excursion; and, in all probability, followed and watched.

He had scarce passed out of sight of the penn, when he heard the jangling tones of a swing bell – harshly reverberating upon the still air of the morning.

The sounds did not startle him. He knew it was not an alarm; only the plantation bell, summoning the slaves to enter upon their daily toil.

Knowing that it must have awakened the sleeper in the chair, he congratulated himself on his good luck at getting away, before the signal had been sounded – at the same time that it caused him to quicken his steps towards the *rendezvous* given by the Maroon.

Cubina, though from a greater distance, had also heard the bell, and had in a similar manner interpreted the signal, though with a greater degree of uneasiness as to the effect it might have produced. He, too, had conjectured that the sounds must have awakened the sleeper in the chair.

Both had reasoned correctly. At the first “ding-dong” of the

bell, the Jew had been startled from his cat-like slumber, and, rising erect in his seat, he glanced uneasily around him.

“Blesh my soul!” he exclaimed, spitting out the bit of burnt cigar that clung adheringly to his lips. “It ish broad daylight. I musht have been ashleep more ash two hours. Ach! theesh are times for a man to keep awake. The Cushtos should be on his road by thish; and if theesh Spanish hunters do their bishness as clefferly as they hash promise, he’ll shleep sounder thish night ash effer he hash done before. Blesh my soul!” he again exclaimed, with an accent that betokened a change in the tenor of his thoughts. “Supposhe they make bungle of the bishness? Supposhe they should get caught in the act? Ha! what would be the reshult of that? There ish danger – shstrike me dead if there isn’t! Blesh me! I neffer thought of it,” continued he, after some moments spent in reflection of an apparently anxious kind. “They might turn King’sh evidence, and implicate me – me, a shustice! To save themselves, they’d be likely to do ash much ash that. Yesh; and eefen if they didn’t get taken in the act, still there ish danger. That Manuel hash a tongue ash long ash his *macheté*. He’sh a prattling fool. I musht take care to get him out of the Island – both of them – ash soon ash I can.”

In his apprehensions the Jew no longer included Chakra: for he was now under the belief that the dark deed would be accomplished by the Spanish assassins; and that to *steel*, not *poison*, would the Custos yield up his life.

Even should Cynthia have succeeded in administering the

deadly dose – a probability on which he no longer needed to rely – even should the Custos succumb to poison, the myal-man was not to be feared. There was no danger of such a confederate declaring himself. As for Cynthia, the Jew had never dealt directly with her; and therefore she was without power to implicate him in the hellish contract.

“I musht take some shteps,” said he, rising from his chair, and making a feint towards retiring to his chamber, as if to adjust his dress. “What ish besht to be done? Let me think,” he added, pausing near the door, and standing in an attitude of reflection; “yesh! yesh! that’s it! I musht send a messensher to Mount Welcome. Some one can go on an excushe of bishness. It will look strange, since we’re such bad neighboursh of late? No matter for that. The Cushtos is gone, I hope; and Rafener can send the message to Mishter Trusty. That will bring ush newsh. Here, Rafener!” continued he, calling to his overseer, who, cart-whip in hand, was moving through the court below, “I wan’t ye, Mishter Rafener!”

Ravener, uttering a grunt to signify that he had heard the summons, stepped up to the stairway of the verandah; and stood silently waiting to know for what he was wanted.

“Hash you any bishness about which you could send a messenger to Mishter Trusty – to Mount Welcome, I mean?”

“Humph! There’s business a plenty for that. Them consarned hogs of the Custos has got into our corn-patch up the valley, and played pitch and toss with the young plants. Ye must get damages

for it.”

“That ish right – that ish right.”

“Humph! You won’t say it’s right when once you’ve seen the mess they’ve made. We’ll have a sorry show at crop time, I tell ye.”

“Neffor mind that – we’ll have an action. Ishe not let it pass; but joosh now I hash other bishness on hand. You send a messensher to Mishter Trusty, and tell him about it. And, harksh you, Mishter Rafener! I want this messensher to be dishcreet. I want him to find out whether the Cushtos ish at home – without making a direct ashking about it. I have heard that he ish going on a shourney; and I want to know if he hash set out yet. You undershtands me?”

“All right,” replied Ravener, with an air that betokened comprehension, “All right! I’ll send a fellow that’ll get an answer to that question without asking it. Blue Dick can do that.”

“Ah! true, Blue Dick ish the one! And, harksh you, Mishter Rafener! tell him to try if he can see the mulatta wench, Cynthy.”

“What is he to say to her?”

“He ish to tell her to come ofer here, if she hash an opportunity. I wants to shpeak with *her*. But, mind ye, Mishter Rafener! Dick ish to be careful what he saysh and doesh. He musht talk with the girl *only in whispers*.”

“I’ll instruct him in all that,” replied the overseer, in a tone of confidence. “You want him to go now?”

“Thish minute – thish very minute. I hash a reason for being

in a hurry. Send him off as soon ash you can.”

Ravener, without further parley, walked off to dispatch his messenger; and a few minutes after he had gone out of the court, that yellow “complected” Mercury, known by the *sobriquet* of “Blue Dick,” was seen “streaking” it along the path which conducted from the Jew’s penn to the mansion of Mount Welcome.

Volume Three – Chapter Three

The Mysterious Absence

The brief conversation between Jessuron and his overseer had taken place *sotto voce*: as it was not desirable that it should be overheard by any one – much less by the nephew of him who was its chief subject, and who was supposed to be suspended in a hammock not ten paces from the spot.

The hammock, however, was not visible from the front stairway – being hung in that part of the verandah that extended along the other side of the house.

On the departure of Ravener from his presence, the Jew proceeded with his original intention – to put his person in order for the day.

His toilette did not take long. After a very brief absence within his room, he reappeared on the gallery in the same pocketed blue coat, breeches, and tops, that served him for all purposes and occasions. The coat was buttoned over his breast, the whitey-brown beaver once more upon his head, and the goggles adjusted on the knife-back ridge of his nose. It was evident he intended a stroll. This was all the more certain as he had regained the umbrella – which had dropped from him during sleep – and, holding it in his grasp, stood by the top of the stairway, as if on the eve of setting forth.

Whither was he going? For what purpose, so early?

His muttered soliloquy declared his design.

“It musht be to-day – yesh, I musht get them married thish very day; and before any newsh can come. The report of the Cushtos’ death might shpoil all my plans. Who knowsh what the young man might do, if he hash only a hint of hish goot luck? After all, may be, Shoodith ish not so shure of him? She hash said something last night. Ha! it musht be thish day. It is no ushe going to the rector of the parish. He ish the Cushtos’ friend, and might make some obsheckshun. That won’t do – s’help me, no! I musht go to the other. Hee’sh poor, and won’t sthand shilly-shally. Besides, hish knot would be shoost as hard to looshe as if it wash tied by the Bishop of Shamaica. He’ll do; and if *he* won’t, then I knowsh one who will – for monish; ay, anything for monish!”

After this soliloquy he was about setting foot upon one of the steps with the intention of descending, when a thought appeared to strike him; and turning away from the stair, he walked with shuffling gentleness along the gallery, towards that part of the verandah where the hammock was suspended.

“I supposhe the young shentleman is shtill ashleep. Shentleman, indeed! *now* he ish all that, or will be the next time he goesh to shleep. Well, if he ish, I mushn’t dishturb him. Rich shentlemen mushn’t have their shlumbers interrupted. *Ach!*”

The exclamation escaped from his lips, as, on rounding the angle of the verandah, he came within sight of the hammock.

“Tish empty, I declare! He’sh early astir! In hish room, I supposhe?”

Sans cérémonie, the Jew kept on along the gallery, until he had arrived in front of his book-keeper’s private apartment. There he stopped, looking inward.

The door was ajar – almost wide open. He could see the greater portion of the interior through the door; the rest of it through the jalousies. There was no one in the room – either sitting, standing, or moving about!

“Mashter Vochan! Are you there?”

The interrogatory was put rather by way of confirming his observation: for he saw there was no one inside.

“Where are you, Mashter Herbert?” continued he, repeating the interrogatory in an altered form – at the same time craning his neck into the apartment, and glancing all around it. “Ash I live, it’sh empty, like the hammock! He musht have gone out. Yesh. Hish hat’s not here – his cloak ish not here; and I see no gun. He alwaysh kept hish gun joosh there. How hash he passed me without my hearing his foot? I shleeps so ash I can hear a cat shtearin’ over the floor! Hash he gone by the shtairway at all? Ash I live, no! Blesh my soul! there is a track where somebody musht have shumped over the railing down into the garden! S’help me, it ish his track! There’sh no other but him to have made it. What the deffil ish the young fellow after this morning? I hope there ish nothing wrong in it.”

On missing the young Englishman out of his hammock and

room, the penn-keeper felt at first no particular uneasiness. His *protégé* had, no doubt, gone out for a stroll in the woods. He had taken his gun along with him, to have a shot at some early bird looking for the early worm. He had done so many a time before – though never at so early an hour.

The hour, however, was not enough of itself to cause any surprise to his patron; nor even the fact of his having leaped over the verandah railing. He might have seen the owner of the house asleep in his chair near the head of the stairway; and, not wishing to disturb him, had chosen the other mode of exit. There was nothing in all this to cause uneasiness.

Nor would the Jew have thought anything of it had it not been for some other circumstances which quickly came under his notice – guiding him to the suspicion that something *might be amiss*.

The first of these circumstances was that Herbert, although having taken his gun along with him, had left behind his shot-belt and powder-flask! Both were there in his room, hanging upon their peg. They did not escape the sharp glance of the Jew, who at once began to draw conclusions from their presence.

If the young man had gone out on a shooting excursion, it was strange that he did not take his ammunition along with him!

Perhaps, however, he had seen some sort of game near the house, and, in his hurry to get a shot at it, had gone off hastily – trusting to the two charges which his gun contained. In that case he would not go far, and in a few minutes might be expected

back.

A few minutes passed, and a great many minutes – until a full hour had transpired – and still nothing was heard or seen of the book-keeper, though messengers had been dispatched in search of him, and had quartered all the ground for half a mile around the precincts of the penn.

Jessuron – whose matutinal visit to the minister had been postponed by the occurrence – began to look grave.

“It ish shtrange,” said he, speaking to his daughter, who had now arisen, and was far from appearing cheerful; “shtrange he should go abroad in thish fashion, without shaying a word to either of ush!”

Judith made no reply: though her silence could not conceal a certain degree of chagrin, from which she was evidently suffering. Perhaps she had even more reason than the “rabbi” to suspect there was something amiss?

Certainly, something disagreeable – a misunderstanding at least, had arisen between her and Herbert on the preceding day. Her speech had already given some slight hint of it; but much more her manner, which, on the night before, and now unmistakably in the morning, betrayed a mixture of melancholy and suppressed indignation.

It did not add to the equanimity of her temper, when the house wench – who was unslinging the hammock in which Herbert had slept – announced it to contain two articles scarce to be expected in such a place – a cocoa-nut and a tobacco-pipe!

The pipe could not have belonged to Herbert Vaughan: he never smoked a pipe; and as for the cocoa-nut, it had evidently been plucked from the tree standing near. The trunk of the palm exhibited scratches as if some one had climbed up it, and above could be seen the freshly-torn peduncle, where the fruit had been wrenched from its stalk!

What should Herbert Vaughan have been doing up the palm-tree, flinging cocoa-nuts into his own couch?

His unaccountable absence was becoming surrounded by circumstances still more mysterious. One of the cattle-herds, who had been sent in search of him, now coming in, announced a new fact, of further significance. In the patch of muddy soil, outside the garden wall, the herd had discovered the book-keepers track, going up towards the hills; and near it, on the same path, the footprint of another man, who must have gone over the ground twice, returning as he had come!

This cattle-herd, though of sable skin, was a skilled tracker. His word might be trusted.

It was trusted, and produced an unpleasant impression both on Jessuron and Judith – an impression more unpleasant as time passed, and the book-keeper was still unreturned.

The father fumed and fretted; he did more – he threatened. The young Englishman was his debtor, not only for a profuse hospitality, but for *money advanced*. Was he going to prove ungrateful? A defaulter?

Ah! little had that pecuniary obligation to do with the chagrin

that was vexing the Jew Jessuron – far less with those emotions, like the waves of a stormy sea, that had begun to agitate the breast of his daughter; and which every slight circumstance, like a strong wind, was lashing into fury and foam.

Blue Dick came back. He had executed his errand adroitly. The Custos was gone upon a journey; he had started exactly at the hour of daybreak.

“Goot!” said Jessuron; “but where is hish nephew?”

Blue Dick had seen Cynthia; and whispered a word in her ear, as the overseer had instructed him. She would come over to the penn, as soon as she could find an opportunity for absence from Mount Welcome.

“Goot!” answered the Jew. “But where is Mashter Vochan? where hash he betaken himself?”

“Where?” mentally interrogated Judith, as the noonday sun saw the black clouds coursing over her brow.

Volume Three – Chapter Four

A Shadowed Spirit

The sun was just beginning to re-gild the glittering flanks of the Jumbé Rock, his rays not yet having reached the valley below, when lights streaming through the jalousied windows of Mount Welcome proclaimed that the inmates of the mansion were already astir.

Lights shone through the lattices of several distinct windows – one from the Custos’ sleeping room, another from the apartment of Lilly Quasheba, while a brilliant stream, pouring through the jalousies in front, betokened that the chandelier was burning in the great hall.

From Smythje’s chamber alone came no sign either of light or life. The windows were dark, the curtains close drawn. Its occupant was asleep.

Yes, though others were stirring around him, the aristocratic Smythje was still sleeping as soundly and silently as if dead, perhaps dreaming of the fair “cweeole queetyaws,” and his twelve conquests now happily extended to the desired baker’s dozen, by the successful declaration of yesterday.

Though a light still burned in the sleeping apartment of the Custos, and also in that of Kate, neither father nor daughter were in their own rooms. Both were in the great hall, seated by a table,

on which, even at this early hour, breakfast had been spread. It was not the regular matutinal meal, as certain circumstances showed. Mr Vaughan only was eating; while Kate appeared to be present merely for the purpose of pouring out his coffee, and otherwise attending upon him.

The costume in which the Custos appeared differed from his every-day wear. It was that of a man about to set forth upon a journey – in short, a travelling costume. A surtout, of strong material, with ample outside pockets; boots reaching above his knees; a belt, with pistol holsters, around his waist – a guard against any chance encounter with runaway negroes; a felt hat, lying on a chair beside him, and a camlet cloak, hanging over the back of the same chair – all proclaimed the purpose of a journey, and one about to be entered upon within a few minutes of time.

A pair of large silver spurs buckled over his boots, told also the mode of travel intended. It was to be on horseback.

This was further manifested by the fact that two horses were at that moment standing at the bottom of the stone stairs outside, their forms dimly visible through the blue dawn. Both were saddled, bridled, and equipped, with a black groom by their side, holding them in hand – himself in travelling toggery.

Valises, buckled upon the croup, and saddlebags suspended across the cantle, showed that the travellers were to carry their luggage along with them.

The object of the intended journey is already known. Mr Vaughan was about to put into execution a design long delayed

– to perform a duty which he owed to his daughter, and which, if left unaccomplished, would seriously imperil the prosperity and happiness of her future life. He was about proceeding to the capital of the Island, to obtain from the Assembly that special act of grace, which they alone could give; and which would free his daughter from those degrading disabilities the Black Code had inflicted upon all of her unfortunate race. Six lines from the Assembly, with the governors signature attached, though it might not extinguish the *taint*, nor the *taunt* of malevolent lips, would, nevertheless, remove all obstacles to hereditament; and Kate Vaughan could then become the heiress to her own father's property, without fear of failure.

To sue for this act and obtain it was the purpose of that journey upon which Loftus Vaughan was on the eve of setting forth. He had no apprehension of a failure. Had he been only a book-keeper or small tradesman, he might have been less sanguine of success; but, Custos of an important precinct, with scores of friends in the Assembly, he knew that he would only have to ask and it would be given him.

For all that, he was not setting out in very high spirits. The unpleasant prospect of having such a long and arduous journey to make was a source of vexation to him: for the Custos liked an easy life, and hated the fatigue of travel.

But there was something besides that dispirited him. For some days past he had found his health giving way. He had lost appetite, and was rapidly losing flesh. A constant and burning

thirst had seized upon him, which, from morning to night, he was continually trying to quench.

The plantation doctor was puzzled with the symptoms, and his prescriptions had failed in giving relief. Indeed, so obstinate and *death-like* was the disease becoming, that the sufferer would have given up his intention of going to Spanish Town – at least, till a more fitting time – but for a hope that, in the capital, some experienced physician might be found who would comprehend his malady and cure it.

Indulging in this hope, he was determined to set forth at all hazards.

There was still another incubus upon his spirits, and one, perhaps, that weighed upon them more heavily than aught else. Ever since the death of Chakra – or rather, since the glimpse he had got of Chakra's ghost – a sort of supernatural dread had taken possession of the mind of Loftus Vaughan. Often had he speculated on that fearful phenomenon, and wondered what it could have been. Had he alone witnessed the apparition, he might have got over the awe it had occasioned him: for then could he have attributed it to an illusion of the senses – a mere freak of his imagination, excited, as it was at the time, by the spectacle on the Jumbé Rock. But Trusty had seen the ghost, too! and Trusty's mind was not one of the imaginative kind. Besides, how could both be deluded by the same fancy, and at the same instant of time?

Turn the thing in his own mind as he might, there was

something that still remained inexplicable – something that caused the heart of the Custos to tingle with fear every time that he thought of Chakra and his ghost.

This intermittent awe had oppressed him ever since the day of his visit to the Jumbé Rock – that day described; for he never went a second time. Nor yet did he afterwards care to venture alone upon the wooded mountain. He dreaded a second encounter with that weird apparition.

In time, perhaps, the fear would have died out, and, in fact, was dying out – the intervals during which it was not felt becoming gradually more extended. Loftus Vaughan, though he could never have forgotten the myal-man, nor the terrible incidents of his death, might have ceased to trouble himself with the oughts about Chakra's ghost, but for a circumstance that was reported to him on the day that Smythje sank into the dead-wood.

On the afternoon of that day, as Quashie was making his way homeward through the forest and over the hills, the darkey declared that, on passing near a noted spot called the Duppy's Hole, he had "see'd de gose ob ole Chakra!"

Quashie, on reaching home, announced the fact, with chattering teeth, and eyes rolling wildly in their sockets; and, though the loutish boy was only laughed at by his fellow-slaves, the statement made a most painful impression on the mind of his master – restoring it to the state of habitual terror that had formerly held possession of it, and from which it had become only partially relieved.

The circumstance related by Quashie – still fresh in the thoughts of the Custos – had contributed not a little to increase that feeling of dejection and discouragement, under which he suffered at the moment of setting out upon his proposed expedition.

Volume Three – Chapter Five

The Stirrup-Cup

If Loftus Vaughan was in low spirits, not more joyful seemed his daughter, as she assisted at that early *déjeuner*.

On the contrary, a certain sadness overspread the countenance of the young Creole; as if reflected from the spirit of her father.

A stranger to the circumstances that surrounded her might have fancied that it was sympathy – at seeing him so dull and downcast – mingled with the natural regret she might have at his leaving home, and fop so lone: an absence. But one who scrutinised more closely could not fail to note in those fair features an expression of sadness that must have sprung from a different and deeper source.

The purpose of her father's journey may, in part, explain the melancholy that marked the manner of the young Creole. She knew that purpose. She had learnt it from her father's lips, though only on the evening before.

Then, for the first time in her life, was she made acquainted with those adverse circumstances that related to her birth and parentage: for up to that hour she had remained ignorant of her position, socially as well as legally. Then, for the first time, was fully explained to her her own true status in the social scale – the disabilities and degradation under which she suffered.

It was to remove these disabilities – and wipe out, as it were, the degradation – that her father was now going forth.

The young girl did not fail to feel gratitude; but perhaps the feeling might have been stronger had her father taken less trouble to make her sensible of the service he was about to perform – using it as a lever to remove that reluctance to the union with Smythje which still lingered.

During the few minutes that Mr Vaughan was engaged in eating his breakfast, not many words passed between them. The viands, luxurious enough, were scarce more than tasted. The intended traveller had no appetite for the solids with which the table was spread, and seemed to care only for drink.

After quaffing off several cups of coffee, solely from a desire to quench thirst, and without eating bread or anything else along with it, he rose from the table, and prepared to take his departure.

Mr Trusty entering, announced that the horses and the attendant groom were ready, and waiting outside.

The Custos donned his travelling hat, and with the assistance of Kate and her maid Yola, put on his sleeved cloak: as the air of the early morning was raw and cold.

While these final preparations were being made, a mulatta woman was seen moving about the room – at times acting as an attendant upon the table, at other times standing silently in the background. She was the slave Cynthia.

In the behaviour of this woman there was something peculiar. There was a certain amount of nervous agitation in her manner

as she moved about; and ever and anon she was seen to make short traverses to different parts of the room – apparently without errand or object. Her steps, too, were stealthy, her glances unsteady and furtive.

All this would have been apparent enough to a suspicious person; but none of the three present appeared to notice it.

The “swizzle” bowl stood on the side-board. While breakfast was being placed on the table, Cynthia had been seen refilling the bowl with this delicious drink, which she had mixed in an outside chamber. Some one asked her why she was performing that, her diurnal duty, at so early an hour – especially as master would be gone before the time of swizzle-drinking should arrive: usually during the hotter hours of the day.

“P’raps massr like drink ob swizzle ’fore he go,” was the explanatory reply vouchsafed by Cynthy.

The girl made a successful conjecture. Just as the Custos was about to step outside for the purpose of descending the stairway, a fit of choking thirst once more came upon him, and he called for drink.

“Massr like glass ob swizzle?” inquired Cynthia, stepping up to his side. “I’ve mixed for massa some berry good,” added she, with impressive earnestness.

“Yes, girl,” replied her master. “That’s the best thing I can take. Bring me a large goblet of it.”

He had scarce time to turn round, before the goblet was presented to him, full to the rim. He did not see that the slave’s

hand trembled as she held it up, nor yet that her eyes were averted – as if to hinder them from beholding some fearful sight.

His thirst prevented him from seeing anything, but that which promised to assuage it.

He caught hold of the goblet, and gulped down the whole of its contents, without once removing it from his lips.

“You’ve overrated its quality, girl,” said he, returning her the glass. “It doesn’t seem at all good. There’s a bitterish taste about it; but I suppose it’s my palate that’s out of order, and one shouldn’t be particular about the stirrup-cup.”

With this melancholy attempt at appearing gay, Loftus Vaughan bade adieu to his daughter, and, climbing into the saddle, rode off upon his journey.

Ah! Custos Vaughan! That stirrup-cup was the last you were ever destined to drink! In the sparkling “swizzle” was an infusion of the baneful *Savannah flower*. In that deep draught you had introduced into your veins one of the deadliest of vegetable poisons!

Chakra’s prophecy will soon be fulfilled. The death-spell will now quickly do its work. In twenty-four hours you will be a corpse!

Volume Three – Chapter Six

The Horn Signal

Cubina, on getting clear of the penn-keeper's precincts, lost little time in returning to the glade; and, having once more reached the *ceiba*, seated himself on a log to await the arrival of the young Englishman.

For some minutes he remained in this attitude – though every moment becoming more fidgetty, as he perceived that time was passing, and no one came. He had not even a pipe to soothe his impatience: for it had been left in the hammock, into which he had cast it from the cocoa.

Before many minutes had passed, however, a pipe would have been to little purpose in restraining his nervous excitement; for the non-appearance of the young Englishman began to cause him serious uneasiness.

What could be detaining him? Had the Jew been awakened? and was he by some means or other, hindering Herbert from coming out? There was no reason, that Cubina could think of, why the young man should be ten minutes later than himself in reaching the *ceiba*. Five minutes – even the half of it – might have sufficed for him to robe himself in such garments as were needed; and then, what was to prevent him from following immediately? Surely, the appeal that had been made to him

– the danger hinted at to those dear to him, the necessity for haste, spoken in unmistakable terms – surely, all this would be sufficient to attract him to the forest, without a moment’s hesitation!

Why, then, was he delaying?

The Maroon could not make it out: unless under the disagreeable supposition that the Jew no longer slept, and was intercepting his egress.

What if Herbert might have lost his way in proceeding towards the rendezvous? The path was by no means plain, but the contrary. It was a mere cattle-track, little used by men. Besides, there were others of the same – scores of them trending in all directions, crossing and converging with this very one. The half-wild steers and colts of the penn-keeper ranged the thickets at will. Their tracks were everywhere; and it would require a person skilled in woodcraft and acquainted with the *lay* of the country, to follow any particular path. It was likely enough that the young Englishman had strayed.

Just then these reflections occurred to Cubina. He chided himself for not thinking of it sooner. He should have stayed by the penn – waited for Herbert to come out, and then taken the roads along with him.

“Not to think of that! *Crambo!* how very stupid of me!” muttered the Maroon, pacing nervously to and fro: for his impatience had long since started him up from the log.

“Like enough, he’s lost his way?”

“I shall go back along the path. Perhaps I may find him. At all events, if he’s taken the right road, I must meet him.”

And as he said this, he glided rapidly across the glade, taking the back track towards the penn.

The conjecture that Herbert had strayed was perfectly correct. The young Englishman had never revisited the scene of his singular adventure, since the day that introduced him to the acquaintance of so many queer people. Not but that he had felt the inclination, amounting almost to a desire, to do so; and more than once had he been upon the eve of satisfying this inclination, but, otherwise occupied, the opportunity had not offered itself.

Not greatly proficient in forest lore – as Cubina had also rightly conjectured – especially in that of a West-Indian forest, he had strayed from the true path almost upon the instant of entering upon it; and was at that very moment wandering through the woods in search of the glade where grew the gigantic cotton-tree!

No doubt, in the course of time, he might have found it, or perhaps stumbled upon it by chance, for – made aware, by the earnest invitation he had received, that time was of consequence – he was quartering the ground in every direction, with the rapidity of a young pointer in his first season with the gun.

Meanwhile the Maroon glided rapidly back, along the path leading to the penn, without seeing aught either of the Englishman or his track.

He re-entered the ruinate fields of the old sugar estate, and

continued on till within sight of the house, still unsuccessful in his search.

Proceeding with caution, he stepped over the dilapidated wall of the old orchard. Caution was now of extreme necessity. It was broad day; and, but for the cover which the undergrowth afforded him, he could not have gone a step further without the risk of being seen from the house.

He reached the ruin from which he had before commanded a view of the verandah; and, once more stealing a glance over its top, he obtained a full view of the long rambling corridor.

Jessuron was in it – not as when last seen, asleep in his armchair, but on foot, and hurrying to and fro, with quick step and excited mien.

His black-bearded overseer was standing by the stair, as if listening to some orders which the Jew was issuing.

The hammock was still hanging in its place, but its collapsed sides showed that it was empty. Cubina could see that, but no signs of its late occupant – neither in the gallery nor about the buildings.

If still there, he must be in some of the rooms? But that one which opened nearest the hammock, and which Cubina conjectured to be his bedroom, appeared to be unoccupied. Its door stood ajar, and no one seemed to be inside.

The Maroon was considering whether he should stay a while longer upon the spot, and watch the movements of the two men, when it occurred to him that if the young man had gone out, and

up the right path, he must have crossed a track of muddy ground, just outside the garden wall.

Being so near the house – and in the expectation of seeing something there to explain Herbert’s delay – he had not stayed to examine this on his second approach.

Crouching cautiously among the trees, he now returned to it; and, almost at the first glance, his eye revealed to him the truth.

A fresh footprint was in the mud, with its heel to the house, and its toe pointing to the path! It was not his own: it must be that of the young Englishman!

He traced the tracks as far as they could be distinguished; but that was only to the edge of the damp earth. Beyond, the ground was dry and firm – covered with a close-cropped carpet of grass, upon which the hoof of a horse would scarcely have left an impression.

The tracks, however, on leaving the moist ground, appeared as if trending towards the proper path; and Cubina felt convinced that, for some distance at least, the young Englishman had gone towards the glade.

That he was no longer by the house was sufficiently certain; and equally so that he had kept his promise and followed Cubina into the woods. But where was he now?

“He may have reached the glade in my absence, and be now waiting for me!” was the reflection of the Maroon.

Stimulated by this, as well as by the chagrin which his mischances or mismanagement were causing him, he started

back along the path at a run – as if struggling in a match against time.

Far quicker than before he reached the glade, but, as before, he found it untenanted! *No* Englishman was under the *ceiba*– no human being in sight.

As soon as he had fairly recovered breath, he bethought him of shouting. His voice might be of avail in guiding the wanderer to the glade; for Cubina now felt convinced that the young Englishman was straying – perhaps wandering through the woods at no great distance from the spot. His shouts might be heard; and although the stranger might not recognise the voice, the circumstances were such that he might understand the object for which it was put forth.

Cubina shouted, first at a moderate pitch, then hallooed with all the strength of his lungs.

No answer, save the wood echoes.

Again and again: still no response.

“*Crambo!*” exclaimed he, suddenly thinking of a better means of making his presence known. “He may hear my horn! He may remember that, and know it. If he’s anywhere within a mile, I’ll make him hear it.”

The Maroon raised the horn to his lips and blew a long, loud blast – then another, and another.

There was a response to that signal; but not such as the young Englishman might have been expected to make. Three shrill bugle blasts, borne back upon the breeze, seemed the echoes of

his own.

But the Maroon knew they were not. On hearing them, he let the horn drop to his side, and stood in an attitude to listen.

Another – this time a single wind – came from the direction of the former.

“Three and one,” muttered the Maroon; “it’s Quaco. He needn’t have sounded the last, for I could tell his *tongue* from a thousand. He’s on his way back from Savanna-la-Mer – though I didn’t expect him to return so soon. So much the better – I may want him.”

On finishing the muttered soliloquy, the Maroon captain stood as if considering.

“*Crambo!*” he muttered after a pause, and in a tone of vexation. “What has become of this young fellow? I must sound again – lest Quaco’s horn may have misled him. This time, lieutenant, hold your tongue!”

So saying, and speaking as if the “lieutenant” was by his side, he raised the horn once more to his lips, and blew a single blast – giving it an intonation quite different from the others.

After an interval of silence, he repeated the call in notes exactly similar, and then, after another pause, once again.

To none of these signals did the “tongue” of Quaco make reply; but shortly after, that worthy responded to the original summons by presenting himself *in propria persona*.

Volume Three – Chapter Seven

Quaco's Queer Encounter

Quaco came into the glade carrying a large bundle upon his back – under which he had trudged all the way from Savanna-la-Mer.

He was naked to the breech-cloth – excepting the hog-skin greaves upon his shanks, and the old brimless hat upon his head. This, however, was all the costume Quaco ever wore – all, indeed, that he owned; for, notwithstanding that he was the lieutenant, his uniform was no better than that of the meanest private of the band.

His captain, therefore, exhibited no surprise at the scantiness of Quaco's clothing; but what did surprise Cubina was the air with which he entered the glade, and some other circumstances that at once arrested his attention.

The skin of the colossus was covered with a white sweat that appeared to be oozing from every pore of his dark epidermis. This might have been occasioned by his long walk – the last hour of it under a broiling sun, and carrying weight, as he was: for the bag upon his back appeared a fifty-pounder, at least, to say nothing of a large musket balanced upon the top of it.

None of these circumstances, however, would account for that inexplicable expression upon his countenance – the wild rolling

of his yellow eyeballs – the quick, hurried step, and uncouth gesticulations by which he was signalling his approach.

Though, as already stated, they had arrested the attention of his superior, the latter, accustomed to a certain reserve in the presence of his followers, pretended not to notice them. As his lieutenant came up, he simply said: —

“I am glad you are come, Quaco.”

“An’ a’m glad, Cappin Cubina, I’ve foun’ ye har. War hurryin’ home fass as my legs cud carry me, ’spectin’ to find ye thar.”

“Ha!” said Cubina; “some news, I suppose. Have you met anyone in the woods – that young Englishman from the Jew’s penn? I’m expecting him here. He appears to have missed the way.”

“Han’t met no Englishman, Cappin. Cussos Vaughan am that – I’s e a met *him!*”

“*Crambo!*” cried Cubina, starting as he uttered the exclamation. “You’ve met Custos Vaughan? When and where?”

“When – dis mornin’. Where – ’bout fo’ mile b’yond the crossin’ on the Carrion Crow road. That’s where I met *him.*”

The emphasis upon the last word struck upon the ear of Cubina. It seemed to imply that Quaco, on his route, had encountered others.

“Anybody else, did you meet?” he inquired, hurriedly, and with evident anxiety as to the answer.

“Ya-as, Cappin,” drawled out the lieutenant, with a coolness strongly in contrast with his excited manner on entering the

glade. But Quaco saw that his superior was waiting for the coming of the young Englishman, and that he need not hurry the communication he was about to make. “Ya-as, I met ole Plute, the head driver at Moun’ Welcome. He was ridin’ ’longside o’ the Cussos, by way o’ his escort.”

“Nobody else?”

“Not jess then,” answered Quaco, evidently holding back the most interesting item of news he had to communicate. “Not jess then, Cappin Cubina.”

“But afterwards? Speak out, Quaco! Did you meet anyone going on the same road?”

The command, with the impatient gesture that accompanied it, brought Quaco to a quicker confession than he might have volunteered.

“I met, Cappin Cubina,” said he, his cheeks bulging with the importance of the communication he was about to make, while his eyes rolled like “twin jelly balls” in their sockets – “I met next, not a *man*, but a *ghost!*”

“A ghost?” said Cubina, incredulously. “A duppy, I sw’ar by the great Accompong – same as I saw before – the ghost of ole Chakra!”

The Maroon captain again made a start, which his lieutenant attributed to surprise at the announcement he had made.

Cubina did not undeceive him as to the cause.

“And where?” interrogated he, in hurried phrase. “Where did you meet the ghost?”

“I didn’t zackly meet it,” answered Quaco. “I only seed it on the road afore me – ’bout a hundred yards or tharaway. I wor near enuf to be sure o’ it – and it was Chakra’s ghost – jess as I seed him t’other day up thar by the Duppy Hole. The old villain can’t sleep in his grave. He’s about these woods yet.”

“How far was it from where you met Mr Vaughan?”

“Not a great way, Cappin. ’Bout a quarrer o’ a mile, I shed think. Soon as it spied me, it tuk to the bushes, and I seed no more on it. It was atter daylight, and the cocks had crowed. I heard ’em crowing at ole Jobson’s plantation close by, and, maybe, that sent the duppy a-scuttlin’ into the river.”

“We must wait no longer for this young man – we must be gone from here, Quaco.”

And as Cubina expressed this intention, he appeared about to move away from the spot.

“Stop, Cappin,” said Quaco, interrupting with a gesture that showed he had something more to communicate; “you han’t heard all. I met more of ’em.”

“More of whom?”

“That same queer sort. But two mile atter I’d passed the place where I seed the duppy o’ the ole myal-man, who dye think I met nex’?”

“Who?” inquired Cubina, half guessing at the answer.

“Them debbil’s kind – like enough company for the duppy – them dam’ Spaniards of de Jew’s penn.”

“Ah! *maldito!*” cried the Maroon captain, in a voice of alarm,

at the same time making a gesture as if a light had suddenly broken upon him. “The Spaniards, you say! They, too, after him! Come, Quaco, down with that bundle! throw it in the bush – anywhere! there’s not a moment to be lost. I understand the series of encounters you have had upon the road. Luckily, I’ve brought my gun, and you yours. We may need them both before night. Down with the bundle, and follow me!”

“Stop and take me with you,” cried a voice from the edge of the glade; “I have a gun, too.”

And at the same moment the young Englishman, with his gun upon his shoulder, was seen emerging from the underwood and making towards the *ceiba*.

Volume Three – Chapter Eight

An Uncle in Danger

“You appear to be in great haste, Captain Cubina,” said Herbert, advancing in double-quick time. “May I know what’s the matter? Anything amiss?”

“Amisss, Master Vaughan? Much, indeed. But we shouldn’t stand to talk. We must take the road to Savannah, and at once.”

“What! you want me to go to Savannah? I’m with you for any reasonable adventure; but my time’s not exactly my own, and I must first have a reason for such a journey.”

“A good reason, Master Vaughan. Your uncle, the Custos, is in trouble.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the young Englishman, with an air of disappointment. “Not so good a reason as you may think, Captain. Was it he you meant when you said, just now, one who *should be* dear to me was in danger?”

“It was,” answered Cubina.

“Captain Cubina,” said Herbert, speaking with a certain air of indifference, “this uncle of mine but little deserves my interference.”

“But his life’s in danger!” urged the Maroon, interrupting Herbert in his explanation.

“Ah!” ejaculated the nephew, “do you say that? If his life’s in

danger, then – ”

“Yes,” said the Maroon, again interrupting him, “and *others*, too, may be in peril from the same enemy – yourself, perhaps, Master Vaughan. Ay, and maybe those that might be dear to you as yourself.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Herbert – this time in a very different tone of voice, “you have some evil tidings, Captain! pray tell me all at once.”

“Not now, Master Vaughan, not now! There’s not a moment to be wasted in talk; we must take the route at once. I shall tell you as we go along.”

“Agreed, then,” cried Herbert. “If it’s a life and death matter, I’m with you – even to Savannah! No *book-keeping* to-day, Master Jessuron, and – ” (the speaker only mentally pronounced the name) “Judith may well spare me for one day – especially for such a purpose as the saving of lives. All right; I’m with you, Captain Cubina.”

“*Vamos!*” cried the Maroon, hastily moving off. “For want of horses we must make our legs do double-quick time. These skulking scoundrels have sadly got the start of us.”

And saying this, he struck into the up-hill path, followed by Herbert – the taciturn lieutenant, no longer embarrassed by his bundle, keeping close in the rear.

The path Cubina had chosen appeared to conduct to Mount Welcome.

“You are not going *there?*” inquired Herbert, in a significant

way, at the same time stopping, and appealing to his conductor for an answer.

It had just occurred to the nephew that a visit to his uncle's house might place him in a position both unpleasant and embarrassing.

“No!” answered the Maroon; “there is no longer any need for us to go to the house: since the Custos has left it long hours ago. We could learn nothing there more than I know already. Besides, it's half a mile out of our way. We should lose time; and that's the most important of all. We shall presently turn out of this path, into one that leads over the mountain by the Jumbé Rock. That's the shortest way to the Savannah road. *Vamos!*”

With this wind-up to his speech, the Maroon again moved on; and Herbert, his mind now at rest, strode silently after.

Up to this time the young Englishman had received no explanation of the object of the journey he was in the act of undertaking; nor had he asked any. The information, though as yet only covertly conveyed – that those dear to him were in danger – was motive enough for trusting the Maroon.

Before long, however, it occurred to him that he ought to be informed of the nature of that danger; over whom it impended; and what was the signification of the step they were now taking to avert it.

These questions he put to his conductor, as they hastened together along the path.

In hurried phrase the Maroon made known to him much,

though not all, of what he himself knew of the position of affairs – more especially of the peril in which the Custos appeared to be placed. He gave an account of his own descent into the Duppy's Hole; of the conversation he had overheard there; and, though still ignorant of the motives, stated his suspicions of the murderous plot in which Herbert's own employer was playing a principal part.

It is needless to say that the young Englishman was astounded by these revelations.

Perhaps he would have been still more astonished, but that the development of these wicked dealings was only a confirmation of a whole series of suspicious circumstances that for some days before had been constantly coming under his notice, and for which he had been vainly seeking an explanation.

From that moment all thoughts of returning to dwell under the roof of Jacob Jessuron vanished from his mind. To partake of the hospitality of such a man – a murderer, at least by intent – was completely out of the question. He at once perceived that his fine sinecure situation must be given up; and, despite the scandal his desertion might bring about, he could never again make his home in the Happy Valley. Even the fascinations of the fair Judith would not be strong enough to attract him thither.

Cubina listened to these resolves, and apparently with great satisfaction. But the Maroon had not yet made known to Herbert many other secrets, of which he had become the depository; and some of which might be to the young Englishman of extremest

interest. The communication of these he reserved to a future opportunity – when time might not be so pressing.

Herbert Vaughan, now apprised of the peril in which his uncle stood, for the time forgot all else, and only thought of pressing onward to his aid. Injuries and insults appeared alike forgotten and forgiven – even that which had stung him more sharply than all – the cold, chilling bow at the Smythje ball.

Beyond the Jumbé Rock, and at no great distance from the by-path by which they were travelling, lay the proper country of the Maroons. By winding a horn, it might have been heard by some of the band; who at that hour would, no doubt, be engaged in their usual occupation – hunting the wild hog.

Cubina knew this; and, on arriving at that point on the path nearest to his town, he halted, and stood for a moment reflecting.

Then, as if deeming himself sufficiently strong in the companionship of the robust young Englishman and the redoubtable lieutenant, he gave up the idea of calling any of them to his assistance; and once more moved forward along the route towards the Savannah road.

Volume Three – Chapter Nine

An Equestrian Excursion

Throughout the day the penn-keeper kept to his penn. The unexplained absence of his protégé rendered it prudent to postpone his proposed visit to the minister: besides, Cynthia was expected.

From the mulatta he hoped to obtain much information. Her knowledge of events must be fresher than even that of Chakra – else would he have gone up to the Duppy's Hole to consult the oracle of Obi. Cynthia would be likely to know all. She could at least tell him whether the spell had been administered – how, and when.

These were facts worth knowing, and Jessuron stayed at home to await the advent of Cynthia.

Not so Judith. Devoured by spleen, inaction was too irksome. She could not content herself in the house; and resolved to seek outside, if not solace, at least distraction to her thoughts. Shortly after breakfast she ordered her steed to be saddled, and prepared to set forth.

Strange it was that he should absent himself on that day above any other! Just after his uncle had departed on a journey! That was strange!

Judith summoned the herdsman who had discovered the

tracks in the mud.

“You are sure it was the track of young Master Vaughan you saw?”

“Sartin sure, Missa Jessuron – one ob ’em war.”

“And the other? What was *it* like? Was it also the track of a man?”

“Ya, missa; ’twar a man’s track – leastwise, I nebber seed a woman track big as dat ’ere. Sartin de sole dat make it wor de fut ob a man, though it wa’n’t the boot ob a gen’l man like young Massa Vaughan.”

Whip in hand, the Jewess stood reflecting.

A messenger might it be? From whom, if not from Kate Vaughan? With whom else was he acquainted? Such strange conditions of relationship! The mysterious mode by which the messenger must have approached him: for fresh mud upon the bark of the tree told that he who had climbed up must have been the same who had made the footmarks by the garden wall. The articles found in the hammock had been flung down to awake and warn the sleeper.

Clearly a secret message, delivered by a crafty messenger! Clearly a surreptitious departure!

And the motive for all this? No common one? – it could not be. No errand after game. The fowling-piece was gone; but that was no evidence of an intention to spend the day in sporting. Herbert was in the habit of taking his gun, whenever he strolled out into the fields or forest. But the other and necessary

paraphernalia had been left behind! A shooting excursion? Nothing of the sort!

A messenger with a love message – a summons willingly accepted – promptly responded to!

“Oh, if it be!” cried the proud, passionate woman, as she sprang upon the back of her steed; “if it be, I shall know it! I shall have revenge!”

The horse came in for a share of this jealous indignation. A spiteful cut of the whip, and a fierce “dig” from her spurred heel, set the animal in rapid motion – his head towards the hills.

Judith Jessuron was a splendid equestrian, and could manage a horse as well as the best breaker about her father’s penn.

In the saddle she was something to be seen and admired: her brilliant beauty, enhanced by the charm of excitement, exhibiting itself in the heightened colour of her cheeks, and the stronger flashing of her dark Jewish eyes. The outline of her form was equally attractive. Of full womanly development, and poised in the saddle with an air of piquant *abandon*, it illustrated the curve of Hogarth in all its luxuriant gracefulness. Such a spectacle was calculated to elicit something more than ordinary admiration; and it required a heart already pre-occupied to resist its fascinations. If Herbert Vaughan had escaped them, it could only have been from having his heart thus defended from a danger that few men might have tempted with a chance of safety!

Galloping across the old garden, with a single leap she cleared the ruined wall; and, arriving at the spot where were still to be

seen those tell-tale tracks, she reined up, and leaned over to examine them.

Yes – that was his track – his small foot was easily distinguished! The other? There it was – the footprint of a negro – pegged brogans! White men do not wear them. Some of the slave people of Mount Welcome? But why twice back and forward? Was not once sufficient? Had there been a double message? There might have been – a warning, and afterwards an appointment!

Perhaps, to meet in the forest? Ha! perhaps at that moment!

The bitter conjecture brought her reflections to an abrupt ending; and, once more plying whip and spur, the jealous equestrian dashed rapidly on, up the sloping path that trended towards the hills.

The purpose of this expedition, on the part of the Jewess, was altogether indefinite. It simply sprang from that nervous impatience that would not permit her to rest – a faint hope that during her ride she might discover some clue to the mysterious disappearance. Wretchedness might be the reward of that ride. No matter! Uncertainty was unendurable.

She did not go exactly in the direction of Mount Welcome, though thither went her thoughts. She had never been a guest of the Custos, and therefore had no colourable excuse for presenting herself at the mansion – else she would have ridden direct to it.

Her design was different.

Though she might not approach the house, she could

reconnoitre it from a distance; and this had she determined upon doing.

She had fixed upon the Jumbé Rock as the best point of observation. She knew that its summit commanded a bird's-eye view of Mount Welcome estate, lying under the mountain like a spread map, and that any movement by the mansion, or in the surrounding inclosures, might be minutely marked – especially with the aid of a powerful *lorgnette*, with which she had taken the precaution to provide herself.

With this intent did she head her horse towards the Jumbé Rock – urging the animal with fierce, fearless energy up the difficult acclivity of the mountain.

Volume Three – Chapter Ten

Smythje among the Statues

At that hour, when the heart of Judith Jessuron was alternately torn by the passions of love and jealousy, a passion equally profound, though apparently more tranquil, was burning in the breast of Lilly Quasheba, inspired by the same object – Herbert Vaughan.

In vain had the young creole endeavoured to think indifferently of her cousin: in vain had she striven to reconcile her love with what her father had taught her to deem her duty, and think differently of Mr Smythje – in vain. The effort only ended in a result the very opposite to that intended – in strengthening her passion for the former, and weakening her regard for the latter. And thus must it ever be with the heart's inclinings, as well as its disinclinings. Curbed or opposed, it is but its instinct in both cases to rebel.

From that hour in which Kate had yielded to the will of her father, and consented to become the wife of Montagu Smythje, she felt more sensibly than ever the sacrifice she was about to make. But there were none to step forth and save her – no strong hand and stout heart to rescue her from her painful position. It had now become a compromise; and, summoning all the strength of her soul, she awaited the unhappy issue with such resignation

as she could command.

She had but one thought to cheer her, if cheer it could be called – she had not sacrificed her *filial* affection. She had performed the wishes of her father – that father who, however harsh he might be to others, had been ever kind and affectionate to her. Now, more than ever, did she feel impressed with his kindness, when she considered the errand on which he had gone forth.

Though thus resigned, or trying to feel so, she could neither stifle her passion for Herbert, nor conceal the melancholy which its hopelessness occasioned; and during all that morning, after her father had left her, the shadow appeared upon her countenance with more than its wonted darkness.

Her lover – that is, her *fiancé* – for Smythje now stood to her in that relationship – did not fail to observe her unusual melancholy, though failing to attribute it to the true cause.

It was natural that the young lady should feel sad at the absence of her worthy parent, who for many years had never been separated from her beyond the period of a few hours' duration, or, at most, a single day. She would soon get used to it, and then all would be right again.

With some such reflections did Smythje account for the abstraction which he had observed in the behaviour of his betrothed.

During all the morning he had been assiduous in his attentions – more than wontedly so. He had been left by the Custos in a proud position – that of *protector* – and he was desirous of

showing how worthy he was of the trust reposed in him.

Alas! in the opinion of Kate he was by far too assiduous.

The *protégée* felt importuned; and his most well-meant attentions had the effect only to weary her. Too glad would she have been to be left alone to her sighs and her sadness.

Shortly after breakfast, Smythje proposed a stroll – a short one. He had no zest for toilsome excursions; and, since the day of his shooting adventure, no zeal again to attempt any distant traverse of the forest.

The stroll was only to extend to the shrubbery and among the statues set there. The weather was temptingly fine. There was no reason why Kate Vaughan should refuse; and, with a mechanical air, she acceded to the proposal.

Smythje discussed the statues, drawing largely from the stock of classic lore which his University had afforded him – dilating more especially on those of Venus, Cupid, and Cleopatra, all suggestive of the tender sentiments that were stirring within his own romantic bosom, and to which, more than once, he took occasion to allude. Though narrowly did he watch to see what effect his fine speeches were producing, he failed to perceive any that gave him gratification. The countenance of his companion obstinately preserved that air of pre-occupation that had been visible upon it all the morning.

In the midst of one of his scholastic dissertations, the classical exquisite was interrupted by the advent of his valet, Thoms – who appeared coming from the house with the air of a servant who

brings a message for his master.

The message was declared: a gentleman friend of Mr Smythje – for he had now many such in the Island – had called to see him. No particular business – merely a call of compliment.

The name was given. It was one which should be honoured by a polite reception; else the proud owner of Montagu Castle might have declined leaving the company in which he was upon so trivial a purpose. But the visitor was one of note – a particular friend, too. Miss Vaughan would not deem him rude, leaving her only for a moment?

“By no means,” said Kate, with a free haste that almost said as much as that she was only too glad to get quit of him.

Smythje followed his valet into the house; and the young Creole was left among the statues alone – herself the fairest shape in all that classical collection.

Volume Three – Chapter Eleven

A Strange Determination

For some moments after Smythje was gone, Kate Vaughan remained where he had left her – silent and motionless as the sculptured marbles by her side. Niobe was near; and, as if by accident, the eyes of the young Creole turned upon the statue of the weeping daughter of Dione.

“Ah!” muttered she, struck with a strange thought; “unhappy mother of a murdered offspring! If thy sadness was hard to endure as mine, thy punishment must have been a pleasure. Would that I, like thee, were suddenly turned into stone. Ah, me!”

And finishing her apostrophe with a profound sigh, she stood for some time silently gazing upon the statue.

After a while her thoughts underwent some change; and along with it her eyes wandered away from the statues and the shrubbery. Her glance was turned upward towards the mountain, and rested upon its summit – the Jumbé Rock now glittering gaily under the full sheen of the sunlight.

“There,” soliloquised she, in a low murmur, “upon that rock, and there only, have I felt one hour of true happiness – that happiness of which I have read in books of romance, without believing in; but which I now know to be real – to gaze into the

eyes of him you love, and think, as I then thought, that you are loved in return. Oh! it was bliss! it was bliss!”

The remembrance of that brief interview with her cousin – for it was to that her words referred – came so forcibly before the mind of the impassioned young Creole as to stifle her utterance, and for a moment or two she was silent.

Again she continued – “An hour, have I said? Ah! scarce a minute did the sweet delusion last; but had I my choice I would rather live that minute over again, than all the rest of my past life – certainly, than all of it that is to come!” Again she paused in her speech, still gazing upon the rock – whose sparkling surface seemed purposely presented to her eyes, as if to cheer her heart with the sweet *souvenir* it recalled.

“Oh! I wonder,” she exclaimed at length, “I wonder how it would be, were I but up there again! To stand on the spot where I stood! Could I fancy him, as then, beside me? Could I recall the look he gave me, and my own sweet thoughts as I returned it? Oh! it would be like some delicious dream!”

Passion again called for a pause; but soon after, her reflections found speech.

“And why should I not indulge in it? why not? What harm can it do me? Even if the *souvenir* should bring sadness, it cannot add to that which now overwhelms me. No; I need not fear to tempt the trial; and I shall. This very hour shall I go up and stand upon that same spot. There shall I invoke the past, and give to memory, to fancy, its fullest play. I need not fear. There will be

no witness but the heaven above and the God who dwells in it – alike witness to the sacrifice of a broken heart made in the fulfilment of my duty.”

On completing this impassioned speech, the young girl raised a kerchief of white cambric which she carried in her hand, and hastily adjusting it over the luxuriant plaits of her hair, glided towards the rear of the mansion.

She did not turn aside to enter the house, nor even to warn any one of her sudden determination, but, hastening on, soon reached the back of the garden.

There a small wicket-gate gave her egress into the woods – a path from that point trending in traverses, zigzag fashion, up the mountain slope.

It was the same path she had followed upon the day of the eclipse; but how different were the thoughts that now agitated her bosom from those she had indulged in upon that memorable occasion! Even then, it is true, her spirits were far from being cheerful; but still there was hope ahead. She had not then arrived at the full knowledge of Herbert’s indifference towards her – of his determination towards her more fortunate rival. The circumstances that had since transpired – the scenes that had come under her own observation – the rumours heard and too substantially confirmed – all had combined to extinguish that little gleam of hope so faint and feebly flickering.

Indeed, there was upon that very morning a new thought in her mind, calculated still further to render her sad and humiliated.

The revelations which her father had made before starting on his journey – the admissions as to the inferiority of her race, and contingently of her social rank, which he had been compelled to make – had produced, and no wonder, a painful impression upon the spirits of the quinteroon.

She could not help asking herself whether Herbert's disregard of her had ought to do with this? Was it possible that her own cousin was slighting her on account of this social distinction? Did he, too, feel shy of the *taint*? More than once during that day had she mentally put these interrogatories without being able to determine whether they merited a negative or affirmative answer.

And what was her errand now? To resuscitate within her soul the memory of one moment of bliss – to weave still more inextricably around her heart the spell that was threatening to strangle it – to stifle the happiness of her whole life.

But that was already gone. There could be no daring now – no danger worth dread.

The zigzag path she ascended with free step and air undaunted – her fair, bright form gleaming, meteor-like, amid the dark-green foliage of the forest.

Volume Three – Chapter Twelve

A Jealous Reconnoissance

The ravine leading up the rear of the Jumbé Rock – the only way by which its summit could be reached – though easily scaled by a pedestrian, was not practicable for a person on horseback.

On reaching the base of the cliff the jealous equestrian dismounted, made fast her bridle to the branch of a tree, and, after unbuckling the little spur and removing it from her heel, continued the ascent *à pied*.

Arrived at the summit she took her stand near the edge of the platform, in a position that commanded an unbroken view of the mansion of Mount Welcome, its shrubberies and surroundings.

Satisfied with the situation, she instantly commenced her *reconnoissance*.

She did not at first make use of her *lorgnette*.

Any human figures that might be moving around the house could be seen by the naked eye. It would be time enough to use the magnifying lens should there be a difficulty of identifying them.

For some moments after she had taken her stand no one made appearance near or around the dwelling. A complete tranquillity reigned over the spot. A pet *axis* deer skipping over the lawn, some pea-fowl moving amidst the shrubbery of the

parterre— their purple gorgets gaily glittering in the sun — were the only objects animate that could be seen near the house.

Farther off in the fields gangs of negroes were at work among the cane, with what appeared to be a white overseer moving in their midst. These had no interest for the observer upon the rock, and her eye, scarce resting on them for a second, returned to scan the inclosed space approximate to the dwelling, in the hope of there seeing something — form, incident, or scene — that might give her some clue to the mystery of the morning.

In respect to the former, she was not disappointed. Forms, scenes, and incidents were all offered in succession; and though they did but little to elucidate the enigma which had carried her to that aerial post of observation, they had the effect of calming, to some extent, the jealous thought that was distressing her.

First she saw a gentleman and lady step out from the house and take their stand among the statues. At the sight she felt a slight flutter of uneasiness; until through the *lorgnette* she looked upon hay-coloured hair and whiskers, enabling her to identify the owner as Smythje. This gave her a species of contentment; and her jealous spirit was still further tranquillised when the glass revealed to her the features of Kate Vaughan overspread with an expression of extreme sadness.

“Good!” muttered the delighted spy; “that tells a tale. She cannot have seen him? Surely not, or she would not be looking so woe-begone?”

At this moment another figure was seen approaching across

the *parterre* towards the two who stood among the statues. It was that of a man in a dark dress. Herbert Vaughan wore that colour.

With a fresh flutter of uneasiness, the *lorgnette* was carried back to the eye.

“Bah! it is not he. A fellow with a common face – a servant, I suppose. Very likely the valet I’ve heard of! He has brought some message from the house. Ha! they’re going in again. No, only the master. She stays. Odd enough he should leave her alone! So much for your politeness, Mr Montagu Smeithjay!”

And, with a sneering laugh as she pronounced the name, the fair spy again took the glass from her eye, and appeared for a moment to give way to the gratification which she had drawn from what she had succeeded in observing.

Certainly there were no signs of the presence of Herbert Vaughan about the precincts of Mount Welcome, nor anything to indicate that he had had an interview with his cousin. If so, it must have ended just as the Jewess might have wished: since the expression observable on the countenance of Kate showed anything but the traces of a reconciliation.

Pleased to contemplate her in this melancholy mood, her jealous rival again raised the glass to her eye.

“Ha!” she exclaimed on the instant. “Whatever is the nigger doing in front of the statue? She appears to be talking to it. An interesting dialogue, I do declare! Ha! ha! ha! Perhaps she is worshipping it? Ha! ha! She seems as much statue as it. ‘Patience upon a monument, smiling’ – Ha! ha! ha!”

“Ah, now,” resumed the hilarious observer, still gazing through the glass, “she turns from the statue. As I live, she is looking up this way! She cannot see me? No, not with the naked eye. Besides, there is only my head and hat above the edge of the rock. She won’t make them out. How steadfastly she looks this way! A smile upon her face! That, or something like it! One might fancy she was thinking of that pretty scene up here, the interesting tableau – Smythje on his knee. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Ah! what now?” she continued, interrogatively; at the same time suddenly ceasing from her laughter, as she saw the young creole adjust the scarf over her head, and glide towards the back of the house. “What can it mean? She appears bent on an excursion! Alone, too! Yes, alone, as if she intended it! See! she passes the house with stealthy step – looks towards it, as if fearing some one to come forth and interrupt her! Through the garden! – through the gate in the wall! Ha! she’s coming up the mountain!”

As the Jewess made this observation, she stepped a pace forward upon the rock, to gain a better view. The *lorgnette* trembled as she held it to her eye: her whole frame was quivering with emotion.

“Up the mountain!” muttered she. “Yes, up the mountain! And for what purpose? To meet – Herbert Vaughan?”

A half-suppressed scream accompanied the thought: while the glass, lowered by her side, seemed ready to fall from her fingers.

Volume Three – Chapter Thirteen

A Spy in Ambush

You have seen a proud bird, whose wing has been broken by the fatal bullet, drop helpless to the earth?

So fell the heart of Judith Jessuron from the high confidence that but the moment before had been buoying it up.

The sight of Kate Vaughan coming up the mountain path at once robbed it of exultation – even of contentment.

What errand could the young Creole have up there, unless that of an assignation? And with whom, but the man who was so mysteriously missing?

Her surreptitious departure from the dwelling – the time chosen, when Smythje was out of the way – her quick gait and backward glances as she stole through the shrubbery: all indicated a fear of being seen and followed.

And why should she fear either, if bent upon an ordinary errand? Mr Smythje was not her father, nor, as yet, her husband. Why should she care to conceal her intentions from him: unless indeed they were clandestine, and pointing to that very purpose which the jealous Jewess had conjectured – a rendezvous with Herbert Vaughan?

Judith felt convinced of it – so fully that, as soon as she saw the young Creole fairly started up the sloping path, she glided to

the rear edge of the platform, and looked down, expecting to see the other party to the assignation.

True, she saw no one; but this did little to still the agitation now vibrating through every nerve of her body. *He* was not in sight, but that signified not. Perhaps he was at that moment within hearing, and might be seen, but for the forest screen that covered the *façade* of the mountain?

Where was it their design to meet? Where had they named their appointment?

Judith did not doubt that there was design – jealousy did not stay to ask the question. She was convinced that an arrangement had been made, and on that very morning. What else could be the meaning of the double message? First, to demand a meeting; secondly to appoint the place. Yes, that would explain the repetition of those footmarks – that had gone twice to and fro.

What spot had they chosen for the scene of their clandestine encounter?

A sudden apprehension seized upon the spy. She might lose sight of them; and then they would enjoy their meeting in secret and uninterrupted. By Heavens, that must not be! Her spirit, now roused to the extreme pitch of jealousy, cared not for consequences. End as the scene might, she was resolved on its interruption.

The only chance of discovering the place of assignation would be to keep Kate Vaughan in sight. Perhaps Herbert was already there waiting for her? He would be there. The lover is always first

upon the ground!

Obedient to this thought, the Jewess rushed back across the platform; and once more directed her glance down the mountain.

She saw what she looked for: the snow-white snood, easily distinguishable among the dark-green foliage – now hidden as the wearer walked under the tall trees – again appearing at the open angles where the road zigzagged.

Most of the path could be seen from the summit of the rock: for, although rarely used, it had once been cleared by the axe, and formed an open tract through the timber, narrow, but perceptible from above.

Judith, still marking the movements of the kerchief, swept the path with her glance and her glass – up to the point where it reached the base of the rock and ran round to the rear. Repeatedly she scanned the track, far in advance of the climber, expecting to see some one appear – Herbert Vaughan, of course.

If aught showed among the trees – a bird fluttering in the foliage, frayed by the approach of the gentle intruder – the heart of the jealous Jewess experienced a fresh spasm of pain. Though certain she was soon to see it, she dreaded to behold the first blush of that clandestine encounter. To see them come together, perhaps rush into each other's arms, their lips meeting in the kiss of mutual love – oh, agony unendurable!

As she surmised the scene before her fancy, for a moment her proud spirit shrank, quailed, and cowed within her, and her form of bold, noble development shook like a fragile reed.

Up the steep, with springy step, climbed the young Creole, lightly as a bird upon the wing, unconscious that she was observed, and, of all others, by the rival she had most reason to dread.

After completing the numerous windings of the path, she at length arrived within some twenty paces of the rock – where the road turned round to the rear. She knew the way; and, without pausing, kept on till she stood within the *embouchure* of the sloping ravine.

Up to this point the Jewess had marked her every movement, watching her along the way. Not without some surprise had she perceived her intention to climb the Jumbé Rock – which by the direction she had taken was now evident.

The surprise soon passed, however, with a quick reflection. The summit of the rock – that place already hallowed by a love scene – was the spot chosen for the meeting!

On discovering Kate's determination to ascend the rock, which she had now divined by seeing her pass round to the rear, the Jewess stayed no longer upon the platform. That would have necessarily led to an encounter between the two. Not that Judith would have shunned it, however awkward, however *contra-tiempo*.

It was not from any feeling of delicacy that she determined on leaving the place; on the contrary, the action that followed betrayed a motive of a very opposite character.

Just where the ravine debouched upward on the platform, a

lateral cleft opened to one side. Its bottom was but a few feet below the summit level; covered with a thick growth of evergreen bushes, whose tops, rising to an equal height with the table above, completely filled the hollow with their dense frondage.

The quick eye of Judith Jessuron at once detected the convenience of this covert. There concealed, she could see without being seen. From under the grim shadow of those dark evergreens, she could behold what was like enough to wring her heart: though she was now reckless of the result.

Watching her opportunity – when the eyes of the young Creole were turned downwards – she glided into the lateral ravine, and concealed herself behind the curtain of leaves. Cowering within the covert, she awaited the ascent of her rival.

Amidst the tumult of her emotions, there was no chance to reason calmly. Suspicion of Herbert's perfidy – for it is not to be denied that the young man had shown her attentions, or, at all events, had passively permitted her to think so – suspicion of his faithlessness had now become certainty. There could be no mistake about the intended meeting between him and his cousin – at least, so Judith, blinded by her passions, believed.

There was Kate coming upon the ground, and Herbert – he would soon be after! Strange, he had not arrived first! But that had not much significance. He could not be far off; and, no doubt, would be there in good time – perhaps, overtake his sweetheart ere she could reach the summit of the rock?

Thus ran the reflections of the rival.

She listened for Herbert's voice – expecting every moment to hear him hailing from below.

She cast listless glances down the ravine, in the belief she should presently see him following frantically upon the footsteps of his cousin, and chiding himself for not being foremost at the tryst.

Volume Three – Chapter Fourteen

A Fell Purpose Defeated

Judith had as yet traced out no definite plan of action – trusting to circumstances to suggest what course she should pursue.

Only on one thing had she come to a determination – to permit both to pass up on the rock before showing herself.

She resolved, as long as possible, to restrain her instinct of revenge. She would see them meet – be witness of their mutual endearments – be sure of it; and then would be her time to launch forth into the full torrent of recrimination.

Something of this kind was the course she had shaped out for herself – still but vaguely, still dependent on chance.

The young Creole, little suspecting the proximity of her spiteful rival, ascended the ravine – close passing the spot where the latter was concealed. Altogether unconscious of being observed, she stepped lightly upon the platform; and, crossing over, stopped near the opposite edge – precisely upon the spot where she had stood during the eclipse, hallowed by such sweet remembrance.

Undoing the slight knot that had confined the kerchief under her chin, and holding it in both hands, so as to shade her eyes from the sun, she stood for some time gazing into the valley below

– not the one where lay the mansion of her father, but that in which dwelt a relative still dearer. As before, her eyes were bent upon the penn – that sombre pile which, despite the dim shadows that surrounded it, seemed to her the brightest spot upon the earth. The sun in the sky above was nothing in brightness to the light that circled there – the light of Herbert’s love. What would she not have given to have lived in that light? What to have been that favourite who now basked in it?

“Would that I could see him once again,” she murmured, “before that hour when we must meet no more: for then even the thought would be a crime! If I could only see him once – only speak with him, I feel as if I should tell him all. Though he cannot love me, I am sure he would pity me. Even that, it seems to me, would soothe – it could not cure. Oh! why did he, upon this very spot – why those glances I can never forget? I can see them now – his eyes as they were then, gazing into mine, as if something passed between us – something that sank into the very depths of my soul. Oh! Herbert! why did you so regard me? But for that it might have passed. But now – never! Ah, Herbert! Herbert!”

In her anguish the young Creole pronounced the last words aloud.

Only the name was heard by Judith Jessuron; but they fell upon her ear with fearful effect, piercing through her heart like a poisoned arrow. If she had any doubts about the purpose of Kate’s presence, that word had decided them. The Creole had now declared it with her own tongue!

On the instant a thought, dread and dire, commenced taking shape in the heart of the jealous woman. She felt her bosom stirred to a purpose bold and black as hell itself.

That purpose was nothing less than the destruction of her rival – the death of Kate Vaughan!

The circumstances suggested the mode. The young Creole was standing upon the escarpment of the cliff – scarce three feet from its edge. A slight push from behind would project her into eternity!

Not much risk either in the committal of the crime. The bushes below would conceal her body – at least, for a length of time; and, when found, what would be the verdict? What could it be, but *felo-de-se*?

The circumstances would give colour to this surmise. Even her own father might fancy it, as the consequence of his forcing her to be wedded against her will. Besides, had she not stolen surreptitiously from the house, taking advantage of an opportunity when no eye was upon her?

Other circumstances equally favoured the chances of safety. No one seemed to know that Kate had come up to the Jumbé Rock; and not a soul could be aware that she, Judith, was there: for she had neither passed nor met anyone by the way.

No eye was likely to be witness of the act. Even though the forms of the actors might be descried from the valley below, it would be at too great a distance for anyone to distinguish the character of the proceeding. Besides, it was one chance in a

thousand if any eye should be accidentally turned towards the summit of the mountain. At that hour the black labourers in the fields were too busy with their task to be allowed the freedom of gazing idly upon the Jumbé Rock.

With a fearful rapidity coursed these thoughts through the mind of the intending murderess – each adding fresh strength to her horrible purpose, and causing it to culminate towards the point of execution.

Her jealousy had long since become a strong passion, to which she had freely abandoned her soul. Already was it yearning for revenge; and now that an opportunity seemed to offer for gratifying it, she could no longer restrain herself. The chance was too tempting – the demoniac desire became uncontrollable.

Casting a glance down the ravine to make sure that no one came that way, and another towards Kate to see that her face was still turned away, Judith stole softly out of the bushes and mounted upon the rock.

Silently, as treads the tigress approaching her prey, did she advance across the platform towards the spot where stood her intended victim, utterly unconscious of the dread danger that was so nigh.

Was there no voice to warn her?

There was – the voice of Smythje!

“Aw-haw, deaw Kate! that yaw up there on the wock! Aw, ba Jawve! what a pwecious chase aw’ve had aftaw yaw! There isn’t a bweath left in my body! Haw! haw!”

Judith heard the voice, and, like a cheated tigress, was about to retreat to her lair, when Kate, half facing about, compelled her to keep her ground. With the suddenness of a thought she had changed her terrific attitude, and, as the eyes of the Creole rested upon her, she was standing with her arms hanging negligently downward, in the position of one who had just stepped forward upon the spot.

Kate beheld her with surprise, not unmixed with alarm; for the wild look that still lingered in the eye of the disappointed and balked murderess could not escape observation.

Before either could say a word, the voice of Smythje was again heard speaking from below.

“Deaw queetyaw, I am coming! Aw shall pwesently be up,” continued he; his voice, constantly changing its direction, proclaiming that he continued to advance round the rock towards the ravine in the rear.

“I beg your pardon, Miss Vaughan,” said the Jewess, with a sweeping curtsy and a cynical glance towards Kate; “most emphatically I beg your pardon. The second time I have intruded upon you in this delightful place! I assure you my presence here is altogether an accident; and, to prove that I have no desire to interfere, I shall bid you a very good morning!”

So saying, the daughter of Jacob Jessuron turned towards the downward path, and had disappeared from the platform before Kate could command words to express either her astonishment or indignation.

“Ba Jaw-aw-ve!” gasped Smythje, breathless, on reaching the platform. “Had yaw company up heaw? Shawly aw saw some one gawing out fwom the wavine – a lady in a widing dwess!”

“Miss Jessuron has been here.”

“Aw, Miss Jessuwon – that veway wemarkable queetyaw! Gawing to be mawied to the – yaw cousin, ’tis repawted. Ba Jawve, she’ll make the young fellow a fine wife, if she dawn’t want too much of haw awn way. Haw! haw! what do yaw think about it, deaw Kate?”

“I have no thoughts about it, Mr Smythje. Pray let us return home.”

Smythje might have noticed, though without comprehending it, the anguished tone in which these words were uttered.

“Aw, veway well. A’m weady to go back. But, deaw Kate, what a womp yaw are, to be shawr! Yaw thought to pway me a twick, like the young bwide in the ‘Misletaw Bough.’ Haw! haw! veway amusing! Nevaw mind! Yaw are not so unfawtunate as that fair queetyaw was. I saw yawr white scarf amid the gween twees, and that guided me to yaw seqwet hiding-place. Haw! haw!”

Little suspected Smythje how very near had been his affianced to a fate as unfortunat as that of the bride of Lovel – as little as Kate that Smythje had been her preserver.

Volume Three – Chapter Fifteen

Cynthia's Report

Cynthia was not slow in responding to the summons of the Jew, who possessed an influence over her which, if not so powerful, was also less mysterious than that wielded by the myalman, since it was the power of *money*. The mulatta liked money, as most people do, and for the same reason as most – because it afforded the means for indulging in dissipation, which with Cynthia was a habit.

Very easily did she find an opportunity for paying a visit to the penn – the more easily that her master was absent. But even had he been at home, she would have had but little difficulty in framing an excuse, or, rather, she would have gone without one.

In the days of which we write, slavery had assumed a very altered phase in the West Indies – more especially in the Island of Jamaica. The voices of Wilberforce and Clarkson had already reached the remotest corners of the Island, and the plantation negroes were beginning to hear the first mutterings of the emancipation. The slave trade was doomed; and it was expected that the doom of slavery itself would soon be declared.

The black bondsmen had become emboldened by the prospect; and there was no longer that abject submission to the wanton will of the master, and the whip of the driver, which

had existed of yore. It was not uncommon for slaves to take “leave of absence” without asking it – often remaining absent for days; returning without fear of chastisement, and sometimes staying away altogether. Plantation revolts had become common, frequently ending in incendiarism and other scenes of the most sanguinary character; and more than one band of “runaways” had established themselves in the remote fastnesses of the mountains; where, in defiance of the authorities, and despite the preventive service – somewhat negligently performed by their prototypes, the Maroons – they preserved a rude independence, partly sustained by pilfering, and partly by freebooting of a bolder kind. These runaways were, in effect, playing a *rôle*, in complete imitation of what, at an earlier period, had been the *métier* of the original Maroons; while, as already stated, the Maroons themselves, employed upon the sage but infamous principle of “set a thief to catch a thief,” had now become the detective police of the Island.

Under such conditions of slavery, the bold Cynthia was not the woman to trouble herself about asking leave of absence, nor to be deterred by any slight circumstance from taking it; therefore, at an early hour of the day, almost on the heels of Blue Dick, the messenger, she made her appearance at the penn.

Her conference with Jessuron, though it threw no light either on the whereabouts of the missing book-keeper, or on the cause of his absence, was not without interest to the Jew, since it revealed facts that gave him some comfort.

He had already learnt from Blue Dick that the Custos had started on his journey, and from Cynthia he now ascertained the additional fact, that before starting he *had taken the spell*. It had been administered in his *stirrup-cup* of “swizzle.”

This intelligence was the more gratifying, in view of the apprehensions which the Jew was beginning to feel in regard to his Spanish *employés*. If the spell should do its work as quickly as Chakra had said, these worthies would be anticipated in the performance of their dangerous duty.

Another important fact was communicated by Cynthia. She had seen Chakra that morning – just after her master had taken his departure. There had been an arrangement between her and the myal-man to meet at their usual trysting-place – contingent on the setting out of the Custos. As this contingency had transpired, of course the meeting had taken place – its object being that Cynthia might inform Chakra of such events as might occur previous to the departure.

Cynthia did not know for certain that Chakra had followed the Custos. The myal-man had not told her of his intention to do so. But she fully believed he had. Something he had let fall during their conference guided her to this belief. Besides, on leaving her, Chakra, instead of returning towards his haunt in the Duppy’s Hole, had gone off along the road in the direction of Savanna.

This was the substance of Cynthia’s report; and having been well rewarded for the communication, the mulatta returned to Mount Welcome.

Notwithstanding the gratification which her news afforded, it was far from tranquillising the spirit of Jacob Jessuron.

The absence of Herbert Vaughan still continued – still unexplained; and as the hours passed and night drew near, without any signs of his return, Jessuron – and it may be said Judith as well – became more and more uneasy about his disappearance.

Judith was puzzled as well as pained. Her suspicion that Herbert had had an appointment with his cousin Kate had been somewhat shaken, by what she had seen – as well as what she had *not* seen: for on leaving the Jumbé Rock she had not ridden directly home. Instead of doing so, she had lingered for a length of time around the summit of the mountain, expecting Herbert to show himself. As she had neither encountered him, nor any traces of him, she was only too happy to conclude that her surmises about the meeting were, after all, but fancy; and that no assignation had been intended. Kate's coming up to the Jumbé Rock was a little queer; but then Smythje had followed her, and Judith had not heard that part of the conversation which told that *his* being there was only an accident – the accident of having discovered the retreat to which the young Creole had betaken herself.

These considerations had the effect of soothing the jealous spirit of the Jewess; but only to a very slight extent: for Herbert's absence was ominous – the more so, thought Judith, as she remembered a conversation that had lately passed between them.

Nor did she feel any repentance for the dark deed she had designed, and would certainly have executed, but for the well-timed appearance of Smythje upon the scene. The words which had fallen from the lips of Kate Vaughan had been a sufficient clue to her reflections; and though he whose name she had mentioned was not present in person, the Jewess did not doubt that he, and only he, was the subject of that soliloquy.

There might have been remorse for the deed, had it been accomplished; but there was no repentance for the design. Jealousy, bitter as ever in the breast of Judith, forbade this.

Judith's return did not make the matter any clearer to Jessuron. She had no story to tell, except that which she deemed it more prudent to keep to herself. Her not having encountered Herbert during her ride, only rendered his absence more difficult of explanation.

Volume Three – Chapter Sixteen

A Day of Conjectures

Towards sunset a fresh inspection was made of the tracks, Jessuron going in person to examine them. The skilled herdsman was again questioned; and on this occasion a fresh fact was elicited; or rather a conjecture, which the man had not made before, since he had not noticed the circumstance on which he rested it.

It was some peculiarity in the sole of the shoe that had made the strange track, and which guided the herdsman to guess who was the owner. In scouring the forest paths in search of his cattle, he had observed that footmark before, or one very like it.

“If’t be de same, massa,” remarked he, in reply to the cross-questioning of the Jew, “den I knows who owns dat fut. It longs to that ere cappen of Maroons.”

“Cubina?”

“Ah – that’s jest the berry man.”

The Jew listened to this conjecture with marked inquietude; which was increased as another circumstance was brought to his knowledge: that Quaco the Maroon – who had been arrested along with Herbert on the day of his first appearance at the penn – had been lately seen in communication with the latter, and apparently in a clandestine manner. Blue Dick was the authority

for this piece of incidental intelligence.

The penn-keeper's suspicions had pointed to Cubina at an earlier hour of the day. These circumstances strengthened them.

It needed but another link to complete the chain of evidence, and this was found in the tobacco-pipe left in the hammock: a rather unique implement, with an iron bowl, and a stem made out of the shankbone of an ibis.

On being shown the pipe, the herdsman recognised it on sight. It was the "cutty" of Captain Cubina. More than once had he met the Maroon with the identical instrument between his teeth.

Jessuron doubted no longer that Cubina had been the abductor of his book-keeper. Nor Judith, either: for the Jewess had taken part in the analytical process that guided to this conclusion.

Judith was rather gratified at the result. She was glad it was no worse. Perhaps, after all, the young Englishman had only gone on a visit to the Maroon, with whom she knew him to be acquainted: for Judith had been informed of all the circumstances connected with their first encounter. What was more natural than a sort of attachment between them, resulting from such an odd introduction? Curiosity may have induced Herbert to accompany the Maroon to his mountain home; and this was sufficient to explain his absence.

True, there were circumstances not so easily explained. The presence of the Maroon at the penn – his track twice to and fro – the hurried departure of Herbert, without any previous notice either to herself or to her father – all these circumstances were

suspicious; and the spirit of the jealous Judith, though partially tranquillised by a knowledge of the new facts that had come to light, was, nevertheless, not quite relieved from its perplexity.

The same knowledge had produced an effect on the spirit of her worthy parent altogether different. So far from being gratified by the idea that his book-keeper was in the company of the Maroon captain, he was exceedingly annoyed by it. He at once remembered how pointedly Herbert had put certain questions to him, in relation to the fate of the flogged runaway – the prince. He remembered, also, his own evasive answers; and he now foresaw, that in the case of the questioner being in the company of Cubina, the latter would give him a very different account of the transaction – in fact, such a statement as could not fail to bring about the most crooked consequences.

Once in possession of those damning facts, the young Englishman – of whose good moral principles the old Jew had become cognisant – would be less likely to relish him, Jessuron, for a father-in-law. Such an awkward affair coming to his knowledge might have the effect, not only to alienate his much-coveted friendship – his equally-solicited love – but to drive him altogether from a house, whose hospitality he might deem suspicious.

Was it possible that this very result had already arisen? Was the whole scheme of the penn-keeper to prove a failure? Had murder – the blackest of all crimes – been committed in vain?

There was but little doubt left on the mind of Jacob Jessuron

that the deed was now done. Whether by the poison of Chakra, or the steel of the *caçadores*, so far as the Custos himself was concerned, that part of the programme would, by this time, be complete; or so near its completion, that no act of the instigator could stay its execution.

How, when, and where was it done? And had it been done in vain?

During the early part of that same night – and on through the midnight hours – thus interrogatively reflected the Jew.

He slept not; or only in short spells of unquiet slumber, taken in his chair – as on the night before, in the open verandah. It was care, not conscience, that kept him awake – apprehension of the future, rather than remorse for the past.

After midnight, and near morning, a thought became uncontrollable – a desire to be satisfied, if not about the last of these interrogatories, at least in relation to the former.

In all likelihood Chakra would, by that time, have returned? – would be found in his lair in the Duppy's Hole?

Why he had followed the Custos, Jessuron could not tell. He could only guess at the motive. Perhaps he, Chakra, was in fear that his spell might not be sufficient; and, failing, he might find an opportunity to strengthen it? Or, was it that he wished to be witness to the final scene? to exult over his hated enemy in the last hour of life?

Knowing, as the Jew did, the circumstances that had long existed between the two men – their mutual malice – Chakra's

deadly purposes of vengeance – this conjecture was far from improbable.

It was the true one; though he also gave thought to another – that perhaps the myal-man had followed his victim for the purpose of *tendering him*.

To ascertain that he had succeeded in the preliminary step – that of murdering him – the Jew forsook his chair couch; and, having habited himself for a nocturnal excursion, proceeded in the direction of the Duppy's Hole.

Volume Three – Chapter Seventeen

The Sick Traveller

After passing beyond the precincts of his own plantation, and traversing for some distance a by-road known as the Carrion Crow, Mr Vaughan at length reached the main highway, which runs between Montego Bay on the north and Savanna-la-Mer on the southern side of the Island.

Here, facing southward, he continued his route – Savanna-la-Mer being the place where he intended to terminate his journey on horseback. Thence he could proceed by sea to the harbour of Kingston, or the Old Harbour, or some other of the ports having easy communication with the capital.

The more common route of travel from the neighbourhood of Montego Bay to Spanish Town, when it is desired to make the journey by land, is by the northern road to Falmouth Harbour, and thence by Saint Ann's, and across the Island. The southern road is also travelled at times, without the necessity of going to the port of Savanna, by Lacovia, and the parish of Saint Elizabeth. But Mr Vaughan preferred the easier mode of transit – on board ship; and knowing that coasting vessels were at all times trading from Savanna to the ports on the southern side, he anticipated no difficulty in obtaining a passage to Kingston. This was one reason why he directed his course to the seaport

of Savanna.

He had another motive for visiting this place, and one that influenced him to an equal or greater extent. Savanna-la-Mer, as already stated, was the *assize town* of the western district of the Island – otherwise the county of Cornwall – including under its jurisdiction the five great parishes of Saint James, Hanover, Westmoreland, Trelawney, and Saint Elizabeth, and consequently the town of Montego Bay. Thus constituted, Savanna was the seat of justice, where all complaints of importance must be preferred. The process which Mr Vaughan was about to institute against the Jew was one for the consideration of a full court of assize. A surreptitious seizure of twenty-four slaves was no small matter; and the charge would amount to something more than that of mere malversation.

Loftus Vaughan had not yet decided on the exact terms in which the accusation was to be made; but the assize town being not only the seat of justice, but the head-quarters of the legal knowledge of the county, he anticipated finding there the counsel he required.

This, then, was his chief reason for travelling to Spanish Town *via* Savanna-la-Mer.

For such a short distance – a journey that might be done in a day – a single attendant sufficed. Had he designed taking the land route to the capital, then it would have been different. Following the fashion of the Island, a troop of horses, with a numerous escort of servants, would have accompanied the great Custos.

The day turned out to be one of the hottest, especially after the hour of noon; and the concentrated rays of the sun, glaring down upon the white chalky road, over which the traveller was compelled to pass, rendered the journey not only disagreeable, but irksome.

Added to this, the Custos, not very well on leaving home, had been getting worse every hour. Notwithstanding the heat, he was twice attacked by a severe chill – each time succeeded by its opposite extreme of burning fever, accompanied by thirst that knew no quenching. These attacks had also for their concomitants bitter nausea, vomiting, and a tendency towards cramp, or *tetanus*.

Long before night, the traveller would have stopped – had he found a hospitable roof to shelter him. In the early part of the day he had passed through the more settled districts of the country, where plantations were numerous; but then, not being so ill, he had declined making halt – having called only at one or two places to obtain drink, and replenish the water canteen carried by his attendant.

It was only late in the afternoon that the symptoms of his disease became specially alarming; and then he was passing through an uninhabited portion of the country – a wild corner of Westmoreland parish, where not a house was to be met with for miles alone: the highway.

Beyond this tract, and a few miles further on the road, he would reach the grand sugar estate of Content. There he might

anticipate a distinguished reception; since the proprietor of the plantation, besides being noted for his profuse hospitality, was his own personal friend.

It had been the design of the traveller, before starting out, to make Content the halfway house of his journey, by stopping there for the night. Still desirous of carrying out this design, he pushed on, notwithstanding the extreme debility that had seized upon his frame, and which rendered riding upon horseback an exceedingly painful operation. So painful did it become, that every now and then he was compelled to bring his horse to a halt, and remain at rest, till his nerves acquired strength for a fresh spell of exertion.

Thus delayed, it was sunset when he came in sight of Content. He did get sight of it from a hill, on the top of which he had arrived just as the sun was sinking into the Caribbean Sea, over the far headland of Point Negree. In a broad valley below, filled with the purple haze of twilight, he could see the planter's dwelling, surrounded by its extensive sugar-works, and picturesque rows of negro cabins, so near that he could distinguish the din of industry and the hum of cheerful voices, borne upward on the buoyant air; and could see the forms of men and women, clad in their light-coloured costumes, flitting in mazy movement about the precincts of the place.

The Custos gazed upon the sight with dizzy glance. The sounds fell confusedly on his ear. As the shipwrecked sailor who sees land without the hope of ever reaching it, so looked

Loftus Vaughan upon the valley of Content. For any chance of his reaching it that night, without being carried thither, there was none: no more than if it had been a hundred miles distant – at the extreme end of the Island. He could ride no further. He could no longer keep the saddle; and, slipping out of it, he tottered into the arms of his attendant!

Close by the road-side, and half hidden by the trees, appeared a hut – surrounded by a kind of rude inclosure, that had once been the garden or “provision ground” of a negro. Both hut and garden were ruinate – the former deserted, the latter overgrown with that luxuriant vegetation which, in tropic soil, a single season suffices to bring forth.

Into this hovel the Custos was conducted; or rather carried: for he was now unable even to walk.

A sort of platform, or *banquette*, of bamboos – the usual couch of the negro cabin – stood in one corner: a fixture seldom or never removed on the abandonment of such a dwelling. Upon this the Custos was laid, with a horse-blanket spread beneath, and his camlet cloak thrown over him.

More drink was administered; and then the attendant, by command of the invalid himself, mounted one of the horses, and galloped off to Content.

Loftus Vaughan was alone!

Volume Three – Chapter Eighteen

A Hideous Intruder

Loftus Vaughan was not long alone, though the company that came first to intrude on the solitude that surrounded him was such as no man, either living or dying, would desire to see by his bedside.

The black groom had galloped off for help; and ere the sound of his horse's hoofs had ceased to reverberate through the unclayed chinks of the cabin, the shadow of a human form, projected through the open doorway, was flung darkly upon the floor.

The sick man, stretched upon the cane couch, was suffering extreme pain, and giving way to it by incessant groaning. Nevertheless, he saw the shadow as it fell upon the floor; and this, with the sudden darkening of the door, admonished him that someone was outside, and about to enter.

It might be supposed that the presence of any living being would at that moment have pleased him – as a relief to that lugubrious loneliness that surrounded him; and perhaps the presence of a living being would have produced that effect. But in that shadow which had fallen across the floor, the sick man saw, or fancied he saw, the form of one who should have been long since dead – the form of Chakra the myal-man!

The shadow was defined and distinct. The hut faced westward. There were no trees before the door – nothing to intercept the rays of the now sinking sun, that covered the ground with a reddish glare – nothing save that sinister *silhouette* which certainly seemed to betray the presence of Chakra. Only the upper half of a body was seen – a head, shoulders, and arms. In the shadow, the head was of gigantic size – the mouth open, displaying a serrature of formidable teeth – the shoulders, surmounted by the hideous hump – the arms long and ape-like! Beyond doubt was it either the shadow of Chakra, or a duplication of his ghost – of late so often seen!

The sick man was too terrified to speak – too horrified to think. It scarce added to his agony when, instead of his shadow, the myal-man himself, in his own proper and hideous aspect, appeared within the doorway, and without pause stepped forward upon the floor!

Loftus Vaughan could no longer doubt the identity of the man who had made this ill-timed intrusion. Dizzy though his sight was, from a disordered brain, and dim as it had been rapidly becoming, it was yet clear enough to enable him to see that the form which stood before him was no phantasy – no spirit of the other world, but one of this – one as wicked as could well be found amid the phalanx of the fiends of darkness.

He had no longer either fancy or fear about Chakra's ghost. It was Chakra's self he saw – an apparition far more to be dreaded. The scream that escaped from the lips of Loftus Vaughan

announced the climax of his horror. On uttering it, he made an effort to rise to his feet, as if with the intention of escaping from the hut; but finally overpowered by his own feebleness, and partly yielding to a gesture of menace made by the myal-man – and which told him that his retreat was intercepted – he sank back upon the *banquette* in a paralysis of despair.

“Ha!” shouted Chakra, as he placed himself between the dying man and the door. “No use fo’ try ’scape! no use wha’somdever! Ef ye wa able get ’way from hya, you no go fur. ’Fore you walk hunder yard you fall down, in you track, like new-drop calf. No use, you ole fool. Whugh!”

Another shriek was the only reply which the enfeebled man could make.

“Ha! ha! ha!” vociferated Chakra, showing his shark-like teeth in a fiendish laugh. “Ha! ha! ha! Skreek away, Cussus Va’ghan! Skreek till you bust you windpipe. Chakra tell you it no use. De death ’pell am ’pon you – it am *in* you – an’ jess when dat ar sun hab cease shine upon de floor, you go join you two brodder jussuses in de oder world, wha’ you no fine buckra no better dan brack man. Dey gone afore. Boaf go by de death ’pell. Chakra send you jess de same; only he you keep fo’ de lass, ’kase you de grann Cussus, an’ he keep him bess victim fo’ de lass. De Debbil him better like dat way.”

“Mercy, mercy!” shrieked the dying man. “Ha! ha! ha!” scornfully answered Chakra.

“Wha’ fo’ you cry ‘mercy?’ D’you gib mercy to de ole myal-

man, when you 'im chain up dar to de cabbage-tree? You show no mercy den – Chakra show none now. You got die!”

“Oh! Chakra! good Chakra!” cried the Custos, raising himself upon the couch, and extending his arms in a passionate appeal. “Save me! save my life! and I will give you whatever you wish – your freedom – money – ”

“Ha!” interrupted Chakra, in a tone of triumphant exultation. “Gib me freedom, would you? You gib me dat arready. You money dis hya nigga doan' care 'bout – not de shell ob a cocoa. He hab plenty money; he get wha' he want fo' de lub spell and de death 'pell. Whugh! De only ting you hab dat he care 'bout, you no can gib. Chakra take dat 'ithout you gibbin.”

“What?” mechanically asked the dying man, fixing his eyes upon the face of Chakra with a look of dread import.

“Lilly Quasheba!” cried the monster, in a loud voice, and leering horridly as he pronounced the name. “Lilly Quasheba!” he repeated, as if doubly to enjoy the fearful effect which his words were producing. “De dawter ob de quaderoom! Da's only fair, Cussus,” continued he, in a mocking tone. “You had de modder yourseff – dat is, affer de Maroon! You know dat! It am only turn an' turn 'bout. Now you go die, Chakra he come in fo' de dawter. Ha! ha! ha!

“Whugh!” he exclaimed, suddenly changing his tone, and bending down over the form of the Custos, now prostrate upon the couch. “Whugh! I b'lieve de buckra gone dead!”

He was dead. On hearing the name “Lilly Quasheba,”

accompanied by such a fearful threat, a wild cry had escaped from his lips. It was the last utterance of his life. On giving tongue to it, he had fallen back upon the bamboo bedstead, mechanically drawing the cloak over his face, as if to shut out some horrid sight; and while the myal-man, gloating over him, was endeavouring to procrastinate his pangs, the poison had completed its purpose.

Chakra, extending one of his long arms, raised the fold from off his face; and holding it up, gazed for a moment upon the features of his hated foe, now rigid, blanched, and bloodless.

Then, as if himself becoming frightened at the form and presence of death, the savage miscreant dropped the cover quickly to its place; rose from his stooping position; and stole stealthily from the hut.

Volume Three – Chapter Nineteen

Two Speculative Travellers

The sun was sinking out of sight into the bosom of the blue Caribbean, and the twilight, long since extended over the valley below, was now spreading its purple robe around the summit of the hill, on which stood the hut. The shadows cast by the huge forest trees were being exchanged for the more sombre shadows of the coming night; and the outlines of the hovel – now a house of death – were gradually becoming obliterated in the crepuscular obscurity.

Inside that deserted dwelling, tenanted only by the dead, reigned stillness, solemn and profound – the silence of death itself.

Outside, were sounds such as suited the solemnity of the scene: the mournful *loo-who-ah* of the eared owl, who had already commenced quartering the aisles of the forest; while from the heaven above came the wild wail of the potoo, as the bird went across the fast-darkening sky, in search of its insect prey.

To these lugubrious utterances there was one solitary exception. More cheerful was the champing of the steel bit – proceeding from the horse that had been left tied to the tree – and the quick, impatient stroke of his hoof, as the animal fretted

under the stings of the musquitoes, becoming more bitter as the darkness descended.

The body of Loftus Vaughan lay upon the bamboo bedstead, just as Chakra had left it. No hand had been there to smooth that rude pillow – no friendly finger to close those eyes that were open, and saw not – those orbs glassed and coldly glaring from their sunken sockets!

As yet the attendant had not returned with that succour which would come too late.

Nor was it possible for him to get back in much less than an hour. Content, though in actual distance scarcely a mile from the hut, was full five in point of time. The slope of the mountain road was at an angle with the horizon of at least fifty degrees. There could be no rapid riding on that road – neither up nor down, upon the most urgent errand; and the black groom was not going to risk life by a broken neck, even to save the life of a Custos.

It would be a full hour, then, before the man would return. As yet only twenty minutes had passed, and forty more were to come.

But it was not fated that even for those forty minutes the body of the Custos Vaughan should be permitted to rest in peace.

Twenty minutes had scarcely elapsed after Chakra had stolen away from the side of the corpse, when there came others to disturb it, and with a rude violence almost sufficient to arouse it from the slumber of death!

Had Chakra, on leaving the hut, only taken the main road back

to Montego Bay – and that was the direction in which he intended going – he would have met two strange men. Not so strange but that they were known to him; but strange enough to arrest the attention of an ordinary traveller.

But among the proclivities of the myal-man, that of travelling along *main roads* was one in which he did not indulge, except under the most unavoidable circumstances.

Following his usual practice, as soon as he had cleared the precincts of the negro cabin, he struck off into a by-path leading through the bushes; and by so doing lost the opportunity of an encounter with two individuals, who, although of a different nationality, were as great villains as himself.

The brace of worthies thus described are already known. They were the man-hunters of Jacob Jessuron, Manuel and Andres – *caçadores de cimmarones* from the Island of Cuba.

With the object for which they were journeying along the Savanna road the reader is equally *au fait*. Jessuron's talk with them, on starting them off, has plainly proclaimed the vile intent of his two truculent tools.

All day long had these human bloodhounds been following upon the track of the Custos – now nearer to him – now further off – according to the halts which the traveller had made, and the relative speed of horseman and pedestrian.

More than once had they sighted their intended victim afar off on the white dusty road. But the presence of the stout negro attendant, as well as the broad open daylight, had deterred

them from proceeding in their nefarious purpose; and they had postponed its execution till that time which gives opportunity to the assassin – the going down of the sun.

This hour had at length arrived; and just as the real murderer was hastening away from the hut, the intending assassins were hurrying towards it, with all the speed in their power!

“*Carrambo!*” exclaimed he who was the older, and in consequence the *leader* of the two, “I shouldn’t be surprised, Andres, if the *ingeniero* was to slip out of our clutches to-night! Not far beyond lies Content, and the owner of that *ingenio* is a friend of his. You remember Señor Jacob said he would be like to put up there for the night?”

“Yes,” replied Andres, “the old Judio was particular about that.”

“Well, if he gets there before we can overhaul him, there’ll be nothing done to-night. We must take our chance on the road between that and Savanna.”

“*Carajo!*” responded Andres, with somewhat spiteful emphasis; “if it wasn’t for them ugly pistols he carries, and that big buck nigger by his side, we might have stopped his breath before this. Supposing he gets to Savanna before we can have a talk with him? what then, *compadre?*”

“Then,” answered he thus godfatherly addressed, “then our lines won’t lie in pleasant places. Savanna’s a big city; and it isn’t so easy to murder a man in the street of a town as among these trees. People prowling about have tongues, where the trees

haven't; and fifty pounds, Jamaica money, a'nt much for killing a man – more especially a *Custos*, as they call him. *Carajo!* we must take care, or we may get our necks twisted for this simple trick! These *Custos* are like our *alcaldes*– kill one, and a dozen others will spring up to prosecute you.”

“But what,” inquired Andres, who, although the younger of the two, appeared to be gifted with a greater degree of prudence than his companion – “what if we don't find a chance – even in Savanna?”

“Then,” replied the other, “we stand a good chance of losing our fifty pounds – shabby currency as it is.”

“How that, Manuel?”

“How that? Why, because the *ingeniero*, once in Savanna, will take ship and travel by sea. The *dueno* said so. If he do that, we may bid adieu to him; for I wouldn't make another sea-voyage for five times fifty pounds. That we had from Batabano was enough to last me for my life. *Carajo!* I thought it was the *vomito prieto* that had seized upon me. But for the fear of another such puking spell I'd have gone home with the rest, instead of staying in this nest of Jews and nigger-drivers; and how I'm ever to get back to Batabano, let alone making a voyage for the purpose of – ”

The Cubano refrained from finishing his speech – not from any delicacy he had about declaring the purpose, but because he knew that the declaration would be supererogatory to an associate who already comprehended it.

“In that case,” counselled the more sagacious Andres, “we

must finish our business before Savanna comes in sight. Perhaps, *compadre*, by pushing on rapidly now, we may overtake the party before they get anchored in Content?"

"You're right, *hombre*; you're right about that. Let us, as you say, push on; and, if it suits you as it does me, let our motto be, '*Noche o nunca*' (this night or never)!"

"*Vamos!*" rejoined Andres; and the assassins increased their speed, as if stimulated by the fear of losing their prey.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty

No Blood

The sun had already hidden his red disc under the sea horizon, when the man-hunters mounted the hill, and approached the hut where Custos Vaughan had been compelled to make halt, and in which he was now lying lifeless.

“*Mira, Manuel!*” said Andres, as they came within sight of the hovel, and at the same instant saw the horse standing tied to the tree; “*un cavallo!* saddled, bridled, and with *alforjas!*”

“A traveller’s horse!” rejoined Manuel, “and that very traveller we’ve been tracking. Yes! it’s the horse of the great alcalde of Mount Welcome! Don’t you remember, when we saw them before us at mid-day, that one of the horses was a bay, and the other a grey? There’s the grey, and it was on that very animal the Custos was riding.”

“Quite true, *compadre*; but where’s the other?”

“Maybe among the trees, or tied round the other side of the hut. The riders must be inside.”

“Both, do you think, Manuel?”

“Of course, both; though where Blackskin’s horse can be is more than I can say. *Carrambo!* what’s halted them here? There’s nobody lives in the ranche. I know that: I came this way about a week ago and it had no tenant then. Besides, the *ingenio* where

he was to put up for the night is just below. What, in the name of Saint Mary, has stopped them here?”

“*Por Dios, compadre!*” said the younger of the two *caçadores*, looking significantly at the saddlebags still hanging over the cantle of the Custos’s saddle. “There ought to be something valuable in those *alforjas?*”

“*Caval!* you’re right; but we mustn’t think of that just yet, *camarado!* After the other’s done, then we shall have the opportunity – I wonder whether they’re both inside? It’s very odd we don’t see the negro’s horse!”

“Ha!” rejoined Andres, apparently struck with an idea. “What if he’s gone on to the plantation for some purpose? Suppose an accident has happened to the Custos’s steed, or, *carrai!* suppose he’s himself taken sick? You remember the man we met, who told us about them ugly pistols – he said that one of the travellers – the white man – looked sick. Didn’t the fellow say he saw him puking?”

“*Por Dios!* he did. As you say, there may be something in it. If Blackskin’s out of the way, now’s our time; for there is more to be feared from that big buck nigger than his master, when it comes to a struggle. If it should prove that the Custos is sick – I hope it is so – he won’t be in a condition to make much use of his weapons; and *carrambo!* we must get hold of them before he knows what we’re after!”

“Hadn’t we better go round first?” counselled the sagacious Andres. “Let us explore the back of the hut, and see whether the

other horse is there. If he's not, then certainly the negro's gone off on some errand! We can steal through the bushes to the other side, and get right up to the walls without any danger of being seen!"

"That's our plan, *camarado*. Let's lose no time, then, for, if it be so that Blackskin's abroad, we're in luck. We mayn't find such another chance – not between here and the world's end. Follow me, *hombre!* and set down your feet as if you were stepping upon eggs with young birds in them. *Vamos!*"

So saying, the chief of the two *caçadores* skulked in among the trees, closely followed by his companion.

After making a circuit through the underwood, the assassins stole silently in towards the back of the hovel.

They saw no other horse – only the grey, which stood tied to the tree in front. The bay was gone, and in all probability his rider. Andres already congratulated himself upon his conjecture being correct: the negro had ridden off upon some errand.

This was put beyond all doubt by their perceiving the fresh tracks of a horse, leading away from the hut along the road towards Content. The hoof-prints were so plain as to be visible at some distance. The turf on the road-edge was torn up, and deeply indented – where the negro groom had urged his horse into a gallop.

The assassins saw this, even without returning to the road; and were now satisfied that the attendant was gone away. It only remained to make sure that the traveller himself was inside the

hut.

Creeping cautiously up to the wall, the *caçadores* peeped through the unclayed chinks of the cabin.

At first the darkness inside hindered them from distinguishing any object in particular. Presently, as their eyes grew more accustomed to the obscurity, they succeeded in making out the bamboo bedstead in the corner, with something that resembled the figure of a man stretched lengthwise upon it. A dark cloak covered the form, the face as well; but the feet, booted and spurred, protruding from under the cover, told that it was a man who was lying in that outstretched attitude – the man who was to be murdered!

He appeared to be sound asleep: there was no motion perceptible – not even as much as would indicate that he breathed!

Lying on the floor, at some distance from the couch, was a hat, and beside it a pair of pistols, in their holsters – as if the traveller had unbuckled them from his belt, and flung them down, before going to sleep. Even if awake he could scarce get hold of the pistols, before his assailants could spring upon him.

The assassins looked towards one another with a significant glance. The fates appeared to favour their attempt; and, as both on the instant were actuated by the same sanguinary instinct, they leaped simultaneously to their feet, drew their sharp *machetés*, and rushed together through the doorway.

“*Matelo! matelo!*” (kill him!) cried both, in the same voice,

each with a view of encouraging the other; and, as they uttered the cruel cry, they buried the blades in the body of the unresisting traveller – stabbing it repeatedly through the cloak.

Convinced that they had finished their bloody work, the murderers were about to rush out again – probably with an eye to the saddlebags outside, when it occurred to them as strange that the victim of their hired villainy should have kept so quiet. In their frenzied excitement – while dealing what they supposed to be his death-blows – they had not stopped to notice anything odd in the behaviour of the man whom they were murdering. Now that the deed was done, and they could reflect more coolly, a sudden surprise seized upon them – springing from the circumstance that the wretched man had made not the slightest motion – had neither stirred nor cried out! Perhaps the first stab had gone right through his heart: for it was so intended by Andres, who had given it. But even that does not produce instantaneous death, and the man-hunters knew it. Besides, on the blade of Andres' *macheté*, as well as that of his comrade, *there was no blood!*

It was very strange. Could the cloak or under-garments have wiped it off? Partially they might, but not altogether! Their blades were wet, but not with blood – of that they showed scarce a stain!

“It’s a queer thing, comrade,” exclaimed Manuel. “I could almost fancy — *Vaya!* Lift the cloak, and let’s have a look at him.”

The other, stepping closer to the couch, stooped forward, and

raised the fold of the camlet from the face of the murdered man.

As he did so, his hand came in contact with the cold skin, while his glance fell upon the stiffened features of a corpse – upon eyes whose dull, blank film showed that the light had long since forsaken them!

The assassin stayed not for a second look. With a cry of terror he let go the garment; and rushed towards the door, followed by his equally terrified companion.

In another moment both would have escaped outside; and perhaps have taken the back track, without thinking any more about the saddlebags; but just as Andres had set foot upon the door-sill, he saw before him something that caused him to pull up, and with a precipitancy that brought his comrade with a violent concussion against his back.

The something which had led to this sudden interruption was the presence of three men, standing in a triangular row, scarce five paces from the door. Each was holding a gun, in such position, that its dark, hollow tube was visible to the eyes of the assassin – pointing directly upon himself.

The three men were of three distinct colours – white, yellow, and black; all three known to the man-hunter and his companion. They were Herbert Vaughan, Cubina, captain of Maroons, and Quaco, his lieutenant.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty One

The Capture of the Caçadores

The black, though presumably the lowest in rank, was the first to break speech.

“No, ye don’t!” cried he, moving his musket up and down, while still keeping it levelled upon the foremost of the *caçadores*. “No, Mister Jack Spaniard, not a foot d’you set outside that door till we see what you’ve been a-doin’ ’ithin there. Steady, now, or thar’s an ounce of lead into yer garlicky inside! Steady!”

“Surrender!” commanded Cubina, in a firm, authoritative voice, and with a threatening gesture, which, though less demonstrative than that of his lieutenant, was equally indicative of determination. “Drop your *machetés*, and yield at once! Resistance will only cost you your lives.”

“Come, my Spanish worthies,” said Herbert, “you know me! I advise you to do as you’re bid. If there’s nothing against you, I promise no harm – Ha! ’ware heels!” he continued, in sharp haste, observing that the Spaniards were looking over their shoulders, as if intending to escape by the back of the hut. “Don’t attempt to run away. You’ll be caught, no matter how fast you go. I’ve got two barrels here; and each is good for a bird on the wing. Show your backs, and they’ll be preciousy peppered, I promise you.”

“*Carajo!*” hissed out the older of the *caçadores*. “What do you want with us?”

“Ay!” added the other, in a tone of innocent reproach; “what have we been doing to make all this *fanfaron* about?”

“What have you been doing?” rejoined the Maroon captain. “that’s just what we desire to know, and are determined upon knowing.”

“There is nothing to be known,” answered the man, speaking with an air of assumed simplicity; “at the least, nothing that’s very particular. We were on our way to Savanna – me and my comrade here – ”

“Stach yer palaver!” cried Quaco, becoming impatient, and pushing the muzzle of his musket within an inch of the Spaniard’s ribs. “Did ye hear the cappen tell ye to drop yer toastin’ forks and surrender? Down with ’em this minnit, I say, an’ do yer jaw-waggin’ atterwards!”

Thus threatened, either with a poke in the ribs, or, perhaps, a bullet between them, Andres sulkily let fall his *macheté* upon the floor – an action that was instantly imitated by his senior and superior.

“Now, my braves!” proceeded the black lieutenant, still holding his huge gun to the Spaniard’s breast; “lest ye mout be wantin’ to gie us leg-bail, you muss submit to be trussed a trifle. Down upon yer behinds, both o’ ye; and keep that way till I get the cords and skewers ready.”

The *caçadores* perfectly understood the order; and, perceiving

that there was no chance for disobedience, squatted down upon the floor – each on the spot where he had been standing.

Quaco now picked up the two *machetés*, placing them beyond the reach of their *ci-devant* owners. Then, handing his great gun over to the care of Cubina – who with Herbert was left to guard the prisoners – he walked off to a short distance among the trees.

Presently he returned, trailing after him a long creeping plant that resembled a piece of cord, and carrying two short sticks, each about three feet in length.

All this was accomplished with as much celerity, and in as brief a space of time, as if he had simply taken the articles from an adjacent store-room.

Meanwhile, Cubina and Herbert had kept their guns still pointed upon the two *caçadores*: for it was evident that the villains were most eager to get off; and as it was now nearly night, had the least chance been allowed them, they might have succeeded in escaping through the darkness.

Their captors were determined they should have no chance: for although neither Herbert nor Cubina could see into the obscure interior of the cabin, and were as yet ignorant of the fearful spectacle that there awaited them, they had reason to suspect that the Spaniards had either intended some dark deed, or had already committed it. They had learnt something along the road of the progress of the *caçadores*, and their mode of journeying, which, to more than one whom they met, had appeared mysterious.

The horse standing tied to the tree – caparisoned as he was for travel – that was the most suspicious circumstance of all. Though none of the three pursuers recognised the animal as belonging to Custos Vaughan, as soon as they set eyes upon it they had felt a presentiment that they had arrived too late.

The wild haste with which the Spaniards were rushing from the cabin when intercepted at the door, almost confirmed their unpleasant foreboding; and before any of the three had entered the hut, they were half prepared to find that it contained a corpse – perhaps more than one, for the disappearance of Pluto was not yet explained.

Quaco, habile in handling cordage of all kinds, more especially the many sorts of supple withes with which the trees of a Jamaica forest are laced together, soon tied the two Spaniards wrist to wrist, and ankle to ankle, as tightly as could have been done by the most accomplished gaoler. A long practice in binding runaway blacks had made Quaco an expert in that department, which, indeed, constitutes part of the professional training of a Maroon.

The captors had already entered within the cabin, now dark as death itself. For some moments they stood upon the floor, their eyes endeavouring to read the gloom around them. Silent they stood – so still, that they could hear their own breathing, with that of the two prisoners upon the floor. At length, in the corner, they could dimly make out something like the form of a man lying stretched upon a low bedstead.

Quaco, though not without some trepidation, approached it. Stooping down, he applied his hand to it with cautious touch.

“A man!” muttered he: “eyther asleep or dead.

“Dead!” he ejaculated the instant after, as, in groping about, his fingers chanced to fall upon the chill forehead – “dead and cold!”

Cubina and Herbert stepping forward, and stooping over the corpse, verified the assertion of Quaco.

Whose body was it? It might not be that of Loftus Vaughan! It might be the black attendant, Pluto!

No! it was not a black man. It needed no light to show that. The touch of the hair was sufficient to tell that a white man lay dead upon the couch.

“Catch me one of those *cocuyos!*” said the Maroon captain, speaking to his lieutenant.

Quaco stepped outside the hut. Low down along the verge of the forest were flitting little sparks, that appeared to be a galaxy of stars in motion. These were the *lampyridae*, or small fire-flies. It was not with these Quaco had to do. Here and there, at longer intervals, could be seen much larger sparks, of a golden green colour. It was the great winged beetle – the *cocuyo* (*Pyrophorus Nectilucus*.) – that emitted this lovely light.

Doffing his old hat-crown, Quaco used it as an insect-net; and, after a few strokes, succeeded in capturing a *cocuyo*.

With this he returned into the hut, and, crossing over, held it near the head of the corpse.

He did not content himself with the gold green light which the insect emits from the two eyelike tubercles on its thorax. The forest-craft of Quaco enabled him to produce a brighter and better.

Holding open the elytra with his fingers, and bending back the abdomen with his thumb, he exposed that oval disc of orange light – only seen when the insect is on the wing.

A circle of a yard in diameter was illuminated by the phosphoric glow. In that circle was the face of a dead man; and sufficiently bright was the lamp of the *cocuyo*, to enable the spectators to identify the ghastly lineaments as those of the Custos Vaughan.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Two

A Double Murder

None of the three started or felt surprise. That had been gradually passing; for before this their presentiment had become almost a conviction.

Quaco simply uttered one of those exclamations that proclaim a climax; Cubina felt chagrined – disappointed in more ways than one; while Herbert gave way to grief – though less than he might have done, had his relative more deserved his sorrow.

It was natural they should inquire into the circumstances of the Custos's death. Now, firmly believing he had been murdered, and by the *caçadores*, they proceeded to make an examination of the body.

Mystery of mysteries! a dozen stabs by some sharp instrument, and no blood! Wounds through the breast, the abdomen, the heart – all clean cut punctures, and yet no gore – no extravasation!

“Who gave the stabs? you did this, you wretches!” cried Herbert, turning fiercely upon the *employés* of Jessuron.

“*Carrambo!* why should we do such a thing, master?” innocently inquired Andres. “The alcalde was dead before we came up.”

“Spanish palaver!” cried Quaco. “Look at these blades!” he

continued, taking up the two *machetés*, “they’re wet now! ’Ta’nt blood azzactly; but somethin’ – . See,” he exclaimed, holding his *cocuyo* over the wounds, and presenting one of the *machetés* to the light, “they fit to these holes like a cork to a bottle. ’Twere they that made em, nothin’ but they, an’ you did it, ye ugly skinks!”

“By the Virgin, Señor Quaco!” replied Andres, “you wrong us. I’ll swear on the holy evangelists, *we* didn’t kill the alcalde – Custos, I mean. *Carrambo!* no. We were as much surprised as any of you, when we came in here and found him lying dead – just as he is now.”

There was an air of sincerity in the declaration of the wretch that rendered it difficult to believe in his guilt – that is, the guilt of him and his companion as the real murderers, though their intention to have been so was clear enough to Cubina.

“*Crambo!* why did you stab him?” said he to the two prisoners. “You need not deny that you did that.”

“Señor capitan,” answered the crafty Andres, who in all delicate questions appeared to be spokesman, “we won’t deny that. It is true – I confess it with shame – that we did run our blades once or twice through the body.”

“A dozen times, you John Crow!” corrected Quaco.

“Well, Señor Quaco,” continued the Spaniard, “I won’t be particular about the number. There may have been a thrust or two less, or more. It was all a whim of my comrade, Manuel, here – a little bit of a wager between us.”

“A wager for what?” asked Herbert.

“Well, you see, master, we’d been journeying, as I’ve said already, to Savanna. We saw the horse tied outside this little rancho, and thought we would go in and see who was inside. *Carrambo!* what should we see but the body of a dead man lying stretched out on the bamboos! *Santissima! Señores,* we were as much startled as you!”

“Terribly surprised, I suppose?” sarcastically spoke Cubina.

“Nearly out of our senses, I assure you, señor.”

“Go on, you wretch!” commanded Herbert. “Let us hear what tale you have to tell.”

“Well!” said the *caçadore*, resuming his narration, “after a while we got a little over our fright – as one naturally does, you know – and then Manuel says to me, ‘Andres!’ ‘What is it, Manuel?’ said I. ‘Do you think,’ said he, ‘that blood would run out of a dead body?’ ‘Certainly not,’ said I; ‘not a drop.’ ‘I’ll bet you five pesos it will,’ challenged my *camarado*. ‘Done!’ said I; and then, to settle the thing, we – I acknowledge it – did run our *machetés* through the body of the Custos – of course, we could do him no harm then.”

“Monsters!” exclaimed Herbert; “it was almost as bad as killing him! What a horrid tale! Ha! you wretches, notwithstanding its ingenuity, it’ll not save your necks from a halter!”

“Oh, señorito,” said Andres, appealingly, “we’ve done nothing to deserve that. I can assure you we are both right sorry for what

we've done. Ain't you sorry, Manuel?"

"*Carrai!* that I am," earnestly answered Manuel.

"We both regretted it afterwards," continued Andres, "and to make up for what we had done, we took the cloak and spread it decently over the body – in order that the poor *alcalde* should rest in peace."

"Liar!" cried Quaco, throwing the light of his *cocuyo* on the corpse. "You did no such thing; you stabbed him *through* the cloak. Look there!"

And as Quaco gave this indignant denial, he pointed to the cuts in the cloth to prove the falsehood of the Spaniard's statement.

"*Carrai-ai-i!*" stammered out the confounded Andres. "Sure enough there's a cut or two. Oh, now I recollect: we first covered him up. It was after we did that, we then made the bet – didn't we, Manuel?"

Manuel's reply was not heard: for at that instant the hoof-strokes of horses were heard in front of the hut; and the shadowy forms of two horsemen could be distinguished just outside the doorway.

It was the black groom, who had returned from Content, accompanied by the overseer of the estate.

Shortly after a number of negroes appeared on foot, carrying a stretcher.

Their purpose was to convey the sick man to Content.

Circumstances had occurred to make a change in the character of their duty.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Three

Chakra on the Back Track

Of the three magistrates who condemned the Coromantee, one had been slumbering in his grave for six months; the second, about that number of days; and the third – the great Custos himself – was now a corpse!

Of all three had the myal-man been the murderer; though in the case of the first two there had been no suspicion of foul play, or, at least, not enough to challenge inquest or investigation. Both had died of lingering diseases, bearing a certain resemblance to each other; and though partaking very much of the nature of a wasting, intermittent fever, yet exhibiting symptoms that were new and strange – so strange as to baffle the skill of the Jamaican disciples of Aesculapius.

About the death of either one Chakra had not felt the slightest apprehension – nor would he even had an investigation arisen. In neither murder had his hand appeared. Both had been accomplished by the invisible agency of Obi, that at this period held mysterious existence on every plantation in the Island.

With the assassination of the Custos, however, it was different. Circumstances had caused that event to be hurried, and there was danger – as Chakra himself had admitted – that the spell of Obi might be mistaken for a spell of poison. A death so sudden,

and by natural causes inexplicable, would, undoubtedly, provoke speculation, and lead to the opening and examining of the body.

Chakra knew that inside would be found something stronger than even the sap of the Savanna flower or the branched *calalue*; and that in all probability the malady to which the Custos had succumbed would be pronounced *murder*.

With this upon his mind, he was not without apprehension – his fears pointing to Cynthia.

Not that he suspected the *honesty* of his confederate; but only that her *consistency* might be too weak to withstand the cross-questioning of a coroner.

Fearing this, he had scarce got out of sight of the Custos's corpse before he commenced contriving how Cynthia's tongue could be tied – in other words, how the mulatta was to be made away with.

Upon this design his thoughts were for the moment bent.

He had less, if any, apprehension about his other accomplice in the crime. He fancied that Jessuron was himself too deeply dyed to point out the spots upon his fellow-conspirator; and this rendered him confident of secrecy on the part of the Jew.

Neither did he dwell long upon the danger to be apprehended from Cynthia, and so trivial a matter as the silencing of her tongue soon became obliterated or blended with another and far more important project, to the execution of which he was now hastening.

On leaving the hut where lay the dead body of his victim, he

had taken to by-paths and bushes. Only for a short time did he keep to these. The twilight rapidly darkening into night left the highway free to him; and, availing himself of this privilege, he returned to it – showing by his hurried steps, as he regained the road, that he was glad to escape from a circuitous path.

His face once more set towards the Trelawney hills, he walked in silence, and with a rapidity scarce credible – his long, ape-like legs, split trestle fashion to the centre of his body, enabling him to glide over the ground almost as fast as a mule could mince.

Whenever anyone appeared upon the road before him, he adopted his customary plan of betaking himself to the bushes until they had passed; but when travellers chanced to be going the same way – which more than once did happen – he avoided an encounter by making a circuit through the woods, and coming out far ahead of them.

The trouble thus taken to gain time, as well as the earnest manner with which the myal-man was hastening forward, proved that the crime just committed was not the crisis of Chakra's villainies; but that some other evil purpose – to him of equal or greater import – was yet before him; and soon to be achieved, or, at least, attempted.

Following back the main route between Savanna-la-Mer and the Bay, he at length arrived at the Carrion Crow Road, and, after traversing this for some distance, came within view of the Jumbé Rock, now glancing with vitreous sheen in the clear moonlight.

Almost as soon as he had caught sight of the well-known land-

mark, he forsook the road; and struck off into a by-path that led through the woods.

This path, trending diagonally up the side of the Jumbé mountain, and passing near the base of the rock, was the same which Herbert Vaughan and the two Maroons had traversed on their way from the Happy Valley on that same morning.

Chakra, however, knew nothing of this; nor aught either of the design or expedition of Cubina and his comrades. Equally ignorant was he of the errand on which Jessuron had dispatched his Cuban emissaries – by way of having his bow twice stringed.

The Coromantee, fancying himself the only player in that game of murder, had no idea that there were others interested in it as much as he; and although once or twice during the day he had seen men moving suspiciously behind him along the road, it had never occurred to him who they were – much less that they had been deputed to complete his own job, should the “spell” fail to prove sufficiently potent.

A somewhat long *détour*– which he had taken after leaving the hut – had brought him out on the main road behind both parties; and thus had he remained ignorant of their proximity, at the same time that he had himself escaped the observation both of the villains who intended to assassinate the Custos, and of the men who were pressing forward to save him.

Still continuing his rapid stride, Chakra climbed the mountain slope, with the agility of one accustomed to the most difficult paths.

On arriving under the Jumbé Rock, he halted – not with any intention of remaining there, but only to consider.

He looked up towards the summit of the cliff, in whose dark shadow he was standing; and then, raising his eyes still higher, he gazed for a short while upon the sky. His glance betrayed that interrogative scrutiny characteristic of one who, not being furnished with a watch, endeavours to ascertain the time. Chakra needed no watch. By day, the sun was sufficient to inform him of the hour; by night the stars, which were old and familiar acquaintances.

The sinking of Orion towards the silvered surface of the sea told him that in two hours, or thereabout, no stars would be seen.

“Kupple ob hour!” muttered he, after making the observation; “woan do – woan do. By de time I get to de Duppy Hole fo’ de lamp, an’ den back to de rock fo’ fix um – It woan do! Adam an’ his men de better part ob an hour ’fore dey ked climb up hya; an’ den it be daylight. *Daat* woan do nohow. Muss be done in de night, else we git follered, an’ de Duppy Hole no longer safe ’treat fo’ Chakra. Mussent risk dat, whasomebber a do.

“Whugh!” he continued, after reflecting a moment, and with a look of villainous chagrin overspreading his countenance; “tam a piece of cuss crooked luck fo’ me no’ be hya ’bout two hour soona. Dat ’ud ’a been s’fishint to got ’em all up in time; an’ dar wud den a been gobs o’ time to ’complish de whole bizness.

“Nebba mind!” cried he, after a pause, and rousing himself from the attitude of reflection; “nebbamind, ye old Coromantee

fool! 'morra night do jess as well. Den dar be plenty ob time. 'Taint like dey get de dead corpus ob de Cussus back to de Buff afore two, tree day; an' ef dat ere nigga fotch de news, it do no harm. Maybe do good, in de 'fusion it make 'bout de place. Nebba mind. It be all right fo' 'morr' night. 'Fore dis time ob de mornin' de Lilly Quasheba – de beau'ful dauter ob dat proud quaderoom – she sleep in de 'brace o' ole Chakra de myal-man. Whugh!

“Two hour 'fore day,” added he, after a longer pause, in which he appeared to gloat over his fiendish expectations; “two hour. I'se jess hab time go down to de Jew penn, an' den back to de Duppy Hole 'fore daylight. Dat ole sinner, he want know what's a been done; an' a want get de balance ob dat fifty poun'. A mout stan' need ob de money, now a's a-gwine ta hab a wife, an' take to de keepin' ob a 'tablishment. Ha! ha! ha!”

And as he gave utterance to the laugh, the prospective bridegroom once more put his hideous form in motion, and followed the path leading to the Jew's penn.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Four

The Vigil of Love and the Vigil of Jealousy

Yola, true to her tryst, set forth to meet her beloved Maroon. The hour of midnight was the time that had been appointed; but, in order to secure punctuality, she took her departure from Mount Welcome long before that hour – leaving herself ample time to reach the rendezvous.

Of late these after-night expeditions had become known to Miss Vaughan, and their object as well. To her young mistress, the Foolah maiden had confessed her *penchant* for Cubina – her belief of its being reciprocated; in short, had told the whole story of her love.

Common report spoke well of the young Maroon captain – Yola warmly; and as everything contributed to proclaim his intentions honourable, Miss Vaughan made no objection to his meetings with her maid.

There was something in her own sentiments to incline her to this liberal line of conduct. The young creole could sympathise with hearts that truly loved – all the better that, by experience, her own heart had learnt the bitterness of being thwarted.

At all times, therefore – so far as she was concerned – the brown-skinned sweetheart of Cubina had free leave to meet her

lover.

On that particular night permission was granted to the maid more freely than ever, since, for a certain reason, the mistress herself desired the interview to take place.

The reason may be guessed without difficulty. On the previous night Cubina had thrown out a hint, which his sweetheart had communicated to her mistress.

She had spoken of some news he might have that would interest the latter; and although there was nothing definite in that, still the hint had led to an indulgence in speculations – vague as dreams, it is true, but tinged with a certain sweetness.

Kate knew something of the romantic friendship that had been established between Herbert and Cubina. Yola had long ago told her of this – as well as the incident that had given origin to it. Perhaps that knowledge may explain the interest, almost amounting to anxiety, she now felt to ascertain the nature of the communication which the Maroon had hypothetically promised to make.

It was only in the afternoon of the day – after the excursion to the Jumbé Rock – that the maid had imparted this piece of intelligence to her mistress: and the altered demeanour of the latter during the rest of the evening proved how interesting it must have been to her. Her anxiety was scarce of the sorrowful kind, but rather tinged with an air of cheerfulness – as if some secret instinct had infused into her spirit a certain buoyancy – as if on the dark horizon of her future there was still lingering, or

had suddenly arisen, a faint ray of hope.

Yola had not told all she knew. She said nothing of certain surmises that had escaped the lips of Cubina. With a woman's tact, she perceived that these, being only conjectural, might excite false hopes in the breast of her young mistress: for whom the girl felt a true affection. In fear of this, she kept back the allusion to the marriage of Herbert and Judith, and its probable failure, which Cubina had so emphatically illustrated by a proverb.

Yola intended this reserve to be only temporary – only until after her next meeting with her lover – from which she hoped to return with a fuller power of explaining it.

Neither had she made known to her mistress the circumstance of having seen Cynthia in company with the Jew, and the conference that had occurred between them, overheard by herself and Cubina – much less the suspicions to which the latter had given expression.

Under the apprehension that a knowledge of these strange facts and suspicions might trouble her young mistress, she had withheld them.

The young Creole had not retired to rest when Yola took her departure from the house, nor yet for long after. Anxious to know the result of the interview between her maid and the Maroon, she remained awake within her chamber – burning the midnight lamp far into the hours of morning.

Notwithstanding the more than permission that had been accorded to her, the princess-slave stole softly from the house –

passing the precincts of the mansion, and traversing the grounds outside with considerable caution. This partly arose from the habit of that half-barbaric life, to which, in her own country and from earliest childhood, she had been accustomed. But there was also, perhaps, some suspicion of present danger, or, at all events, that fear of interruption natural to one on the way to keep an appointment of the kind towards which she was now betaking herself.

From whatever motive sprung her cautious behaviour, it was not sufficient to prevent her departure from being observed; nor did it enable her to perceive that thing of woman's shape that, like an evil shadow, flitted after her across the fields, and went following her along the forest path.

Whenever she turned it also turned, only not preserving an erect bearing, nor going in the same continuous gait; but every now and then pausing upon the path, sometimes in crouched attitude, as if seeking concealment under the shadow of the bushes – then gliding rapidly onward to make stop as before.

After having got beyond the surroundings of the house, and some distance into the pimento forest, the Foolah walked with more freedom – as if no longer fearing interruption. She was, therefore, less likely to perceive that ill-omened shadow, that still continued on her track – following, as before, by a series of progressive traverses, and in death-like silence.

On reaching the glade, the young girl advanced towards the *ceiba*, and took her stand within its shadow – on a spot, in her

eyes, “hallowed down to earth’s profound, and up to heaven.”

She merely glanced round to satisfy herself that Cubina was not there. She scarce expected him yet. The hour, though late, was earlier than the time appointed. It had not yet gone twelve – else she would have heard the plantation clock announcing it.

Allowing her eyes to drop to the ground at her feet, she stood for some minutes buried in a reverie of reflection – a sweet reverie, as befitted her situation of pleasant expectancy.

She was startled from this abstraction by the behaviour of a bird – a scarlet tanager, that rose, fluttering and frightened, out of a small clump of bushes about ten paces from the *ceiba*, and in which it had been reposing.

The bird, uttering a cry of alarm, forsook the shelter, and flew off into the forest.

Yola could see nothing that should have caused the creature to make so abrupt a departure from its roosting-place. Her own presence could scarce have been the cause: since she had been some minutes upon the ground, and standing in tranquil *pose*. Some of its natural enemies had frayed the bird? Perhaps a rat, an owl, or a serpent? Thus reasoned she; and was so satisfied.

If, instead of contenting herself with this conjecture, she had stepped ten paces forward, and looked into the little copse, she would have seen there something very different from any of the three creatures her fancy had conjured up. She would have seen the form of a woman crouching within the shadow, with features set in suppressed rage, and eyes glowing indignantly upon herself.

Easily, too, would she have recognised the face as that of her fellow-slave, Cynthia!

But she saw it not, though Cynthia saw her – though for hours did the two remain in this singular juxtaposition – one occupied with the vigil of love, the other absorbed in the vigil of jealousy.

For long hours did the Foolah maid wait for the coming of her beloved Cubina – her ear keenly bent to catch any sound that might announce his approach; her bosom every moment becoming more and more a prey to painful impatience.

Equally long stayed the spy in her place of concealment – equally suffering torture from jealous imaginings.

To both it was a relief, when a footstep upon the path, and a rustling of branches, proclaimed the approach of some one towards the spot. It was but a momentary relief, mocking the anticipations of both – thwarting the joy of the one, and the vengeful design of the other.

Instead of the expected lover, a very different personage made his appearance; and almost at the same instant another, coming from the opposite side.

Both, at the same time, advanced towards the middle of the glade; and, without exchanging a word, stopped face to face near the *ceiba*, as if they had met by appointment.

They were out in the open ground, and under the full light of the moon. Both were men, and the faces of both could be distinctly seen.

Yola knew only one of them, and the sight of him hindered

her from staying to look upon the other. She merely glanced at a countenance that was fearful – though not more fearful to her than the one she had already recognised, and which had at once determined her to get away from the ground.

Keeping the great trunk between herself and the new comers, and retreating silently under its shadow, she glided back into the underwood of the forest, and was soon far from the presence of the two intruders, who had brought her long and vain vigil to such an unsatisfactory termination.

Cynthia could not have followed her example, even had she been so inclined. The two men had stopped within six paces of the spot in which she lay concealed. On every side of it the ground was clear of cover, with the moon shining full upon it. A cat could not have crept out of the copse without attracting the attention of one or the other.

Cynthia knew both the men – was the confederate of both – though not without fearing them.

At first sight of them she would have discovered herself, but disliked to come under the observation of her rival. Afterwards, when the two men had entered into conversation, she was held in her place by a dread of a different kind. She had already overheard part of what they were saying; and she feared they might punish her for eavesdropping, involuntary though it was.

Better for Cynthia had she then declared herself; but dreaming not of discovery, or the fearful fate that might be involved in it, she determined to be still, and listen to the dark dialogue to its

ending.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Five

Cynthia in Trouble

The two men who had thus interrupted the silent tableau by the *ceiba* tree were Jacob Jessuron and Chakra the Coromantee.

Just at the time that Chakra departed from the Jumbé Rock to pay his nocturnal visit to the Jew, the latter was leaving his penn to honour the Coromantee with a similar call.

As both were travelling the same path, and in adverse directions, it was more than probable – a necessity, in fact – that each should meet the other before reaching the end of his journey. Also, as the glade, where stood the great *ceiba*, was on the same path, and midway between the Jumbé Rock and the Jew's penn, it was natural this encounter should take place not far from that noted trysting-place. In effect, it occurred within the glade: the two men having entered it almost at the same instant of time.

The Jew had got first into the open ground, and was first seen. The myal-man might have had these advantages had he wished: he had been the first to arrive on the edge of the opening; but, true to his instinct of caution, he had kept under cover until making a reconnoissance, in which he saw and recognised his advancing *vis-à-vis*.

They met near the middle of the glade, just outside the shadow

of the great tree, stopping face to face when within a pace or two of each other. Not the slightest salutation was exchanged between the two men – any more than if they had been two tigers who had just come together in the jungle. The secret compact between them precluded the necessity for compliment or palaver. Each understood the other; and not a word was spoken to introduce the dialogue except that which was pertinent to the business between them.

“Well, goot Shakra! you hash news for me?” interrogated the Jew, taking the initiative in the conversation. “You hash been in the direction of Savanna? Ish all right on the road?”

“Whugh!” vociferated the myal-man, throwing out his breast and jerking up his shoulders with an air of triumphant importance. “All right, eh? Well, not azzackly on de road, but by de side ob daat same, dar lie a corp’, wich by dis time oughter be as cold as de heart ob a water-millyum, an’ ’tiff as – ’tiff as – as – de ’keleton ob ole Chakra. Ha! ha! ha!”

And the speaker uttered a peal of fierce laughter at the simile he had had so much difficulty in conceiving; but which, when found, recalled the sweet triumph of his vengeance.

“Blesh my soul! Then it ish all over?”

“Daat’s all ober – Ise be boun’.”

“And the shpell did it? There wash no need – ”

With a start the Jew paused in his speech, as if about to say something he had not intended; and which had been very near escaping him.

“There wash no need – no need for you to haf gone after?”

This was evidently not the question originally upon his tongue.

“No need!” repeated Chakra, a little puzzled at the interrogatory; “no need, so far as dat war consarned. Ob coos de ’pell did de work, as a knowd it wud, an’ jess as a told you it wud. ’Twan’t fo’ dat a went arter, but a puppos ob my own. Who tole ye, Massr Jake, dat I wor gone arter?”

“Goot Shakra, I washn’t quite sure till now. The wench Cynthy thought ash how you had followed the Cushtos.”

“Whugh! dat ’ere gal talk too much. She hab her tongue ’topped ’fore long. She *muss* hab her tongue ’topp, else she gess boaf o’ us in trouble. Nebba mind! A make dat all right too – by-’m-bye. Now, Massr Jake, a want dat odder twenty-five pound. De job am finish, an’ de work am done. Now’s de time fo’ de pay.”

“That ish right, Shakra. I hash the monish here in red gold. There it ish.”

As the Jew said this, he passed a bag containing gold into the hands of Chakra.

“You’ll find it ish all counted correct. Twenty-five poundsh currenshy. Fifty pounsh altogether, ash agreed. A deal of monish – a deal of monish, s’ help me!”

Chakra made no reply to this significant insinuation; but, taking the bag, deposited it in the lining of his skin *kaross*, as he did so giving utterance to his favourite ejaculation, “Whugh!” the meaning of which varied according to the accentuation given

to it.

“And now, goot Shakra!” continued the Jew: “I hash more work for you. There ish another shpell wanted, for which you shall have another fifty poundsh; but firsht tell me, hash you seen anyone to-day on your travels?”

“Seed any one, eh? Well, dat am a quessin, Massr Jake. A seed a good when on my trabbels: more’n seed me, I’s be boun’.”

“But ash you seen anyone ash you know?”

“Sartin a did – de Cussus fo’ one, tho’, by de gollies! a hardly wud a knowd him, he wa’ so fur gone – moas to de bone! He am almos’ as much a ’keleton as ole Chakra hissself. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Anybody elshe that you hash a knowledge of?”

“No – nob’dy – neery one as a know anythin’ bout ’ceppin’ de Cussus’ ’tendant. A seed odder men on de road, but dey wur fur off, and a keep dem fur off as a kud. Oa! yes, dar wa’ one who comed near – mose too near – him I knowd. Dat wa’ one ob dem ’ere Trelawney Maroon – Quaco dey call um.”

“Only Quaco, you shay? You hash seen nothing of hish capt’in, Cubina, nor of a young white gentlemansh along with him?”

“Neider de one nor de todder ob dem two people. Wha fo’ you ask dat, Massr Jake?”

“I hash a good reason, Shakra. The young fellow I speaksh of ish a book-keeper of mine. He hash left the penn thish very morning. I don’t know for why, or whither he ish gone; but I hash a reason to think he ish in company with Capt’in Cubina. Maybe not, and maybe he’ll be back again; but it looksh suspicious. If

he'sh gone for goot, the shpell will be all for nothingsh. 'S'help me, for nothingsh!"

"Dat's a pity! I'm sorry fo' dat, Massr Jake. A hope he no gone."

"Whether or not, I mushn't go to shleep about it. There ish another shpell that will be more needed now ash ever."

"De Obi am ready. Who d'ye want um set fo' nex'?"

"For this rashcal Cubina."

"Ah, dat ere in welkum. De god do him bess to 'pell *him*."

"He hash trouble for me. It ish not like to come so soon now, ash the Cushtos ish out of the way. But who knowsh how soon? And better ash the shpell should be set at once. So, good Shakra, if you can manish to do for Cubina in as short a time ash you hash done the Cushtos, there ish another fifty poundsh ready for you."

"A'll do ma bess, Massr Jake, to earn you money. All do ma bess – de bess can do no mo."

"That ish true, goot Shakra! Don't you think this wench, Cynthy, can help you?"

"Not a bit ob help from dat quar'r – not worth a 'traw for 'pelling Cubina. He no let de m'latta come nigh o' 'im fo' no considerashun. He sick ob de sight o' her. Besides, dat gal, she know too much now. She one ob dese days fotch de white folk to de Duppy Hole. Dat nebba do. No furrer use now. She hab serb her turn, an' mus' be got rid ob – muss go 'long wi' de odders – long wi' de Cussus. Da's my way – de only way keep a woman tongue tied, am to 'top 'um waggin' altogedder. Whugh!"

After uttering the implied threat, the monster stood silent a moment, as if reflecting upon some mode by which he could make away with the life of the mulatta.

“You think, Shakra, you ish likely to find somebody elshe to assist you?”

“Nebba fear, Massr Jake. Leab dat to ole Chakra – ole Chakra an’ ole Obi. Dey do de bizness widout help from any odder.”

“Fifty poundsh, then, Shakra. Ach! I’d give twice the monish – yes, s’help me, ten times the monish – if I knew it wash all right with young Vochan. Ach! where ish he gone?”

The expression of bitter chagrin, almost anguish, with which the villainous old Jew, for at least the tenth time on that day, repeated this interrogative formula, told that, of all the matters upon his mind, the absence of his book-keeper was the one uppermost, and deemed by him of most importance.

“Blesh my soul!” continued he, lifting his umbrella high in air, and continuing to hold it up, “Blesh my soul! if he ish gone for goot, I shall have all thish trouble for nothing – all the cr-r – inconvenience!”

It was “crime” he was about to have said; but he changed the word – not from any delicacy in the presence of Chakra, but rather to still a shuddering within himself, to which the thought had given rise.

“Nebba mind, Massr Jake,” said his confederate, encouragingly; “you hab got rid ob an enemy – same’s masseff. Dat am someting, anyhow; an’ a promise you soon get shot ob

one odder. A go at once 'bout dat berry bizness.”

“Yesh! yesh! soon, goot Shakra, soon ash you can! I won't keep yoush any longer. It ish near daylight. I musht go back, and get some shleep. S'help me! I hash not had a wink thish night. Ach! I can't shleep so long ash he'sh not found. I musht go home, and see if there ish any newsh of him.”

So saying, and turning on his heel, without “good night,” or any other parting salutation, the Jew strode abstractedly off, leaving Chakra where he stood.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Six

A Fatal Sneeze

“Whugh!” ejaculated the Coromantee, as soon as his confederate was out of hearing; “dar’s someting heavy on de mind ob dat ere ole Jew – someting wuss dan de death ob de Cussus Va’gh’n. Wonder now wha’ em be all ’bout? ’Bout dis yar book-keeper a knows it am. But wha’ ’bout him? A’ll find out ’fore a’m many hour older. Daat a’ll do. Gollies! A muss go an’ git some sleep too. A’m jess like de Jew masseff – han’t had ne’er a wink dis night, nor de night afore neider; nor doan expeck get de half ob a wink morrer night! Dat will be night ob all odder! Morrer night, if all ting go well, Chakra he no sleep him ’lone – he sleep no more by hisseff – he hab for him bedfellow de beauty ob all de Island ob Jamaica. He sleep wi’ de Lilly – .”

Ere the full name of the victim threatened with this horrid fate had passed from his lips, the menace of the myal-man was interrupted.

The interruption was caused by a sound proceeding from the little clump of bushes close to where Chakra stood.

It sounded exactly as if some one had sneezed – for it was that in reality. Cynthia had sneezed.

She had not done so intentionally – far from it. After what she had heard, it was not likely she would have uttered any sound to

proclaim her presence.

At that instant she would have given all she possessed in the world – all she ever hoped to possess, even the love of Cubina – to have been miles from the spot, within the safe kitchen of Mount Welcome – anywhere but where she then was.

Long before the conversation between the Jew and Chakra had come to a close, she had made up her mind never to see the myal-man again – never willingly. Now an encounter appeared inevitable: he must have heard the sneeze!

The wretched woman reasoned aright – he had heard it.

A fierce “whugh!” was the ejaculation it called forth in response; and then the myal-man, turning suddenly in the direction whence it appeared to have proceeded, stood for a short time silent, and listening.

“By golly!” said he, speaking aloud; “dat ’ere soun’ berry like a ’neeze! Some ob dem ’ere trees ha’ been a-takin’ snuff. A’d jess like know wha’ sort ob varmint made dat obstropolis noise. It wan’t a bush – dat’s sartin. Nor yet wa’ it a bird. What den? It wan’t ’t all onlike de ’neeze ob a nigga wench! But what wud a wench be a-doin’ in tha? Da’s what puzzles me. Lookee hya!” added he, raising his voice, and addressing himself to whoever or whatever might have produced the noise; “les’s hear dat ag’in, whosomebber you be! Take anodder pince ob de snuff – louder dis time, so a can tell whedder you am a man or whedder you be femmyne.”

He waited for a while, to see if his speech would elicit a

response; but none came. Within the copse all remained silent, as if no living thing was sheltered under its sombre shadows.

“You wan’t ’neeze agin,” continued he, seeing there was no reply; “den, by golly, a make you, ef you am what a ’speck you is – someb’dy hid in dar to lissen. No snake can’t a ’neeze dat way, no’ yet a lizzart. You muss be eyder man, woman, or chile; an’ ef you be, an’ hab heerd wha’s been say, by de great Accompong! you life no be worth – Ha! ha!”

As he entered upon this last paragraph of his apostrophe he had commenced moving towards the copse, which was only six paces from his starting-point. Before the speech was completed he had passed in among the bushes; and, bending them over with his long, ape-like arms, was scrutinising the ground underneath.

The exclamation was called forth by his perceiving the form of a woman in a crouching attitude within the shadow.

In another instant he had seized the woman by the shoulder, and with a quick wrench jerked her into an erect position.

“Cynthy!” he exclaimed, as the light fell upon the countenance of the mulatta.

“Yes, Chakra!” cried the woman, screaming ere she spoke; “it’s me, it’s me!”

“Whugh! Wha’ you do hya? Youb been lissenin’. Wha’ fo’ you lissen?”

“Oh, Chakra! I did not intend it. I came here – ”

“How long you been hya? Tell dat quick!”

“Oh, Chakra – I came – ”

“You hya ’fore we came in’ de glade. Needn’t axe dat. You no kud git hya atterwad. You heer all been said? You muss hab heer it.”

“Oh, Chakra, I couldn’t help it. I would have gone – ”

“Den you nebba hear nodder word more. Won’t do let you go now. You come hya; you stay hya. You nebba go out ob dis ’pot. Whugh!”

And giving to the monosyllable an aspirate of fierceness, that caused it to sound more like the utterance of a wild beast than a human being, the monster threw out his long dark arms, and rushed towards his intended victim.

In another instant his long muscular fingers were clutched round the throat of the mulatta, clamping it with the tightness and tenacity of an iron garotte.

The wretched creature could make no resistance against such a formidable and ferocious antagonist. She tried to speak; she could not even scream.

“Chak-r-a, de-ar Chak-r-r-a,” came forth in a prolonged thoracic utterance, and this was the last articulation of her life.

After that there was a gurgling in her throat – the death-rattle, as the fingers relaxed their long-continued clutch – and the body, with a sudden sound, fell back among the bushes.

“You lie da!” said the murderer, on seeing that his horrid work was complete. “Dar you tell no tale. Now for de Duppy Hole; an’ a good long sleep to ’fresh me fo’ de work of de morrer night. Whugh!”

And turning away from the image of death he had just finished fashioning, the fearful Coromantee pulled the skirts of his skin mantle around him, and strode out of the glade, with as much composure as if meditating upon some abstruse chapter in the ethics of Obi.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Seven

Chakra Trimming his Lamp

Day was dawning when the tiger Chakra returned to his lair in the Duppy's Hole. With him night was day, and the dawn of the morn the twilight of evening.

He was hungry: having eaten only a morsel of food since starting out on his awful errand, just twenty-four hours ago.

The remains of a pepper-pot, still unemptied from the iron skillet in which it had been cooked, stood in a corner of the hut.

To warm it up would require time, and the kindling of a fire. He was too much fatigued to be fastidious; and, drawing the skillet from its corner, he scooped up the stew, and ate it cold.

Finally, before retiring to rest, he introduced into his stomach something calculated to warm the cold pepper-pot – the “heel-tap” of a bottle of rum that remained over from the preceding night; and then, flinging himself upon the bamboo bedstead, so heavily that the frail reeds “scrunched” under his weight, he sank into a profound slumber.

He lay upon his hunched back, his face turned upward. A protuberance on the trunk of the tree, of larger dimensions than that upon his own person, served him for a bolster – a few handfuls of the silk cotton laid loosely upon it constituting his pillow.

With his long arms extended loosely by his side – one of them hanging over until the murderous fingers rested upon the floor – and his large mouth, widely agape, displaying a double serrature of pointed, shining teeth, he looked more like some slumbering ogre than a human being.

His sleep could not be sweet. It was far from being silent. From his broad, compressed nostrils came a sonorous snoring, causing the cartilage to heave outward, accompanied by a gurgling emission through his throat that resembled the breathing of a hippopotamus.

Thus slumbered Chakra throughout the livelong day, dreaming of many crimes committed, or, perhaps, only of that – the sweetest crime of all – which was yet in abeyance.

It was near night when he awoke. The sun had gone down – at least, he was no longer visible from the bottom of the Duppy's Hole – though some red rays, tinting the tops of the trees upon the summit of the cliff, told that the orb of day was still above the horizon.

Extended on his couch, Chakra saw not this. His hut was dark, the door being shut close; but through the interstices of the bamboos he could see to some distance outside, and perceived that twilight was fast deepening among the trees. The cry of the bittern, coming up from the lagoon, the shriek of the *potoo*, heard through the sough of the cataract, and the hoot of the great-eared owl – all three true voices of the night – reaching his ears, admonished him that his hour of action had arrived.

Springing from his couch, and giving utterance to his favourite ejaculation, he set about preparing himself for the adventure of the night.

His first thought was about something to eat, and his eyes fell upon the skillet, standing where he had left it, near the middle of the floor. It still contained a quantity of the miscellaneous stew – enough for a meal.

“Woan do eat um cold,” he muttered, proceeding to kindle a fire, “not fo’ de second time. Gib me de ager chills, it wud. Mus’ fortify de belly wi’ someting warm – else a no be fit to do de work dat am to be done.”

The kindling of the fire, the warming up of the pepper-pot, and its subsequent consumption, were three operations that did not take Chakra any very great amount of time. They were all over just as the darkness of night descended over the earth.

“Now fo’ get ready de signal,” soliloquised he, moving about over the floor of his hut, and looking into crannies and corners, as if in search of some object.

“As de good luck hab it, dar be no moon to-night – leastways, till atter midnight. Atter den a doan care she shine as bright as de sun hisseff. Dare be plenty ob dark fo’ Adam to see de signal, and plenty fo’ de odder bizzness at Moun’ Welc’m’. Dar’ll be light ’nuf ’bout dat ere ’fore we takes leab o’ de place. Won’t dat be a blaze? Whugh!

“Wha hab a put dat ere tellemgraff lamp?” said he, still searching around the hut. “I’se fo’got all ’bout wha it am, so long

since a use de darned ting. Muss be un'er de bed. Ya – hya it am!"

As he said this, he drew from under the bamboo bedstead a gourd shell, of nearly egg shape, but of the dimensions of a large melon. It had a long, tapering shank – part of the fruit itself, where the pericarp narrowed towards its peduncle – and through this a string had been passed, by which the gourd could be suspended upon a peg.

Holding it by the handle, he raised the shell to the light of his lard lamp, already kindled, and stood for some time silently inspecting it.

The gourd was not perfect – that is, it was no longer a mere empty shell, but a manufactured article, containing within a most singular apparatus. On one side appeared a hole, several inches in diameter, and cut in a shape nearly pyramidal, the base being above the thick end of the oval, and the apex, somewhat blunt, or truncated, extending towards the shank.

Up to the level of the opening the shell was filled with lard, in the middle of which appeared a wick of silk cotton staple; and behind this were two bits of broken looking-glass, set slanting to each other.

The whole apparatus bore some resemblance to a reflecting lamp; and that was in reality the purpose for which the rude contrivance had been constructed.

After a careful examination, its owner appeared to be satisfied that it was in good order; and having "trimmed" it, by adding a little fresh lard, and straightening up the wick, he set the

lamp aside, and proceeded with the preparation of some other paraphernalia necessary for the night's expedition.

A stick, some four feet in length, and a piece of strong cord, were the next articles procured; and these were also put on one side.

To these succeeded a long-bladed knife, and a stout pistol, with flint lock, which the Coromantee loaded and primed with great care. Both were stuck behind a belt which he had already buckled around his ribs, under the skin kaross.

“A doan ’ticipate,” said he, as he armed himself with these formidable weapons, “dar a-gwine be much need fo’ eider ob ’em. Dar ain’t nob’dy down dar am like show fight. Dat ere gran’ buckra ob late come to Moun’ Welc’m’ de say he be ’fraid ob de shadda ob danger; an’ as fo’ de brack folks, de look ob dese weapon be suffishient fo’ dem. Ef dat woan do, den a trow off my mask. De sight ob ole Chakra, dat dribe ’em into fits. Dat send ebbery nigga on de plantashun into de middle ob next week. Whugh!”

Another weapon appeared to be wanting, in the shape of a large black bottle, containing rum. With this the Coromantee soon supplied himself, drawing one out from its secret hiding-place, and holding it before the light, to make sure that it was full.

“Dis bottle,” said he, as he thrust it into a pouch in his kaross, “I hab kep fo’ dis ’pecial ’casion; it am de bess weapon fo’ my puppos. When dem fellas get dar dose ob de rum, dar’ll be no back out in ’em den. Golly!” he added, glancing out, and seeing

that it was now quite dark, “a muss be gone fro’ hya. By de time ole Adam sees de tellemgraff, an’ gets ’cross dem ’ere mountains, it be late ’nuf for de bizness to begin.”

Finishing with this reflection, the sable conjuror took up his “telegraphic apparatus,” and, stepping over the threshold, hurried away from the hut.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Eight

Setting the Signal

The short tropic twilight had passed, and night had descended upon the Island of Jamaica. It promised to be a night of deepest darkness. The moon would not rise before midnight; and even then she might not be seen, as the canopy was covered with a thick curtain of black cumulus clouds, through which neither star nor speck of blue sky was visible.

Alike lay valleys and mountains shrouded in amorphous darkness; and even the Jumbé Rock – the highest and most conspicuous summit for miles around – was wrapped in complete obscurity. Its vitreous flanks no longer sparkled in the light, since there was none; and its dark mass was so dimly outlined against the equally sombre background of the sky, as to be invisible from the valley below.

The form of a man, groping his way up the narrow ravine that debouched upon the summit of the rock, could not have been distinguished, much less the black hue of his skin, the deformity that marked his figure, or the hideous aspect of his countenance. And yet a man so characterised climbed up there, about half-an-hour after the going down of the sun.

It need scarce be said that that man was Chakra, the Coromantee. Who else would be seeking the Jumbé Rock at that

hour?

What was his errand up there? Let the sequel declare.

On setting foot upon the platform, he undid the knot that fastened the skin mantle over his shoulders; and then taking off the garment, he spread it out upon the rock.

The stick he had brought up with him he placed along one edge, and there made it fast with some pieces of string. When this was accomplished, he lifted both stick and cloak from the rock, and, proceeding to the palm, he laid the stick transversely across the stem, at about the height of his own hand, and then lashed it fast to the tree.

The kaross now hung down the stem, in a spread position, the transverse stick keeping it extended to its full width.

While arranging it thus, Chakra evidently had an eye to the direction – that is, the plane represented by the spread garment had one face fronting the valley of Mount Welcome and the cultivated lowlands between that and Montego Bay, while the reverse side was turned towards the “black grounds” of Trelawney – a tract of wild country in which not a single estate, plantation, or penn had been established, and where no such thing as a white settlement existed. In this solitude, however, there were *black* colonies of a peculiar kind; for that was the favourite haunt of the absconded slave – the lurking-place of the outlaw – the retreat of the runaway.

There, even might the assassin find an asylum, secure from the pursuit of justice. There had he found it: for among those

dark, forest-clad mountains more than one murderer made his dwelling.

Robbers there were many – even existing in organised bands, and holding the authorities of the Island at defiance.

All these circumstances were known to Chakra; and some of the robbers, too, were known to him – some of the fiercest who followed that free calling.

It was to communicate with one of these bands that the preparations of the myal-man were being made. Chakra was preparing the signal.

Satisfied that the skin cloak was extended in the proper direction, the Coromantee next took up his reflector-lamp; and having attached it against that side of the kaross facing towards the mountains, he took out his flint, steel, and tinder, and, after striking a light, set the wick on fire.

In an instant the lamp burned brightly, and the light, reflected from the bits of looking-glass, might have been seen from the back country to the distance of many miles; while, at the same time, it was completely screened from any eye looking from the side of the plantations. The projecting edges of the calabash hindered the rays from passing to either side; while the interposed disc of the spread kaross further prevented the “sheen” that otherwise might have betrayed the presence of the signal.

It was not meant for the eyes of honest men in the direction of Montego Bay, but for those of the robbers among the far hills

of Trelawney.

“Jess de sort ob night fo’ dem see it,” muttered the myal-man, as with folded arms foe stood contemplating the light. “De sky brack as de Debbil’s pitch-pot. Ole Adam, he sure hab some ’un on de look-out. De sure see ’im soon.”

Chakra never looked more hideous than at that moment.

Stripped of the ample garment, that to some extent aided in concealing his deformity a scant shirt, of coarse crimson flannel, alone covering the hunch; most part of his body naked, exposing to the strong light of the reflector his black corrugated skin; the aspect of his ferocious features compressed by the snake-encircled turban upon his temples, the long-bladed knife and pistol appearing in his waist-belt – all combined to produce a fearful picture, that could not fail to strike terror into whoever should have the misfortune to behold it.

Standing immovable under the glare of the lamp, his misshapen figure projected across the surface of the summit platform, he might easily have been mistaken for a personification of the fiend – that African fiend – after whom the rock had been named.

In this situation he remained, observing perfect silence, and with his eyes eagerly bent upon the distant mountains, dimly discernible through the deep obscurity of the night. Only for a few minutes was this silence preserved, and the attitude of repose in which he had placed himself.

“Whugh!” he exclaimed, dropping his arms out of their fold,

as if to set about some action. "I know'd dey wud soon see um. Yonner go' de answer!"

As he spoke, a bright light was seen suddenly blazing up on the top of a distant eminence, which was suddenly extinguished.

After a short interval another, exactly similar, appeared in the same place, and in a similar manner went out again; and then, when an equal interval had elapsed, a third.

All three resembled flashes produced by powder ignited in a loose heap.

The moment the third response had been given to his signal, the Coromantee stepped up to his reflector and blew out the light.

"Dar's no use fo' you any mo'," said he, apostrophising the lamp; "dar *am* some danger keepin' you dar. B'side, it am a gettin' cold up hya. A want my ole cloak."

So saying, he took down the reflector, and after it the kaross; and, separating the latter from the piece of stick, he once more suspended the garment around his shoulders. This done, he moved forward to the front of the platform; and dropping his legs over, sat down upon the edge of the rock.

Volume Three – Chapter Twenty Nine

The Cry of the Solitaire

From the spot where he had seated himself, the mansion of Mount Welcome was in view – that is, it would have been, had it been daytime, or even a moonlight night. As it was, however, darkness veiled the whole valley under its opaque shadows; and the situation of the house could only have been guessed at, had it not been for the light streaming through the jalousied windows. These revealed its position to the eyes of the Coromantee.

More than one window showed light – several that were side by side giving out a strong glare. These Chakra knew to be the side windows of the great hall, or drawing-room. Its front windows could not be seen from the Jumbé Rock: since they faced towards the valley and not to the mountain.

The myal-man knew all this. A forty years' residence on the estate of Mount Welcome had rendered perfectly accurate his knowledge of the topography of the place.

So much light shining out suggested the idea of cheerfulness, as if company were entertained within.

“Whugh!” ejaculated Chakra, as his eye caught the lights. “Doan look berry much like dey war grievin’. Dey can’t hab heer’d o’ dat ’fair yet. P’raps de hab take de body to de plantashun ob Content? Leetle dey know down dar wha’s been done. Leetle

dey dream dat de proud masser ob dat ere Buff am jess at dis minnit a cold corpus. Da's no house ob mournin'. Dar's fea's'in a-gwine on da', a be boun'? Nebba mind! Nebba mind! Patience, ole nigga! maybe you come in fo' share ob dem wittle 'fore he gits cold; and maybe you hab share of the dishes on which de wittle am sa'v'd up – de forks, an' de 'poons, and de silber plate generumly. Daat *will* be a haul. Whugh!

“But wha' care I fo' de forks an' de 'poons? Nuffin! Dar's but one ting a care fo', an' dat am more dan silber, more na gold, more na Moun' Wele'm, itseff! Dat am de Lilly Quasheba. Whugh! A hab lub her fo' many long year – lub her more'n ebba; yes, a lub her wi' de whole 'trench ob my soul. Once a git dat bewfu' gal in dese arms, a no care for de forks and de 'poons. Ole Adam be welc'm take all dem rubbish.

“No,” continued he, after a pause, apparently relenting of his liberality; “dat no do, neider. A soon need boaf de forks and de 'poons. A'll want him fo' de housekeepin'. A'll want de silber an' de gold to buy odder ting. Muss hab m' share 'long wi' de ress.

“Wha am de bess place take my wife to?” muttered the intended husband, continuing the same strain of reflections. “Muss leab de Duppy Hole. Dat place no longer safe. Too near de ole plantashun. Boun' to be a debbil ob a rumpus atter she carried 'way – daat are ef dey b'lieve she *am* carried away. Guess a know de way make um b'lieve diff'rent. Nebba mind. A know how manage dat!”

At this moment the reflections of the Coromantee were

interrupted by a sound that caused him to draw his legs up on the rock, and assume an attitude as if about to spring to his feet.

At the repetition of the sound, he started up, and rapidly recrossed to the opposite side.

At the point where the upward path debouched upon the platform, he stopped to listen.

For the third time the sound was repeated.

There was nothing strange in it – at least, to ears familiar with the voices of a Jamaica forest. It was the call of a common yet peculiar bird – the *solitaire*. The only thing strange was to hear it at that hour of the night. It was not the time when the soft and flute-like note of the *solitaire* should fall upon the ear of the forest wanderer. Hearing it at that hour was by no means strange to Chakra. It was not that which had startled him from his seat, and caused him to cross quickly to the other side of the platform. On the contrary, it was because he knew that what he had heard was *not* the note of the *solitaire*, but a counterfeit call from his confederate, Adam!

Chakra's private slogan was different – more mournful and less musical. It was an imitation of that melancholy utterance heard at night from the sedgy shores of the dark lagoon – the cry of the wailing bittern.

With a small reed applied to his lips, the Coromantee produced an exact imitation of this cry, and then remained silent, awaiting the result.

At the bottom of the ravine could be heard a murmur of

voices, as if several men were together, talking in guarded tones. Following this came a sound of scratching against the stones, and a rustling of branches, each moment becoming more distinct. Shortly after, the form of a man emerged out of the shadowy cleft, stepping cautiously upon the platform. Another followed, and another, until six in all stood upon the summit of the rock.

“Dat you, brodder Adam?” said Chakra, stepping forward to receive the first who presented himself at the head of the sloping path.

“Ya – ya! Am it Chakra?”

“Dat same ole nigga.”

“All right, kommarade. We’ve see yar signal as soon as it war hoisted. We wan’t long a comin’, war we?”

“Berry quick. A didn’t ’speck ye fo’ half an hour mo’.”

“Well, now we’re hya, what’s the game? I hope dar’s a good big stake to play for! Our stock of stuff wants remplenishin’ berry badly. We haven’t had de chance of a job fo’ more dan a month. We’re a’most in want o’ wittles!”

“Wittles!” exclaimed the myal-man, laying a scornful emphasis on the word. “Dar’s a ting for ye do dis night dat’ll gib ye mo’ dan wittle – it gib you wealth – ebbery one ob ye. Whugh!”

“Good!” ejaculated Adam, simultaneously with a chorus of like exclamations; “glad to hear dat ere bit o’ intelligence. Am it dat ere little job you speak me ’bout last time I see you? Dat it, ole humpy?”

“Dat same,” laconically answered Chakra, “only wi’ dis

diffERENCE,” added he; “dat a call um de big job in’stead of de little un.”

“Big or little,” rejoined the other, “we’ve come ready to do it – you see we hab?”

The speaker, who appeared to be the leader of the party who accompanied him, pointed to the others as he made this remark.

The hint was scarce regarded by Chakra. Notwithstanding the murky gloom that enveloped the forms of Adam and his companions, the myal-man could see that they were all armed and equipped, though in the most varied and uncouth fashions. The weapons of no two were alike. One carried an old musket, red with rust; another a fowling-piece, in like condition. Others were provided with pistols, and nearly all had long knives, or *machetés*. Thus provided, it was scarce probable that the job for whose execution Chakra had summoned them could be one of a pacific character.

Had a light been thrown upon the group that surrounded Chakra, it would have revealed a collection of faces, each provided with a set of features but little less sinister than those of Chakra himself. In not one of them would have been found a line indicative of either peace or mercy – for it was the band of the black robber Adam, celebrated as the most notorious cut-throats in the Island.

Chakra expressed no surprise at seeing them armed, nor felt any. He had expected it; and the flourish which their leader had made of this fact was only intended to make manifest that they

were ready for the ordinary requirements of their vocation.

Eagerly willing were they for the extremest action; but, in order to make more certain of their compliance, Chakra thought it prudent to ply them with a little rum.

“Ma frien’s,” said he, in an affectionate tone, “you hab had de fatigue ob a long walk troo de darkness ob de night. A hab got hya a leetle drop ob someting dat’s berry good fo’ keep de cold out ob you. ’Pose we all take a wet from dis bottle?”

To this proposition there was a general assent, expressed in varied phraseology. There was no teetotaller in that crowd of worthies.

Chakra had not thought of providing himself with either drinking-cup or calabash; but the want was scarcely felt. The robbers each in turn refreshed himself directly from the neck of the bottle, until the rum ran out.

“Well, ole humpy,” said Adam, drawing Chakra aside, and speaking in that familiar phrase that betokened a thickness of thieves between them. “I suppose the chance you spoke ’bout hab come round at las’?”

“Da’s a fack, brodder Adam. It hab come now.”

“De great buckra gone from home?”

“He gone from home, and gone *to* home, ha! ha!”

“Come, dat’s a riddle. What you mean by gone *to* home?”

“To ’im long home. Da’s wha’ I mean.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Adam; “you don’t say the Cussos – ”

“Nebber mind ’bout the Cussus now, brodder Adam. Dat you

know all 'bout atter wards. It am the Cussus' silber plate dat consarn you now; and dar's no time to was'e in p'laverin'. By de time we gets down da, an' puts on de masks, dey'll be a-gwine to bed. Better dey wa' gone to bed; but by dat time, you see, de moon 'ud be up, an' fo' all dese clouds mout shine out. Dat, as you know, won't nebba do. We must 'ticipate de risin' ob de moon."

"True enuf. All right! I'm ready, and so are de rest."

"Den foller me, all ob you. We can plan de mode ob 'tack as we trabbel 'long. Plenty ob time fo' dat, when we find out how de land lie down below. Foller me!"

And with this injunction, the Coromantee commenced descending the ravine, followed by Adam and his band of burglars.

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty

A Sad Procession

On that same evening, about half-an-hour before sunset, a singular procession was seen moving along the Carrion Crow Road, in the direction of Mount Welcome. Its slow progress, with the staid looks and gestures of those who composed the procession, betokened it to be one of a melancholy character.

A rude litter, carried upon the shoulders of four men, confirmed this impression; more especially when the eye rested upon a human form stretched along the litter, and which could easily be identified as a dead body, notwithstanding the camlet cloak that covered it.

There were ten individuals forming this funeral *cortège*; though all were not mourners. Two were on horseback, a little in advance of the rest. Four followed, carrying the litter; while close behind these came four others, two and two – the foremost pair being lashed arm and arm to one another – each also with his hands tied behind his back, and both evidently prisoners. The two that brought up the rear appeared to be guarding them.

The individuals composing this mournful procession may be easily identified.

The two riding in advance were Herbert Vaughan and the Maroon captain; the horses they bestrode being the same that had

passed over that road the day before, carrying the Custos and his negro attendant. The prisoners were the Spanish *caçadores*— their guards, Quaco and the before-mentioned attendant; while the four men bearing the body were slaves belonging to the plantation of Content.

It need scarce be added that the corpse, stretched stark and stiff upon the litter, was all that remained of the grand Custos Vaughan.

Strictly describing them, not one of the procession party could be called a mourner. None of them had any reason to be greatly aggrieved by the fate that had befallen the owner of Mount Welcome — not even his relative. Notwithstanding this absence of a cause for grief, the faces of all — the prisoners excepted — wore a look of decent gravity becoming the occasion.

Perhaps the nephew would have more keenly felt the situation — for now that his uncle was no more, every spark of hostility had become extinguished — perhaps he might even have mourned, but for certain circumstances that had just come to his knowledge; and which had the effect not only to counteract within his heart all tendency towards sorrow, but almost to overpower it with joy.

It was only with an effort, therefore, that he could preserve upon his features that expression of sadness, due to the melancholy position in which he was placed.

Despite the presence of death, his heart was at that moment filled with a secret satisfaction — so sweet that he could not deny himself its indulgence. The source of this satisfaction may be

easily traced. It will be found in the information communicated to him by the Maroon captain. During their journey of the preceding day, their vigil of the night, and, still further, their long, slow march of that morning, Cubina had made known to him many circumstances of which he had been hitherto ignorant, among other items of intelligence, one of the most interesting that language could have imparted.

It need scarce be said what this was. It may be guessed at by recalling the conversation between the Maroon and his mistress Yola, occurring at the last tryst under the *ceiba*— that part of it which related to the Lilly Quasheba. Though Cubina's knowledge was only second-hand, it was sufficiently definite to inspire Herbert with hope – something more than hope; and hence that secret joy whose outward manifestation he found it difficult to suppress.

Every word of the conversation that had passed between the Maroon and his mistress – every word that referred to *her* mistress – Cubina had been compelled to repeat over and over again; till Herbert knew it as well as if he had been present during the dialogue. No wonder he was not in a condition to feel very profoundly for the sad fate that had befallen his uncle – hitherto only known to him as a relative harsh and hostile.

Other secrets had Cubina disclosed to him – among the rest, the true character of his patron, Jessuron – which Herbert had already begun to suspect, and which was now revealed to him in all its hideous wickedness. The history of the Foolah prince

– hitherto unknown to Herbert – besides his own experiences during the last twenty-four hours, was sufficient to confirm any suspicion that might point to Jacob Jessuron. Though it was plain that the two prisoners in the custody of Quaco had not actually assassinated the Custos, it was equally clear that such had been their intention, anticipated by a death of another kind. This both Cubina and Herbert conjectured to have proceeded from the same hand – the hand of Herbert’s *ci-devant* host.

The phrase is appropriate. Long before Herbert had heard one half of Cubina’s disclosures, he had resolved never more voluntarily to set foot in the Happy Valley – much less return to seek shelter under the roof of Jessuron.

If he should hereafter have aught to do with the Israelite, it would be in the course of justice; as avenger of the death of his murdered relative. That Loftus Vaughan was the victim of assassination neither he nor the Maroon for a moment doubted. The conversation which the latter had listened to between Chakra and the Jew – and which, unfortunately, at the time he had not clearly comprehended – was no longer mysterious; only its motive remained so. The deed itself had now furnished the terrible interpretation.

Neither Herbert nor Cubina had any idea of permitting the matter to drop. An event of such fearful significance called for the fullest investigation; and they were now proceeding with the preliminary step – carrying the body to Mount Welcome, in order that the authorities might be called together, and an inquest

instituted.

How different were the feelings of Herbert from those he experienced on his former and first approach to the mansion of his haughty relative! He was now the victim of emotions so varied and mingled as to defy description!

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty One

The Abduction

To Chakra, viewing them from the summit of the Jumbé Rock, the well-lighted windows of Mount Welcome had proclaimed the presence of company within the mansion. In this, however, the Coromantee was mistaken. In the past such an appearance might have had that signification, or up to a very late period – that is, up to the date of the arrival of the distinguished Smythje. Since the latter had become the guest of Mount Welcome, however, the illumination of the mansion with chandelier and candelabra was not only not unusual, but had been the nightly practice.

This was Mr Vaughan's pleasure; which, in his absence, the house steward had injunctions to carry out. The grand hall was only lit up as usual, its lustrous floor glistening in the brilliant light, while the profusion of cut glass and silver plate sparkled upon the sideboards, loudly proclaiming the opulence of the planter. There was no strange company present – none expected – no one who did not belong to the family, except Mr Smythje; and he could scarcely be considered a stranger. Rather might he be regarded – for the time at least – as the master of the mansion: since in that charge had the Custos left him.

The only individuals occupying this splendid apartment were

Smythje and the young mistress of Mount Welcome – both yet ignorant of what had occurred upon the Savanna Road – that fearful event which had left Kate Vaughan a fatherless orphan, at the same time depriving her of the proud title we have just bestowed upon her.

Yola, her attendant, went and came at intervals, and Thoms occasionally presented himself in the apartment, in obedience to a summons from his master.

Notwithstanding the absence of company, Smythje was in full evening dress – body-coat, breeches, silk stockings, and pumps, with silver buckles. It was his custom to dress, or be dressed, every evening – a custom so scrupulously observed, that had there been no one in the house except the negro domestics of the establishment, Smythje would have appeared in full fashionable costume all the same. With him the exigencies of fashion were as rigorous as to a holy friar would be the observances of his religion.

The gentleman was in high spirits – merry, indeed; and, strange to say, his companion was less melancholy than of late. No doubt this had given him his cue for mirth.

Why she had been enabled to escape from her habitual dejection was not known to Smythje; but he was fain to attribute the improvement in her spirits to the near prospect of that pleasant ceremony which in a few days must indubitably take place. In a week, or a fortnight at most, Mr Vaughan might be expected back; and then it was understood by all – tacitly by

the young lady herself – that the union of Mount Welcome and Montagu Castle should be no longer delayed.

Smythje had even begun to talk of the wedding *trousseau*; of the honeymoon tour – which was to extend to the grand metropolis; and as Kate, at his request, seated herself to the harp, suggesting a musical conversation, he commenced enlarging upon the theme of the grand “opwa,” and its attractions – so dear and delightful to himself.

This sort of talk, upon other occasions, had invariably the effect of making his listener more sad; but, strange to say, on that evening, it produced no such a disagreeable consequence. Kate’s fingers flitted over the strings of the instrument, drawing music from them that was far from melancholy.

In truth, the young creole was not listening to the *couleur de rose* descriptions of the “metwopolis,” and its “opwa,” which Smythje was so strenuously endeavouring to impart to her.

Though seated by the harp, and striking mechanically upon its strings, she was dwelling upon thoughts of a far different character – thoughts suggested by some further intelligence which Yola had communicated to her, and which was the true source of that joy – perhaps but a transitory gleam – that overspread her countenance.

Little did Kate Vaughan suspect that the corpse of her father – lying cold and lifeless upon a stretcher, and surrounded by strange mourners – was at that moment scarce five miles distant from where she sat, and slowly approaching the now masterless

mansion of Mount Welcome!

Little did she suspect, while making that music for Smythje, that, from another direction, monsters in human form were moving towards that mansion – their dark shadows projected across the glare of the window-lights – now stationary, now flitting stealthily onward – at each progressive movement drawing nearer and nearer to the walls!

She saw not these shadowy, demon-like men – had no suspicion either of their approach or intent – an intent which comprehended robbery, rapine of a far more fearful kind – murder, if need be.

Neither its mistress, neither Smythje, nor any one else of Mount Welcome, saw or suspected this mysterious circumvallation, until the movement had been successfully executed.

Not a word of warning, not a sign or gesture, was given to the occupants of the apartment, until, with wild, unearthly yells, half-a-dozen fiend-like forms – men of horrid aspect – some with black masks, others with naked visage even more hideous to behold – burst into the grand hall, and commenced the work of pillage.

One, of gigantic size, masked from crown to throat, and wrapped in an ample covering of skin – though not sufficient to conceal the deformity of a hunched back – rushed directly up to where the fair musician was seated; and, dashing the harp to one side, seized upon her wrist before she could disengage herself

from her chair.

“Whugh!” came the ejaculation, in loud aspirate, from behind the mask, “I’se got ye at lass, ma Lilly Quasheba – atter many’s de yea’ ob longin’ fo’ hab ye. Ef de quaderoom, ya mudder, she ’cape an’ ’corn me, I’se take care de dauter doan’ get de same chance. You come ’long wi’ me!”

And as the ravisher pronounced these words, he commenced dragging his shrieking victim across the room towards the stair entrance.

Smythje’s half irresolute interposition was of no avail. With one sweep of his long, flail-like arm, he in the skin cloak sent the exquisite sprawling upon the floor.

The terrified Cockney no longer thought of resistance; but after scrambling awhile over the polished planks at length succeeded in gaining his feet. Then, without waiting to receive a second knock-down, he shot out through the open doorway, and, descending the stone stairs, in a couple of skips, disappeared in the darkness below.

Meanwhile the alarm had been communicated to the kitchen and all over the house. Shouts of surprise were succeeded by screams of terror. The domestics came running in from all directions; but a shot or two from the muskets and pistols of the black burglars, fired for the purpose of increasing the confusion, scattered the whole establishment of servants, Thoms among the rest, and sent them in full flight towards the sugar-works and negro village beyond.

In less than a score of seconds, Adam and his confederates had the mansion to themselves.

It was but the work of a few minutes to fling, open the buffets and sideboards, and plunder them of their most valuable contents. In less than a quarter of an hour the black burglars had finished their "job," and were ready to depart.

While his confederates were thus engaged, Chakra had secured his victim at the bottom of the front stairway, where he was impatiently awaiting the completion of the pillage. Though determined upon having his share of the booty, he cared less for that than for the gratification of that wicked desire that had so long possessed his savage soul – so long by circumstances restrained.

Notwithstanding his eagerness for this demoniac indulgence, he still possessed a certain degree of prudence. As soon as Adam and his associates made their appearance, loaded with spoils, he placed his prisoner under the charge of one of the robbers, and, commanding the others to follow him, rapidly re-ascended the stairway, and once more entered the plundered apartment.

In an incredibly short space of time the harp, the chairs, the ottomans, and other articles of light furniture, were piled up in the middle of the floor; the jalousies were wrenched from their fastenings, flung upon the heap, and then set on fire.

Quick as tinder the dry wood blazed up; and in five minutes the noble mansion of Mount Welcome was in flames!

In five minutes more, under the red glare, flung far out into

the distant fields, the robbers were seen, slowly and laboriously seeking concealment within the shadows beyond – six of them burdened with shining utensils that gave back the gleam of the blazing mansion; while the seventh, the most formidable figure of all, carried in his arms an object of a far different kind – the body of a beautiful woman – the fainting form of Lilly Quasheba!

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Two

Burglars! Robbers! Murderers!

In solemn pace the procession which accompanied the corpse of Custos Vaughan moved silently on along the lonely road. The Jumbé Rock was now in sight, encarmined by the last rays of the sinking sun. Beyond lay Mount Welcome – a house to which the sad *cortège* was about to carry the cue for wailing and desolation.

Ah! little dreamt they who composed it that the demon was already there before them – if not of death, of a doom equally as dark!

Could Herbert only have known that at that moment the beautiful being he loved with his whole heart, and now more than ever – she who loved him, was struggling in the arms!

No matter. The terrible truth will reach him but too soon. It will meet him on his way. In another hour the sweet dreams in which, throughout that long day, he has been indulging, will meet with a dread dissipation.

At a turning of the road there stood several gigantic trees, offering a grand canopy of foliage. Under these the party halted, by the joint command of Herbert and Cubina, who at the same moment dismounted from their horses.

It was not the shade that had tempted them, for the sun had now gone down; nor yet that the bearers might obtain rest; the

men were strong, and the wasted form was far from being a heavy burden. It was not for that reason that the halt had been ordered, but on account of a thought that had suggested itself to Herbert, and which was approved of by Cubina.

It was the apprehension of the dread impression which their arrival might produce at Mount Welcome – of course, on her whose father's corpse they were carrying.

They had stopped to consider what was best to be done.

A plan soon suggested itself. A messenger could be sent forward upon one of the horses to communicate the sad tidings to Trusty, the overseer, and through him the melancholy news might be more gradually made known to her whom it most concerned.

Herbert would have gone himself, but was hindered by certain delicate considerations, based on the conflicting emotions that were stirring within him.

It mattered little who should bear the melancholy tidings to Trusty; and the negro attendant was finally chosen.

The man received his instructions; and, having mounted his own horse, rode off at such speed as the darkness, now down upon the earth, would permit.

For another hour the party remained in the place where they had halted, to give time for the messenger to execute his commission. Then, once more taking the road, they moved forward at a slow pace, Herbert alongside Cubina – now a-foot, and leading the horse upon which he had hitherto ridden.

Quaco alone guarded the prisoners; a duty to which the

Maroon lieutenant was quite equal, and which he had rendered the more easy of accomplishment, by pressing into his service a piece of rope, attached round the neck of the one that was nearest, and which, held halter-fashion in his hand, enabled him to prevent either of them from straying in the darkness. Neither, however, made any attempt to escape, knowing as both did, that the slightest movement in that direction would cost them a “thwack” from a stout cudgel – an additional implement carried in the hands of Quaco.

In this way the *cortège* had proceeded for some half-mile or so beyond its last resting-place, when it was again brought to a halt by the orders of those in the lead.

The cause of this interruption was declared to all of the party at once. All heard the hoof-strokes of a horse coming rapidly along the road, and *from* the opposite direction to that in which they were moving.

Going, as he appeared to be, at full gallop, in five minutes more, or in half the time, the horseman should be in their midst.

Was he a stranger? Or could it be their own messenger coming back? He had not been directed to return. It was deemed sufficient for him to see Mr Trusty, and make known the news which he had been entrusted to communicate.

It was not without a feeling of surprise therefore, as the horseman dashed forward upon the ground, and pulled up in front of the procession, that Herbert and Cubina recognised the returned attendant.

He left them no time to speculate on the mystery of his re-appearance. The white froth upon the flanks of his steed, shining through the gloom, told of fast riding; while the stammering and terrified accents in which the man proclaimed the purpose of his return rendered more startling the news he had come to communicate.

Mount Welcome was, at that moment, attacked by a band of burglars, robbers, and murderers!

There were men in masks, and men without them – equally terrible to look upon. They were plundering the great hall, had murdered Mr Smythje, were ill-treating the young mistress of the mansion, and firing guns and pistols at every one who came in their way!

The messenger had not stayed to see Mr Trusty. He had learnt all this from the domestics, who were hurrying in flight from the mansion. Confounded by the shouting and shots he had himself heard, and thinking that the likeliest chance of assistance would be found in the party he had just left – and which he believed to be much nearer – he had galloped back along the road.

These were the main facts of the attendant's story – not communicated, however, with any regard to sequence, but in the most incoherent manner, and liberally interspersed with exclamations of alarm.

It was a fearful tale, and fell with a terrible effect upon the ears of those to whom it was told – Herbert and Cubina.

Burglars – robbers – murderers! Mr Smythje killed! The

young mistress of Mount Welcome in the act of being abused! and Yola? she, too —

“Quaco!” cried the Maroon captain, rushing to the rear, and addressing himself to his lieutenant, “think you our men can hear us from here? Sound your horn on the instant: your blast is stronger than mine. There is trouble at Mount Welcome. We may need every man of them. Quick – quick!”

“The devil!” cried Quaco, dropping his hold of the halter, and raising the horn to his mouth, “I’ll make them hear, if they’re in the Island of Jamaica. You keep your ground, ye pair of John Crows!” he added, as he held the horn an inch or two from his lips. “If either of you budge a foot out of your places, I’ll send a brace of bullets through your stinkin’ carcades, and stop you that away. See if I don’t!”

And with this emphatic admonition, the colossus applied the horn to his mouth, and blew a blast that might have been heard for miles.

In echoes it rang from the sides of the Jumbé Rock, and from many a peak lying far beyond. So loud and shrill rang it, that one might almost have believed in Quaco’s affirmation: that it could be heard to the extremities of the Island!

At all events, it was heard by some not so far off: for scarce had its echoes ceased to reverberate, when half-a-dozen similar sounds, proceeding from different directions, and apparently from different distances, came back in response.

Cubina waited not to hear their repetition.

“Enough,” cried he, “there are half-a-dozen of them anyhow. That will no doubt be enough. You, Quaco, stay here till they come up, and then follow to Mount Welcome. Sound again, to direct them; and see that these two murderous villains don’t escape you.”

“Hadn’t I better put a brace of bullets through them?” naïvely inquired Quaco. “It’ll save trouble if I do that! What say you, Capen Cubina?”

“No, no, Quaco! Justice will settle accounts with them. Bring them on along with you; and follow as soon as our men get up!”

Before Quaco could offer any further suggestions, the Maroon captain had mounted the messenger’s horse – Herbert having already leaped into the saddle of the other – and both, without further speech, rode forward as fast as their steeds could carry them.

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Three

Dread Conjectures

Observing a profound silence, the two young men pressed forward. Neither liked to put question to the other. Each dreaded the answer the other might make – each was thinking only of the danger of her who was dearest to him.

They urged on their steeds with equal eagerness, for both were alike interested in the *dénouement* of the dreadful drama at that moment being enacted at the mansion of Mount Welcome.

Their reflections were similar, and similarly painful.

They might be too late! Ere they could arrive upon the scene, the stage might be deserted – the tragedy played out – the players gone!

It needed not these thoughts to stimulate them to increased speed: they were already riding as if life or death rested on the issue.

They had neared the flank of the Jumbé mountain, and were heading for the ridge that separated the estates of Montagu Castle and Mount Welcome.

At this point the road debouched from the forest, and the ridge came in sight. At the same instant, a cry escaped from the lips of Cubina, as with a quick wrench he drew his horse to a halt.

Herbert echoed the cry of his comrade – at the same time

imitating his action.

Neither thought of questioning the other. Both had halted under the same impulse. The evil omen had been seen simultaneously by both.

Over the summit of the ridge a yellow light glared, halo-like, against the sky.

“Fire!” exclaimed Cubina. “Just over Mount Welcome! *Santa Madre!* the mansion is in flames!”

“Oh, heavens!” cried Herbert; “we shall be too late!”

Not another word passed between the two horsemen. Stirred by the same instinct, they renewed their gallop; and silently, side by side, urged their horses up the hill.

In a few minutes they had attained the summit of the ridge, whence they could command a full view of the valley of Mount Welcome.

The mansion *was* in flames.

There was no further utterance of surprise: that was past. It was scarce a conjecture which Cubina had pronounced, on seeing that glare against the sky, but a conviction; and the crackling sounds which had assailed their ears, as they were riding upward to the crest of the ridge, had fully confirmed the event before their eyes looked on the fire itself.

There was no more a mansion of Mount Welcome. In its place a blazing pile – a broad sheet of flame, rising in gigantic jets to the sky, crowned with huge sparks and murky smoke, and accompanied by a continuous roaring and crackling of timbers,

as if fiends were firing a *feu-de-joie* in the celebration of some terrible holocaust.

“Too late! – too late!” muttered both the horsemen in the same breath; and then, with despair on their faces and black fear in their hearts, they once more gave rein to their steeds; and, riding recklessly down the slope, galloped on towards the conflagration.

In a few seconds’ time they had crossed the inclosures, and halted in front of the blazing pile; as near to it as their frayed steeds would consent to carry them. Both at the same instant sprang from their saddles; and, with guns grasped and ready to defend themselves against whatever enemy, approached nearer and nearer to the building.

No one appeared in front of the house. They hurried round to the rear: no one was there. Equally deserted were the grounds and the garden. Not a soul was to be seen anywhere – not a voice to be heard, except their own, as they called aloud; and this only feebly, through the hissing and roaring of the flames.

Back and forth rushed the two men in eager haste, going round and round the house, and exploring every spot that might be expected to conceal either friend or foe. But in spite of their most eager search, and the constant summons of their shouts, not a creature appeared, and no response reached them.

For a moment they paused to consider.

It was evident the conflagration had been going on for some time. The upper storey – which was but a framework of light timber – was now nearly consumed, and only the stonework

below left standing. Over this the larger beams had fallen – no longer emitting flame, but lying transversely upon each other, charred, red, and smouldering.

On finding no one near the dwelling, Cubina and Herbert made for the works. These were all standing untouched; and it was evident that no attempt had been made to fire them. Only the mansion had been given to the flames.

On arriving among the out-buildings, the two men again raised their voices; but as before, without receiving a reply.

Here everything was dark and silent as the tomb – a silence more impressive by contrast with the awe-inspiring sounds of the conflagration raging at a distance. Neither in the curing-house, nor the mill, nor the mash-house, nor the stable, could anyone be discovered. Not an individual to be seen, not a voice to respond to their oft-repeated halloos.

On rushed they to the negro cabins. Surely there someone would be found? All could not have fled through fear of the robber-band?

As the two men turned in the direction of the negro village, a figure started up in the path – having just emerged out of the bushes. In that semblance to the imp of darkness, seen under the distant glare of the conflagration, Herbert recognised his old acquaintance Quashie.

Quashie had already identified him.

“Oh, young massr!” cried the darkey, as he rose to his feet; “de Buff am a-blazin’! It be all burn up!”

“*Crambo!* tell us something we don’t know!” impatiently demanded Cubina. “Who has set it on fire? Do you know that!”

“Did you see the incendiaries?” hurriedly added Herbert.

“See who, massr?”

“Those who set the house on fire?” inquired Herbert, still speaking with anxious haste.

“Yes – massr, I seed dem – when dey first rush up de front ’tairway.”

“Well – speak quickly – who and what were they? What were they like?”

“Law, massr, dey war like so many debbils. Dey were nigga men, an’ some had mask on dar faces. Folks say it war de Maroon ob de mountains. Black Bet she deny dat, and say no. She say ’twar some robbers of de mountains, an’ dat dey come fo’ carry off – ”

“Your young mistress? Miss Vaughan? Where? where?” interrupted Herbert, gasping out the unfinished interrogatory.

“And Yola, my lad! have you seen her?” added Cubina.

“No, genlums,” replied Quashie; “I seen neider de young missa, no’ de brown gal Yola. Dey war boaf up in de great hall. I no go up dar myseff. I’s e afeard dey’d kill dis chile ef he go up da. I stayed down below, till I see Mr ’Mythje a comin’ down de stair. Lor – how de did streak it down dem dere stone step! He run in under de arch below. I guess he go hide dere. Den I took to ma heels, ’long wif de oder folk; an’ we all go hide in de bushes. Massa Thom an’ de house people dey all run for de woods – dey

none o' em nebber come back yet.”

“Oh, heavens!” exclaimed Herbert, in a voice of anguish; “can it be possible? You are sure,” said he, once more appealing to the darkey, “you are sure you saw nothing of your young mistress?”

“Nor of Yola?” asked the Maroon, equally as distressed as his companion.

“I decla' I didn't – neider o' 'em two,” emphatically exclaimed Quashie. “See yonner!” he added, pointing towards the burning pile, and speaking in an accent of alarm. “Golly! dey a'n't gone 'way yet – de robbers! de robbers!”

Herbert and Cubina, who, while in conversation with Quashie, had been standing with their backs towards the fire, faced suddenly round. As they did so, they perceived several dark forms moving between them and the bright background of the flames; their shadows projected in gigantic outlines up to the spot where the spectators stood. There were about half-a-dozen in all – just about the number at which Quashie had roughly estimated the incendiaries.

Both sprang forward, regardless of consequences, resolved upon knowing the worst; and, if their apprehensions should prove true, determined upon death or vengeance.

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Four

Smythje Still Living

With their pieces cocked, and ready for instant execution, Cubina and Herbert were pressing to get within range, when the notes of a horn, sounded by one of the men before the fire, came swelling upon their ears.

The sounds were re-assuring. Cubina knew the signal of his lieutenant, and they were now near enough to recognise the colossal Quaco standing in the glare of red light, surrounded by some half-dozen of his comrades.

Quaco had left the corpse upon the road, and the prisoners well guarded by a couple of his followers; and, thinking he might be wanted at Mount Welcome, had hurried forward close upon the heels of the horsemen.

This accession of strength might have proved useful had the enemy been upon the ground. Where were the robbers – the incendiaries – perhaps the murderers? Where was Miss Vaughan? Where the maid Yola?

Had they escaped among the domestics, or – ?

The alternative thought was too horrible for utterance. Is either Herbert nor Cubina could trust themselves to give speech to it. Only in their minds did the interrogatory shape itself: *had they perished in the flames?*

Fearful as was the thought, it could not fail to be entertained; and, in the solemn silence which the reflection produced, all stood hopelessly gazing upon the ruthless fire that was fast reducing the noble mansion to a shapeless and smouldering ruin.

At that moment the stillness was interrupted by a voice proceeding from an unexpected quarter. It appeared to come from out the great arched vault under the stone stairway, from a corner shrouded in comparative darkness. It was partly an exclamation – partly a groan.

Quaco was the first to seek an explanation. Seizing a faggot that still flared, he rushed under the archway, regardless of the scorching heat.

Herbert and Cubina quickly followed, and all three stood within the vault.

Quaco waved the torch in front of his body, to illuminate the place.

The eyes of all three simultaneously rested upon an object that, at any other time, might have elicited from them peals of laughter.

In the corner of the vault stood a half-hogshead, or large tub – its head covered with a heavy lid. Near the upper edge a square hole had been sawed out; so that a hand containing a quart measure might be inserted, without the necessity of raising the lid. Inside, and directly opposite this opening, appeared the face of a man, with ample whiskers and moustaches; which face, despite the bedaubment of something that resembled treacle or

tar, was at once identified as that of the aristocratic Smythje!

“Mr ’Mythje!” cried Quashie, who had followed the others under the archway. “I seed him – .”

“Fact, ma fwends, it’s nawbody else but maself,” interrupted the ludicrous image within the hogshead, as soon as he recognised his ancient deliverer, Quaco. “Aw took wefuge here fwom those howid wobbers. Be so good as waise the wid, and pawmit me to get out of this queeaw situation. Aw was afwaid aw should be ddowned. Ba Jawve! aw bwieve it’s tweakle?”

Quaco, endeavouring to suppress his laughter, lost no time in throwing up the lid, and extracting the sufferer from his sweet, though unpleasant position – for it was, in reality, a hogshead of molasses into which the terrified Smythje had soused himself, and in which, during the continuance of the tragedy enacted over his head, he had remained buried up to the neck!

Placed upright upon his legs on the flagged floor of the vault, glistening from neck to heel with a thick coat of the slimy treacle, the proud proprietor of Montagu Castle presented even a more ludicrous appearance than when Quaco had last seen him upon the summit of the hollow stump.

The latter, recalling this scene to memory, and unrestrained by other sentiments, could no longer restrain himself from giving way to loud laughter, in which Quashie, equally free from sorrow, took part.

With Herbert and Cubina it was not the moment for mirth; and, as soon as Smythje had been fairly deposited on his feet,

both eagerly questioned him as to the circumstances that had transpired.

Smythje admitted having fled – at the same time making an awkward attempt to justify himself. According to his own account, and the statement was perfectly true, it was not till after he had been overpowered and struck down, that he betook himself to flight. How could he do otherwise? His antagonist was a giant, a man of vast magnitude and strength.

“A howid queetyaw,” continued Smythje; “a queetyaw with long arms, and a defawmity – a pwotubewance upon his shawders, like the haunch of a dwomedawy!”

“And what of Kate, my cousin?” cried Herbert, interrupting the exquisite, with contemptuous impatience.

“Aw – aw – yes! yaw cousin – ma paw Kate! A feaw the wobbers have bawn her off. A know she was bwrought outside. Aw heard haw scweam out as they were dwagging’ haw down the staiw – aw – aw – .”

“Thank Heaven, then!” exclaimed Herbert; “thank Heaven, she still lives!”

Cubina had not waited for the whole of Smythje’s explanation. The description of the robber had given him his cue: and, rushing outside, he blew a single blast upon his horn – the “assembly” of his band.

The Maroons, who had scattered around the ruin, instantly obeyed the signal, and soon stood mustered on the spot.

“Upon the scent, comrades,” cried Cubina. “I know the wild

boar that has been making this havoc. I know where the monster makes his den. *Crambo!* Ere an hour passes over his head, he shall answer for this villainy with his accursed life. Follow me!”

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Five

On the Track of the Destroyer

As Cubina pronounced this command, he faced towards the mountain, and was hastening to gain the wicket in the garden wall, when an object came before his eyes that caused him to halt. Amidst the gloom, it was a sight that gave him joy.

He was not the only one to whom it brought gladness. Among the Maroons that had come with Quaco was one who had been suffering anguish equally with Herbert and Cubina – one who had equal cause for grief – if not for the loss of sweetheart or cousin, for that which should be dear as either – a *sister*.

A sister for whose sake he had crossed the wide ocean – had been sold into slavery – robbed by ruthless men – branded as a felon – chastised by the cruel scourge – had suffered every indignity which man could put on man. In this individual may be identified the young Foolah prince – the unfortunate Cingües.

What was it that gave Cubina joy – shared thus by Cingües?

It may be easily guessed. It was the sight of a female form, recognised by both – the sweetheart of the one, the sister of the other – Yola!

The girl was at that moment seen coming through the wicket-gate. Once inside, she made no stop, but hastened across the garden towards the group of men.

In another instant she was standing between her brother and lover, sharing the embrace of both.

Her story was soon told, and by all listened to with breathless attention – by Herbert Vaughan with emotions that wrung blood-drops from his heart. It was short, but far too long for the impatience of apprehension and revenge.

The girl had been in one of the chambers as the robbers entered the great hall. Regardless of consequences, she had rushed out among them. Like Smythje, she had been struck down, and lay for some minutes insensible, unconscious of what was transpiring.

When her senses returned, and she could look around her, she perceived that her young mistress was no longer in the room. The monsters were at that moment in the act of setting fire to the mansion.

A scream outside directed her. She recognised the voice of her mistress.

Springing to her feet, she glided through the open door, and down the stairway. The robbers were too much occupied – some with their booty, others with their scheme of incendiarism; they either did not observe or did not think it worth while – further to molest her.

On getting outside, she saw her young mistress borne off in the arms of a huge, misshapen man. He wore a mask over his face; but, for all this, she could tell that it was the same individual she had seen upon the preceding night in company with the Jew.

The masked man, whose attention seemed wholly engrossed by his precious prize, went off alone, leaving the others to continue their work of plunder and devastation.

The African maid, in her native land habituated to similar scenes, with a quick instinct perceived the impossibility of rescuing her mistress at that moment; and, abandoning the idea of making an idle attempt, she determined to follow and ascertain to what place the robber was taking her. She might then return to Mount Welcome, and guide those who would be sent upon the pursuit.

Gliding silently along the path, and taking care not to show herself, she had kept the robber in view, without losing sight of him for a moment. The darkness was in her favour, as also the sloping path – enabling her to see from below, while she was herself in little danger of being seen.

In this way had she followed the robber up the declivity of the mountain, and in an oblique direction across it, still keeping close behind him; when all at once, and to her astonishment, she saw him suddenly disappear into the earth – bearing her young mistress upon his arm – like some monstrous fiend of the other world, who had stolen a sweet image of this, and was carrying her to his dread home in the regions of darkness.

Notwithstanding the supernatural fear with which the sudden disappearance had inspired her, the bold maiden was not deterred from proceeding to the spot.

Both her terror and astonishment were in some degree

modified when she looked over a cliff, and saw the sheen of water at the bottom of a dark abyss yawning beneath her feet. In the dim light, she could trace something like a means of descent down the face of the cliff, and this at once dispelled all idea of the supernatural.

She made no attempt to follow further. She had seen enough to enable her to guide the pursuit; and, instantly turning back upon the path, she hastened down the declivity of the mountain.

She was thinking of Cubina and his Maroons – how soon her courageous sweetheart with his brave band would have rescued her unfortunate mistress – when at that moment, in the light of the flickering fire, she recognised the very image that was occupying her thoughts.

Her story was communicated in hurried phrase to Cubina and his comrades, who, without losing a moment of time, passed through the wicket-gate, and, with all the speed in their power, commenced ascending the mountain road.

Yola remained behind with Quashie and the other domestics, who were now flocking around the great fire, looking like spectres in the flickering light.

Cubina required no guide to conduct him. Forewarned by that wild conversation he had overheard, as well as by the events of the preceding day, he had already surmised the author of that hellish deed. More than surmised it: he was satisfied that, whatever head had planned, the hand that had perpetrated it was that of Chakra, the Coromantee.

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Six

Too Late

Eager as hounds upon a fresh trail – quick as young, strong limbs could carry them – pressed the pursuers up the steep path that led to the Duppy’s Hole.

Words could but feebly express the agony rankling in the heart of Herbert Vaughan. He knew not Chakra in person; but a full description of him, morally as well as physically, had been imparted to him by Cubina on the day before. It was not strange he should tremble with fear for the fate of her who was now in the power of a monster so fell and fiend-like – not strange that his soul should be filled with anguish.

That conditional phrase – “We may be too late!” – spoken as he urged his horse along the road; repeated as he came within sight of the burning mansion – once more found utterance on his lips; but now more emphatically and with a far more fearful significance.

His was a situation to stir the soul to its profoundest depths. Even had the victim of the vile abduction been no more than his cousin, he could not have failed to feel keenly the danger that threatened her.

But now that he viewed Kate Vaughan in another and very different light – certain, from what Cubina had told him, that

she reciprocated his love – under the influence of this sentiment, his distress was tenfold greater. So late, too, had he become possessed of that knowledge – so sweet had been the ecstasy it produced – that the sudden revulsion was all the more dreadful to endure.

While murmuring the words “We may be too late,” he dare scarce trust himself to give thought to the form of danger whose dread was thus hypothetically predicted.

Cubina, though, perhaps, a little less anxious than before, was equally earnest in the pursuit; and, indeed, every one of the Maroon band showed to some extent the feelings of painful apprehension that actuated their leader, whom they knew to be the friend of the young Englishman. No one showed a disposition to lag. All were alike eager to aid in the rescue of the unfortunate young lady, known to most of them, and honoured by those to whom she was known.

The horses had been left behind. On the steep and tangled path, they would have been only an encumbrance.

Perhaps, never before, by man on foot, had that path been traversed in so short a space of time. There was no delay on account of the darkness. As if by Divine favour, the moon had opportunely arisen, just as they were passing through the wicket-gate, and by her light they were able to proceed without pause or interruption. No stop was made anywhere, till the pursuers stood upon the edge of the Duppy cliff, and looked down into that dark abyss, where they hoped to find the spoiler and his victim.

Scarce a moment there, either. One after another they descended the tree stairway, Cubina going first, Herbert next, the others following, with like rapidity.

With the instinct of trained hunters all made the descent in silence. Only on arriving at the bottom of the cliff did an exclamation escape from the lips of their chief – Cubina.

The sight of a canoe, drawn up under the bushes, had elicited this exclamation – which expressed surprise mingled with disappointment.

Herbert saw the canoe almost at the same instant of time, but without drawing the inference that had caused Cubina to utter that cry. He turned to the latter for an explanation.

“The canoe!” whispered Cubina, pointing down to the little craft half hidden under the leafy branches.

“I see it,” said Herbert, also speaking in a whisper. “What does it signify?”

“They have gone out again.”

“Oh, heavens!” cried Herbert, in an accent of anguish, the more expressive from the low tone in which the words were uttered. “If that be so, then we *are* too late – she is lost! – lost!”

“Patience, comrade! Perhaps it is only Chakra himself who has gone out; or, maybe, some one of the robbers who have been helping him, and who may be expected to return again. In any case, we must search the valley and make sure. Step into the canoe! You can’t swim in your clothes, while my fellows are not embarrassed in that way. Here, Quaco! get your guns aboard this

cockle-shell, and all of you take to the water. Swim silently. No splashing, do you hear? Keep close under the cliff! Swim within the shadow, and straight for the other side.”

Without more delay the guns were passed from hand to hand, until all were deposited in the canoe. Cubina and Herbert had already stepped into the frail craft, the former taking possession of the paddle.

In another instant the little vessel shot out from the bushes, and glided silently under the shadow of the cliff.

Some half-dozen human forms, their heads just appearing above the surface of the water, followed in its wake – swimming with as little noise as if they had been a brood of beavers.

There was no need to direct the canoe to its old landing-place under the tree. Cubina knew that this had been chosen for concealment. Instead of going thither, he made for the nearest point of the opposite shore. On touching land he stepped out, making a sign to his fellow-voyager to imitate his example.

The Maroons waded out the moment after; and once more getting hold of their guns, followed their captain and his companion – already on their route to the upper cascade.

There was no path from the point where they had landed; and for some time they struggled through a thicket almost impervious. There was no danger, however, of their losing the way. The sound of the falling water was an infallible guide; for Cubina well remembered the proximity of the hut to the upper cascade, and it was for this point they were making.

As they advanced, the underwood became easier to traverse; and they were enabled to proceed more rapidly.

There was something lugubrious in the sound of the cataract. Cubina was painfully impressed by it, and equally so his companion. It sounded ominous in the ears of both; and it was easy to fancy sighs of distress, wild wailings of a woman's voice, mingling with the hoarser tones of the torrent.

They reached at length the edge of the opening that extended for some distance beyond the branches of the cotton-tree. The hut was before their eyes. A light was shining through the open door. It cast its reflection across the ground shadowed by the great tree, till it met the surface silvered by the moon. Though faint, and apparently flickering, the light gave joy to the eyes that beheld it. It was evidence that the hut was occupied.

Who but Chakra could be there? And if Chakra, there too must be his victim.

Oh! was she his victim? Had the rescue arrived *too late*?

Cubina's bosom was filled with sad forebodings. Herbert's heart was on fire. It was with difficulty that either could control his emotion to approach with that caution that prudence required.

Making a sign to his followers to stay among the trees, the Maroon captain, with Herbert by his side, crept up towards the cotton-tree.

Having got fairly under its shadow, they rose to their feet, and, with the silence of disembodied spirits, glided close up to the entrance of the hut.

In another instant the silence was broken by both. A simultaneous cry escaped them as they arrived in front of the open door and looked in. It was a cry that expressed the extreme of disappointment. The hovel was empty!

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Seven

The Corpse of a Cousin

Yes, the temple of Obi was untenanted, save by those dumb deities that grinned grotesquely around its walls.

To ascertain this fact it was not necessary to enter within the shrine of the Coromantee Pantheon. Nevertheless, Cubina and Herbert, as if moved by a mechanical impulse, rushed inside the door.

They looked around with inquiring glances. There were signs of late occupation. The lighted lamp was of itself sufficient evidence of this. Who save Chakra could have lit it? It was a lamp of lard, burning in the carapace of a tortoise. It could not have been loner alight: since but little of the lard was consumed.

There was no doubt that Chakra had been there, with his captive. That added nothing to the knowledge they possessed already: since Yola had witnessed their descent into the Duppy's Hole.

But why had the robber so suddenly forsaken this apparently safe retreat? That the lamp was left burning betokened a hasty departure. And whither could he have gone?

“Oh, where? – oh, where?” distractedly interrogated Herbert.

Cubina could make no answer. He was equally astonished at not finding the Coromantee within his hut.

Had he once more gone out from the Duppy's Hole? The position of the canoe gave colour to this conjecture. But why should he have done so? Had he caught sight of that agile girl gliding like a shadow after him? and, becoming suspicious that his retreat might be discovered, had he forsaken it for some other at a greater distance from the scene of his crime?

In any case, why should he have left in such haste, not staying to put out the light – much less to carry with him his peculiar Penates?

“After all,” thought Cubina, “he may still be in the Duppy's Hole. The canoe may have been used by some one else – some confederate. Chakra might have seen his pursuers crossing the lagoon, or heard them advancing through the thicket, and, taking his captive along with him, may have hastily retreated into some dark recess among the trees.”

His sudden abandonment of the hovel rendered this view of the case the more probable.

Quick as came the thought, Cubina once more rushed out of the hut, and summoning his men around him, directed them to procure torches and search every corner of the wood. Quaco was despatched back to the canoe, with orders to stay by it, and prevent any chance of escape in that direction.

While the Maroons proceeded to procure the torchwood, their chief, accompanied by Herbert, commenced quartering the open ground in search of any trace which Chakra might have left. By the edge of the water, where the trees stood thinly, the moon

afforded ample light to favour the investigation.

On advancing towards the cascade, an object came under the eyes of Cubina that caused him to utter a quick ejaculation. It was something white that lay by the side of the cauldron into which the stream was precipitated. Within the pool itself were broad flakes of white foam floating upon the water; but this was not in the water, but above it, on one of the boulders; and all the more conspicuous from the black colour of the rock.

Herbert had seen the white object at the same instant of time, and both simultaneously ran forward to examine it.

A scarf!

It bore evidence of ill-usage. It was tossed and torn, as if it had fallen from someone who had been struggling!

Neither could identify the scarf, but neither doubted to whom it had belonged. Its quality declared it to have been the property of a lady. Who else could have owned it but she for whom they were in search?

Cubina appeared to pay less attention to the scarf than to the place in which it lay. It was close up to the cliff, on the very edge of the pool into which the stream was projected.

Behind this pool, and under the curved sheets of the falling water, a sort of ledge ran across, by which one could pass under the cascade.

Cubina knew this: for, while on his hunting excursions, he had gone under it. He knew, moreover, that, half way across, there was a large cave or grotto in the cliff, several feet above the water

in the pool.

As the scarf was found lying upon the ledge that conducted to this grotto, the circumstance caused the Maroon to remember it, at the same time that it guided him to the conjecture that Chakra might be there. Alarmed by their approach, there was nothing more likely than for the Coromantee to have chosen the cave for his place of retreat – the last place where anyone, not aware of its existence, would have thought of looking for him.

These reflections cost Cubina scarce two seconds of time. Quick as the conjecture had shaped itself, he ran back to the hut; and, seizing a torch, which one of his men had prepared, he hurried back towards the cascade.

Then, signing to Herbert, and one or two others to follow him, he glided under the canopy of falling waters.

He proceeded not rashly, but with due caution. There might be others within the cave besides Chakra! His robber confederates might be there; and these the Maroon knew to be desperate characters – men of forfeit lives, who would die before suffering themselves to be captured.

With his drawn *macheté* in one hand, and the torch in the other, Cubina advanced silently and stealthily towards the entrance of the grotto. Herbert was close behind, grasping his double-barrelled gun, in readiness to fire, in case resistance should be offered from within.

Holding the torch in advance of him, Cubina entered first, though Herbert, anxious and eager, was close upon his heels.

The glare of the torch was reflected back from a thousand sparkling stalactites, and for a while the sight of both was bewildered.

Soon, however, their eyes became accustomed to the dazzling coruscation; and then a white object, lying along the floor of the cave, seen by both at the same instant, caused them to utter a simultaneous cry – as they did so, turning to each other with looks of the most painful despair.

Between two large masses of stalagmite was the body of a woman, robed in white. It was lying upon its back, stretched out to its full length – motionless; apparently dead!

They needed not to pass the torch over that pale face to identify it. It was not necessary to scrutinise those wan, silent features. On first beholding the prostrate form, too easily had Herbert rushed to the sad conclusion – that it was the corpse of his cousin!

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Eight

The Sleep-Spell

During all this time where was Chakra?

As soon as he had seen the mansion of Mount Welcome fairly given to the flames, the Coromantee, bearing its young mistress in his arms, hurried away from the spot. Outside the garden wicket he made stop: only for a moment, which was spent in a hasty consultation with the chief of the black bandits.

In the brief dialogue which there took place between them, Adam was enjoined to carry the whole of the booty to his mountain home, where Chakra promised in due time to join him. The Coromantee had no intention to resign his share of the spoils; but just then he was in no mood for making the division. He was at that moment under the influence of a passion stronger than the love of plunder.

Adam was only too eager to accede to these terms; and the confederates parted company – the robber and his followers at once shouldering their booty, and setting out for their forest dwelling among the far mountains of Trelawney.

Like the tiger who has killed his prey – and, not daring to devour it on the spot, bears it to his jungle covert – so Chakra, half dragging, half carrying Kate Vaughan, proceeded up the mountain path in the direction of the Duppy's Hole.

Lifeless as the victim of the ferocious beast appeared the form of Lilly Quasheba, hanging supple and unconscious over the arm of the human monster – equally ferocious.

Her screams no longer fell upon the ear. Her terror had exhausted her strength. Syncope, resembling death, had succeeded.

It continued, happily for her, during the whole of the transit up the mountain. The wild forest path had no terrors for her: neither the descent into the dank solitudes of the Duppy's Hole. In the traverse over that dark lagoon, she was not frightened by the scream of the startled night bird, nor the threatening roar of the close cataract. She knew no fear, from the moment she was earned away in the arms of a hideous monster, on a path lighted by the blaze of the roof under which she had been born and reared: she experienced no feeling of any kind, until she awoke to consciousness in a rude triangular hut, lit by a feeble lamp, whose glare fell upon a face hitherto well-known – the face of Chakra, the myal-man.

His mask had been removed. The Coromantee stood before her in all his deformity – of soul as of person.

Terror could go no further. It had already produced its ultimate effect. Under such circumstances reproach would have been idle; indignation would only have been answered by brutal scorn.

Though she might not clearly comprehend her situation, the young Creole did not think she was dreaming. No dream could

be so horrid as that! And yet it was difficult to believe that such a fearful scene could be real!

O God! it was real. Chakra stood before her – his harsh voice was ringing in her ears. Its tone was mocking and exultant.

She was upon the bamboo bedstead, where the myal-man had placed her. She had lain there till, on her senses returning, she discovered who was her companion. Then had she started up – not to her feet, for the interposition of the Coromantee had hindered her from assuming an erect position, but to an attitude half reclining, half threatening escape. In this attitude was she held – partly through fear, partly by the hopelessness of any attempt to change it.

The Coromantee stood in front of her. His attitude? Was it one of menace? No! Not a threat threw out he – neither by word nor gesture. On the contrary, he was all softness, all suppliancy – a wooer!

He was bending before her, repeating vows of love! Oh, heavens! more fearful than threats of vengeance!

It was a terrible tableau – this paraphrase of the Beast on his knees before Beauty.

The young girl was too terrified to make reply. She did not even listen to the disgusting speeches addressed to her. She was scarce more conscious than during the period of her syncope.

After a time, the Coromantee appeared to lose patience. His unnatural passion chafed against restraint. He began to perceive the hopelessness of his horrid suit. It was in vain to indulge in that

delirious dream of love – in the hope of its being reciprocated – a hope with which even satyrs are said to have been inspired. The repellent attitude of her, the object of his demoniac adoration – the evident *degoût* too plainly expressed in her frightened features – showed Chakra how vain was his wooing.

With a sudden gesture he desisted, raising himself into an attitude of determination that bespoke some dreadful design – who knows what?

A shrill whistle pealing from without prevented its accomplishment, or, at all events, stayed it for the time.

“Tam de signal ob dat ole Jew!” muttered he, evidently annoyed by the interruption. “Wha he want dis time ob de night? ’Pose it somethin’ ’bout dat ere loss book-keeper? Wa! a know nuffin ’bout him. Dere ’tam ’gain, and fo’ de tree time. Dat signify he am in a hurry. Wha’s dat? Foth time! Den da be some trouble, sa’tin. Muss go to him —*muss go*. He nebba sound de signal fo’ time ’less da be some desp’rate ’casion fo’ do so. Wonder what he want!”

“Nebba mind, Lilly Quasheba!” added he, once more addressing his speech to his mute companion. “Doan bex yaseff ’bout dis interupshun. De bisness ’tween you ’n me ’ll keep till a gets back, an’ den, p’raps, a no find you so ob’tinate. You come – you ’tay out hya – you muss no be seen in dis part ob de world.”

As he said this, he seized the unresisting girl by the wrist, and was about leading her out of the hut.

“Ha!” he exclaimed, suddenly stopping to reflect; “dat woan

do, neider. De ole Jew mussn't know she hya – no account. She mout run back in de shanty, darfur she muss be tied. An' den she mout 'cream so he hear her, darfur she muss be gagged.”

Still holding her wrist in his grasp, he looked around the hut as if in search of the means to put this design into execution.

“Ha!” he ejaculated, as if inspired by some new thought, “what hab a been bodderin' ma brains 'bout? Dar's a better plan dan eider tyin' or gaggin' – better dan boaf put togedder! De sleepin' draff. Da's de berry ting keep her quiet. Wha's de bottle, a wonder? Dar um be.”

With this, he stretched forth his disengaged hand, and drew something out of a sort of pocket cut in the palm-leaf thatch. It appeared to be a long narrow phial, filled with a dark-coloured fluid, and tightly corked.

“Now, young missa!” said he, drawing out the cork with his teeth, and placing himself as if intending to administer a draught to his terrified patient; “you take a suck out ob dis hya bottle. Doan be 'feerd. He do no harm – he do you good – make you feel berry comf'able, I'se be boun'. Drink!”

The poor girl instinctively drew back; but the monster, letting go her wrist, caught hold of her by the hair, and, twisting her luxuriant tresses around his bony fingers, held her head as firmly as if in a vice. Then, with the other hand, he inserted the neck of the phial between her lips, and, forcing it through her teeth, poured a portion of the liquid down her throat.

There was no attempt to scream – scarce any at resistance –

on the part of the young creole. Almost freely did she swallow the draught. So prostrate was her spirit at that moment, that she would scarce have cared to refuse it, even had she known it to be poison!

And not unlike to poison was the effect it produced – equally quick in subduing the senses – for what Chakra had thus administered was the juice of the *calalue*, the most powerful of narcotics.

In a few seconds after the fluid had passed her lips, the face of the young girl became overspread with a death-like pallor – all through her frame ran a gentle, tremulous quivering, that bespoke the sudden relaxation of the muscles. Her lithe limbs gave way beneath her; and she would have sunk down upon the floor, but for the supporting arm of the weird conjuror who had caused this singular collapse.

Into his arms she sank – evidently insensible – with the semblance rather of death than of sleep!

“Now, den!” muttered the myal-man, with no sign of astonishment at a phenomenon far from being strange to him – since it was to that same sleeping-spell he was indebted for his professional reputation – “now, den, ma sweet Lilly, you sleep quiet ’nuff ’till I want wake you ’gain. Not hya, howsomever. You muss take you nap in de open air. A muss put you wha de ole Jew no see you, or maybe he want you fo’ himself. Come ’long, disaway!”

And thus idly apostrophising his unconscious victim, he lifted

her in both arms, and carried her out of the hut.

Outside he paused, looking around, as if searching for some place in which to deposit his burden.

The moon was now above the horizon, and her beams were beginning to be reflected feebly, even through the sombre solitude of the Duppy's Hole. A clump of low bushes, growing just outside the canopy of the cotton-tree, appeared to offer a place of concealment; and Chakra was proceeding towards them, when his eye fell upon the cascade; and, as if suddenly changing his design, he turned out of his former direction, and proceeded towards the waterfall.

On getting close up to the cliff over which the stream was precipitated, he paused for an instant on the edge of the seething cauldron; then, taking a fresh hold of the white, wan form that lay helpless over his arm, he glided behind the sheet of foaming water, and suddenly disappeared from the sight – like a river-demon of Eld, bearing off to his subaqueous cavern some beautiful victim, whom he had succeeded in enticing to his haunt, and entrancing into a slumber more fatal than death.

In a few seconds the hideous hunchback reappeared upon the bank, no longer embarrassed by his burden; and hearing the whistle once more skirling along the cliffs, he faced down stream, and walked rapidly in the direction of his canoe.

Volume Three – Chapter Thirty Nine

A New Job for Chakra

Chakra, on reaching the crest of the cliff, found Jacob Jessuron in a state of impatience bordering upon torment. The Jew was striding back and forth among the trees, at intervals striking the ground with his umbrella, and giving utterance to his favourite exclamatory phrases – “Blesh my soul!” and “Blesh me!” – with unusual volubility.

Now and then also could be heard the Teutonic ejaculation, “Ach!” proving that his soul was under the influence of some unpleasant passion, that was vexing him even to torture.

“Wha’s de trouble, Massr Jake?” inquired the myal-man, scrambling over the edge of the rock. “Dar’s something go wrong, a ’pose, from de way you hab soun’ de signal? A hear de whissel fo’ time.”

“There ish something wrong – a great deal ish wrong – s’help me, there ish! What hash kept you, Shakra?” he added, with a show of vexation.

“Golly, Massr Jake, a war asleep; da’s wha’ d’layed me.”

“How, then, hash you heard the signal four times?”

The query appeared slightly to puzzle Chakra.

“O – a – de signal fo’ time,” stammered he, after a pause of reflection. “Wa, ye see, a hear de fuss time in ma sleep – den de

second time he wake me – de third a got to ma feet; and when de fo'th – ”

The Jew – either satisfied with the explanation, or too much hurried to hear the end of it – interrupted Chakra at “de fo'th.”

“It ish no time for talk when Mount Welcome ish in flames. You knowsh that, I supposhe?”

Chakra hesitated, as if considering whether to make a negative or affirmative reply.

“Of course you knowsh it. I needn't haf ashked. Who wash it? Adam hash been there. Wash it him?”

“Ole Adam hab a hand in dat ere bizness, a b'lieve.”

“You knowsh it, Shakra; and I knowsh another that hash had a hand in it. That ish not my bishness, nor what I hash come here about. There ish worse than that.”

“Wuss, Massr Jake?” inquired the myal-man, with an air of feigned surprise. It might have been real. “Wuss dan dat? Hab de young man no come back?”

“Ach! that ish nothings. There ish far worse – there ish danger: s'help me, there ish!”

“Danger! Wha from, Massr Jake?”

“Firsh tell me where ish Adam now? I want him, and all his fellish.”

“He am gone back to de mountains.”

“Ach! Gone back, you shay? How long ish he gone? Can you overtake him, Shakra?”

“Possab'e a mout; dey won't trabbel fass. Dey am too hebby

load fo' dat. But wha' fo' you want ole Adam, Massr Jake?"

"Bishness of the greatest importance. It ish life and death. Blue Dick hash been over to Mount Welcome. He hash heerd shtrange news – ach! terrible news! A messhenger who came in from the Saffana road hash brought the newsh of many dishagreeable things – among the resht that my Shpaniards haf been made prisoners by Cubina and thish ungrateful villain of a Vochan. They are accused of murdering the Cushtos. Blesh my soul!"

"What harm dat do you, Massr Jake? Wha's de danger?"

"Danger! Dosh you not see it, Shakra? If theesh hunters ish brought to trial, do you supposhe they would hold their tongues? S'help me, no! They will turn Shtate's efidence; and then I should be exshposed – arreshted – ruined! Oh! why hash I ever trusted theesh clumsy fellish with a bishness of such importance?"

"Dey am clumsy fellas, jess as you say, Massr Jake."

"Ach! it ish too late to shpeak of regretsh. It ish necessary to take some shteps to prevent thish terrible mishfortune. You musht go after Adam, and find him thish instant – thish instant, Shakra."

"All right, Massr Jake. A do whatebber you bid me, nebba fear. A soon track up Adam; but wha d'ye want me say to de ole nigga when a hab foun' 'im?"

"You needn't shay anything – only bring him back with you to the Shumbé Rock. I shall wait there for you till you come. Don't keep me long in sushpense, Shakra. Make all the shpeed in your

power. If you don't get back before sunrise, all will be lost! I'll be ruined – I will, s'help me!”

“Nebba fear, Massr Jake. A woan lose a minnit. A doan tink dat ere ole nigga's got far 'way jess yet. A soon obertake 'im. A go atter him at once. Whugh!”

As Chakra uttered the exclamation, he turned on his heel, and was about to start up the mountain, in the direction of the Jumbé Rock, near which he would have to pass on his way towards the haunt of the black robbers.

“Shtay!” cried the Jew, “T'she going with you ash far ash the Shumbé Rock. I may ash well wait there ash anywhere elshe. It ish no ushe my going home now. S'help me! I cannot resht till thish thing ish settled. And now, when I thinksh of it, you may ash well let Adam know for what he ish wanted – so ash he may come prepared. Say to him he ish to go shstraight to Mount Welcome – that ish, where it ushed to be. He'sh not to show hishelf there, but prosheed along the road, till he meets the Cushtos' body, and them that ish with it. Then he ish to find some way to rescue the Shpaniards, an' let them eshcape to me. You musht go along with Adam and hish men, elshe they may shpoil all. He musht bring his fellish well armed; you may shtand in need of them all. The messenger said there were some negroes from the eshtate of Content. Theesh won't signify. They will all run away ash soon as you show yourselves; but the others may be inclined to make fight. There ish Cubina, and the young raschal of an Englishman, besides that giant Quaco, and the messenger

hishself. You thinksh you can manage them, Shakra?”

“Sure ob dat.”

“You musht take them by an ambushcade.”

“P’raps we kill some o’ dem.”

“Ash many ash you like. Only make shure to get the Shpaniards off.”

“Be no great harm to kill dem too – atter de fool dey hab made ob demselves, lettin’ dem fellas take um pris’ner dat a way. Whugh!”

“No, no, goot Shakra! – we mushn’t kill our friendsh – we may need them again. You may promish Adam goot pay for the shob. I don’t care for the cosht, so long as it ish clefferly done.”

“All right, Massr Jake; leab dat to me an’ Adam. We do de ting clebberly ’nuf, I’s e be boun’.”

And with this assurance Chakra strode off up the mountain, the Jew having set the example by starting forward in advance of him.

Volume Three – Chapter Forty

Dead, or Asleep?

On beholding what he believed to be the dead body of his cousin, the grief of Herbert Vaughan proclaimed itself in a wild cry – in tones of the bitterest agony. He flung his gun upon the rock – knelt down by the side of the corpse – raised her head upon his arm, and, gazing upon that face, in death beautiful as ever, drew it nearer to his own, kissed the cold, unconscious lips – kissed them again and again, as though he had hopes that the warmth of his love might re-animate the fair form over which he was bending.

For some time his frenzied caresses were continued – their fervour unchecked by the presence of his rude companions who stood around. Respecting the sanctity of his grief, all observed a solemn silence. Nor word nor sound escaped the lips of any one. Sobs alone proceeded from Cubina. The Maroon had also cause to sorrow at that sad spectacle – but these were not heard. They were drowned by a more powerful voice – the melancholy monotone of the cataract – that had been speaking incessantly since the creation of the world.

It was a long time before the heart of Herbert consented to his discontinuing those cold but sweet kisses – the first he had ever had; the last he was destined to have – from those pale lips;

long before he could withdraw his supporting arm from beneath that beautiful head, whose shining tresses lay dishevelled along the rock.

The torch held in the hands of Cubina was burning to its base. Only when warned by its flickering light, did the chief mourner rise once more to his feet; and then making a feeble signal to those who stood around, he moved in solemn silence towards the entrance of the grotto.

His gesture was understood, and promptly obeyed. By the authority of his greater grief he had become master of the mournful ceremonies now to be observed.

The Maroons, quietly crossing their arms under the inanimate form, raised it from the rock; and, following him who had given them their silent direction, they bore it to the hut – there placing it upon the cane couch. With instinctive delicacy all retired upon the completion of their task, leaving Herbert and Cubina alone with the body.

An interval elapsed before either essayed to speak. Both were under the influence of a profound grief, that almost stifled reflection, Cubina was the first to have other thoughts, and to give expression to them.

“*Santa Virgen!*” said he, in a voice husky with emotion, “I know not how she has died, unless the sight of Chakra has killed her. It was enough to have done it.”

The suggestive speech received no other answer than a groan.

“If the monster,” continued the Maroon, “has used other

violence, I see no trace of it. There is no wound – no appearance of anything that should have produced death. Poor young creature! – there’s something dark inside her lips – but it’s not blood – ”

“O God!” cried Herbert, interrupting the speaker with a fresh paroxysm of grief. “Two corpses to be carried home to the same house – father and daughter on the same day – in the same hour: both the victims of villainy. O God!”

“Both victims of the same villain, I have my belief,” rejoined Cubina. “The same hand that has laid low the Custos, if I mistake not, has been at the bottom of this horrible crime. Chakra is but the weapon. Another has dealt the blow – you know who, Master Vaughan?”

Herbert was hindered from making reply. A dark form appearing in the door, distracted the attention of both from the theme of their conversation.

Quaco had heard the melancholy tidings; and, relieved from his duty by the canoe, had hurried back to the hut. He it was who now appeared in the doorway, filling it from post to post – from step to lintel.

Neither his chief nor Herbert offered any remark. Quaco’s presence did not surprise them. It was natural he should come to the hut – if only to satisfy his curiosity. Weighted with their sorrow, neither took any notice of his arrival, nor of his movements after he had entered the hut – which he did without waiting to be invited.

Having stepped inside, the colossus stood for some moments by the couch, gazing down upon the sweet, silent face. Even on his features was depicted an expression of sorrow.

Gradually this became more subdued, or rather appeared to undergo a total change – slowly but surely altering to an expression of cheerfulness.

Slight at first, and imperceptible on account of the large scale upon which Quaco's features were formed, the expression was every moment becoming more pronounced; until at length it attracted the notice of the others, notwithstanding the abstraction caused by their poignant grief.

Both observed it at the same instant, and to both it caused a feeling of annoyance – amounting almost to indignation.

“Lieutenant,” said Cubina, addressing his subaltern in a tone of reproach, “it is not exactly the time for being gay. May I ask you what is making you smile, while others around you are overwhelmed with sorrow?”

“Why, cappen!” rejoined Quaco, “I can't see what yar all a-grievin' 'bout. Can't be the Custos: since, sartinly, you've got over grievin' for him long afore this!”

The reply – grotesque in character, and almost jovial in the manner of its delivery – could not fail still further to astonish those to whom it was addressed. Both started on hearing it; and for some moments bent their *eyes* on the speaker in an expression of wonder, mingled with indignation.

Had Quaco gone mad?

“In the presence of death, sir,” said the young Maroon captain, directing a severe glance upon his lieutenant, “you might lay aside that merry mood, too common with you. It ill becomes you – ”

“Death, do ye say, cappen?” interrupted Quaco; “who’s gone dead here?”

There was no reply to this abrupt interrogatory. Those to whom it was addressed were too much taken by surprise to say a word.

“If you mean the young buckra lady,” continued Quaco, “I’d give all the barbecued hog I ever owned nebber to be more dead than she jess now. Dead, i’d deed? nonsense dat: she only sleep!”

Herbert and Cubina started from their seats, each uttering a cry of astonishment, in which might be detected the accents of hope.

“Who’s got a piece o’ lookin’-glass!” continued Quaco, turning his glance interrogatively around the hut. “Good,” he exclaimed, as the sparkle of a piece of broken mirror came under his eyes; “here’s the thing itself!

“Now, lookee hyar!” resumed he, taking the bit of glass from the place where it had been deposited, and rubbing its surface with a piece of rag: “you see thar’s ne’er a speck upon it?”

The others, still held silent by surprise, made answer only by nodding their assent.

“Wal, now,” continued Quaco, “watch me a bit.”

Placing the smooth surface of the mirror to the mute lips, he held it there for a minute or more; and then, turning, he raised it

up, and held it close to the light of the lamp.

“Ye see,” he cried, triumphantly pointing to a white filmy bloom that appeared upon the glass, partially obscuring its sheen, “that’s her breath! She no gone dead, else how she hab breath?”

His listeners were too excited to make reply. Only by exclamations did they signify their assent to the truth of his hypothesis.

“Ho!” exclaimed Quaco, suddenly dropping the bit of glass, and clutching hold of a phial that lay upon the floor – now for the first time noticed.

“What we got here?” continued he, drawing the cork with his teeth, and thrusting the neck up his wide nostril. “Sleepin’ draugh’! I thought so. So this is the spell that’s put the young buckra lady to rest. Well, there’s another that’ll wake her, if I can only find it. It’s boun’ be hya, somewheres about; and if I can git my claws on it, I’ll make this hya young creatur’ talk to ye in less than ten minutes!”

So saying, the colossus commenced searching around the hut, looking into the numerous chinks and crannies with which both walls and roof were provided.

Restrained by surprise, blended with hopeful anticipation, neither Herbert nor Cubina offered to interrupt his actions, by word or gesture. Both remained in their respective places – silently but anxiously awaiting the event.

Volume Three – Chapter Forty One

Quaco Turned Myal-Man

To Herbert Vaughan it was a moment of tumultuous emotions – joy springing up in the midst of utter woe. That his cousin still breathed he could not doubt; that she lived he was only too ready to believe. Though mystified beyond measure by what appeared the perfect semblance of death, the words of Quaco had given him some clue to a remarkable mystery – at the same time inspiring him with the belief that in that motionless form the soul was yet present. Her breathing upon the mirror had made him sure of it.

The mystery to which Quaco's speeches had introduced him was that of *myalism*. In this the Maroon lieutenant claimed to have skill almost equalling the regular professors of the art. In addition to being Cubina's deputy on all important occasions, Quaco was the doctor of the band; and in his medical experience he had picked up some knowledge of the system of Obeah – more especially of the trick by which, in the belief of the ignorant, a dead body can be brought to life again – that dread secret of the Coromantee charlatan, known in the West Indies as *myalism*.

“Only a sleep-spell,” said Quaco, still continuing his search; “nothin’ more than that – a draught given her by the myal-doctor. I know it well enough; and I knows what’ll make all right again;

though 'ithout that she'd come to of herself. A-ha! hyar it is! hyar's the anecdote!"

A small bottle glistened between his fingers; which in another instant was uncorked and brought in contact with his nostrils.

"Yes, dis is the stuff that's a-goin' to countrack that spell. In 'less 'n ten minutes' time you see her wake up, brisk as ebber she been in her life. Now, young master, if you jess hold up the young lady's head while I spill a drop or two down her throat – It must go down to do her good."

Herbert, with joyful willingness, obeyed the request; and the beautiful head once more received the support of his arm.

Quaco, with all the gentleness of which his huge, coarse fingers were capable, parted the pale lips; and, inserting the neck of the phial, poured out a portion of its contents into the mouth of the sleeper. This done, he held the bottle for some minutes to her nostrils; and then, laying it aside, he commenced chafing her hands between his own broad, corrugated palms.

With heart wildly beating, and eyes alternately scanning the face of Quaco and the countenance of the silent sleeper, Herbert made no effort to conceal his terrible solicitude.

It would have been far more terrible, but for the confident manner of the negro, and the triumphant tone in which he predicted the result.

Scarce five minutes had elapsed from the time of administering the antidote – to Herbert they appeared fifty – when the bosom of the sleeper was seen to swell upward; at the

same time that a sigh, just audible, escaped from her lips!

Herbert could no longer restrain his emotions. With a cry of supreme joy, he bent his face nearer to that of the young girl, and pressed his lips to hers, at the same time gently murmuring her name.

“Be quiet, young master!” cautioned Quaco, “else you may keep her longer from wakin’ up. Hab patience. Leave the anecdote to do its work. ’Tan’t goin’ to be very long.”

Herbert, thus counselled, resumed his former attitude; and remained silently but earnestly gazing upon the beautiful face, already showing signs of re-animation.

As Quaco had predicted, the “anecdote” was not long in manifesting its effects. The bosom of the young girl began to rise and fall in quick spasmodic motion, showing that respiration was struggling to return; while, at shorter intervals, sighs escaped her, audible even amidst the sounds, so similar, heard from without.

Gradually the undulations of the chest became more regular and prolonged, and the lips moved in soft murmuring – as when one is endeavouring to hold converse in a dream!

Each instant these utterances became more distinct. Words could be distinguished; and, among others, one that filled the heart of Herbert with happiness indescribable – his own name!

Despite the prudent counsel of Quaco, he could no longer restrain himself; but once more imprinting a fervent kiss upon the lips of his beloved cousin, responded to her muttering by loudly pronouncing her name, coupled with words of love and

exclamations of encouragement.

As if his voice had broken the charm – dispelling the morphine from out her veins – the eyes of the young girl all at once opened.

The long, crescent-shaped lashes displayed through their parting those orbs of lovely light, brown as the berry of the *theobroma*, and soft as the eyes of a dove.

At first their expression was dreamy – unconscious – as if they shone without seeing – looked without recognising.

Gradually this appearance became changed. The spark of recognition betrayed itself fast spreading over pupil and iris – until at length, it kindled into the full flame of consciousness.

Close to hers was the face of which she had been dreaming. Looking into hers were those eyes she had beheld in her sleep, and with that same glance with which, in her waking hours, they had once regarded her – that glance so fondly remembered!

Again was it fixed upon her; but no longer in silence, and unexplained. Now it was accompanied by words of love – by phrases of endearment – spoken with all the wild *abandon* of an impassioned heart.

“Herbert! cousin!” she exclaimed as soon as speech was restored to her. “It is you? Where am I? No matter, since you are by me. It is your arm that is around me?”

“Yes, dearest cousin – never more to part from this sweet embrace. Oh, speak to me! Tell me that you live!”

“Live? Ah! you thought me dead? I thought so myself. That

horrid monster! He is gone? I see him not here! Oh! I am saved! It is you, Herbert? you who have delivered me from worse than death?"

"Mine is not the merit, cousin. This brave man by my side – it is he to whom we are both indebted for this deliverance."

"Cubina! and Yola? – poor Yola? She, too, has escaped? Oh! it is a fearful thing. I cannot comprehend –"

"Dearest cousin! think not of it now. In time you shall understand all. Know that you are safe – that all danger is past."

"My poor father! if he knew – Chakra alive – that fearful monster!"

Herbert was silent, Cubina, at the same time, withdrawing from the hut to give some orders to his followers.

"Ah, cousin, what is that upon your breast?" inquired the young girl, innocently touching the object with her fingers. "Is it not the ribbon you took from my purse? Have you been wearing it all this time?"

"Ever since that hour! Oh, Kate! no longer can I conceal the truth. I love you! I love you! I have heard. But tell me, dearest cousin! – with your own lips declare it – do you return my love?"

"I do! I do!"

Once more Herbert kissed the lips that had given utterance to the thrilling declaration.

In that kiss two loving souls were sealed for ever!

Volume Three – Chapter Forty Two

The Rescue

On starting off from the Duppy's Hole, it had been the intention of the Jew to wait by the base of the Jumbé Rock for the return of Chakra with the robbers. Before arriving at the rock, a better plan presented itself.

In the absence of Chakra – which might be a prolonged one – it occurred to him that he might profitably pass the interval of time by making a reconnoissance of Mount Welcome and its precincts.

Before parting from Chakra, therefore, a new place of rendezvous was arranged between them – at a particular place upon the mountain slope, only a short distance from the rear of the garden.

This point being settled, Chakra continued on after the home-returning bandits; while his fellow-conspirator, facing down the mountain, proceeded towards the valley of Mount Welcome.

He soon came upon the path habitually used in the ascent and descent of the mountain. Only for a short distance did he follow it, however. He conjectured that a pursuit would be already set on foot; and, apprehensive of encountering the pursuers, he preferred making his approach to the house by working his way through the woods, where no path existed. By this means he

should advance more slowly, but with greater safety.

Favoured by an occasional flash from the smouldering fires – seen at intervals through the trees – he had no difficulty in guiding himself in the right direction; and in due time he arrived at the rearward of the garden.

Crouching behind the wall, and looking cautiously over its top, he could command a full view of the grounds – no longer containing a grand house, but only a smouldering mass of half-consumed timbers.

There was still sufficient flame springing up amidst the smoke to reveal to the eyes of Jessuron a terrible *tableau*.

Under the light could be seen a number of human figures grouped around an object resembling a rude bier. On this lay the body of a white man, whose ghastly visage – ghastlier under the glare of the unnatural light – betokened it to be a corpse.

A white man stood beside it, bent over the body, and looking thoughtfully on the face. Jessuron recognised in this individual the overseer of the estate. The others were blacks – both men and women – easily known as the domestics and field slaves of the plantation.

At a short distance from these was another group – smaller in individual numbers, but equally conspicuous.

Two men lay along the grass in attitudes that showed them to be fast bound. They were white men, in colonial phraseology, though their complexions of dark olive were but a shade or two lighter than those of the negroes who surrounded them. Jessuron

easily identified them as his own *employés*, the Cuban *caçadores*.

Some three or four black men stood around them, apparently acting as guards. The costume, arms, and accoutrements of these last – but quite as much their bold, upright bearing – proclaimed them to be men of a different caste from the negroes who encompassed the corpse. They were the Maroons whom Quaco had left in charge of the prisoners.

As soon as Jessuron had finished making these observations, he returned to the place of rendezvous, where he was soon joined by Chakra and the robbers. The latter, on their homeward route, having halted for a rest not far beyond the Jumbé Rock, were there overtaken by the myal-man, and brought instantaneously back.

The report of Jessuron was delivered to Chakra, who, along with Adam and his followers, advanced to the garden wall, and became himself a spectator of the scene already described.

The circumstances suggested the necessity of immediate action. It was evident that Cubina and the main body of the Maroons had gone off in pursuit of the incendiaries at once. No account was made of the presence of the plantation negroes, and the weak guard of the Maroons that had been left could be easily overpowered.

Such were the reflections of Chakra and Adam, acted upon almost as soon as conceived; and, leaving Jessuron to await their return, they and their followers crept forward through the shrubbery of the garden.

A volley from their guns, fired from an ambush, was heard shortly after. It caused most of the Maroon guard to fall dead by the side of their prisoners, at the same time putting to flight the people of the plantation, with their overseer at their head.

Nothing then remained but to relieve the captives from their cords; and this being readily accomplished, both robbers and *caçadores* retreated up the mountain.

On nearing the Jumbé Rock, the confederates once more separated. Adam and his followers continued on towards their mountain home, while Chakra, accompanied by the Jew, and followed by Manuel and Andres, proceeded in the direction of the Duppy's Hole.

It was the design of Jessuron that the two Cubanos should remain in that safe asylum – as guests of the Coromantee – until such time as he might find an opportunity for shipping them back to the country whence they had come.

Chakra's consent to this arrangement had not yet been obtained, and it was to this end that the Jew was now on his errand – for the second time that night – to the sombre solitude of the Duppy's Hole.

Volume Three – Chapter Forty Three

Down the Mountain

The midnight hour had passed ere the lovers forsook the solitude of the Duppy's Hole.

From mingled motives Herbert had lingered on that wild spot. He feared the dread development which he knew must take place on their return to Mount Welcome. What a terrible blow to that young bosom, now in the full enjoyment of earth's supremest happiness! He knew the fatal truth could not loner be concealed; nevertheless, he was desirous of keeping it back as long as possible – at least until his cousin had further recovered from the shock which her spirit had that night sustained.

In concert with Cubina, he had spent some time in reflecting how this temporary concealment might be effected.

Only one way suggested itself – to conduct his cousin to the house of the overseer; there to remain until, as she might suppose, her rather could receive the news of the conflagration that had occurred, and return home again.

The young girl knew that the mansion was burnt down. Its blaze was before her eyes when they ceased to see – lighting her ravisher along the forest path. The roof that had sheltered her childhood was a ruin. She knew all that.

It was therefore but natural that a temporary home should be

sought elsewhere, and in the house of the overseer. She could have no suspicion of any design in their taking her thither.

Neither Herbert nor Cubina knew whether the corpse of the Custos had yet reached its destination. Quaco, on hurriedly parting with it, had given no orders, either to the bearers or the Maroons left in charge of the two prisoners, to move forward.

The funeral *cortège* might still be upon the road, where it had been left by Herbert and Cubina.

If so, it might be possible for them to pass the ruined dwelling, and reach the house of the overseer, without any news of the assassination being communicated to her – the only one likely to be profoundly affected by that dread disaster.

Once under the roof of Mr Trusty, means could be taken to keep silent the tongues of those who should be brought in contact with her.

Such was the scheme, hastily concerted between Herbert and Cubina; and which they now proceeded to execute, by conducting the young creole out of the Duppy's Hole and commencing their descent towards the valley of Mount Welcome.

Only the two accompanied her. The Maroons, under their lieutenant, Quaco, remained behind; and for an important purpose – the capturing of Chakra.

Cubina would himself have stayed, but for a certain impatience once more to enjoy the company of his beloved Yola, who had been left among the other domestics of the desolated establishment.

The Maroon captain had perfect confidence – both in the skill of his lieutenant, and the courage of his followers. He could trust them for an affair like that; and as he parted from the Duppy’s Hole he had very little doubt that by daybreak, or perhaps before that time, Chakra would be the captive of Quaco.

Slowly Herbert and his cousin moved down the mountain. The moon, now shining sweetly upon the perfumed path, favoured their descent; but there was no need – no desire for haste. Cubina kept ahead, to secure them from surprise or danger. The young girl walked side by side with Herbert, leaning upon his arm – that strong arm, once so freely and affectionately promised. The time had arrived when that offer was accepted and welcomed – a proud time for the young Englishman – a happy time, as he walked on, thrilled by the touch of that round arm softly pressing his own – at times more heavily leaning upon him, not from any physical weakness on the part of his companion, but rather out of the pure fondness of her affection.

The strength of the young Creole had become almost restored – the effects of the narcotic having completely disappeared. She had also recovered from the prostration of spirit which it had produced – perhaps all the sooner from the cheering presence of him who was by her side.

The terrible sufferings she had endured were succeeded by a happiness tranquil and profound. She now knew that Herbert loved her: more than once within the hour had he given her that sweet assurance.

On her part there was no coyness – not a shadow of coquetry. She had responded to his vows by a full, free surrender of her heart.

And her hand? Was it still free?

Herbert sought an answer to this question as they passed onward – only indirectly, and with all the delicacy that circumstances would permit.

Was it true, what he had heard, that a promise had been given to Smythje?

With downcast eyes the young girl remained for some moments without vouchsafing any reply. Her trembling arm betrayed the painful struggle that was agitating her bosom.

Presently the storm appeared to have partially subsided. Her features became fixed, as if she had resolved upon a confession; and in a firm, but low, murmured voice, she made answer, —

“A promise! yes, Herbert, wrung from me in my darkest hour – then, when I thought *you* cared not for me – when I heard that you also had made such promise – to another. Oh, Herbert! oh, cousin! believe me it was against my will; it was forced from me by threats, by appeals – ”

“Then it is not binding!” eagerly interrupted the lover. “There was no oath – no betrothal between you? Even if there had been – ”

“Even if there had been!” cried the young girl, repeating his words – the hot Creole blood mounting suddenly to her cheeks, while her eyes expressed a certain determination. “There was

no oath. Even if there had been, it could no longer bind me. No! After what has occurred this night – in the hour of danger deserted by him – no, no! After that, I could never consent to be the wife of Mr Smythje. Rather suffer the charge of perjury, from which my own conscience would absolve me, than to fulfil that promise. Rather shall I submit to the disinheritance which my father threatens, and which upon his return he will doubtless execute. Yes, death itself, rather than become the wife of a coward!”

“How little danger of that disinheritance!” thought Herbert. “How shall I tell the fearful tidings? How reveal to her that she is at this moment the mistress of Mount Welcome? Not yet – not yet!”

For a while the young man remained silent, scarce knowing how to continue the conversation.

She noticed his air of thoughtful abstraction. It guided her to unpleasant conjectures.

“Cousin! are you angry with me for what I have said? Do you blame me – ”

“No – no!” cried Herbert, impressively; “far from it. By the conduct of this man – woman, I should call him, were it not for disgracing the name – by his behaviour to you, you would be released from the most solemn of oaths – much more a mere promise given against your will. It was not of that I was thinking.”

“Of what, Herbert?”

As she put this question she leant towards him, and gazed into

his eyes with a look of troubled inquiry.

The young man was puzzled for a reply. His thoughtful silence was evidently causing her uneasiness that each moment increased. Her glances betokened some painful suspicion.

She did not wait for his answer; but, in a voice that trembled, put the additional interrogative, —

“Have *you* made a promise?”

“To whom?”

“Oh, Herbert! do not ask me to pronounce the name. You must know to whom I allude.”

Herbert was relieved by the interrogatory. It changed the current of his thoughts, at the same time giving him a cue for something to say.

“Ha! ha!” laughed he; “I think, cousin, I comprehend you. A promise, indeed! Nothing of the sort, I assure you; though, since *you* have been good enough to make confession, neither shall I conceal what has passed between her to whom you refer and myself. There was no love between us – at least, none upon my side, I can assure you, cousin. But, I will confess that, stung by what I fancied was your coldness to me – misled by a thousand reports, now happily found to be false – I had nearly committed myself to the speaking of a word which no doubt I should have rued throughout all the rest of my life. Thank fortune! circumstances have saved me – saved us both, may I say?”

“Oh, happiness! Herbert – Herbert! then you will be mine –

mine only?"

Yielding to the promptings of an all-absorbing passion, the young creole gave utterance to this bold interrogatory.

"Dearest Kate!" replied the lover, half delirious with joy, "my heart is yours – all yours. My hand – oh, cousin, I scarce dare to offer it! You are rich – grand – and I – I poor – penniless – even without a home!"

"Alas! Herbert, you know not. Were I rich – ten times as rich as you, believe me, you would be welcome to all. But no. Perhaps I may be poor as yourself. Ah me! you do not know; but you shall. I shall conceal nothing. Know, then, dearest cousin, that my mother was a quadroon, and I am only a *mustee*. I cannot inherit my father's property, except by will; and not even that till an act is obtained from the Assembly. That is the errand upon which my father is gone. But whether he succeed or not, matters not now. Too surely will he disinherit me; for never shall I consent to become the wife of the man he has commanded me to marry – never!"

"Oh, cousin!" cried Herbert, enraptured by the emphatic tone in which she had declared her determination, "if you consent to become mine, I care not for your riches. Your heart is the wealth I covet – that will be enough for me. What matters it even should we both be poor? I am young. I can work. I can strive. We may yet find friends, or, if not, we can do without them. Be mine!"

"Yours for any fate! – for life, Herbert! for life!"

Volume Three – Chapter Forty Four

An Orphan

These earnest utterances of love exchanged between the two cousins were suddenly interrupted. Sounds of woe broke upon the stillness of the night, and in the same place as before.

They had arrived within view of what was once the mansion of Mount Welcome.

Through the foliage that fringed the path, they could see glancing some remnants of red light, here and there flickering into a faint blaze. Now and then, as they descended the slope, they had heard the crash of falling timbers, as they gave way under the wasting fire.

A murmur of human voices, too, had reached their ears; but only as of men engaged in an ordinary conversation; or, at all events, not exhibiting excitement beyond what might be expected at the *finale* of such a scene as had there transpired.

All at once abruptly breaking upon this comparative tranquillity – at the same time interrupting the dialogue of the lovers – were heard utterances of a far different import: the cries of men, the screaming of women, shots, and loud shouting!

All these sounds appeared to proceed from the spot that but a few hours before had echoed to the clangour of a chorus equally diabolical in its accents.

Cubina, who had been moving some paces in advance, sprang instantly back upon the path; and, with troubled look, stopped in front of the lovers.

“What can it mean?” asked Herbert, equally showing signs of apprehension.

“The robbers! Master Vaughan! They have returned; but for what purpose I cannot guess. It must be they. I know that voice, louder than the rest. Do you hear it? ’Tis the voice of the brigand Adam! *Crambo!* I’ll silence it some day ere long – maybe, this very night. Hark! there’s another, still louder and wilder. Ho! that, too, I can distinguish. It’s the hellish shriek of Chakra!”

“But why should they have come again? They took everything a robber would care for. What can have brought them back? There is nothing – ”

“There *is!*” cried Cubina, with a quick gesture, as though the solution had just then presented itself to his mind. “*There is Yola!*” As he said this he faced around, as if about to rush towards the fray, still strepitant – its noise rather on the increase.

For an instant he appeared to be undecided; though not from any fear of going forward.

No, it was another thought that had caused that indecision; which was soon made manifest by his words.

“Master Herbert Vaughan!” he exclaimed, in a tone of appeal; “I have helped you to rescue *your* sweetheart. Mine is in danger!” The young Englishman stood in no need of this appeal. Already he had disengaged his arm from that of his cousin, and stood

ready for action.

“Oh, Herbert!” cried the young girl, in wild accents of distress; “there is fearful danger! Oh, you must not go. Oh, do not leave me!”

Cubina looked as if regretting the challenge he had thrown out.

“Perhaps you had better not?” said he, with no sarcasm meant by the words. “There is danger, but you must not share it. Your life now belongs to another. I did not think of that, Master Vaughan.”

“In the eyes of that other,” replied Herbert, “my life would be worthless, as it would to myself, were I to play the poltroon. Brave Cubina! I cannot fail you now. Dear Kate! it is Yola who is in danger – Yola, to whom we are both indebted. But for her I should not have known that you loved me; and then we should both – ”

“Ah! Yola in danger!” interrupted the young Creole, her affection for her maid half stifling the fear for her beloved. “Oh, Herbert! go if you will, but let me go with you. I should die if you returned not. Yes, yes; if death comes to you, it shall be mine also. Herbert, do not leave me behind!”

“Only for a moment, Kate! I shall soon return. Fear not. With right on our side, the brave Cubina and I can conquer a score of these black robbers. We shall be back before you can count a hundred. There! conceal yourself in these bushes, and wait for our coming. I shall call out for you. Behind the bushes you will

be safe. Not a word, not a movement, till you hear me calling your name.”

As he uttered these admonitions, the brave young man gently guided his cousin into the thicket. Causing her to kneel down in a shaded covert, he imprinted a hurried kiss upon her forehead, and then hastily leaving her, followed Cubina towards the fight.

In a few seconds they ran down to the garden wall, and passed rapidly through the wicket-gate, which they found standing open; on through the garden, and straight towards the place from which they imagined the sounds had proceeded.

Strange enough, these had ceased as abruptly as they had risen – the cries of the men, the screaming of the women, the shots, and the loud shouting!

All, as if by a simultaneous signal, had become silent; as though the earth had opened and swallowed not only the noises, but those who had been causing them!

Unheeding the change, Herbert and Cubina kept on; nor came to a stop until they had passed the smoking remains of the mansion, and stood upon the platform that fronted it.

There halted they.

There was still some fitful light from the burning beams; but the beams of the moon told a truer tale. They illumined a *tableau* significant as terrible.

Near the spot was a stretcher, on which lay the corpse of a white man, half uncovered, ghastly as death could make it. Close to it were three others, corpses like itself, only that they were

those of men with a black epidermis.

Herbert easily identified the first. It had been his companion on that day's journey. It was the corpse of his uncle.

As easily did Cubina recognise the others. They were, or had been, men of his own band – the Maroons – left by Quaco to guard the prisoners.

The prisoners! where were they? Escaped?

It took Cubina but little time to resolve the mystery. To the practised eye of one who had tied up many a black runaway, there was no difficulty in interpreting the sign there presented to his view.

A tangle of ropes and sticks brought to mind the contrivances of Quaco for securing his captives. They lay upon the trodden ground, cast away, and forsaken.

The *caçadores* had escaped. The affair had been a rescue!

Rather relieved by this conjecture, which soon assumed the form of a conviction, Herbert and Cubina were about returning to the place where they had left the young Creole – whom they supposed to be still awaiting them.

But they had not calculated on the bravery of love – much less upon its recklessness.

As they faced towards the dark declivity of the mountain, a form like a white-robed sylph was seen flitting athwart the trunks of the trees, and descending towards the garden wall. On it glided – on, and downward – as the snow-plumed gull in its graceful parabola.

Neither was mystified by this apparition. At a glance both recognised the form, with its soft, white drapery floating around it.

Love could no longer endure that anxious suspense. The young Creole had forsaken her shelter, to share the danger of him she adored.

Before either could interfere to prevent the catastrophe, she had passed through the wicket – a way better known to her than to them – and came gliding across the garden, up to the spot where they stood.

An exclamation of joy announced her perception that her lover was still unharmed.

Quick as an echo, a second exclamation escaped from her lips – but one of a far different intonation. It was a cry of wildest despair – the utterance of one who suddenly knew herself to be *an orphan*. Her eyes had fallen upon the corpse of her father!

Volume Three – Chapter Forty Five

An Involuntary Suicide

On seeing the dead body of her father, Kate Vaughan sank to the earth beside it; not unconsciously, but on her knees, and in an agony of grief. Bending over it, she kissed the cold, speechless lips – her sobs and wilder ejaculations following each other in rapid succession.

Only the face of the corpse was uncovered. The camlet cloak still shrouded the body, and its gaping but bloodless wounds. She saw not these; and made no inquiry as to the cause of her father's death. The wasted features, now livid, recalled the disease under which he had been suffering previous to his departure. It was to that he had succumbed; so reasoned she.

Herbert made no attempt to undeceive her. It was not the time to enter into details of the sad incident that had transpired. The most mournful chapter of the story was now known – the rest need scarce be told: Kate Vaughan was fatherless.

Without uttering a word – not even those phrases of consolation so customary on such occasions, and withal so idle – the young man wound his arms round the waist of his cousin, gently raised her to an erect attitude, and supported her away from the spot.

He passed slowly towards the rear of the ruined dwelling.

There was still enough light emitted from the calcined embers to make plain the path – enough to show that the little summer-house in the garden still stood there in its shining entirety. Its distance from the dwelling-house had saved it from the conflagration.

Into this Herbert conducted his protégée, and, after placing her on a settee of bamboos, which the kiosk contained, seated himself in a chair beside her.

Yola, who had once more appeared upon the scene, followed them, and flinging herself on the floor, at her young mistress's feet, remained gazing upon her with sympathetic looks, that evinced the affectionate devotion of the Foolah maiden.

Cubina had gone in search of the overseer, and such of the domestics as might still have concealed themselves within a reasonable distance.

The Maroon might have acted with more caution, seeing that the second attack of the robbers had unexpectedly been made. But he had no fear of their coming again. The escape of the prisoners explained their second appearance – the sole object of which had been to rescue the *caçadores*.

For a while the three individuals in the kiosk appeared to be the only living forms that remained by the desolated mansion of Mount Welcome. The return of the robbers had produced even a more vivid feeling of affright than their first appearance; and the people of the plantation – white as well as black – had betaken themselves to places of concealment more permanent

than before. The whites – overseer, book-keepers, and all – believing it to be an insurrection of the slaves, had forsaken the plantation altogether, and fled towards Montego Bay.

Among these panic-struck fugitives, or rather at the head of them, was the late distinguished guest of Mount Welcome – Mr Montagu Smythje.

On being left alone, after the departure of the pursuing party, he had made a rapid retreat towards the stables; and there, by the assistance of Quashie, had succeeded in providing himself with a saddled horse.

Not even staying to divest himself of his sacchariferous envelope, he had mounted and ridden at top speed for the port, announcing his fixed determination to take the first ship that should sail for his “deaw metwopolis.”

Smythje had seen enough of Jamaica, and its “queeole queetyaws,” and more than enough of “its howid niggaws.”

Cubina, returning with Quashie – who again, imp-like, had started up in his path – the only living being the Maroon could discover, announced the fact that Mr Smythje was no longer on the ground.

From those who occupied the kiosk, the intelligence elicited no response. Notwithstanding the many jealous pangs he had cost Herbert Vaughan, and the important part he had played in the history of the young Creole’s life, the great lord of Montagu Castle was no longer regarded even as a unit in the situation. Neither spoke of him – neither gave a thought to him. With

perfect indifference, both Herbert and his cousin listened to the report that he was no longer on the ground.

But there was at that very moment one upon the ground who might have been better spared – one whose proximity was a thousand times more perilous than that of the harmless Smythje.

As we have said, Cubina had no apprehensions about the return of the robbers; but there was a danger near, and equally to be dreaded – a danger of which neither he nor any of the others could have had even the slightest suspicion.

The Maroon had delivered his report at the kiosk, and with Quashie attending on him, had gone back to the spot where the dead body still rested. He had gone thither to ascertain which of his own men had fallen in the late struggle, and also the better to acquaint himself with the direction which the robbers might have taken.

Just as he had turned his back upon the kiosk, a human figure – gliding so softly that it might have been mistaken for a shadow – passed through the wicket-gate in the rear of the garden, and, with stealthy step, advanced in the direction of the summer-house.

Notwithstanding an ample cloak in which the figure was enveloped, its *contour* could be distinguished as that of a woman – one of boldly-developed form.

The blaze of the still-burning timbers was no longer constant. At intervals some piece – losing its equilibrium under the effect of the consuming fire – would fall with a crushing sound; to be

followed by a fresh glare of light, which would continue for a longer or shorter period of time, according to the circumstances that created it.

Just as the silent figure, approaching along the path, had arrived within a few paces of the summer-house, one of these sudden coruscations arose, lighting up not only the interior of the summer-house, but the whole enclosure to its furthest limits.

Under that light, had anyone been looking rearwards across the garden, they would have beheld a beautiful face – beautiful, yet disfigured by an expression of mingled rage and pain, that rendered it even hideous. It was the face of Judith Jessuron.

It is not necessary to explain why she was there. The fire of jealousy was still burning in her breast – more furiously, more bitterly than ever.

In another instant she had placed herself in a position that commanded a view of the interior of the kiosk.

What she saw there was not calculated to extinguish the fearful fire that consumed her. On the contrary, like the collision of the falling timbers, it had the effect of stirring it to increased strength and fierceness.

Kate Vaughan had raised herself from her reclining position, and was sitting upright on the bamboo settee. Herbert was by her side, also seated. Their bodies were in contact – the arm of the young man softly encircling the waist of his cousin. It would have been evident to the most uninterested observer that their hearts were equally *en rapport*; that between them was a tie – the

strongest on earth – the tie of mutual love!

It needed no reasoning on the part of Judith Jessuron to arrive at this conclusion.

The tableau was typical. It was a picture that required no explanation, nor did she who looked upon it ask for any.

She did not even stay to notice the brown-skinned damsel, who seemed to be guarding the entrance of the kiosk; but, springing past her, she stood in a defiant attitude in the presence of the lovers.

“Herbert Vaughan!” cried she, in a tone of bitter abandonment; “traitor! perjured villain! you have been false to me – ”

“It is not true, Judith Jessuron!” cried the young man, interrupting her, and, as soon as he had recovered from his surprise, springing to his feet. “It is not true. I – I never intended – ”

“Ha!” screamed the Jewess, her rage apparently becoming more fierce at the attempted explanation; “never intended what?”

“Never intended to marry you. I never gave you promise – ”

“False!” cried Judith, once more interrupting him. “No matter now – it is all past; and since you never intended to marry me, she at least will never be your wife!”

The action that followed rendered the menace of the mad woman too easily intelligible.

As she gave utterance to it she passed her hand under the mantle in which her figure was enveloped; and, as she drew it

forth again, a shining object appeared between her fingers.

It was a pistol, with silver sheen and ivory handle – small, but large enough to take life at such close quarters.

It was presented as soon as drawn, but not at Herbert Vaughan. It was towards his companion that its muzzle was pointed!

Scarce a second passed before the report was heard; and, for a time, the kiosk was filled with smoke.

When this cleared away, and the shining light once more penetrated the apartment, a woman was seen extended on the floor, her form quivering in the last throes of life. In another instant it was motionless – a corpse!

The shot had proved fatal; but the victim was not Kate Vaughan, but Judith Jessuron!

The transposition was due to the Foolah maid. Seeing the life of her mistress in such imminent peril, she had sprung up from her seat by the door; and, bounding forward with the supple quickness of a cheetah, had seized the wrist of the intended murderess, with the intention of averting her aim, and, in doing so, had directed it upon herself.

It was by accident, therefore, and not from design on the part of Yola, that Judith Jessuron thus terminated her life by an involuntary suicide.

Volume Three – Chapter Forty Six

Quaco in Ambush

The Maroon captain, before leaving the Duppy's Hole, had given official orders to his lieutenant about the capture of Chakra. There could no longer be any question of the absence of the myal-man from his haunt. The Maroons had continued their search after the discovery in the cave, still thinking that he might be concealed somewhere in the wood. The bushes were well beaten – the trees, where it was possible for a man to have climbed, were all scrutinised; and the search had ended without their finding any other trace of the Coromantee than what had been already discovered.

Beyond doubt, Chakra had gone abroad – though in what direction, no one could guess; and to have attempted tracking him at night, and through a pathless forest, would have been labour lost.

The correct scheme for capturing him was for the Maroons to remain in the Duppy's Hole, against his return; and, by keeping in ambuscade until he should have re-crossed the lagoon, they would have him, as it were, in a trap.

This was the plan chosen – with the execution of which Quaco was intrusted.

Indeed, the initiatory steps had been taken already: for ever

since the search by torchlight had been abandoned, Quaco and his men had been placed in ambush.

Cubina perceived the error he had committed in causing the search to be made.

Chakra might have been upon the cliff above, where he could not have failed to see the light of the torches.

If so, there would not be the slightest hope of his returning for that night. After witnessing such an invasion of his secret haunt, his caution would be upon the *qui vive*— enough to hinder him from venturing down into the Duppy's Hole, notwithstanding the attractive lure he had there left behind him.

Cubina thus reflected with regret – with chagrin. The capture of Chakra had now become an object of primary importance.

After all, the apprehension that he had seen the torches, or in any way become aware of the intrusion of strangers upon his solitary domain, may have been an idle one. If so, then he would be certain to come back. The presence of his prisoner was earnest of his return, and at no distant period of time.

To make sure of his capture, the Maroon captain had himself planned the ambush. Quaco and his men were placed under the great tree – where the myal-man was accustomed to moor his craft. Some of them were stationed on the tree, among its branches, with the design that they should drop upon the shoulders of the Coromantee, as soon as he should arrive at his anchorage.

The canoe itself was to be left at the bottom of the stairway,

after being taken thither by the Maroon captain and his two companions, on their departure from the place. All this was done as designed.

Before parting from the canoe, Cubina had taken the precaution to place it in the exact position in which it had been left by Chakra: so that the latter could have no suspicions that the craft had been used during his absence.

These arrangements having been completed, Quaco and his comrades – Cingües among the number – from their station by the edge of the lagoon, with eyes bent alternately upon the water and the face of the cliff, awaited the coming of the Coromantee.

The Maroons were armed with guns, loaded and primed. Not that they intended to kill Chakra. On the contrary, Cubina's orders were to capture him. Criminal as was the outlawed myalman, it was not their province to decide upon his criminality – at least, not so far as to the depriving him of his life. Free as was the licence enjoyed by these mountain rovers, there were laws around them by which even they were bound to abide. Besides, there would be no danger of his escaping from the punishment that was his due. They knew that Chakra's capture would be but the prelude to his execution.

They had a different reason for being attentive to their arms. It was just possible the Coromantee might *not return alone*. They knew he had been in the company of others – Adam and his band of desperate robbers. These confederates might come back along with him. In that case, the quiet scheme of their capture might

be transformed into a sanguinary encounter.

It was not necessary all should keep awake. One-half of the little band were appointed sentinels, while the others went to sleep.

The lieutenant himself was among the number of those who were entitled to the latter privilege: since for two days and nights he had scarce slept a wink.

Speedily surrendering himself to the drowsy god, Quaco indulged in a profound slumber – snoring in such fashion, that, but for the louder intonation of the waters surging through the gorge below, his huge nostrils would have betrayed his presence to the expected Chakra – even before the latter should have set foot in his canoe.

As it was, however, the roaring of the cataract quite drowned the nasal music of the sleeping Quaco, and his companions suffered him to snore on.

Volume Three – Chapter Forty Seven

The Doom of Destiny

Until daybreak was Quaco permitted to continue his snoring and his slumber. Up to that time, no Chakra appeared; but just as the red aurora began to tinge the tops of the forest trees, a dark form was distinguished upon the summit of the cliff, just over the tree stairway.

It had scarce made its appearance, when another was seen coming forward by its side; and, in the rear of both, another – and then a fourth.

All four halted for a moment upon the brow of the precipice. Whether they were in conversation could not be told. Likely they were, but their voices could not be heard above the mutterings of the moving water.

Presently, he who had first made his appearance commenced descending the cliff, followed by the others, apparently in the same order in which they had arrived upon its edge.

Cingües had already shaken Quaco from his slumbers. The other sleepers had also been aroused by their companions; and, perceiving the numbers of the enemy, had grasped their guns with a firmer hold.

Though the day had now dawned, none of the four shadowy figures, outlined against the façade of the cliff, could be

identified. The dark rock and the bramble hindered them from being fairly seen. Not even when they had reached the bottom of the stair could they be recognised: for there also the frondage afforded them cover.

It was only after the two foremost had entered the canoe, and the craft was seen gliding out into the open water, that Quaco could tell who were the two individuals thus seeking the solitude of the Duppy's Hole.

"Chakra!" said he, in a whisper to Cingües. "The t'other? Prince! if my eyes don't bamboozle me, it's your old acquaintance, the penn-keeper!"

To the Fellatah this piece of information was superfluous: he had already recognised the well-known features of the man who had so deeply injured him.

The memory of all his wrongs rushed into his heart, accompanied by a thirst for vengeance – keen, irresistible.

With a wild cry – and before Quaco could interpose – he raised his piece and fired.

The young African was a marksman of unerring aim; and but for the upraised arm of Quaco, that had disturbed the level of that deadly tube, the hours of Jacob Jessuron would have been numbered.

And numbered they were. Despite the interruption – despite the accident that guided that leaden missile far wide of its mark – destiny had determined upon having its victim.

Neither of the occupants of the canoe appeared to have been

wounded; but as the smoke cleared away, it could be seen that the shot had not passed them without effect. Chakra's hands were empty; the paddle had been struck by the bullet; and, carried clean out of them, was now seen on the surface of the water, fast gliding towards the gorge!

A shrill cry escaped from the lips of the Coromantee. He alone understood the danger to which this accident had exposed him. He alone knew of the whirl that threatened to overwhelm both himself and his companion.

Instantly he threw himself upon his knees, and, with an arm extended on each side of the canoe, and his body bent down to the gunwale, he commenced heating the water with his broad palms. His aim was to prevent the craft from being drawn into the centre of the current.

For some moments this strange struggle was kept up – the canoe just holding its own – making way neither upwards nor downwards.

The Maroons watched the movement with mute surprise; and no doubt would have continued to do so, but that the two men left by the bottom of the stairway – perhaps stirred by a like curiosity – had rushed forward to the edge of the water, and thus permitted their faces to be seen. At the same instant were they recognised by one who had an old account to settle with them.

“The jack Spaniards!” cried Quaco, surprised beyond measure at the sight of his *ci-devant* prisoners. “They have got loose from our guard. Fire upon them, comrades! Don't let them

escape a second time!”

The stentorian voice of the Maroon lieutenant, audible above all other sounds, at once awakened the *caçadores* to a sense of their dangerous situation; and, like a brace of baboons, they commenced sprawling up the tangled stairway.

Too late had they taken this resolution. Before they had got a third of the way to the summit, half-a-dozen triggers were pulled; and their bodies, one after the other, fell with a heavy plunge into the water below.

Meanwhile Chakra, in the canoe, had kept up his life and death struggle, now going against the current – and now the watery element appearing to prevail.

For the moment the Maroons could not have decided that strife. They were engaged in re-loading their guns; and the Coromantee was left free to continue his struggles without interruption.

Chakra's bitterest enemies could scarce have desired to bring that scene to a speedy termination. No avenger need have wished his victim in a more terrible situation than were he and his confederate at that moment.

The former, acting under the instinct of self-preservation, had not yet given way to despair; while the terrified look of the latter, who appeared to have already succumbed to it, might have restrained his deadliest foe from interference.

Between the long, sinewy arms of Chakra and the strength of the current, it was difficult to decide which would conquer. For

many minutes the forces appeared to be equally balanced. But the strength of the man was declining, while that of the element remained the same. In the end, the waters must prevail. Chakra at length appeared to become convinced of this; and cast round him a glance of mingled inquiry and despair.

At that moment an idea seemed to strike him – some thought, perhaps, that promised him a chance of escape.

All at once he desisted from his hopeless efforts to stay the canoe, as if some resolution had suddenly become fixed; and, turning towards his companion, he bent down, apparently with the intention of whispering to him. His wild, dark look, however, declared his design to be far different.

When fairly within reach, he threw out his long arms with a sudden jerk, and, clutching the Jew by both shoulders, drew him up into his embrace, like some gigantic spider seizing upon its prey.

Suddenly changing his hold, he grasped an arm and limb; and, raising the body high in air, with an immense muscular effort, he projected it clear over the gunwale of the canoe.

One shriek from the Jew – emitted in the extremest accent of grief – was heard simultaneously with the plunge; and then the body of the unfortunate man disappeared beneath the dark waters of the lagoon.

His hat and umbrella alone floated on the surface, both rapidly carried along by the current.

The wretched creature rose again, but not to discover any

chance of saving himself from destruction. The only gratification he could have drawn from his temporary emergence was to perceive that his false confederate must perish as well as himself.

Chakra had hoped that by lightening the canoe he might contend more successfully with the current; but it soon became evident that his hopes would prove vain.

In disembarassing himself of his *compagnon du voyage* he had lost way; and, before he could recover it, the canoe was sucked into a charybdis, from which even the power of the paddle could not have extricated it.

In less than ten seconds the craft entered the embouchure of the gorge, gliding downward with the velocity of an arrow.

It was but a despairing effort on the part of its occupant to seize upon a tree that grew horizontally from the rocks; though in his despair Chakra clutched it. Even had the bush been firmly rooted, his strength would not have sustained him against the fierce, resistless flood.

But it was not. The roots gave way; and, in another instant, the Coromantee and his canoe were precipitated an hundred feet sheer among the black rocks below!

His confederate had preceded him only by two seconds of time; and the dead bodies of both came once more in close contact – circling round and round, amidst the frothy spume that creamed over the cauldron below!

Volume Three – Chapter Forty Eight

Conclusion

On the morning that succeeded the occurrence of these tragic events, one entering at the great gate of Mount Welcome estate, and directing his eye up the long, palm-shaded avenue, would have beheld but a mass of black, smoking ruins.

On any other morning, twelve months after, the eye of a person looking in the same direction, would have been gladdened by a sight far different. Smiling in all its splendour, at the end of that vegetable vista, once more could be seen the proud mansion of Mount Welcome —*renaissant* in every respect – its stone stairway still standing – its white walls and green-jaloused windows looking as if they had sprung, phoenix-like, from the flames – every item of the architecture so closely in imitation of the former structure, that even the eye of an old acquaintance could have detected no trace of the transformation.

Outside, everything appeared as before. It was only upon entering the mansion that you might perceive a change, and this chiefly relating to its occupancy and ownership. Instead of a stout, red-faced, and somewhat plebeian personage, of over forty years old, you would see in the present proprietor of Mount Welcome a youth of noble mien, by age scarce claiming the privileges of manhood, but in aspect and demeanour evidently

fit for the performance of its duties – deserving to be the master of that aristocratic mansion.

Near him – oh! certain to be near him – there is one upon whom the eye rests with still greater interest; one who had graced the old mansion – yet more gracing the new – the daughter of its former proprietor, the wife of its present one.

She has not even changed her name – only her condition. Lilly Quasheba is no longer *Miss* but *Mrs* Vaughan!

Both these personages may be seen seated in that great hall, with floor as smooth and furniture as resplendent as ever.

It is the hour after breakfast, and also, as of yore, the hour when the post may be expected. Not that either cared to look abroad for that diurnal messenger – more welcome to those around whom Hymen has not yet wound his golden chain.

Equally indifferent were these two happy individuals to the actions of the outside world: neither cared for its news. Their love, still in the fresh flush of its honeymoon, was world enough for them; and what interest could either feel in the arrival of the mail?

But the post has no respect either for indifference or anxiety. It is transmitted alike to the grave and the gay. It brings joy to the heart heavy laden, and sorrow to that which the moment before its arrival may have been bounding with bliss.

In that great hall in the mansion of Mount Welcome there were two bosoms brimful of bliss, or a feeling near akin to it. Nay, why should we say *akin* to it, since they were two hearts in the

enjoyment of a mutual love? If that be not bliss, there is no other – either on earth or in heaven.

Without any attempt at concealment, the eyes of both betrayed their mutual delight. Gazing on each other, in sweet reciprocal admiration, they saw not that dark form – rudely centaurean – that approached up the long avenue.

Had they seen it, it would have created no surprise. It was only the post-boy, Quashie, on his shaggy cob, returning from the Bay.

After this speculative peroration, the reader may be apprehensive of some dire development springing from the letter-bag slung over the shoulders of the darkey.

Nothing of the kind. There was a letter, but not one that might be unwelcome. But for the post-mark, it might have remained for hours unopened.

But the impress was peculiar. It was African. The letter was stamped with the name of a port near the mouth of the Gambia. It was addressed to “Herbert Vaughan, Esquire, Mount Welcome, Jamaica.”

The young planter broke the seal, and rapidly ran over the contents of the letter.

“From your brother, Cubina,” said he, though he knew that he imparted no information by this. “He writes to say he is coming back again to Jamaica.”

“Oh! I am so glad of that! I knew he would never live contented among those wild people, notwithstanding he has been made a prince over them; but Yola – ”

“She comes with him, of course. It is not likely he would leave her behind. She longs for her island-home again. I don’t wonder, dearest Kate. There is one spot on the earth hallowed beyond all others – the spot where heart meets heart in the free confession of a mutual love. No wonder the African maiden should desire to return to it. Human nature is everywhere the same. To me this Island is the elysium of earth!”

“Ah! to me also!”

On giving utterance to this mutual confession, the young husband and wife bent towards each other, and pressed lips as fervently as if they had never been married!

After this fond embrace, Herbert continued the reading of the letter.

“Oh!” exclaimed he, when he had perused another portion of the epistle; “your brother wants to know whether he can either become our tenant or purchase that piece of land that lies beyond the Jumbé Rock. The old king has given him a capital to start with, and he wants to turn coffee-planter.”

“I am glad he has such intentions. Then he will settle down, and be near us.”

“He must not be permitted to purchase it. We shall present it to him, since we have enough without it. What say you, Kate? It is yours, not mine to give.”

“Ah!” returned the young wife, in a tone of playful reproach, “do not distress me with those sad *souvenirs*. You know that I gave it to you when I might have believed myself its mistress;

and – ”

“Stay, dearest. Do not you distress *me* by such an appeal! You were its rightful owner, and should have been. Even had we not become joint proprietors, I could never have thought of dispossessing you. Say, then, that the land shall be Cubina’s!”

A repetition of that sweet embrace pronounced the consent of both to the proposal of Cubina.

Herbert resumed the reading of the letter. “Good heavens!” cried he, on finishing its perusal, “what a singular story! The captain of the slaver, who brought Yola’s brother over to Jamaica, has been back again to the coast. What a terrible retaliation!”

“What, dear Herbert?”

“Only that *they have eaten him!*”

“Oh, merciful Father!”

“Sad and terrible though it be, it is true; else Cubina would not have written it. Hear what he says: —

“‘Jowler’ – that was the name of the slaver’s captain – presented himself before old Foolah-foota, in search of a fresh cargo of slaves. The king, already apprised of the skipper’s treason to Cingües, instantly ordered him to be seized; and, without trial or other formality, caused him to be chopped to pieces upon the spot. He was afterwards cooked and eaten, at the grand national feast, which was held on the celebration of my nuptials with the princess Yola. *Crambo!* it was a painful scene; and one might have felt sympathy for the unfortunate wretch, had he been anything else than a dealer in human flesh; but,

under that reflection, I stood by without feeling any great desire to interfere in his behalf. In fact, my Fellatah father-in-law was so furious, I could not have saved the wretch from a fate which, after all, was perhaps not more than he deserved; and to which, no doubt, the poor victims he had carried across the Atlantic would have been only too glad to have seen him consigned.”

“It is well,” said Kate, with a thoughtful air, “that Cubina has determined upon leaving a land where, I fear, such scenes are too common. I shall be so happy to see them both once more in our dear, beautiful Island. And you, Herbert, I am sure, will rejoice at their return.”

“Most certainly I shall. Ah, Kate! did it ever occur to you how much we are indebted to them?”

“Often, Herbert – often. And were it not that I am a firm believer in destiny, I should fancy that but for them – ”

“Nonsense, Kate!” playfully interrupted the young husband. “None of your Creole superstitions. There is no such thing as destiny. It was not that which ruled my heart to believe you the fairest thing in creation – but because you *are* so. Don’t be ungenerous to Cubina and Yola. Give them all the credit that is due to them. Say frankly, love, that but for them you might have become Mrs Smythje, and I – I – ”

“Oh, Herbert! speak not of the past. Let that be buried in oblivion, since our present is everything we can desire!”

“Agreed! But for all that, dearest, do not let us forget the gratitude we owe to Cubina and his dark-skinned bride. And to

prove it to them, I propose something more than giving them the piece of land. Let us build them a house upon it; so that upon their arrival they may have a roof to shelter them.”

“Oh, that would be a pleasant surprise for them!”

“Then we shall bring it about. What a lovely morning! Don’t you think so, Kate?”

As Herbert put this interrogatory, he glanced out through the open jalousies.

There was nothing particularly fine about the morning – at least, for Jamaica, but Kate saw with Herbert’s eyes; and just then, to the eyes of both, everything appeared *couleur-de-rose*.

“Indeed, a beautiful morning!” answered the young wife, glancing inquiringly towards her husband.

“What say you, then, to a little excursion, *à pied*?”

“I should be delighted, Herbert. Where do you think of going?”

“Guess now!”

“No – you must tell me.”

“You forget. According to Creole custom, our honeymoon is to last for twelve months. Until that be terminated, you are to be master, sweet Kate. Where would you most like to go?”

“I have no choice, Herbert. Anywhere. In your company it is all the same to me. You must decide.”

“Well, then, dearest, since you leave it to me, I declare for the Jumbé Rock. Its summit overlooks the piece of land we intend presenting to our brother, Cubina. While we are there we can

select the site for his house. Is it agreeable to you?"

"Dearest Herbert," replied the young wife, entwining her arm around that of her husband's, and gazing fondly into his eyes – "the very place I was thinking of."

"Why of it? Tell me, Kate!"

"Shame, Herbert! Must I tell you? You know that I have told you before."

"Tell me again. It gives me pleasure to hear you speak of that hour."

"Hour! scarce a minute was it, and yet a minute worth all the rest of my life! A minute in which I learnt that the language of your eyes was truer than that of your tongue! But for that belief, Herbert, I might, indeed, have yielded to despair. The memory of that sweet glance haunted me – sustained me through all. Despite all, I continued to hope!"

"And I, too, Kate. That remembrance is as dear to me as it can be to you. Let us seek the hallowed spot."

An hour after, and they stood upon the Jumbé Rock, on that spot so consecrated in their hearts.

Herbert appeared to have forgotten his purpose. Not a word was said about Cubina or the site of his dwelling. Not a word of the Happy Valley, or the unpleasant recollections it was calculated to call up. All the past appeared to be forgotten, except that one sweet scene; and on this were concentrated the thoughts of both – their words as well.

"And you loved me then?" inquired he, only to enjoy the

luxury of an affirmative answer. “You loved me then?”

“Oh, Herbert! how could I help loving you? Your eyes were so beautiful then!”

“What! Are they not so now?”

“How cruel to ask the question! Ah! far more beautiful now! Then I beheld them only with anticipation; now I look into them with the consciousness of possession. That moment was pleasure – this is ecstasy!”

The last word was perfectly appropriate – not a shade too strong to express the mutual feeling that existed between Herbert Vaughan and his cousin-wife. As their rounded arms became entwined, and their young bosoms pressed fondly together, both believed that even in this unhappy world ecstasy may exist.

The End