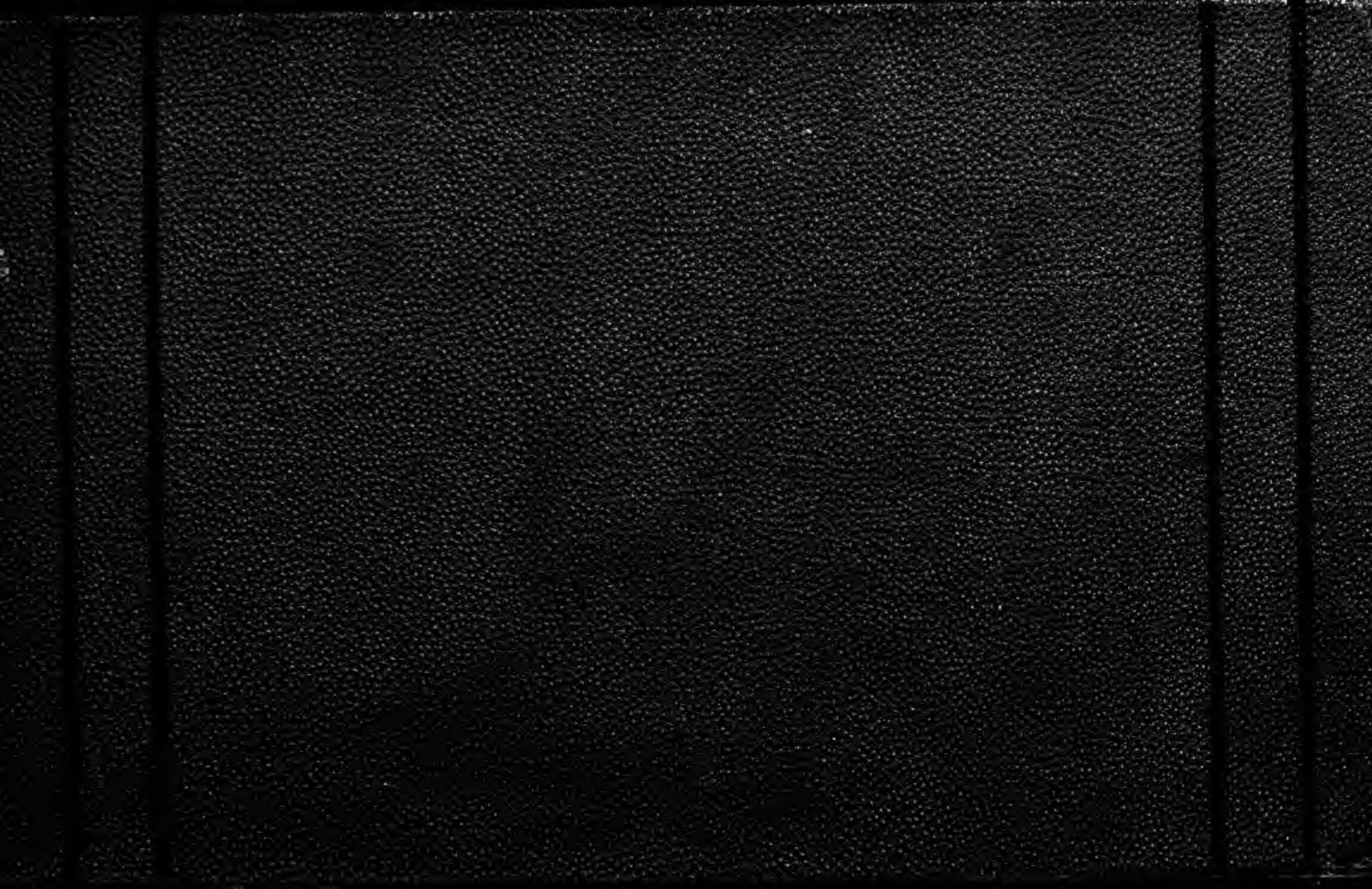

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DUTCH GUIANA.

DUTCH GUIANA

BY

W. G. PALGRAVE

AUTHOR OF 'A YEAR'S JOURNEY THROUGH CENTRAL AND EASTERN ARABIA

"It was a chosen plott of fertile land,—
As if it had by Nature's cunning hand
Been choycely picked out from all the rest
And laid forth for ensample of the best" SPENSER

"It would be interesting to know the secret of Dutch colonial management, which presents to an outside observer the aspect of minding one's own business, and inducing other people to mind theirs" *Saturday Review*

"Go to Egypt. It will suit you. I look upon you as an Oriental. If you like, go to South America. Tropical scenery will astonish and cure you" DISRAELI

WITH PLAN AND MAP.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1876

PREFACE.

During my residence in the West Indies, the hospitable instances of my friend, Mr. A. Cohen, at present Her Majesty's Consul for Surinam, seconded by a courteous invitation from his Excellency C. A. van Sypesteyn, Governor of that colony, determined me to pay a visit to Dutch Guiana. My stay there was, of necessity, a short one, not exceeding a fortnight, but during that period the forethought of my amiable hosts had prepared, and put at my disposal, all available means of collecting trustworthy information, both ocular and documentary, regarding the condition of the people and the country. To the kindness of those friends, accordingly, this work owes any interest or value it may possess.

Some inaccuracies, or, at least, some disputable points, may occur in the historical notices scattered through these pages. In the remote station of my present service, I have at hand no means for comparative investigation of the records

of the Guiana past; and am compelled, accordingly, to throw myself for such matters on the indulgence of my readers, by whom, if better informed, I shall be thankful to be corrected.

Conversant for many years with the negro races in those Eastern lands where they may be, from long domicilement, regarded as almost indigenous, I have felt a special interest in observing their present condition and probable future in their Western regions of more recent adoption. In no European colony have they been so completely identified with the soil as in Dutch Guiana; nowhere could they be studied to better advantage. To those, therefore, who feel interest, not in African geography only, but in African nationality, I commend the results of my observations on this subject; they are grounded on experience, and ratified by fact.

The Biblical paradise, judging by the records that have come down to us, though not, on the whole, a very progressive, was yet a very pleasant place. Much the same may be said of the Creole paradise—Dutch Guiana. The gates are open: enter.

St. Thomas, W. I.,
October 21, 1875.

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DUTCH GUIANA.

CHAPTER I.

THE COAST.

> Then creeping carefully along the beach,
> The mouth of a green river did they reach,
> Clearing the sands, and on the yellow bar
> The salt waves and the fresh waves were at war.
>
> MORRIS.

EVERY one who has read—and who has not?—the incomparable story of 'Guy Mannering' knows that the predetermining thread of our existence, whether spun by Meg Merrilies or a Clotho, is, like the life it measures, a many-coloured twine of differing hues. My own particular Clotho, whoever she be, had kindly unreeled for me a fortnight's length, or nearly so, of the very whitest hank ever allotted to mortal, in a region not incorrectly styled by Mr. Anthony Trollope, in his West-Indian reminiscences, the "true and

actual Utopia of the Caribbean Seas, namely, British Guiana"—a region additionally blessed, at the time of my visit, with that almost Utopian piece of colonial good fortune, the right man in the right place, in the person of its present Governor.

But with British Guiana and the good things thereof my present tale has, except in the way of introduction, little to do. George Town and Berbice, sugar-estates and canals, coolies and vacuum-pans, hospitable planters and not less hospitable townsmen, are they not written, and well written too, in the book above alluded to—the 'Book of the West Indies and the Spanish Main'? At any rate I was soon in some manner acquainted, however superficially, with all these; and now my principal desire was to acquire some knowledge of the neighbouring cousin-colony, if "mother" be not the fitter title—Dutch Guiana.

"'Tis known, at least it should be," that Surinam, geographically indicated by the easterly slice of Guiana placed between our own South American possessions, on the one side, and French Cayenne on the other, is up to the present day under Dutch rule; while Demerara, or, to speak more correctly,

the broad British territory that includes in one the three provinces of Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo, was, till a comparatively recent period, Dutch also. Now, I had often heard it affirmed that the immense superstructure of prosperity raised by British energy on the shores of Demerara owed its oft-tried solidity, if not in whole, at least in no inconsiderable part, to the well-devised foundation-work bequeathed us as a parting legacy by our Batavian predecessors. Our form of administration is Dutch (so said my informants), our local institutions Dutch, our sea-walls are Dutch, our canals, our sluices, the entire system of irrigation and drainage from which the land derives its unparalleled fertility, and we our wealth, all are Dutch. We have made English use of these things, no doubt, and the merit of that use is ours; but the merit of the things themselves is not all our own, it belongs rather to those who first created them and gave them to the land.'

How far might this be true? Colonial success amid the many failures recorded, and yet recording in these very regions, must be, every one will admit, a phenomenon, the sources of

which would be well worth discovery; and here before me was an instance ready to hand, and a cause assigned. Why not investigate its correctness? There was time at disposal, and from George Town to Paramaribo is no great distance. Besides, I had already received assurance of a hearty welcome from his Excellency Van Sypesteyn, the representative of Dutch majesty in Surinam; and an invitation of the sort, when combined with that chiefest of all factors in life's calculations, juxtaposition, made the present occasion doubly favourable; so I readily determined to follow up my Demeraran visit by another to a region which, while in natural respects hardly differing for good or evil from British Guiana, had all along remained under Batavian mastership, and where, consequently, the original institutions of our own acquired colony might be conveniently studied, unmodified, or nearly so, by foreign influences and change of rule.

From George Town, eastward, an excellent carriage road runs parallel to the coast, though at some distance from it inland; the drive is a pleasant one, traversing a varied succession of

large estates and populous villages, interrupted here and there by patches of marsh and wood, till the journey ends on the western bank of a full-flowing river, the Berbice, beyond which lies the small town of the same name, not far from the Anglo-Batavian frontier. Here official kindness had arranged for my further progress, by putting at my disposal the trim little revenue schooner, Gazelle, that now lay at anchor off the lower town-wharf, waiting to take me for a cruise of a hundred and fifty miles—such being the distance interposed between the harbour of Berbice and the mouth of the Surinam river, where rises the capital of Dutch Guiana.

A sailing craft, however small, if in good trim, clean, possessed of a comfortable cabin, and under a steady beam wind, all which advantages were combined in the present instance, is a welcome change from the inevitable smoke, crowding, noise, oily smell, and ceaseless roll of the largest and finest steamer ever propelled by engine. Besides, the circumstances incident to a thirty or forty ton sailing-ship tend to create a friendlier fellow-feeling between passenger and crew than is ordinarily to be met with on her

more business-like rival of three or four thousand tons; just as a traveller often finds himself more at home in the modest parlour of a roadside inn than amid the splendour and bustle of Charing Cross Hotel or the giant structure of Portland Place. To sum up, the losses no less than the gains of steam for those who travel are, after the fashion of things, much the same by water as by land. In the present instance, the crew of the Gazelle was, to a man, composed of creole, that is, colonial-born negroes; indeed, the pilot's memory reached back to the time when the terms negro and slave were identical in his own person, as in the majority of his Guiana brethren. Civil, cheerful, and obliging as the descendants of Ham, despite of their ill-conditioned father's bad example, usually are, they were also—which, for a voyage like this, amid sand-banks and shoals, was of more importance—good seamen, and the captain in charge a good navigator, though a black one.

"I would rather by any amount have a black crew than a white one under my orders," is a remark which I have heard made by many and many a West Indian sea-captain, lamenting over

the insubordination, drunkenness, and other offences of his men. And in fact negroes, like their half-cousins, the Arabs, have naturally in themselves the making of excellent seamen, active, handy, and daring, besides being far more amenable to the restraints of discipline, and less so to the seductions of the brandy or rum bottle, than the average material of which white crews are, nowadays, formed. And should our own strangely scattered and disunited West Indian possessions ever realize among themselves the ideal "cluster of small states," the not unreasonable hope of other statesmen besides the romantic descendant of the Contarinis, such a confederacy might even more easily recruit her indispensable navy, than her less necessary standing army, from among the black creoles of her own islands and coasts.

A brisk wind was blowing, and the white cloud-drift scudding before the Atlantic trade-wind over the pale blue vault had in it something more akin to a Mediterranean than to a tropical sky, as we weighed anchor, and, taking advantage of the seaward ebb, cleared out of the narrow channel alongside of the low, bush grown shoal

that lies athwart the Berbice mouth, and bears, in common with countless other small islets and rocks of these latitudes, the name of Crab Island. The crab here in question is not the dainty crustacean of our seas, but the hideous land-crab known to the students of 'Roderick Random' and 'Tom Cringle'—a monster that may be eaten by such, and such only, as are stomach-proof against the unpleasant associations of burial-grounds and carrion. Soon the tall, formal, semi-Batavian houses of Berbice, and its yet taller market-tower or look-out (for every town hereabouts has within its circuit one of these, at least, to serve for a beacon to the seafarer, and a watch-place, whence notice can be given in case of fire or any other sudden danger threatening the townsmen themselves), had disappeared from our view behind river-bend and forest, and by noon we were afloat on the open sea.

The open but "not the blue," much less the typical "black water," of the deep Atlantic. From the Orinoco to the Amazon, the aqueous fringe of the South American coast is a shallow, muddy, brackish, ochrey sort of composition, which overspreads an almost imperceptible

downward slope of alluvial deposit, that reaches out seaward for ten, fifteen, twenty, or even more miles, and bears witness to the prodigious volumes of water poured unceasingly, with little difference of month or season, by the countless rivers of the great southern continent into the ocean beyond. As we slowly made our way up along the coast, tacking and retacking against the unvarying trade-breeze, broad gaps in the monotonous line of low brown forest, the shore-horizon on our left, successively indicated the mouth of one or other of these great streams, many among which, nor those by any means the largest, equal or exceed the Severn and the Garonne in length of course and copiousness of flow. Of the latter in particular a further intimation was given by the tossing of our ship where the strong river-current, felt far out to sea, crossed and thwarted the regular succession of waves as they rolled slowly on from the open Atlantic, and roughened them into whitening breakers.

From the outlet of the Corentyn, that acts as boundary between British and Dutch Guiana, to the mouth of the Surinam river itself, hardly anything beside these wide gaps in the forest

margin, and the corresponding breaker-patches out at sea, occurs to vary the monotony of yellow waves and level forest-line, that by its utter sameness wearies the eye and depresses the spirits of the voyager.

"What a contrast," may that same voyager not improbably say to himself, "is the Dutch shore to the coast of British Guiana!" There the view by sea or land is not particularly picturesque, to be sure; but to make up for the want of beauty, we have the prospect scarcely less pleasurable to the mind, if not to the eye, of a close succession of tall chimneys, each with its flaunting smoke-pennon, along the whole length of the southern horizon, from Berbice to the Pomeroon, or near it, proclaiming an almost continuous cultivation, and the triumphs of the industry that has transformed a "lonely mud-bank, once productive of nothing but alligators, snakes, and mosquitoes," into a thriving, populous, wealth-coining colony. Here, on the contrary, not a chimney, not a construction of any sort, overtops the impenetrable mangrove-growth of the shore. Scarcely, and at distant intervals, does an irregular wreath of blue vapour, curling above

the forest, tell its tale of clearing and habitation; whence the traveller may, if so minded, deduce the further conclusion of the inferiority of the Batavian race to the British, of Dutch colonization to English, &c.

But this conclusion, like many others drawn at first sight, would break down on closer inspection of the premises; and first of all because the two coasts, however much alike each other when seen from five or six miles distance out to sea, are, in reality, very unlike,—so much so, indeed, that neither for praise nor blame can any correct comparison be made between them. For throughout the whole, or very nearly the whole, breadth of British Guiana a wide swamp district, lower itself than the average sea level, and, in consequence, very difficult, if not impossible, to drain, cuts off the available land-strip of the coast itself from the firm but distant highlands of the interior, and by so doing confines the choicest sugar-producing tracts of the colony to the immediate vicinity of the shore, where they are all arranged side by side in a long but narrow strip, hemmed in between the ocean to the north and the almost equally unmanageable morass on the south. In

Dutch Guiana, on the contrary, a rise, slight but sufficient, of the continental level has thrust forward the swamp-region from the interior down to the very shore, where it forms a barrier, behind which the sugar lands and estates ensconce themselves, with no particular background, until, perhaps, the worthy Brazilians condescend to define their frontier, which, as yet, they seem in no hurry to do, and thus remain, for the most part, out of sight of the seafarer, though not out of easy reach by river communication.

This invisibility from the sea, and those who go down to their business in the great waters, was once by no means an adverse circumstance. On the contrary, it was a very desirable one to the old Dutch settlers throughout the seventeenth and even during the eighteenth century. For those were days when many a gallant Captain Morgan, Captain Trench, or Captain Cutthroat whoever would hail his men on the look-out, as their piratical barque hugged the coast on her way to the golden plunder of the Spanish main, ready enough to shorten sail and let down the boats, had any tempting indication of hoarded Batavian wealth, whether in produce or in coin, appeared within

the limits of a long-shore raid. But the case was different so long as the dense bush-barrier defended what it concealed, and the river estuaries, however frequent and wide, afforded no better prospect to the would-be plunderers than that of a difficult and perhaps distant navigation up stream, far from their comrades in the ships at sea, with the additional probabilities of meeting with a fort or two on the way to bar their passage. And thus, throughout the worst days of piratic menace, the hoards of Dutch Guiana remained, with one exception, to be mentioned hereafter, unpillaged, chiefly because unseen; while the more patent treasures of the Frenchman and the Spaniard were harried to enrich the coffers or decorate the Pollies and Betsies of those lawless heroes of the Caribbean deeps.

I said with one exception—a memorable one, from the injury it caused. This was when the more formidable, because the better organized and better supported, buccaneers,—for buccaneers they also were, both in principle and practice, however much they might screen themselves behind royal usage and international law,—Jacques Cassard and De Monans, commanders of the

French squadron, issued from the all too neighbouring ports of Cayenne, to harry the Batavian settlements within their reach. Had the estates and factories, the warehouses and stores, of the inland, far up the Surinam, the Commoweyne, and the Saramacca, been as easy of access to a marine invader as was the town of Paramaribo itself, (the more its misfortune), the losses inflicted on Dutch Guiana by French rapacity in the years 1712, 1713, and 1714 would have been multiplied ten and twenty fold. Nor was the British flag, so often a signal of terror and dismay in the Caribbean Archipelago, always a desirable or a friendly visitant to Dutch shores.

The age of pirates and buccaneers is past, and even from regular naval invasion a West Indian colony, under the present circumstances of warfare, has little to fear. But, independently of the mischief-makers whom of old times it brought on its waves, the sea of this coast is itself a troublesome and occasionally a dangerous neighbour to the planter and his labours. Whether it is that the north-eastern side of this great continent is, in very truth, slowly sinking, sinking, as runs the ominous verdict of not a few grave, scientific

judges, or whether, as I found it to be the prevalent opinion among the long-shore men themselves, some secular deflection of winds and currents yearly brings a heavier volume of water to war against the unprotected low-lying land, I know not. But this much is certain, that the sea encroaches more and more, and that every equinoxial spring-tide, in particular, is signalled by a wider and more perilous invasion of the watery enemy, and bears his usurpations ever farther over forest and plain.

Whatever the cause, aqueous or terrene, its effects are only too certain; and a woeful example was soon before our eyes, when, after not many hours' cruise, we anchored off the little town, or, to speak more truly, remnant of a town, called Nikarie. The name is, I believe, like most of the names hereabouts, Indian, the meaning, of course, unknown. The district, which is also denominated Nikarie, lies immediately to the east of the Corentyn river; and is thus the nearest of all to the British territory. It contains at the present day, as official returns tell us, nine estates, comprising between them 2,832 acres of cultivated soil; the number was formerly greater, but no portion

of the colony suffered so much from the emancipation crisis, and the other causes of discouragement and depression, from which wealthier and more favoured colonies are only now beginning to recover, and that slowly.

The estates, mostly cane or cocoa, are all situated at some distance inland up the river, safely sheltered behind the tangled mangrove fringe. Where goods have to be shipped, remoteness from the sea-coast is, of course, an inconvenience; yet with this the colonists long preferred to put up, rather than deviate from their traditionary rule. But when, at the opening of the present century, the British lion, jealous lest so choice a morsel as Dutch Guiana should fall into the jaws of the ravenous French Republic and still more ravenous Empire, temporarily extended a protective paw over these regions, a new order of things prevailed for a time, and an unwonted self-confidence took, in more than one instance, the place of prudential caution. Under these novel auspices the seemingly eligible site of the Nikarie river-mouth was not likely to be passed over, and soon a flourishing little town, with streets, shops, stores, churches, public buildings, and the rest,

arose and dilated itself on the western point, to the great advantage of commerce, and for a while bravely held its own.

But wisdom was, before long, justified of her Batavian children, and the failure of the foreign experiment—a woeful failure—is now almost complete. It was afternoon when we made the port. As we cautiously threaded our way between sandbank and shoal before coming to anchor, we passed a broad, triangular space of shallow water, lashed into seething waves by wind and current, where, a few feet under the surface, lies what was once the busy area of populous streets. Meanwhile, the breakers, not content with the mischief already done, continue ceaselessly tearing away the adjoining land, bit by bit. Right in front, a large house, left an empty shell, without doors or window-frames, by its fugitive inhabitants, is on the point of sinking and disappearing among the waters that, unopposed, wash to and fro through the ground floor. Close by, the victorious sea has invaded the gardens of the neighbouring dwellings, and will evidently soon take possession of the buildings themselves; their basement work is rotten with the salt spray. Further on, a few

isolated fragments of what was once a carefully constructed sea-dam rise like black specks among the yeasty waters, and the new earth wall, built to protect what yet remains of Nikarie, has a desponding, make-shift look, as if aware that it will not have long to wait for its turn of demolition. Within its circuit a large, handsome, and solidly built church, now perilously near the water's edge, a commodious court-house, where the magistrate of the district presides, a few private dwelling-houses, and three or four grog-shops stand ranged, like the Maclachlans and Wilsons of the famous Solway martyr-roll, resignedly awaiting the steady advance of the tide. The wind was high, and the roar of the waves, as they burst impatiently on the dwindling remnant of what was once the Nikarie promontory, sounded in the dusky evening air like a knell of doom.

There are many sad sights in this sad world, but few give the beholder so dreary a feeling of helpless melancholy as does a town in the act and process of being washed away by the sea,—the forces are so unequal, the destruction so wasteful and so complete. Fortunately, at Nikarie, however, except for the loss, such as it is, of some acres

of sandbank, and as much building material as the inhabitants do not think it worth their while to carry away, no great harm is being done. Already the situation of a new emporium for the sugar and other produce of the estate has been marked out further up the river, and the rise of the level ground, which is here more rapid than to the west, along the Demerara coast, will ensure it, with the adjoining cultivated lands, from any serious risk of Neptunian invasion for several years to come. Meanwhile, the spectacle now presented by Nikarie is undoubtedly a depressing one to the imagination, if not to the mind, and I was glad to learn that it was the only one of its kind on the Surinam coast.

Here first I heard negroes speaking Dutch, and I have no doubt that they murdered it as ruthlessly as they do the Queen's English or the Republic's French elsewhere. But I will not detain my readers with a minute account of the ways and fashions of the inhabitants in this Nikarie district, as we shall have the opportunity of studying Dutch Guiana life in all its aspects, black, white, or coloured, to better advantage further on. This, however, need not hinder our availing ourselves

in the mean time, where convenient, of the information copiously supplied by his Excellency Van Sypesteyn, who was, in youth, the talented historian, as now, in middle age, he is the active and intelligent Governor of Dutch Guiana.

From official documents, it appears that the number of sugar factories in the district of Nikarie is five, all of them worked by steam, and giving an annual result of five or six thousand hogsheads of sugar, besides 60,000 gallons of molasses and about as many puncheons of rum; to which must be added nearly 14,000 pounds weight of coffee and 300,000 of cocoa, from all which data we may safely conclude that the 2,832 acres of its reclaimed land are neither unfruitful nor badly cultivated. Yet the total number of inhabitants only reaches 2,346, more than 600 of whom are Coolie or Chinese emigrants; the remainder are negroes. Here, as elsewhere, under-population is the great stumbling-block in the way of progress.

It is pitiful to think that, out of the 10,000 and more acres, all excellent land, conceded by the Dutch Government to the occupation of the Nikarie proprietors, hardly more than a fourth

has been, as the preceding numbers show, brought into actual use. Yet it is neither the climate nor the soil that is here in fault. How often, not in Nikarie and the districts of Surinam, but in St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Trinidad, in almost all these Western Edens, nay, even in flourishing Demerara itself, has the image of little unpicturesque Barbados, unpromising in show, unfavoured by nature, yet thriving, prosperous, over-stocked, and, therefore, only prosperous because over-stocked, recurred to my mind. Improved machinery, Coolies, Chinese, are all of them excellent things, each in their way, but they cannot make up for the absence of that one great requisite of all progress, material or social, a superabundant native population. But how is it to be obtained for our own three-quarters-empty islands? How for Guiana? How for Surinam? Many answers have been given, and more may be given yet; but a wholly satisfactory one is yet to seek. We will try our luck at the solution of this problem further on.

And now our trim little craft is once more on the open sea, bounding from wave to wave, as she cleaves her onward way to the east. Sand-

banks and mud-banks, covered with scarcely more than a fathom depth of water, kept us out at a considerable distance from the coast; but had we been nearer we should have had little to study, except a dull uniform growth of mangrove and *parwa* trees, the latter not unlike our own poplars in shape and foliage. Behind this woody screen lies the district of Coronie, almost the only quarter of Dutch Guiana where cotton, once a favourite speculation, especially about the time of the late American war, is now grown. So far as soil and climate are concerned, there is no assignable reason why it should not be more widely planted; but agriculture and commerce have their vagaries, often not less capricious than those of fashion and dress.

Coronie left behind us, a rougher sea than any we have yet encountered gives us notice that we are passing the joint estuary of the Coppename and Saramacca rivers, each the main artery of fertile and, comparatively speaking, populous regions to the south.

Not far inland, by the banks of the Coppename, though shut out from our sight by the forest screen, is a settlement bearing the name of

Batavia; and composed exclusively—exception made, I trust, of the Government inspector and the doctor—of lepers. A hundred and fifty in number, they employ themselves in field labour; have cottages and gardens of their own; and as the disease is painless, or nearly so, they live on not unhappily their death in life. The motive for keeping them thus apart from every one else is, of course, the idea that their malady is contagious—an idea wide-spread, it is true, but unsupported by scientific testimony, and probably due to the horror and disgust excited by the sight of so loathsome a disorder. Salt fish—the old-established slave diet throughout the West Indies—is not improbably responsible in many cases, if not most, for the disease: though not contagious and hardly even infectious, it is certainly hereditary. Improved diet and, above all, fresh articles of food put a limit to its ravages, and give hopes that, with proper precautions, it may ultimately disappear.

For my part, I am not sorry to miss seeing "Batavia," but I must regret the invisibility of "Groningen," where, near the mouth of the Saramacca, a colony of European labourers has

been established for several years past. It is one of the many attempts made at various times to supplement negro by European field work, and has, like the German and Irish colonies of Jamaica and the Portuguese St. Kitts, proved a failure in the main; though its inevitable non-success as a farm has to a certain extent been compensated by the gardeners and artisans whom it has supplied to the capital. Something of the same kind has, I believe, taken place elsewhere. Field labour and out-door life are things, early or late, irreconcilable with European vigour, health, and even existence in the tropical New World. Nor are they needed there. Of all which, also, more anon.

A night and a day have passed since we quitted the melancholy relics of Nikarie; and we are yet tossing on the turbid waves, several miles from land. This grows monotonous, and great was my delight when, on the second evening of our voyage, just as the brief twilight deepened into night, we at last sighted, though still at some distance, the dull gleam of the light-ship, anchored several miles out to sea, off the mouth of the Surinam river. Cautiously, for the shoals

are many and the current strong, we made for the signs of harbour, known even through the general gloom to our pilot and crew, till, about midnight, we anchored in smooth water just within the entry of the mighty stream, here over three miles in width, and took shelter behind a long, low, mangrove-covered land-spit running out from the east.

A wan crescent moon hung dimly over the black forest-line, and gleamed on the smooth seaward-flowing water, where we lay at anchor, waiting the rise of the tide, that would not take place till after daybreak. Not a sign of human habitation, not a sound of beast or bird; only the low roar of the breakers outside the bar, and the ceaseless flapping of the idle rudder against the sternpost. The air was mild, and no fear of marsh miasma deterred the crew from taking their rest where they lay, each prone on his face along the deck. That negroes always sleep face downwards is a fact long since observed by Tom Cringle, or rather Michel Scott, of Jamaican celebrity; whether his further conjecture, that this accounts for the flatness of their noses, be correct, let Darwin decide. Night dews, so much

and so justly dreaded in many parts of the East Indies, seem to be of little account in these Indies of the West. This, to venture a guess of my own in turn, may, perhaps, be owing to the much lesser degree of variation here occurring between the diurnal and nocturnal temperature. So we waited, while our boat's prow pointed steadily up stream, in a weird solitude, that looked as if it were the world's outer frontier land, and the great river the portal to some mysterious and unexplored regions beyond.

Morning broke at last; the tide turned, and flowed in, while a fresh breeze, with a sprinkling of light showers on its wings, blew from the east, as we hoisted sail for the port of our destination. Very soon it became evident, from the objects around us, that the drear loneliness we had just left behind extended no further than the immediate margin of the shore, and that we were entering on a region of industry, prosperity, and life.

What a relief was the change after two days' uniformity of turbid water, with nothing but mangrove-grown mudbanks for a horizon! With breeze and tide in our favour we now went briskly on, while, bend after bend, the river unfolded to our

gaze the treasures that lined its banks, more varied and more abundant at every turn. Joyfully I welcomed first one, then two, then several tall factory chimneys, each flaunting on the air its long grey smoke-wreath, silvered in the level sunbeams; then appeared glimpses of clustered roofs and brick walls, through the tall trees planted beside them, boiling-houses, megass-sheds, distilleries, overseers' dwellings; and not far removed from each group, rose the tall gabled roof of the Dutch-built residence for manager or proprietor, half screened amid the shades of its garden grove. Factory-chimneys and distillery-roofs! picturesque objects, indeed! you say. Yes, my dear Galwegian friend; or if you hail from the Black Country rather, factory chimneys and distillery roofs are, I am quite ready to admit, no very lovely objects when they are seen grimed with coal smoke, and amid even grimier surroundings, against the background of a heavy sepia-coloured sky. But under a bright sun, mixed up with glittering foliage, overtopped by graceful palms, and canopied by the most dazzling of skies, even roofs and chimneys combine with the beauty around them, and become

part of it, in their turn. Or else it was a long row of cottages, evidently pattern-built, that announced the presence of Coolies, Indian or Chinese, and implied the prosperity of those who could afford to employ such; while the less regular roof-lines, scattered amid the thick garden bushes, told of creole or Surinam-born negro labour. Or roofs and sheds, but without the accompaniment of factory and chimney, just visible among the boughs of what the inexperienced eye might take for a natural-grown forest, mark the cocoa estate, scarce less lucrative in Surinam than the cane-field; or perhaps it is a wide green expanse of plantain leaves—colossal plantains these—or the belfry of a Moravian school-house that shows over the bank; canoes, too, some mere hollowed tree-trunks, some of larger construction, covered barges, six-oar pleasure boats, sloops with shoulder-of-mutton sails, become more and more frequent.

So we sailed on, and before long came on one of the grandest sights that nature affords, the junction of two mighty rivers. For here, at a distance of some eight or nine miles from the sea, the Surinam and the Commeweyne rivers meet

together, the former from the south, the latter from the east. It was on their united waters that we had sailed thus far. The Surinam, which has, like the Demerara, given its name to an entire region, is navigable by vessels drawing ten feet of water for a distance of about one hundred miles up stream; higher yet, rocks and rapids permit only canoes to pass. Its sources lie hid among the forests of the equatorial mountain-land that forms the watershed of the valley of the Amazon, four or five degrees further still to the south; its breadth for the last forty miles, before junction with the Commeweyne, averages above half a mile, its depth from thirty to sixty feet. It is the main artery of the colony, which, indeed, was for many years limited to the immediate neighbourhood of its banks. The Commeweyne of shorter course, but here, at the junction point, little, if at all, inferior in breadth and depth to the Surinam itself, runs on an inland parallel with the eastern coast for a distance of some forty miles; further up, a number of smaller rivers, the Cottica, the Perica, the Coermoeribo, and others, deep though narrow streams, unite their waters to form the main trunk.

On the point which divides the two great rivers, a Hindoo ruler of the good old times, and before the unkind interference of a low-caste Government had, Paul-like, commanded widows rather to marry than to burn, would doubtless have erected a graceful temple, and consecrated the spot to the decorous performance of suttee; Dutch Governors, a more practical style of men, utilized the spot by erecting on it the fortress of "New Amsterdam." Its first stone was laid in 1734, shortly after the plundering exploits of Cassard and the French squadron; its object was evidently the protection of the capital from any repetitions of the like visits in future. But though Paramaribo and New Amsterdam, too, have since that date twice received French, twice English masters within their walls, it has so happened that the fort guns have never had occasion to pour forth any more deadly fire than that of a signal or a salute, treaties having in later times subjected the colony to those changes that hard fighting brought about in former days. However, the position of New Amsterdam is well chosen, the works strong, and should any future age raise up against the Dutch colonies a new

Cassard, he would find in the batteries enough and more than enough to render a buccaneering excursion up to Paramaribo by no means so easy a business as of yore.

We saluted the national flag, and, passing close under a very respectable battery, exchanged a few words of amicable Dutch with a subaltern, who, at the sight of our Government pennon, had hastened down for inquiry to the water's edge. Exempted by his courtesy—a courtesy I have never found wanting in any of his Batavian comrades—from the delays of an inspectorial visit, we continued our course due south, up the Surinam river; but the breeze had died away, and it was near noon when, after about eight miles of slow progress between banks and scenes much like those already described, but with a continually increasing denseness of estates and cultivation on either side, we approached the capital. Gardens too, small dwelling-houses, and crowded cottages rose thicker and thicker into view; a tall Flemish-looking tower glittered in the sun, and, at last, rounding an abrupt fort-crowned promontory on the left river bank, we cast anchor opposite the river quay and townhall of Paramaribo.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPITAL.

> In the afternoon they came unto a land
> In which it seemed always afternoon.
>
> TENNYSON.

It was not afternoon, in fact it was forenoon, and the sun, though mounted high, had not yet throned himself in his meridian tower, when, accompanied by those who had come to meet and welcome my arrival, I mounted a red brick flight of steps, leading from the water's edge up to the raised quay, and found myself on the threshold of the capital of Dutch Surinam. Yet there was something in the atmosphere that can only be described as post-meridian—an influence extending over everything around, town and people alike; nor post-meridian only, but distinctly lotophagous, befitting the lotus-eating capital of a lotus-eating land, very calm and still, yet very comfortable and desirable withal.

For what regards the material atmosphere, its heavy warmth, even at so early an hour as ten or eleven of the morning, need excite no surprise. Paramaribo stands on the South American map at little more than five and a half degrees north of the equator, and the equator here crosses the immense breadth of the moist plains, brimming river-meshes, and dense forests that constitute nine-tenths of the Guianas and Brazil. Fifteen miles, at least, in a straight line, removed from the nearest coast, and cut off from the very limited sea-breeze of the tropics by intervening belts of plantation and thick wood, the air of Paramaribo is not that of wind-swept Barbados or dry Antigua, but that of the moistest among all equatorial continents, and may best be likened to the air of an orchid-house at Kew and that of a Turkish bath combined. Not, be it well understood, a dry-heated, pseudo-Turkish bath of the European kind, but a genuine hammam of Damascus or Constantinople. In such an atmosphere, Ulysses himself and his crew must after a very short stay have betaken themselves in company with the natives to lotus-eating; it is a duty imposed by the climate, and there are

many less agreeable duties in the world elsewhere.

Not that the climate is unhealthy; quite the reverse. That tall, large-made, elderly European gentleman in a light grey suit, who, parasol in hand, grandly saunters by, evidently does so not from any want of vigour, either in mind or limb, but because a sauntering step is more congenial to the place than a brisk one; those sleek, stout, comfortable, glossy negroes, loitering in sun or shade, appear, and are, in fact, equal, did the occasion require it, to any exertion of which human muscle is capable; they are doing nothing in particular, because nothing in particular is just now the proper thing to do. The town itself, its tall houses, its wide streets, its gardens, its squares, its shady avenues, its lofty watch-tower, its tree-embosomed palace, its shrub-embosomed cottages, each and every particular of the scene, animate or inanimate, is stamped with the same character. "Take it easy," seems the lesson they all alike inculcate; and the lesson is a popular one, soon learnt, and steadily practised on every hand.

But appearances, however real for what regards

the surface of which they are part, may yet be very deceptive, if reasoned from unconditionally to what exists beneath them; and a town that numbers more than 22,000 inhabitants, itself the capital of a colony that yearly exports to the average value of a third of a million sterling, cannot be wholly peopled by dreamy lotus-eaters, delicious lotus-eaters only; nor can the sole occupation of the dwellers in city or field be lotus-eating, either physical or moral.

The solid and underlying fact of Paramaribo is that, amid this atmosphere and on this segment of the great Guiana delta, have planted themselves and taken root, no longer exotic but indigenous, the same Dutch industry, Dutch perseverance, and Dutch good sense that of old turned the sandy swamps of the Batavian delta into a flower-garden, and erected the Venice of the North on the storm-swept shores of the Zuider Zee. Surinam, rightly understood, is only Holland under another sky; Paramaribo is Amsterdam by other waters: the colouring and toning of the picture may indeed be equatorial Creole, but the lines and grouping are those of the Netherlands school, and no other.

This it is that gives to Paramaribo its twofold character, at once European and tropical, Dutch and Creole—a blending of opposites, a dual uniformity—an aspect that, when first beheld, leaves on the mind an impression bordering on unreality, as if place and people were imaged in a hot, picturesque dream. Yet Paramaribo is no dream, nor its inhabitants dream-shapes; very much the contrary. In fact, no capital town throughout the West Indies, no offspring of European stem, French, English, Danish, or even Spanish, so genuinely, so truthfully, represents the colony to which it belongs as Dutch Paramaribo. Contrary examples are easily adduced. Thus, for instance, Jamaica is pre-eminently the land of English country gentlemen, of magistrates, landlords, farmers, and, in tone, ways, and life, an English country district; while Demerara is in no small measure an English or, rather, I should say, a Scotch manufacturing district; Barbados, an English parish (Little Pedlington its satirists, of whom I beg to state that I am not one, would call it) magnified into an island. But neither Jamaica nor Demerara nor Barbados possesses a correct epitome of itself in Kingston, Georgetown, or

even Bridgetown: each of these three seaports has a character of its own, distinct from, and in some respects opposed to, the colony at large. This is due to many causes, and, most of all, to the "mixed multitude" of trade, the camp-followers of enterprise, who, under whatever banner they congregate, acknowledge in heart and life no flag but that of individual self-interest. These are they who muster strongest in the generality of colonial towns, especially seaports, and tinge, if they do not absolutely colour, the places of their resort. And thus from the merest port of call along these shores, where the "condottiere" element is at its maximum, to Georgetown, where it is decidedly at its minimum, a something of a restless, make-shift, egotistic, "cheap-Jack" admixture obscures, or at least jars with, the public-spirited nationality, unsettles the population, debases the buildings, ungroups the unity, and deforms the beauty of place and site.

With Paramaribo it is otherwise. The broad, straight streets, flanked with spacious and lofty houses, shaded by carefully planted avenues, adorned with public buildings that Scheveningen or the Hague need not blush to own, and trim

almost as the waysides of Brock; the Governor's residence, a miniature palace for elegance of style and stately appearance; the spacious Masonic lodge, "Concordia," where a Grand Orient himself—I speak as a profane, and, if the term be incorrect, apologize—might hold his assembly; the seemly synagogues—Dutch the one, Portuguese the other; the decorous if somewhat heavy-built churches, reformed and Lutheran; the lighter constructed but more spacious establishments, Moravian and Catholic; the lofty Town Hall, with its loftier tower, that from a hundred and twenty feet of height looks down over fort and river; the Court-house hard by; the noble Military Hospital, with its wide verandahs, open staircases, and cool halls; the strong-built Fort and Barracks; the Theatre, the Club-house, the many other buildings of public use and ornament, —all these are Dutch in appearance and character —all expressive of the Eleven Provinces, though chiefly of Zeeland and the steady purpose of her sons. The well-planned and carefully kept canals that intersect the town in every direction, the neat bridges, the broad river-side quays, the trim gardens, the decent cemeteries, the entire

order and disposition of the place, tell the same tale, witness to the same founders, reflect the same image, true to its original on the North Sea coast: all tell of settled order and tasteful method.

Is there in Dutch—for there certainly exists not in English—a guide-book of the town of Paramaribo, capital of Dutch Surinam? Perhaps there is; but I have not had the fortune to see it. However that may be, I must run the risk implied in writing as if of things familiar to every one, though, in fact, Paramaribo and Surinam may very possibly be not much better known to the good folks of Amsterdam and Rotterdam in general, let alone those of London or Norwich, than are the districts of Timboo and the town of Timbuctoo. Bearing this in mind, I think that a brief historical notice and an equally brief topographical description of the Surinam capital, and incidentally of the colony at large, will, under circumstances like these, hardly stand in need of an apology. There is little profit in reading of travels, or in making them, unless they be prefaced by some knowledge of the countries and their inhabitants: the former may

best be studied in their maps; the latter in their histories.

Revealed to Europe in 1499 by the great discoverer who gave his name to the American continent, Surinam, like the rest of the North-Guiana delta, though visited by adventurers of almost every nationality, remained for more than a century unclaimed, because uncolonized by any. Gradually, however, the future triple division of this part of the coast-region began to foreshadow itself in the marked persistency of English, French, and Dutch enterprise, all of which together contributed to the foundation of the Surinam settlement, though the honour of having first introduced regular land-cultivation, and erected a fort, belongs not to a Dutch but an English captain, whose name is borne by the little watercourse called Marshall's creek, a tributary stream of the Surinam river, or, as it was then called, the Greater Coma, some sixty or seventy miles' distance from the sea. But Thoracica, the spot selected by Marshall in 1603, was not destined long to enjoy its metropolitan honours; and the Indian village of Paramaribo, where a settlement had already been made by French emigrants as early, some say, as

1640, was by Lord Willoughby of Parham raised to the dignity of capital, in 1650—a dignity which it retained when, a few years later, it passed definitively under the Dutch flag. The name itself, "Paramaribo," is of Indian origin, not a derivative of "Parham," as some have erroneously stated.

The site was well chosen. The Surinam, here a tidal river of nearly a mile broad, flows past a slightly raised plateau of sand and gravel mixed with "caddy," a compound of finely broken fragments of shell and coral, extending for some distance along the left or west bank. The general elevation of the ground is about sixteen feet above low-water level, enough to insure it from being overflowed in the rainy seasons or by the highest tides. Several streams, improved by Dutch industry into canals, intersect this level; one of them connects the waters of the Surinam with those of the Saramacca further west: all are tidal in their ebb and flow. Drainage is thus rendered easy; and, now that the low bush and scrub, the natural growth of every South American soil, however light, has been cleared away, the citizens of Paramaribo may securely

boast that throughout the entire extent of Guiana, from the Oronoco to the Amazon, no healthier town than theirs is to be found.

This healthiness is, however, in great measure due to their own exertions; and above all to the good sense that presided over the construction of the town. When the true founder of town and colony alike, Cornelius van Aerssen, Lord of Sommelsdyk, and the fifth Governor of Dutch Guiana, landed on these shores in 1683, Paramaribo—so he wrote—consisted of only "twenty-seven dwellings, more than half of which were grog-shops," and close to it the Fort of Zeelandia, so named after its builders, the intrepid Zeelanders, who had already repelled more than one Indian or English assault from its walls. But under the vigorous administration of Sommelsdyk the rapidly rising prosperity of the colony was reflected in the town itself, that henceforth grew and prospered year by year. Its records describe it in 1750 as already covering one-half of its present extent; and, in 1790, the number of houses within its circuit exceeded a thousand; till, about the beginning of the present century, the addition of the extensive suburb of "Combe,"

on the north side, brought it up to its actual limits. Then followed a long and dreary period of colonial depression, general, indeed, throughout the West Indies, but nowhere (Jamaica perhaps excepted) greater than in Surinam, where the uncertainty consequent on a reiterated change of masters, French, English, and Dutch, helped to depreciate the already declining value of estates and produce in this part of the world. Misfortunes never come singly; and, while the colony at large suffered, Paramaribo in particular, ravaged by two severe conflagrations, the one in 1821 and the other in 1832, presented a melancholy spectacle of unrepaired ruins and abandoned suburbs. Between 1840 and 1860 things were at their worst, both for colony and capital. Then came the turn: the shock of emancipation passed, its benefits remained; town and country alike revived together; houses were rebuilt, suburbs repopulated; and of her past wounds the Paramaribo of our day now scarcely shows a scar. The number of her inhabitants, reckoned at barely 16,000 in 1854, at present exceeds 22,000, thus showing an increase of 6,000 in the course of the last twenty years only.

"A goodly city is this Antium;" but during the hot hours of the day, that is, from eight or at latest nine in the morning till pretty near sunset, I would not willingly incur the responsibility of sending a friend, or even an enemy, unless he happened to be a mortal one, on a sight-seeing stroll through the streets of Paramaribo. Carriages or riding-horses there are few to be found in the town, and none at all for hire. Negro carts are plenty, to be sure, and negro mules, too; but the former, independently of other considerations, are jolting conveyances; the latter a hard-mouthed, stiff-necked generation; and neither adapted to the furtherance of European locomotion, whether on pleasure or business. As to walking exercise under this equatorial sun, it might possibly be an agreeable recreation for a salamander, but hardly for any other creature.

It is true that shade may be found even in the hottest hours of perpendicular noon; and when the sun has fairly beaten you (as he will in less than five minutes) from the field, you may take refuge, if you choose, under the broad-leaved, glistering, umbrella-like almond-trees—so called from a superficial resemblance between the

kernels of their fruit and those of the almond, but neither in foliage nor growth having the most distant likeness to the European tree of that name—which Dutch forethought has kindly planted all along the river-quay. There, in company with any number of ragged black loungers, you may improve your leisure by watching the great barges as they float leisurely along the tide, bearing their neatly protected loads of sugar, cocoa, or other plantation produce for the cargo-ships that wait off the town-"stellings" or wharfs, patiently moored day by day, with so little bustle or movement of life about them, that you wonder whether their crews have not all by common consent abandoned them and gone off to join a lotus-eating majority on shore. Or, if you are driven to seek refuge while wandering through the interior of the town, the great broad streets, all mathematically straight, will offer you the shelter of their noble avenues, where tamarind, mahogany, sand box, or other leafy trees, planted with Batavian regularity, cast down a long black streak of shade on the glaring whiteness of the highway. Or you may rest, if so inclined, beside some well in one

of the many rectangular spaces left open, for the sake of air or ornament, here and there in the very heart of the town, like squares in London, but without the soot.

One such green oasis contains, half hidden amid its trees, the handsome Portuguese Synagogue of recent construction; another, the Dutch, less showy, but more substantial, as befits the old standing and wealth of the worshippers within its walls, and the memory of Samuel Cohen Nassy, its talented founder—the Surinam Joshua of his tribe, when they camped, two centuries ago, on the banks of their newly acquired Jordan. A third "square" (I use the inappropriate word for want of a better in our own language, but the French "place" or Arab "meidan" would more correctly express the thing) boasts the presence of the Dutch Reformed Church—the building, I mean—a model of heavy propriety, suggestive of pew-openers and the Hundredth Psalm, Old Tune; while a fourth has in its enclosure the flimsy, all-for-show construction that does appropriate duty for the gaudy rites of Rome. A fifth has for its centre-piece the Lutheran place of worship; a sixth, the

Moravian; and so forth. But, whatever be the gods within, the surroundings of every temple are of a kind in which Mr. Tylor could legitimately discern something of a "survival" of tree-worship and the "groves" of old—a sensible survival in these sun-lorded equatorial regions. Select, then, your city of refuge where you will; but except it be by chance some stray black policeman, whom an unusual and utterly heroic sense of duty keeps awake and on his beat, or a few dust-sprinkled ebony children, too young as yet to appreciate the impropriety of being up and alive at this hour, you yourself and the ungainly Johnny-crows that here, as at Kingston, do an acknowledged share of the street-cleaning business, will be the only animal specimens discernible among this profusion of vegetable life. For these shade-spots, with all their cool, are delusive in their promise. They are mere islets plunged amid an overwhelming ocean of light and heat; and flesh, however solid, though protected by them from actual combustion in the furnace around, must soon thaw and resolve itself into a dew under the influence of the reflected glare.

Better take example, as indeed it is the traveller's wisdom to do in any latitude, whether tropical or arctic, from the natives of the land, and like them retire, after a substantial one o'clock breakfast, luncheon, or dinner,—since any of these three designations may be fairly applied to the meal in question,—to an easy undress and quiet slumber till four, or later, have "chappit" in the afternoon. In-doors you will find it cool enough. The house walls, though of wood, at least throughout the upper stories, are solidly constructed, and are further protected from the heat by any amount of verandahs outside, which in true Dutch taste are not rarely dissembled under the architectural appearance of porticos; the house-roofs are highly pitched, and an airy attic intervenes between them and the habitation below; the windows too are well furnished with jalousies and shutters; and the bedrooms are most often up two flights of stairs—occasionally three. If, under circumstances like these, you cannot keep cool, especially when you have nothing else on earth to do, you have only yourself, not the climate, to blame. Such at any rate is the opinion, con-

firmed by practice, of the colonists universally, European or creole, white or coloured; and as they have in fact been up and at work, each in his particular line of business, ever since earliest dawn, it would be hard to grudge them their stated and, for the matter of that, well-earned afternoon nap. Merchants, tradesmen, accountants, proprietors, bankers, and the like, thus disposed of, his Dutch Majesty's officials, civil, military, or naval (for a small frigate is always stationed at Paramaribo, ready at the Colonial Governor's behests), may, I think, sleep securely calm when all around are sleeping; nay, even the watchmen—and they are many in these gates of keen energetic Israel—have retired to their tents in the universal post-meridian trance. As to the 18,000 or 19,000 negroes of the town, it would be superfluous to say that no special persuasion or inducement of local custom is needed to induce *them* to sleep, either at this or any other hour of the day.

Follow, then, the leader or rather the whole band. If, however, you still prefer to prove yourself a stranger by using your eyes for sight-seeing at a time when every genuine Para-

mariban has closed his for sleep, the open parade-ground will afford you, while crossing it, an excellent opportunity for experimental appreciation of the intensity of the solar rays, lat. 5° 40″ north. This done you may, or rather you certainly will, take speedy refuge under the noble overarching tamarind alley that leads up from the parade-ground to the front of Government House; and passing through the cool and lofty hall of the building, left open, West India fashion, to every comer, make your way into the garden, or rather park, that lies behind. It is probable that the peccaries, tapirs, monkeys, deer, and the other animal beauties or monstrosities, collected the most of them by his Excellency the present Governor, and domiciled in ample wire inclosures between the flower-beds, will, in their quality of natives, be fast asleep; and if the quaint, noisy, screaming birds, the tamed representatives of Guiana ornithology, collected here are asleep also, you may admire their plumage without needing to regret the muteness of their "most sweet voices." But the humming-birds and butterflies are wide awake, and, unalarmed by your approach, will continue

to busy themselves among flowers, such as Van Elst himself never painted, nor Spenser sung: here is a crimson passion-flower, there a pink-streaked lily; golden clusters hang from one plant, spikes of dazzling blue rise from another; the humming-birds themselves are only distinguishable from them as they dart through by the metallic lustre, not by the vividness or variety, of their colours. As to the butterflies, who is the greatest admirer of the race? Mr. Wallace, I think: let him see the butterflies of Surinam, and die. Beyond this, the flower-garden merges in the park—a Guiana park of Guiana trees: their names and qualities it is easy to look out in books, or recapitulate from memory. But how to describe them as they are? Mr. Ruskin says, that the tree-designer begins by finding his work difficult, and ends by finding it impossible; and I say the same of the tree-describer, at any rate here. And yet luxuriant as is the Government House garden, I am not sure if any of its beauties charmed me so much as the exquisite betel-nut avenue, each palm averaging fifty feet in height, and each equally perfect in form and colour, that adorns the central space

enclosed by the spacious buildings of the public hospital at the further end of the town. Leave all these if you can, and, which will be better still, enter instead the cool vaulted brick hall of genuine Dutch burgher build, that serves partly as an entry to the public law offices and courts, partly as a depository for whatever colonial records have escaped the destructive fires of '21 and '32.

Hence you may mount, but leisurely, in compassion for your guide if not for yourself, the central tower, till you reach the lantern-like construction, that at a height of 100 feet crowns the summit of the Town Hall. There stand and look down far and wide over the most fertile plain that ever alluvial deposit formed in the New World or the Old either. On every side extends a green tree-grown level as far as the eye can reach; its surface just high enough raised above water-mark to escape becoming a swamp, yet nowhere too high for easy irrigation; capriciously marked at frequent intervals by shining silver dashes, that indicate sometimes the winding of rivers broad and deep, sometimes the more regular lines of canals, of creeks, and of all

the innumerable waterways which in this region supply the want of roads, and give access to every district that lies between the northern sea and the equatorial watershed, far beyond the limits of European enterprise, all too narrow as yet. Long years must pass before the children of Surinam have cause to complain that the "place is too strait for them"; long before the cultivation that now forms an emerald ring of exceptional brightness round the city, and reaches out in radiating lines and interrupted patches along the courses of the giant rivers, has filled up the entire land circle visible from the Tower of Paramaribo alone.

The day has declined from heat to heat, and at last the tall trees begin to intercept the slant sun-rays; when, behold! with one consent Paramaribo, high and low, awakes, shakes itself, puts on its clothes, ragged or gay, and comes out to open air and life. The chief place of resort is, of course, the parade-ground, where, according to established custom, a Dutch or creole military band performs twice a week, and where, in the absence of musical attractions, cool air, pleasant walks, free views, and the neighbourhood of the

river draw crowds of loungers, especially of the middle and even upper classes. But, in truth, for a couple of hours, or near it, every road, every street, is full of comers and goers, and loud with talk and laughter. For the negro element, a noisy one, predominates over all, even within the capital itself; the Dutch, though rulers of the land, are few, and other Europeans fewer still. Indeed, a late census gave the total number of whites in the town, the soldiers of the fort included, but little over a thousand. As to Indians, the pure-blooded ones of their kind have long since abandoned the neighbourhood of Paramaribo, and now seldom revisit the locality to which two centuries past they gave a name: a few half-breeds, with broad oval faces and straight black hair, alone represent the race. Bush negroes, in genuine African nudity, may be seen in plenty from the river-wharves; but they seldom leave their floating houses and barges to venture on shore, though common sense has for some time past relaxed the prudish regulations of former times, according to which no unbreeched male or unpetticoated female was permitted to shock the decorum of Paramaribo promenades. Coolies

and Chinese, too, though now tolerably numerous on the estates, where, indeed, about 5,000 of them are employed, are rarely to be met with in the streets of the capital; which in this respect offers a remarkable contrast to Georgetown and Port of Spain, where the mild Hindoo meets you at every turning with that ineffable air of mixed self-importance and servility that a Hindoo alone can assume, and China men and women make day hideous with the preternatural ugliness of what flattery alone can term their features. The absence of these beauties here may be explained partly by the recentness of their introduction into the Dutch colony, where they are still bound by their first indentures to field-work, and consequently unable as yet to display their shopkeeping talents; partly by the number and activity of the negro creole population, which has preoccupied every city berth. Of all strangers, only the irrepressible Barbadian, with the insular characteristics of his kind fresh about him, has made good his footing among the Surinam grog-shops and wharfs, where he asserts the position due to his ready-handed energy, and keeps it too. But the diversity between the Barbados negro and

his kinsmen of the neighbouring islands or of the Main is one rather of expression and voice than of clothes and general bearing, and hence may readily pass unnoticed in the general aspect of a crowd.

"Aim at consistency," has said one of the foremost ethical teachers of our own or indeed of any time. Were John Henry Newman by the strangest of all strange chances ever to visit Paramaribo, he would, I think, allow that both town and its inhabitants do not come far short in this respect of his standard of excellence. He might wander at night when the snow-like dazzle of the pure moonbeams lights up the tall house-fronts and rectilinear streets in ghostly loneliness, or at the scarcely less lonely hour of noon, when the shrunk shadows disappear in the perpendicular blaze, and in either scene admire the uniform consistency of idea which has impressed on every dwelling, from the tiniest creole cottage up to the princely residence of Government, the same general character of comfort, good taste, and a certain decorous refinement, content with what it has attained, and expressive, if not of progress, of stability, order, and calm. The architectural

jumble, indicative of restless and incongruous tendencies, that has in so many other colonial towns erected Gothic, or quasi-Gothic, churches and church towers amid the flat lines of low-roofed bungalows, or thrust a Venetian-palace front into the midst of palms and mango-trees, offends not here. Churches, houses, buildings, bridges, quays, streets, squares, all are the same in kind, though differing in scale; all in accord with each other, and with the climate too.

But if, during the busy morning hours, or in the idle eventide, our Littlemore ethicist were to survey the same streets crowded with passers-by of every class and colour, he would, so soon as his eye had learnt to penetrate beneath the motley surface of seeming incongruities, acknowledge the praise of consistency as due to the inhabitants of Paramaribo not less than to the material town itself. However diversified the species, the genus is one. Watch the throng as it passes—the kerchief-turbaned, loose-garmented market-women—the ragged porter, and yet more ragged boatman—the gardener, with his cartful of yams, bananas, sweet potatoes, and so forth—the white-clad shop-clerk and writer, the straw-hatted

salesman, the umbrella-bearing merchant—sailors, soldiers, policemen, quaintly dressed as policemen are by prescriptive right everywhere, except in sensible, practical Demerara—officials, aides-de-camp, high and low, rich and poor, one with another—and you will see that, through and above this variety of dress, occupation, rank, colour even, there runs a certain uniformity of character, a something in which all participate, from first to last.

A few exceptions indeed there are, but they are confined almost exclusively to the white colonists, and among them even the anomalies are few. In general, one pattern comprehends the entire category of white colonists, men and women, gentle and simple; and it is an eminently self-contained, self-consistent pattern—the Dutch. Steady in business, methodical in habit, economical in expenditure, liberal in outlay, hospitable in entertainment, cheerful without flightiness, kindly without affectation, serious without dulness, no one acquainted, even moderately, with the mother country can fail to recognize the genuine type of the Hague in the colonial official, and that of Maestricht or Amsterdam in the busi-

ness population of Paramaribo. This, indeed, might have been fairly anticipated, the steady, unimpressionable Dutchman being less subject to —what shall we call it?—equatorization than the soon-demoralized Spaniard or lighter Portuguese. It is a matter of more surprise, an agreeable surprise, when we find much that recalls to mind the Dutch peasantry and labouring classes distinctly traceable among the corresponding classes of creole negroes throughout the delta of Surinam. By what influence is it—attraction, sympathy, or mastership?—that some nations so eminently succeed in transforming the acquired subjects of whatever race into copies and, occasionally, caricatures of themselves, while other nations not less signally fail in doing so? That Frenchmen, however much they may annoy those they annex by their incurable habit of administrative overmeddling, yet make, not always, indeed, obedient subjects of France, but, anyhow, Frenchmen and Frenchwomen out of those they rule, is a fact attested everywhere, and one that will long remain to show German eyes and grieve German hearts in Alsace and Lorraine. How long ago is it since the Tricolor has been hauled

down to make place for the Union Jack at St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Trinidad? Yet in each of these and their kindred isles, the French impress still survives, uneffaced, as yet, by change and time. Much in the same way, to run through the list of other national annexations or conquests, Brazil is not merely ruled by a Portuguese emperor, but is Portuguese itself; and even the revolted Spanish colonies are Spanish in almost everything but official allegiance, to this day. On the contrary, who ever heard of a land Germanized by the Germans, however influential their settlers, and absolute their rule? And is there the remotest prospect that the Hindoo, though reconciled by sheer self-interest to toleration of the most equitable rule that ever race exercised over race, will ever become, not merely an English subject, but an Englishman in ways and heart? Still more complete has been the failure of Danish attempts at extra-national assimilation in whatever land or age, from the days of Æthelred to our own. But, indeed, where there is diversity of blood, mistrust and antipathy are more easily accounted for than sympathy and unison. To return to our Dutch friends: how it may be

with them elsewhere—in Java, for instance—I know not; here, on the Guiana coast, they have almost outdone the French in assimilative results—a problem of which the solution must be sought, partly in history, partly in actual observation. Our best opportunity for the latter will be when visiting the country districts further up the river, among the estates.

Meanwhile, let us linger yet a little in Paramaribo itself; and here among the European townsmen their visitor will find everywhere, so he be one that deserve to find, a pleasant uniformity of unostentatious but cordial welcome, of liberal entertainment, of thoughtful and rational hospitality, attentive to the physical and not neglectful of the mental requirements of the guest—whatever, in a word, he would meet with, though under a different aspect, on the shores of the Yssel or the Waal. Indeed, he might even have some difficulty in remembering, when endeavouring to recall to mind the events of his stay in the Surinam capital, at which citizen's house in particular he passed that pleasant evening; at whose table he shared that copious meal, breakfast, dinner, or supper; where it was

that he admired the fine old china and massive plate; under which roof the hostess smiled most courteously, the host conversed with most good nature and good sense. After all, "*si vis ut redameris ama*" holds good in every age and land; and if the Dutch colonists and creoles of Surinam are universally popular, it is because they have been at the pains of earning popularity, which, like other good things, has its price, and is worth it too.

Much the same, proportion and circumstances taken into account, may be said of the black creoles of Dutch Guiana. The evils and degradation inseparable from slavery were not, it is true, wanting here; but, in spite of these unfavourable antecedents, the Surinam negro has amply proved by his conduct, both before and during emancipation, that he had learnt from his white masters lessons of steadiness, of order, of self-respect, of quiet industry, of kindliness even, not indeed alien from his own native character, but too often unpractised elsewhere. And thus the ex-slave has, with a rapidity of change to which, I believe, no parallel can be found in the history of any other West Indian colony, blended

into national and even, within certain limits, into social unison with his masters—a unison so little impaired by the inevitable, however involuntary, rivalry consequent on differences, some artificial, indeed, but some immanent, of caste and race, as to afford the best hopes for the future of the entire colony. It is remarkable that even the terrible servile wars, which lasted with hardly an interruption for sixty entire years —that is, from 1715 to 1775—and not only checked the prosperity, but even more than once menaced the very existence of the colony, should have passed and left behind them no trace, however slight, of hostile feeling or memory among the negro population, whether slave or free; that no outbreak, like those of Jamaica, Sainte Croix, and so many other neighbouring colonies, here followed or anticipated emancipation, though delayed in Surinam till 1863; and, more remarkable yet, that no discontent interfered with the compulsory though paid labour of the ten years following. Slavery quietly faded into apprenticeship; apprenticeship into freedom; and in a land where riot and revolt would have a better chance than anywhere else of success, that

chance was never embodied in act. Facts like these speak certainly well for the creole blacks; but, if attentively considered, they speak even better in favour of their white masters. Our present business is, however, not with these last, but with the negro creoles as they show themselves in the capital, where they muster five or six to one among the entire population. Cheerful contentment is the prevailing expression of every dusky face, whether turned towards you in friendly morning greeting, as the busy swarm presses on, talking, laughing, jesting, along the highways to the market and quay, or in the afternoon gatherings on the parade-ground, under the avenues, and alongside of the river banks. You watch and soon cease to wonder that the official statistics of Paramaribo, while enumerating and classifying its twenty-two thousand inhabitants, make no distinctive headings of colour or race. I wish many other a West Indian town could with equally good reason permit themselves a like omission.

Glossy, however, as the surface may be, there is a wrong side of the stuff, and to this we must now turn our attention. Though a comfortable

and, so far at least as the majority of its indwellers are concerned, a contented town, Paramaribo cannot, if compared, say, with Georgetown or Bridgetown, Kingston or even Port d'Espagne, take rank as exactly prosperous or progressive. True, the streets of the Creole quarters of the city are constantly extending themselves; there, new rows of small, neat dwellings, each with its gay garden and well-stocked provision-ground, spring up year by year; but in the commercial and what may, in a general way, be termed the European quarter of the town, large, half-empty stores, tall, neglected-looking houses, a prevailing want of fresh repair —here deficient paint, there broken woodwork— besides a certain general air of listlessness, verging on discouragement, and an evident insufficiency of occupation, not from want of will, but of means, all combine to give an appearance of stagnation suggestive of "better days," for the European colonists at least, in the past, and contrasting almost painfully with the more thriving back streets and suburbs beyond. If any of my readers have visited Italy in the sad, bygone years when Italy was a geographical name only,

and there compared, as they may well have done, the trim "Borghi" of Grand-Ducal Florence with her stately but dilapidated Lungarno, or have, at Genoa, seen the contrast of those times between the palatial loneliness of Strada Balbi and the pretty, grove-embosomed villas of recent commercial date, they might, under all local differences of circumstance and colouring, recognize something not dissimilar, both in the meaning implied and effect produced, in this Transatlantic capital of Dutch Guiana.

The actual and immediate cause of decadence is a very common one, by no means peculiar to Paramaribo or Surinam—want of capital. Here, however, that want is, in a certain sense, doubled by the circumstance that not only are the means of the colony itself insufficient to its needs, but that there is no satisfactory prospect of an adequate supply from without. It is, I might almost say, the condition of a man indigent at home and friendless out of doors. The home-poverty is readily accounted for. It began with invasions, resistances, foreign occupations, treaty-embarrassments, and the other war-begotten ills of the troublous years that closed the last and

opened the present century. Followed next the evil days already alluded to—evil for Transatlantic colonies everywhere; and, in sequence of the hostilities of 1833 between France and Holland, doubly evil for Surinam. Then came emancipation, long and unwisely deferred, till financial exhaustion had reached its lowest depths; and, with all these, the appalling conflagration of 1821, followed by one scarcely less destructive in 1832; commercial difficulties of every kind; the fatal yellow-fever epidemic of 1851,—in a word, a whole Pandora's box of adversities, opened for Dutch Guiana in a scarcely less disastrous profusion than for Jamaica herself. And thus, to revert to the more special topic of this chapter, Paramaribo was brought low indeed —almost to the very gates of death; and her condition, as we this day see her, is that of a patient recovering from a long and dangerous illness, and weak, not indeed with the weakness of actual disease, but the weakness of convalescence.

Nor is that convalescence likely to be a rapid one. With Jamaica, we know, it has been otherwise; but then Jamaica is the child of a parent alike vigorous and wealthy, able to chastise, able

also to assist. Not so with Dutch Guiana. In more than one respect the good will of Holland exceeds her power, and her comparatively recent severance from Belgium, a political gain, was yet a financial loss. Besides, Java is a more popular name by far in the home mart of Dutch enterprise than Surinam; and the Eastern colony is indisputably the more attractive, the larger, the wealthier, and, more, I believe, owing to external and accidental circumstances than to its own intrinsic qualities as contrasted with those of its rival, proportionally the more remunerative of the two. Hence, while the invigorating cordial, to continue our former metaphor, or, rather, the true and certain panacea for the patient's lingering ills, is poured out freely in the direction of the Pacific, a feeble and interrupted dribble is all that finds its way to the Atlantic coast. Nor, again, can the annual subsidy with which, for years past, the maternal Government of the States has striven to uphold, and still upholds, the drooping vigour of her Western offspring, be regarded as a remedy adapted for the case; it is, at best, a palliative, nor, I think—and in this the wisest heads of the colony agree—one

conducive to genuine recovery and health. State support, after this fashion, tends rather in its results to cramp the energies of the recipient than to develop them; it has something of the prop in it, but more of the fetter. Compare, for example, the French colonies, where it is most lavishly bestowed, with the English, where the opposite and almost niggardly extreme is the rule; the conclusion is self-apparent, and the corollary, too. Periodical subsidy, in particular, is an error—less injurious, it may be, than the opposite conduct of ungenerous Denmark, exacting for herself a yearly tribute from her overtaxed and exhausted colonies, but an error, nevertheless; it is the injudicious conduct of an over-indulgent parent, as the other is that of a step-mother at best. Private enterprise, private capital, these are what Surinam requires; and on the part of the mother country, not a supplement to her coffers, but a guarantee. Lastly, emancipation and its immediate and inevitable consequences, the multiplication of small freeholds, both of them events of yesterday in Surinam, have not yet allowed time for the balance of hired and independent labour to redress itself; nor has the increase of creole well-being

yet reacted, as react it ultimately must, in a corresponding increase of prosperity among the European townsmen and estate-owners themselves. The present moment is one of transition, and transition implies that something has been left behind; a temporary loss even where more has been attained, or is in process of attainment.

While, seated in an upper balcony of Government House, we speculate on these things, the sun has set; twilight—at its very shortest in these latitudes—has brightened on into white moonlight; but the Militia town band, summoned by his Excellency to bear part in the hospitable entertainment of the evening, still gathers round it a motley and by no means silent crowd, assembled, some under the great tamarind-trees close by, and not a few within the Residential gardens themselves, thrown liberally open, on occasions like these, to public enjoyment.

CHAPTER III.

THE RIVER.

The river nobly foams and flows,
The charm of this enchanted ground;
And all its thousand turns disclose
Some fresher beauty varying round.

BYRON.

WITH a subdued silvery gleam, the surest promise in these latitudes of a clear day to follow, the sun peeped through the network of the forest that here does duty for horizon on every side, when our party mustered under the neat wooden pavilion of the landing-place, between the parade-ground and the river,—I might have not less correctly said the highway. For the true highways of this land are its rivers, traced right and left with matchless profusion by Nature herself, and more commodious could scarcely be found anywhere. Broad and deep, tidal, too, for miles up their course, but with scarcely any variation in the fulness of their mighty flow, summer or winter, rainy season or dry, so constant is the

water-supply from its common origin, the equatorial mountain chain. They give easy access to the innermost recesses of the vast regions beyond—east, west, and south; and where their tortuous windings and multiplied side-canals fail to reach, Batavian industry and skill have made good the want by canals, straighter in course, and often hardly inferior in navigable capacity to the mother rivers themselves. On the skeleton plan, so to speak, of this mighty system of water communication the entire cultivation of the inland has been naturally adjusted; and the estates of Surinam are ranged one after another along the margins of rivers and canals, just as farms might be along highways and byways in Germany or Hungary. Subservient to the water-ways, narrow land-paths follow the river or trench, by which not every estate alone, but its every subdivision of an estate, every acre almost, is defined and bordered, while the smaller dykes and canals are again crossed by wooden bridges, maintained in careful repair; but paths and bridges alike are of a width and solidity adapted to footmen only, or at best horsemen. The proper carriage road is the river or canal.

In a climate like that of Surinam, bodily exertion is a thing to be economized as much as possible; and accordingly everybody keeps his carriage—I beg pardon—his boat. That of the wealthy estate-owner, of the vicarious "attorney" (not a professional one, I may as well remark, for the benefit of those unused to West Indian nomenclatures, but the holder of a power of attorney on the proprietor's behalf), of the merchant, of the higher official, and generally of every one belonging to this or the other of what are conveniently called the "upper classes," is a comfortable barge, painted white for coolness' sake, and propelled by oars varying in number from four to eight. Towards the stern rises a deck cabin, three, four, or even five curtained windows in length, and capable of containing from six to ten passengers at need, though more often occupied only by the owner of the craft himself, stretched out luxuriously at length, and secluded by closed doors at either end of the apartment from the toiling boatmen in front, and from the steersman, who may be seen in the small space left open for his duties at the stern of the vessel.

A fresh-painted, well-kept eight-oar, with a

cabin of the kind thus described, but of the very largest dimensions, the sides, ceiling, hangings, cushions, all white, with a dash of gilding here and there; eight rowers dressed in loose white suits, with broad red sashes round their waists, and on their heads blue caps, to complete the triple colours of the national flag, make a pretty show on the sun-lit river. And the Governor's barge might, for picturesque appearance, match the caïque of a Stamboul dignitary, besides being as much superior to the Eastern conveyance in comfort as inferior in speed. The white-painted six-oar, four-oar, or even two-oar barges, too, that abound for ordinary voyaging, though, of course, smaller in their dimensions and less gay in their accessories, are pleasant objects to look at, and may bring to mind the gondolas of Venetian waters; with this difference, that whereas the Adriatic crews are white, or what should be white, and the boats black, here the colours are, and not disadvantageously for pictorial effect, exactly reversed.

So much for the "genteeler sort." Larger yet, and more solidly built, are the great lighter-like barges, whether open or partly covered, that

convey down the stream, from the river-side estates, casks of sugar or molasses, barrels of rum, sacks of cocoa, heaped-up yams, plantains, sweet-potatoes, cocoa-nuts, cassava, and the hundred other well-known but too little cultivated products of this teeming land. Alongside of these may be often seen the floating cottages of the so-called "Bush negroes," well thatched and snug, each occupying half or more of a wide flat-bottomed boat, where two stalwart blacks in genuine African garb—that is, next to no garb (*vide* the woodcuts in Winwood Reade's amusing narratives, *passim*)—paddle rather than row; and any number of black ladies, hardly more encumbered by their costume than their lords, with an appropriate complement of ebony children, these last in no costume at all, look out from the cabin-doors. In their wake follows a raft of cut timber, green-heart, probably, or brown-heart, or purple-heart, or balata, or letter-wood, or locust-wood, or whatever other forest-growth finds its market in town; and, standing on it, one or more statuesque figures, that look as if they had been cut out of dark porphyry by no unskilful hand, and well polished afterwards,

guide its downward course. Most numerous of all, light corials, that have retained the Indian name as well as build, each one hollowed out of a single tree-trunk, with sometimes a couple of extra planks roughly tacked on to the sides by way of bulwarks, paddle past, under the guidance of one or two ragged negro labourers, or husbandmen, who exchange shouts, sometimes of jest, sometimes of quarrel, with their fellows in other boats or on the shore. These little skiffs, drawing scarcely a foot of water when deepest laden, pass through the narrowest ditches that divide almost every acre of cultivated land on the estates from the other, and are the chief means of passage for the working-folks on their way to and fro between country and town. When not in actual use, they are kept sunk in water just deep enough to cover them, and thus preserved from the sun-heat, which would otherwise soon split the unseasoned wood. Lastly, a few clumsy boats of the ordinary long-shore type, in the service of trade with the ships that lie anchored, giving out or taking in cargo, off the town-wharf, mix up with the rest, and add their quota of variety to the river craft of Surinam.

However, on the present occasion, it is neither barge, plain or gay, nor a boat, nor even a corial, that is waiting to receive our party. A flat-bottomed river steamer, one of the three that belong to the service of the colony, lies off the wharf: she draws about ten feet of water, and her duty is just now to convey us up the Commeweyne river, and its main tributary, the Cottica, where lies the district which his Excellency has selected for our inspection, because affording the greatest variety of scenery and cultivation within easy reach of Paramaribo. I have said that the colony possesses three of these boats; the largest of them makes a voyage along the sea-coast as far as Georgetown twice every month; the two smaller confine their excursions within the limits of river navigation.

In a few minutes we were all on board, a merry party, Dutch and English, official and non-official, military, naval, civilian, and burgher, but all of us bent alike on pleasing and being pleased, to the best of our opportunities. Our boat was well supplied, too, with whatever Dutch hospitality—no unsubstantial virtue—could furnish for convivial need, and was commanded by a

paragon of boat-captains, a bright-eyed, brown-faced little man, Scotch by his father's side, Indian by his mother's, himself uniting in physiognomy, as in character, the shrewdness and practical good sense of the former parentage with the imperturbable calm and habitual good humour of the latter. Under such auspices we started on our way.

To enter the Commeweyne river we were first obliged to retrace a portion of the route by which I had arrived three days before, and to follow the downward course of the Surinam river for about eight miles, passing the same objects no longer wholly new, but now more interesting than before, because nearer seen and better understood. Here is a plantation, caught by glimpses through the mangrove-scrub that borders the river's bank; a narrow creek, at the mouth of which several moored barges and half-submerged corials are gathered, gives admittance to the heart of the estate. It is a vast cocoa-grove, where you may wander at will, under 350 continuous acres of green canopy; that is, if you are ready to jump over any number of small brimming ditches, and to cross the wider irrigation-

trenches on bridges, the best of which is simply a round and slippery tree trunk, excellently adapted, no doubt, to the naked foot of a negro labourer, but on which no European boot or shoe can hope to maintain an instant's hold. Huge pods, some yellow, some red,—the former colour is, I am told, indicative of better quality,—dangle in your face, and dispel the illusion by which you might, at first sight of the growth and foliage around you, have fancied yourself to be in the midst of a remarkably fine alder-tree thicket; while, from distance to distance, broad-boughed trees, of the kind called by the negroes "coffee-mamma," from the shelter they afford to the plantations of that bush, spread their thick shade high aloft and protect the cocoa-bushes and their fruit from the direct action of the burning sun. Moisture, warmth, and shade, these are the primary and most essential conditions for the well-doing of a cocoa estate. Innumerable trenches, dug with mathematical exactitude of alternate line and interspace, supply the first requisite; a temperature that, in a wind-fenced situation like this, bears a close resemblance for humid warmth to that of an accurately shut hot-

house, assures the second; and the "coffee-mamma," a dense-leaved tree not unlike our own beech, guarantees the third. Thus favoured, a Surinam cocoa crop is pretty sure to be an abundant one. Ever and anon, where the green labyrinth is at its thickest, you come suddenly across a burly creole negro, busily engaged in plucking the large pods from the boughs with his left hand, while with a sharp cutlass held in his right he dexterously cuts off the upper part of the thick outer covering, and shakes the slimy agglomeration of seed and white burr clinging to it into a basket set close by him on the ground. A single labourer will in this fashion collect nearly 400 pounds weight of seeds in the course of a day. When full the baskets are carried off on the heads of the assistant field-women, or, if taken from the remoter parts of the plantation, are floated down in boats or corials to the brick-paved courtyard adjoining the planter's dwelling-house, where the nuts are cleansed and dried by simple and unexpensive processes, not unlike those in use for the coffee berry; after which nothing remains but to fill the sacks and send them off to their market across the seas.

A Guiana cocoa-plantation is an excellent investment. The first outlay is not heavy; nor is the maintenance of the plantation expensive, the number of labourers bearing an average proportion of one to nine to that of the acres under cultivation. The work required is of a kind that negroes, who are even now not unfrequently prejudiced by the memory of slave days against the cane-field and sugar-factory, undertake willingly enough; and, to judge by their stout limbs and evident good condition, they find it not unsuited to their capabilities. More than 4,000,000 pounds weight of cocoa are yearly produced in Surinam, "which is a consideration," as a negro remarked to me, laboriously attempting to put his ideas into English instead of the creole mixture of every known language that they use among themselves. Neither coolies nor Chinese are employed on these cocoa estates, much to the satisfaction of the creoles, who, though tolerant of, or rather clinging to, European mastership, have little sympathy with other coloured or semi-civilized races. Some authors have indeed conjectured that the West Indian labourer "of the future" will be a cross mixture of the African

and the Asiatic, but to this conclusion, desirable or not, there is, for the present, no apparent tendency either in Surinam or, to the best of my knowledge, elsewhere. As to the Indians of these regions, they keep to themselves; and their incapacity of improvement, combined with hereditary laziness and acquired drunkenness, will, it seems, soon render them a mere memory, poetical or otherwise, of the past.

Soil, climate, and the conditions of labour, all here combine to favour the cocoa-plant; and, accordingly, out of the 30,000 acres actually under cultivation in Dutch Guiana, we find that a sixth part is dedicated to its production. More would be, but for the time required before a fresh plantation can bear a remunerative crop: five or six years must, in fact, elapse, during which no return at all is made, "which is a consideration" also, though in an opposite sense to that quoted above.

Cocoa prospers; but, after all said and done, sugar—the one thing that for two centuries and more has been to the West Indies, Dutch, French, Spanish, or English, what cloth is to Manchester, cutlery to Sheffield, or beer to Bavaria—is even now, despite of emancipation,

free-trade, beet-root, prohibitive regulations, American tariffs, and the whole array of adversities mustered against it for the last fifty years, the "favourite" of the agricultural race-course, and holds, with regard to other products, however valuable, the same position as the queen of the chess-board does when compared with the remaining pieces. Indeed in some, Demerara for instance, sugar reigns, like Alexander Selkirk on his island, not only supreme, but alone; while in Surinam, where, more than in the generality of West Indian regions, she has many and, to a certain extent, successful rivals to contend with, she vindicates a full half of the reclaimed soil for her exclusive domain. Previous to emancipation, four-fifths at least were her allotted share. No fuller evidence of her former sway need be sought than that which is even yet everywhere supplied by the aspect of the great houses, gardens, and all the belongings of the old sugar plantations, once the wealth and mainstay of the Dutch colony. The garb is now too often, alas! "a world too wide for the shrunk shanks" of the present, but it witnesses to the time when it was cut to fitness and measure.

And here on our way, almost opposite the cocoa plantation with its modern and modest demesnes that we have just visited, appears the large sugar estate of Voorburg, close behind Fort Amsterdam, at the junction-point of the rivers. Let us land and glad the heart of the manager—the owner is, like too many others (and the more the pity), an absentee—by a visit. Happy indeed would he be, in his own estimation at least, were we to comply with his well-meant request of riding round every acre and inspecting every cane on the grounds. But as these cover 360 acres of actual cultivation, besides about a thousand more of yet unreclaimed concession, as the sun, too, is now high enough to be very hot, and we have other places to visit and sights to see, we will excuse ourselves as best we can, though by so doing we mark an indifference on our part to the beauties of the cane-field that he may forgive but cannot comprehend.

I may remark, by the way, that in this respect every planter, every manager, Dutch, English, Scotch, or Irish, in the West Indies is exactly the same. None of them, in the intense and per-

sonal interest they take in every furrow, every cane, can understand how any one else can feel less, or how, to the uninitiated eye, one acre of reed is very like another, one ditch resembles another ditch—just as the sheep in a flock are mere repetitions, the one of the other, to all but the shepherd, or as one baby resembles any baby to every apprehension except to that of the mother or, occasionally, the nurse. Let us, however, respect what we are not worthy to share; and do thou decline regretfully, O my friend, but firmly—if thou desirest not headache and twelve hours' subsequent stupefaction at the least—the friendly invitation to "ride round" the estates, in a sun-heat, say, of 140° Fahr., for two whole hours—it cannot be less—while a super-copious breakfast and all kinds of cheerful but "seductive" drinks are awaiting thee on thy return. Accompany us rather on the quiet circuit we now will make about the house, the labourers' cottages, the outbuildings, and two, at most three, acres of cane; and when in future visiting on thy own account, "go and do likewise."

Nor is even the following picture of Voorburg

to be taken as a photographic likeness: rather an idealized view, combining details taken from other subjects with those of the above-named locality, and true to many—indeed most—sugar estates of this region, because limited to the exact facts, statistical or pictorial, of none.

Wood or brick—more often the former—the landing-place or "stelling" receives us, and on traversing it we are at once welcomed by the cool shelter—half a minute's exposure to the sun will have made you desire it—of a cool, well-swept, well-trimmed avenue, most often, as it happens to be at Voorburg itself, of mahogany-trees, dark and clustering, sometimes of light-green almond-trees or locust-trees, or it may be of palms, especially betel—this last selected rather for the perfect beauty of symmetry, in which it excels all other palms, than for shade. To this avenue, which may be from fifty to a hundred yards long, succeeds an open garden, laid out in walks, where "caddie" does duty for gravel, and flower-beds, in which roses, geraniums, verbenas, jessamines, and other well-known Europeanized flowers and plants mix with their tropical rival, of equal or greater

beauty and sweetness; their names—ah, me! I am no botanist—enough if wonderful passion-flowers, noble scarlet lilies, and gorgeous cactus-blossoms be mentioned here: Canon Kingsley's chapter on the Botanical Gardens of Trinidad may be safely consulted for the rest. Amid these are a few flowering trees also — the golden Pui (pronounced Poo'ee), the purple *Bois immortel*, and the scarlet masses, entwined with emerald-green, of the towering Spathodia, the queen of the tropical forest. Among the beds and garden-walks keep sentinel, in true Batavian fashion, quaint, white-painted wooden statues, mostly classical, after Lemprière, "all heathen goddesses most rare"—Venuses, Dianas, Apollos, Terpsichores, Fortunes on wheels, Bacchuses, Fauns, occasionally a William, a Van Tromp, or some other hero of Dutch land or main—these last recognizable by the vestiges of cocked hats and tail-coats, as the former by the absence of those or any other articles of raiment, and all with their due proportion of mutilated noses, lopped hands, and the many injuries of sun, rain, and envious time.

But stay, I had almost forgot to mention the

two iron popguns that command the landing-place, and flank on either side the entry of the avenue—imitation cannon, that, in everything, except their greater size, are the very counterparts of those "devilish engines" that our early childhood thought it a great achievement to load and fire off. Here the children's part is played not unsuccessfully by the negroes themselves, who, at seventy years of age, have no less pleasure than we ourselves might have felt at seven, in banging off their artillery in and out of all possible seasons, but especially on the approach of distinguished and popular visitors like ourselves; I mean, of course, his Excellency the Governor, with whom I am happily identified, so to speak, during this trip. But this is not all; for within the garden, close under the house-windows, are ranged two, four, or even six more pieces, some shaped like cannon, others like mortars; and these too are crammed up to their very mouths with powder and improvized wadding, and exploded on festive occasions, when, as ill hap will have it, their over-repletion often results in bursting, and their bursting in the extemporized amputation of some negro arm,

leg, or head, as the case may be. But, though I heard of many a heart-rending or limb-rending event of the kind, I am thankful to say that I witnessed none during our tour, though of explosions many.

Next a flight of steps, stone or brick, guarded by a handsome parapet in the Dutch style, and surmounted by a platform, with more or less of architectural pretension, leads up to the wide front door, by which we pass, and find ourselves at once in the large entrance-hall, that here, as formerly in European dwellings, serves for dining-room and reception-room generally. The solid furniture, of wood dark with age, gives it a *quasi* old-English look, and the gloom—for the light is allowed but a scanty entrance, lest her sister, heat, should enter too—is *quasi* English also. But the stiff portraits on the wall, ancestors, relatives, Netherland celebrities, royal personages, governors, &c., &c., are entirely Dutch, and belong to the "wooden" school of art. The central table is of any given size and strength, and has been evidently calculated for any amount of guests and viands. We shall partake of the latter before leaving, and bestow well-merited

praise on cook and cellar. Besides the hall are other apartments, counting-rooms, and so forth; above it is a second story; above it a third; for the brick walls are strong, and hurricanes are here, as in Demerara, by Miss Martineau's leave, unknown; over all rises a high-pitched roof; the wolf, or griffin, or lion, or whatever crest the original proprietor may have boasted, figures atop as gable ornament or vane. The whole forms a manor-house that might have been transported, by substantial Dutch cherubs of course, as the Loretto bauble was by slim Italian angiolets, from amid the poplars of Arnheim or Bredevoort, and set down on the banks of Commeweyne. Only the not unfrequent adjuncts of a trellised verandah and a cool outside gallery are manifestly not of extra-tropical growth.

We have received our welcome, and drunk our prelusory "schnapps." And now for the sight-seeing. The factory, where the canes are crushed into mere fibre, as fast as the negroes can lift them from the canal-barge alongside on to the insatiable rollers close by, give out their continuous green frothy stream, to be clarified,

heated, boiled, reboiled, tormented fifty ways, till it finds refuge in the hogsheads or rum-barrels, resembling in every stage of its course its counterpart in Demerara, or Jamaica, minus however, except in one solitary instance, the expensive refinements of the centrifugal cylinder and vacuum pan. But for mere delectation, unless heat, vapour, noise, and an annihilation of everything in general to a sugar thought in a sugar shade—forgive me, Marvell!—be delectation, which I hardly think, no man need linger in a factory, nor, unless he desires premature intoxication on vapour, in a rum-distillery either. Worth attention, however, and admiration too, is the solidity of construction by which the huge mass of building, doubly heavy from the ponderous machinery it contains, besides its clustering group of outhouses, megass-sheds, tall chimneys, store-places, and the rest, is enabled to support itself upright and unyielding on a soil so marshy and unstable. The foundations in many instances, I am told, exceed by double in surface-dimension the buildings above.

Ingenious bees, these sugar-making ones. Let us next look at the hives of the workers. These

workers, or, metaphor apart, labourers, are here —at Voorburg, I mean—and on not a few other estates, of three kinds, coolie, Chinese, and creole. And should any one, smitten with a desire for accuracy and statistics, wish to know their exact numbers in this particular instance, the coolies at Voorburg are ninety all told, the Chinese 181, the creoles or colonial-born negroes, 200.

First to the coolies. Their introduction into Surinam is of recent date—little over two years, in fact; but everything has been organized for them on exactly the same footing as in Demerara or Trinidad. They have their agents, here and in India their official protector—a very efficient one, in the person of Mr. A. C——, her Majesty's Consul. Their labour and pay regulations are textually identical with those of Demerara. They are duly provided with a medical staff and hospitals; in a word, they are, if anything, more fenced in here from every shadow of a grievance than even in an English colony: Mr. Jenkins himself could not ask more for his *protégés*. The eye recognizes at once the regulation cottages, all, like

pretty maids—but here the similarity ceases—of a row, with garden spaces attached, back yards, verandahs, and every attention paid by the constructors to dryness, ventilation, and whatever else a Parliamentary Inspector of the most practical type could desire. Thus much is done for the immigrants; but except to amass money, with an occasional whiff at the hooka between times, from morning to night, the "mild Hindoo" is not inclined to do much for himself. His garden, ill planted, and ill cared for, is a sorry sight; his dwelling, for what concerns the interior, is a cross between a gipsy hut and a rag-shop, and a pinched, stingy meanness characterizes his every belonging, no less than himself. That he may also excel in "grace, ease, courtesy, self-restraint, dignity, sweetness, and light" I am ready, of course, with all believers in "At last," to admit. But I do it on faith, "the evidence of things not seen," either in the West Indies or the East. Low-caste Hindoos in their own land are, to all ordinary apprehension, slovenly, dirty, ungraceful, generally unacceptable in person and surroundings; and the coolies of Voorburg may have been low caste, very

likely. Yet, offensive as is the low-caste Indian, were I estate-owner or colonial governor, I had rather see the lowest Parias of the low than a single trim, smooth-faced, smooth-wayed, clever, high-caste Hindoo on my lands or in my colony.

But for the untidiness, I might say shiftlessness, of the Surinam-planted coolies some allowance must be made. They are new-comers in a new land, among what are to them new races; and if it takes some time even for the European under such like circumstances to pluck up heart and be a-doing, the process of adaptation is yet slower for the Asiatic. In Demerara, where they have now dwelt for years, with Europeans to stimulate and direct them, and negroes to teach them gardening without doors and tidiness within, the coolies certainly make a better show, and so do their dwellings. But they have much as yet to learn in Surinam.

Passing a dyke or two, we come next on the Chinese cottages, in construction and outward arrangement identical with those of the coolies, or nearly so. The gardens here show a decided improvement, not indeed in the shape of flowers, or of any of the pretty, graceful things of the

soil, for of such are none here, but in useful vegetables and pot-herbs in plenty. Spade and hoe, manure and water, care and forethought, have done their work, and are receiving their reward. But, the inside of a Chinese dwelling; "*guarda e passa.*" Well, Chinamen are fond of pigs; and if they have a fancy themselves to live in pigsties, it is all in character.

A dyke or two more has to be crossed, and we enter the Creole village. Here regulation has done less, and individual will and fancy more. But the negroes are Dutch trained, and have an idea of straight lines and orderly rows by no means African; though in the English-like preference given to isolated dwellings, in which each household can live apart, over conjoint ones, they do but follow the custom of their ancestral birthplace. Their gardens are well stocked, not with fruit and vegetables only, with plantains, mangoes, bananas, yams, sweet potatoes, peas, and such like things good for food, but also with whatever is pleasant to the eye; with gay flowers, twining creepers, bright berries, scarlet and black; in fine, with the brilliant colours and strong con-

trasts that befit African taste. Inside their dwellings are comfortable, and in most instances clean, neatly arranged too, though the space is very often overcrowded with furniture, the tables covered with cheap glass and crockery, more for show than use, and the walls hung round with a confused medley of gaudy prints. These creoles evidently know how to enjoy life, and have resolved to make the best of it—the wisest resolution, it may be, for us mortals in our little day.

Enough of creoles, Chinese, and coolies for this once; we are yet at the outset of our voyage. Returning towards the factory, we pay a visit to the airy and well-constructed hospital. Sore feet, the result of neglected chigoes, seem the principal complaint. For the climate is, in itself, a healthy one; epidemics are rare, marsh fever scarcely heard of, and yellow-fever, like cholera, a historical event of years past. Hence disease, when it occurs, is mostly traceable to some distinct cause of individual folly, unreasonable custom, or, as is frequently the case with the self-stinting coolie, insufficient diet. Nor is there any doubt that here, as in almost every other West Indian colony

—Demerara is one of the few honourable exceptions—sanitary regulations and medical service are far from their best. Let them be reformed, as they easily may, and the inhabitant, European or other, of the Guiana coast, will have no reason to complain of his lot, so far as climate is concerned, even when contrasted with the bracing atmosphere and invigorating breezes of the northern sea-shore.

A look at the truly regal king-palm, an African importation, and said to be the only specimen in the colony, that waves its crown of dense fronds, each thirty and forty feet long, in front of the Voorburg Residence, and we re-embark; not sorry, after the hot sunshine we have endured, to find ourselves once more under the boat-awning in the temperate river breeze.

In a few minutes more we have rounded the point of Fort Amsterdam, where of course flags are flying, and officers and soldiers, in all the glory of uniform, are hastily marshalling themselves alongside of the battery at the water's edge, to greet his Excellency, who, hat in hand, acknowledges their salutations from the deck. And now, with the tide to help, we are steaming

up the giant Commeweyne, and enter straight on a scene of singular beauty, and a character all its own. For breadth of stream, indeed, and colour, or discolour, of water, the river hereabouts—that is, for about twenty miles of its lower course—might fairly pass for the Danube anywhere between Orsova and Widdin, or perhaps for a main branch of the Nile above Benha, with the sole discrepancy that whereas the Commeweyne, thanks to the neighbouring Atlantic, is tidal, the two last-named tributaries of the tideless Mediterranean and Black Seas are not so. But that large, reddish water-snake, that writhes its ugly way up the current, that timber-raft of rough-hewn but costly materials, bearing on its planks the tall, naked African figures that guide its way; that light Indian corial, balanced as venturesomely as any Oxford skiff, and managed by a boatman as skilful, however ragged his clothes and reckless his seeming, as the precisest Oxford undergraduate; that gleaming, gondola-like barge, with its covered cabin—is the reclining form within dark or fair?—and its cheery, singing crew,—all these are objects not of Bulgarian nor even, though not absolutely

dissimilar, of Egyptian river-life. The hot light mirrored on the turbid water, the moist, hot breeze, the intense, hot stillness of earth and sky, between which the very river seems as if motionless and sleeping in the monotony of its tepid flow,—these also are unknown to the Nile of the Cairene Delta or the Turko-Wallachian Danube; they belong to a more central zone. Details of the sort might, however, be every one of them—the "Bush negroes" and the covered Dutch barges excepted—equally well found, as I myself can bear witness, on the Essequibo, the Demerara, or any other of the neighbouring Guiana coast rivers. But not so the scarcely interrupted succession of estates, sugar, cocoa, and plantain, to the right and left, each with its quaint name, most often Dutch, telling some tale of the hopes, cares, expectations, anxieties, affections, joys, sorrows, of former owners long ago. Thus the mental phases of a John, a Peter, an Anna, an Elizabeth, are each duly commemorated in the names of "Pieterszorg," "Johannishoop," "Anna's Lust," and "Elizabeth-hoop"; self-confidence speaks in "Vlugt-en-Trow" ("Duty and Trust"); philosophy, practical at any rate, in "Rust-en-

Werk" ("Rest and Labour"). The happy owners of "Pleasure and Rest," "Peace," "Union," "Gratitude," and "Satisfaction" ("Lust tot Rust," "Vriede," "Eendracht," "Dankbaarheid," and "Lustrijk") deserved, we may hope, the congratulations they still seem to claim; while "Incomplete," with "Profit and Loss" ("Nuit Volmacht," "Nuit en Schadelijk"), leave us in doubt. Gloomier yet, "Labour and Sorrow," "Discord," and, worst of all, "Envy and Spite" ("Moed en Kommer," "Discordia," "Nijd en Spijt") remain as recollections of recollections long since faded, a sorry score long since, we may reasonably trust, wiped out, and, but for these now unmeaning names, forgotten. Good deeds and pleasurable things have short-lived memories, it is true; but sorrows and wrongs have, in the majority of instances, shorter still.

Various as were, to judge by the catalogue of which I have just given a random sample, the early fortunes of the "Estates," their later times have been to the full as varied, or, perhaps, more. Some have, by good management, backed with the requisite capital, retained through all vicissitudes of trade and strife, of slavery, apprentice-

ship, and emancipation, a sufficiency of creole labour to retain all, or the greater part of their old West-Indian prosperity, and announce themselves accordingly, as we sail past, by smoking chimneys, roofs and walls in good repair, and clustering cottages, amid the dense green of cocoa groves, or the verdant monotony of sugar-canes, only interrupted at regular distances by canal and dyke, or by some long palm row, planted more for beauty than for profit, a huge cotton-tree, magnificent to look at, but useless else, and chiefly spared to humour negro superstition, that yet brings offerings of food and drink to the invisible power, rather maleficent than otherwise, supposed to reside under its boughs. Or, again, signs of recent additions and improvements, with long white rows of regulation-built cottages, the tenements of coolies or Chinese, attest fortunes, not only maintained, but improved, by the infusion of "new blood" from the Indian or the Celestial Empire. Or a reverse process has taken place: the cane has abdicated in favour of less costly, but also less remunerative, rivals; and the white proprietor has made place for a black land-owner, or, more commonly, for several, who

now cultivate the land in accordance with their narrow means. Here the emerald monotony of the land is broken; patches of cassava-growth, like an infinity of soft green cupolas crowded one on the other, and undulating to every breath of air, show chequerwise between acres where the metallic glitter of vigorous plantain leaves or tall, hop-like rows of climbing yam tell of an unexhausted and seemingly inexhaustible soil. Jotted freely amid the lesser growths, fruit-trees of every kind spread unpruned with a luxuriance that says more for the quantity than the quality of their crop; but this is the tropical rule, and even Dutch gardening skill is unavailing against the exuberance of growth in climates like these. Meanwhile, the stately residence of the former proprietor—who, by the way, had, in all probability, been for many years an absentee, before, by a natural result, he became a bankrupt (the transition is a stereotyped one, and recurs every day)—has at last been totally abandoned as out of keeping with the simpler requirements of Cudjoe and his fellows, who content themselves with small cottages half buried in a medley of flower-bushes and kitchen-growth close by; though in more

than one instance our dusky creole, reverting to the hereditary Oriental instinct of ease and how to take it, has built himself, on the green margin of some creek or river inlet, a pretty painted kiosk, worthy of finding place among its likenesses on the shores of the Bosphorus or Nile, and answering the same ends. An unroofed factory and ruined chimney close by combine to mark the present phase, a necessary though a transient one, of land-ownership, through which Surinam is passing, a more hopeful one, though less brilliant, than that of exclusively large estates and costly factories owned by few.

As the river shores, so is the country behind, for miles away on either side, a chequer-board of field and plantation, intersected by straight ditches and canals, sluices, water-gates, locks, and dams, with an occasional patch of unreclaimed bush or towering forest, and studded with little cottage clusters, where any quantity of negro children play in the dust before the doors, and curs innumerable lie in wait to rush out and yelp at the passing stranger.

The ditches are crossed, at frequent intervals, by wooden bridges, and over these run well-kept

horse-paths, that skirt the canals, and go from estate to estate through the entire district. Often, too, they pass under noble avenues of locust or mahogany-trees, or between tall palm rows, where the turf on either side allows a pleasant canter off the beaten track. Friendly greetings from labourer and peasant meet me everywhere "as I ride, as I ride," and salutations, not so gracefully subservient, perhaps, as those of the Hindoo, but much more cheerful and sincere.

I am again,—for this is not a diary where everything is put down according to the order in which it occurred, but rather a landscape picture, where I take the liberty of arranging accessories as best may suit convenience or effect,—I am again on board our steamer, onward bound with the rest. Sometimes our course lies along the centre of the river, and then we have a general view of either side, far off, but seen in that calmness of atmosphere unknown to the northern climes, which, while it abolishes the effects of distance, creates a curious illusion, making the smallness of the remoter objects appear, not relative, but absolute. Sharp-edged and bright-coloured in the sun, houses and cottages stand out in an apparent

foreground of tree and field; miniature dwellings among a miniature vegetation, with Lilliputian likenesses of men and women between. Then again we approach one or the other bank, and see! the little palm-model is sixty feet high at least, and the gabled toy-house a large mansion three or four stories high. And now the fields and gardens reach down to the very brink of the stream, and our approach has been watched by the labourers from far; so that, by the time we are gliding alongside, troops of blacks, men and women,—the former having hastily slipped on their white shirts, the latter re-arranged their picturesque headkerchiefs, of every device and colour, gala fashion,—hurry down to the landing-place for a welcome. Some bear with them little Dutch or fancy flags; others, the children especially, have wild-flowers in their hands: two or three instruments of music, or what does duty for such, are heard in the crowd; and a dense group forms, with the eager seriousness befitting the occasion, about the two dwarf cannon by the wharf-side, which are now banged off amid the triumphant shouts of the one sex and the screams of the other. We, on the deck

and paddle-boxes, return the greetings as best we may; the Governor waves his hat, fresh shouts follow, till the popular excitement, on shore be it understood, takes the form of a dance, begun for our delectation, and continued for that of the dancers themselves long after we have glided away. White dresses, dashed here and there by a sprinkling of gay colours; behind them a glowing screen of garden flowers, further back and all around the emerald green of cane-fields; overhead tall palms, not half seared and scant of foliage, as we too frequently see them in the wind-swept islands of the Caribbean Archipelago, but luxuriant with their heavy crowns, or giant flowering trees, crimson and yellow, the whole flooded, penetrated everywhere, by the steady brightness of the tropical day—

> "Till all things seem only one
> In the universal sun,"—

a gay sight, and harmonizing well with the sounds of welcome, happiness, and mirth. These tell, not indeed perhaps of all-absorbing industry, of venturesome speculation, and colossal success, but of sufficiency, contentment, and well-doing—good things too in their way.

Salutations duly acknowledged—this may be the tenth estate where the ceremony has been repeated, during about a decade of miles up the river,—we retreat under the cool of the awning for quiet talk; and now the brown-complexioned, bright-eyed, demure little semi-Indian captain, courteously coming up, suggests a glass of Hollands, tempered with grateful ingredients, and prepared in one or other of the many ways known to West Indian convivality. The proposal meets with universal acceptance, and we all join in pledging the health and happiness of the colony of Surinam, and of its excellent and deservedly popular Governor.

CHAPTER IV.

COTTICA.

—A leaf on the one great tree, that, up from old time
Growing, contains in itself the whole of the virtue and life of
Bygone days, drawing now to itself all kindreds and nations,
And must have for itself the whole world for its root and
branches.

CLOUGH.

POPULARITY is rarely denied to merit; but, for one cause or another, it is sometimes deferred till it takes the form of a post-mortem tribute. And thus it has fared with Cornelis van Aersson, more generally known by his territorial style of Sommelsdyk, who erected the fort now in view as we approach the junction of the Commeweyne and Cottica rivers. Van Sommelsdyk, who, in the month of November, 1683, arrived to govern the Guiana territory, a third part of which he already owned as proprietor, had been a page in the Court of William II., of Orange, an intimate friend of our own William III., and had held such high office in his own country as befitted his

noble and ancient birth and great administrative talents. To these advantages he added, if his portraits be correct, a more than ordinary beauty of feature and great dignity of bearing.

The colony, when Van Sommelsdyk took charge of it, was in a wretched state, disorganized, or rather never yet properly organized at all within, and harassed by continual attacks on the part of the native Indians, then formidable by their numbers, from without. To repress these, and thus secure the leisure necessary for internal reforms, was the new Governor's first object; and with such vigour and skill did he address himself to the task, that within a year's time the Indians, repulsed on every side, were glad to ask for peace. It was granted them on equitable terms, and the principal tribes, Caribs, Warrows, and Arrowoks, received the rights of freedom and land; henceforth no longer enemies, but fellow-citizens and allies. This done, Van Sommelsdyk hastened to extend the now-unharassed frontier by founding, in the second year of his rule, with the co-operation of Samuel Cohen Nassy—a modern Joshua in Israel—the important Hebrew settlement, far up the valley of the Surinam

river, afterwards known as the "Joden Savannah," or Jews' Savannah, and which, during the following century, was, for quality and extent of cultivation, the wealthiest district of Dutch Guiana. Less noted at the time, but more important in its results, because more lasting, was the benefit he conferred on the colony at large by the cocoa-plant, first brought by his foresight into cultivation the following year.

It was, however, by the repression of crime and the enforcement of law and order among the colonists themselves, and especially among the garrison soldiers, whose undisciplined conduct and frequent excesses had rendered them hitherto the standing disgrace and terror of the settlement, that he established his best claim to the gratitude of his subjects, bond or free. The soldiers, no longer indulged in the idleness of garrison quarters, were kept constantly occupied on expeditions of war or discovery inland, or employed in digging the great canal that, starting from Paramaribo, joins the Surinam to the Saramacca, and still bears the name of Sommelsdyk; while others constructed the two forts, one of which is now before us on the Commeweyne, the

other stands at the junction of the Para and Surinam rivers. At the same time a High Court of Justice, the first known in the colony, was, by his care, erected, before which offenders of all descriptions, and not rarely masters guilty of cruelty to their slaves, were brought for sentence; and the Governor himself, by public proclamation three times renewed, announced himself amenable, like any other individual in the colony, to legal summons and jurisdiction, disclaiming the protection of any personal privilege soever, and declaring his readiness to make any reparation, should the sentence of the court require it.

For since, as Van Sommelsdyk had officially declared in a dispatch dated the 16th January, 1684, "the misfortunes of the colony had been mainly due to the unworthy conduct of its Governors, who had only sought their own profit to the ruin of the common weal," he rightly thought that the example of better things should first be set by himself as Governor and head. This, for the five years of his administration, he did nobly and steadily. Meanwhile the colony, as was natural under such a rule, grew and prospered, till its limits, formerly restricted to the immediate

neighbourhood of Paramaribo, included the courses of the great rivers, Saramacca and Commeweyne, west and east; while up the Surinam itself they reached to a distance of sixty miles or more from the coast; and the total number of estates, only fifty at the time of Van Sommelsdyk's arrival, had increased to two full hundred.

But while Van Sommelsdyk, by his energetic integrity, earned the thanks and admiration of the colony at large, he drew down on himself, by a necessary consequence, the bitter hatred of those who had been accustomed to find their advantage or gratify their passions under a different system of administration, and, foremost among such, of the soldiery, who chafed under a discipline alike needful and severe. A mutiny that broke out on the 17th July, 1688, soon became general; and the Governor, hastening to quell it in person, fell its first victim, pierced with six-and-forty wounds, inflicted by the mutineers, who at the same time murdered the commander of the garrison, and took possession of the fort and town, which for four days endured all the horrors of military anarchy. But the spirit of

the late Governor had passed into the magistracy he had created; and in a few days order was re-established, and confirmed by the execution of eleven of the ringleaders and the expulsion of the rest. Van Sommelsdyk's grave was dug near the orange-grove where he died, close by the walls of the fort: but his work remained; and on the foundations of order and discipline, cemented by his blood, the colony reared its after-superstructure of lasting prosperity. His son, Francis van Aerssen, Lord of Chatillon, declined, at his mother's prayer, the offered Governorship of the colony; but accompanied the newly appointed Governor thither in a private capacity next year, and upheld the family reputation by the courage and skill with which he headed the repulse of a piratical attempt made by the French, who, with nine men-of-war and a whole flotilla of gun-boats, commanded by Admiral De Casse, attempted to profit by the temporary confusion of Dutch affairs. Under the joint leadership of Francis of Chatillon and the gallant Hebrew chief, Nassy, mentioned before, the colonists obtained a complete victory over their invaders, and for several years after enjoyed the advantages of peace abroad and

good government at home, won for them by Van Sommelsdyk and his son. The States of Holland and William the Third of England testified by their conduct towards the widowed mother the respect felt for the memory of the great Surinam Governor in his native land.

During the whole of the eighteenth century, Fort Sommelsdyk continued to be a position of the greatest importance, covering the bulk of the colonial estates and the capital itself from the frequent inroads of Cayenne depredators, and their allies, the French maroons. With the final repression of these marauders, the military duties of the post may be said to have ceased; and it has now for several years served only as a police-station. No spot could have been better chosen; no truer centre found anywhere. Not only does the Commeweyne river, with its double fringe of estates and cultivation reaching far to the south, here unite with its main tributary, the Cottica, the eastern artery of a wide and populous district, but the same way gives direct access to the Perica river, another important affluent from the south-east; while at a little distance the Matappica watercourse branches off in a northerly

direction, and, winding amid a populous region of plantations and cane-fields, finds an opening to the sea beyond. Half the cultivation and, owing to the character of the estates, more than half the rural population of Dutch Guiana are within the range of these districts; and the selection of this post will ever remain a proof of the administrative no less than of the military talents of Van Sommelsdyk.

The small fort, a pentagon, erected on a grass-grown promontory at the meeting of the two great waters, has a very pretty appearance. On every side the further view is shut off by the dense forest, through which the rivers make their winding way by channels from thirty to forty feet in depth; no other habitation is in sight; and the cleared space around the fort buildings has an out-of-the-world look, befitting a scene of weird-adventure in "Mabensgion" or the "Fairie Queene." But the poetry of the New World is in itself, not in the eyes of those who behold it; and if fairies exist west of the Atlantic, they are invisible the most. Above its junction, the Commewcyne changes character, and, instead of being a broad slow-flowing volume of brackish water,

becomes a comparatively narrow but deep and rapid stream; while its former muddy colour is exchanged for pure black, not unlike the appearance of the mid-Atlantic depths in its inky glassiness. If taken up, however, in small quantity, the black colour, which is due chiefly to the depth, gives place to a light yellow; otherwise the water is clear, free from any admixture of mud, and perfectly healthy, with a slightly astringent taste. These peculiarities are popularly ascribed to some vegetable extract of the nature of tannin, derived from the decomposing substances of the equatorial forest underneath which these rivers take their rise.

We, for our part, no longer pursue our voyage on the Commeweyne, but diverging follow its tributary, or, rather, equal stream, the Cottica, and our course is henceforth east, almost parallel with the sea line, though at some distance from it. From Fort Sommelsdyk onwards the view on either bank gains in beauty what it loses in extent. The bendings and turnings of the river are innumerable; indeed it not rarely coils on itself in an almost circular loop, the nearest points of which have been in many instances

artificially connected by a short but deep and navigable canal, the work of Dutch industry. Several little islands, each an impenetrable mass of tangled vegetation, have thus been formed; on two larger ones, far up the river, coffee is still grown. It was for many years one of the main articles of cultivation in these districts, though now it has fallen into unmerited neglect; whence it will doubtless be rescued whenever a better-proportioned labour supply shall allow the colonist to re-occupy and extend the narrow limits within which their activity is at present restricted. Several creeks, as all lesser watercourses are here called, fall into the main stream, or from distance to distance connect it by the aid of canals with the sea. On the banks of one of these flourished in days gone by the still-famous Helena, a mulatto syren, whose dusky charms are said to have rivalled in their mischievous effects, if not in other respects, those of her Grecian namesake. These creeks, with the canals and ditches dependent on them, complete the water system, alike of irrigation and traffic, throughout this wonderful land, where nature has done so much and art and skill yet

more. But, whatever the sea-communication through these occasional openings, no brackish taint ever finds its way to the higher level through which the Cottica flows; and the freshness of the water is betokened by the ever-increasing loveliness and variety of the river-side vegetation. Lowest down hangs the broad fringe of the large-leaved "moco-moco," a plant that has, I suppose, some authentic Latin name, only I know it not; nor would it, however appropriate, give thee, perhaps, gentle reader, any clearer idea of the plant than may its Indian one, dipping its glossy green clusters into the very stream. Above tower all the giants of West Indian and South American forests, knit together by endless meshes of convolvulus, liane, creeper, and wild vine,—the woorali, I am told, among the rest; and surcharged with parasitic orchises, till the burden of a single tree seems sufficient to replenish all the hot-houses of England and Wales from stove to roof. Piercing through these, the Eta palm—it resembles in growth the toddy palm of the East Indies, and, for aught my ignorance can object to the contrary, may be the very same—waves its graceful fans high against the steady

blue; and birds innumerable, black, white, mottled, plain, blue, yellow, crimson, long-billed, parrot-billed, a whole aviary let loose, fly among the boughs, or strut fearless between the tree-trunks, or stand mid-leg deep meditative in the water. Large lizards abound on the banks; and snakes too, it may be, but they have the grace to keep out of sight, along with the jaguars and other unpleasant occupants of the Guiana jungle. In their stead light corials, sometimes with only a woman to paddle, sometimes a man or boy, dart out of the harbour-like shelter of the creeks; Bush-negro families peer curiously from the doors of their floating cottages, or guide their timber-rafts down the stream. Ever and anon a white painted barge, conveying an overseer, a book-keeper, or some other of the white or semi-white gentry, rows quickly by; for the river is the high-way, and the wayfarers along it many; so that even where its banks are at the loneliest, the stream itself has life and activity enough to show. More often, however, it passes between cultivated lands; for while the factories and sugar estates diminish in number as we go further up, the small Creole properties increase, and comfortable

little dwellings, places, cottages, sheds, and outhouses, amid every variety of "provision-ground" cultivation, multiply along the bank.

Here, too, even more than along the Commeweyne, men in every variety of costume, from the raggedest half-nakedness that in this climate betokens not exactly want, but rather hard outdoor work, to the white trousers and black coat, the badges of the upper-class negro creole, and a yet greater number of women, who have fortunately not learned to exchange the becoming and practical turban of their race for the ridiculous hat and bonnet of European fashion, come down to honour the Governor's passage; nor does the blazing afternoon sun, now at his hottest, seem to have the least effect on the energy of their welcome. And I may add that not here only, and in the more secluded districts of the colony, but throughout its entire extent I neither saw nor heard of anything indicating, however remotely, the duality of feeling that in so many other West Indian settlements — the Danish most—draws a line of separation, if not hostility, between the black and the white inhabitants of the land. The creoles of Surinam

are not less loyal to the Dutch tricolor than the burghers of Leyden, and King William himself could hardly expect a more affectionately enthusiastic greeting, were he to make a tour through the Seven Provinces, than his representative receives when visiting his Transatlantic subjects of the same rule. And, in this matter, observation is confirmed by history; nor, since the conclusion, in 1777, of the long and bloody maroon wars, has a single outbreak or show of insubordination disturbed the interior harmony of Dutch Guiana.

For this happy state of things, contrasting so advantageously with the records of too many other neighbouring colonies, the wise and kindly rule of an enlightened Government has been, of course, the principal promoter and cause. But no small share of the praise is also due to the truest friends and best guides Europe has ever supplied to the African race—the Moravian Brothers.

That Christianity was in the "good old times," a century back, never taught to slaves, that its introduction among them was vehemently opposed, if not positively prohibited by actual law, or

custom stronger than law itself, may nowadays shock, but should not surprise us. Slavery is in itself too absolute an inequality, too marked an injustice of man towards man, to allow of community, that is, of an association on equal terms in other respects, least of all in religion. And so long as slavery was intended to be perpetual, it was necessary that the distinctions behind which it entrenched itself should be perpetual also. It might be objected that in matters professedly regarding the other world such severe demarcation was less necessary than in the more tangible condition of this; but a little attention will show the opposite to be the fact. What is incapable of proof is also incapable of refutation; a boundary line that cannot be defined cannot be disputed; and dogmatic or so-called spiritual distinctions, however indefensible by right reason, have also the more than counterbalancing advantage of being inassailable from the same quarter. They are like the assertion, should any one choose to make it, that Mars or Venus are inferior planets to our own, because Mars, forsooth, is inhabited by bears, and Venus by monkeys. Nation after nation, following this happy line of argument, has boldly

denied the common rights of this world to rivals or strangers, on the plea that the rights of another world were not theirs. Examples would be invidious; they will readily occur to every mind conversant, even superficially, with history, profane or other. Nor, indeed, does that "foulest birth of time," sectarian persecution, rest on any other basis; though here it is not a mere pretext, but a direct cause. And thus it follows conversely that intercommunity of religion, from whichever side, upper or lower, conqueror or conquered, ruler or ruled, the exchange proceeds, has always been the first step to intercommunity of social and, ultimately, of civil rights.

In fact, the impossibility of long denying class-equality to the worshippers in the same temple, the partakers of the same rites, is not less certain than is, unfortunately, the extreme difficulty—I would fain hope not impossibility—of maintaining that same equality where the rites are diverse and the temples apart. Did I hear any one say something that sounded like "Ireland"?—if so, it was you that said it, my dear sir, not I. Let us look for our illustrations in the East; it is safer ground.

That no Mahometan can be rightfully made a slave of, that an enslaved "unbeliever" becomes, if he embraces Mahometanism, entitled to freedom after the lapse of seven years, are axioms of Mahometan law, acknowledged, in theory, as binding by every Islamitic nation, though too often violated in practice. And indeed they have been generally, if not exactly, observed for many centuries; and hence throughout Turkey, Egypt, Arabia, and the Levant we see the liberated negro, in spite of all prejudices of colour and race, occupying precisely the same social position as the whites around him, with no drawback except such as his own mental or moral shortcomings may individually impose.

Our Surinam colonists of two hundred years since had probably little knowledge of the Mahometan world, and the results of Asiatic experience; but they instinctively felt that to admit their slaves, even nominally, to a fellowship of creed would only be the first step towards ulterior "levelling up"; that equality in the Courts of the Temple would soon be followed by equality in the Court of Justice, and, finally, in the Court of Policy itself; in a word,

that the one existing ideal barrier being removed, no matter-of-fact fence could be erected strong enough to supply its wants. Certainly, no one acquainted with those whom our ancestors termed "churchmen" would suppose that the stipendiary ministers of a state religion were likely to compromise their own position by making themselves the champions of negro souls *versus* planters' interest, whatever might be the possible advantages, according to their own theory, to the negro souls aforesaid; and accordingly, for more than a century, the negroes on the banks of Surinam, Commeweyne, Cottica, Perica, and the rest, remained, for belief and worship, in the precise condition of their fathers on the African West Coast. Of this state of things a sample yet remains in the maroons, or Bush negroes, of the interior, the majority of whom are even now Nature-worshippers after the old African form. But, towards the middle of the last century, the modification of public feeling, which was in due time to render first the slave-trade, and then slave-holding itself, an impossibility and an abhorrence, had begun to make its appearance, not only in England, but among the more civil-

ized nations of Europe generally, and through them penetrated across the seas to the slave-owning colonies of the West. And here the first link to be undone in the chain of bondage was, of course, that of religious disparity. But who should loosen it? Clearly not the ministers of any national and established Church, Dutch or English; themselves the thralls of interest and society, their own hands were too closely tied for untying the hands of others. The work was one for the irregular, not the uniform-wearing, soldiers of Christianity; and they were not long in entering on the field.

More fortunate than their compeers of Jamaica and its sister islands, the Surinam slaves fell to the share of the Moravian teachers, who had already, as far back as 1735, organized settlements among the Indians of the interior with much labour and little result. It is remarkable that almost the only teachers who have met with any success—and, indeed, their success, so to call it, has been considerable—among the Indians of the two continents, south and north, are Roman Catholic priests. A sensuous idolatry best fits a sensuous good-for-nothing race. Whereas, when a

Catholic missionary suggested to a Bush negro, the other day, the propriety of exchanging his hereditary worship of the Cotton-tree for that of an imaged Virgin Mary or some other saintly doll, the black is reported to have answered, "God made our idol; man made yours; and, besides, ours is the finer of the two"; and accordingly declined the exchange. "*Se non e vero, e ben trovato.*"

But to return to the Moravians. When, after some difficulty, though less than might have been anticipated from the nature of things, on the masters' part, they were allowed to turn their attention to the slaves, their success was as rapid as it was well deserved. In 1776 the first negro was baptized, and admitted as a member of the congregation; and the countenance publicly and generously given on the occasion by the Governor of the colony marked this step with the importance of an historical event. The very same year a Moravian teaching-establishment was opened on one of the Commeweyne estates; others followed, and, long before the emancipation of 1863, three-fourths of the working negroes had been numbered in the Moravian ranks. The

latest census gives nineteen Moravian schools, attended by more than 2,200 children, while over 24,000 names, all Creole, are inscribed in the register of the Herrnhut Brotherhood.

With the intrinsic merits or defects of discipline or dogma in the Moravian system, which may be concisely described as the exactest reproduction known to our times of primitive Christianity, taken in its better phases, I have nothing here to do. These are matters of opinion, and every man has his own. It is not the theory, but the practical result that claims our attention; and, allowances duly made for circumstances and the inevitable defects and errors of every human institution, whatever its range, this result is eminently satisfactory, both to the people and the colony at large.

That the emancipation, too long deferred, of 1863 was neither preceded, accompanied, nor followed in Dutch Guiana by any disturbances like those which agitated Jamaica, Demerara, and other settlements thirty years before; that apprenticeship, so signal a failure elsewhere, here proved a success; that when this, too, came to its appointed end in 1873, scarcely one among the

thousand of creole labourers on the estates struck work, or took advantage of his new completeness of freedom to give himself up to idleness and vagabond life,—these things are mainly due, so the colonists acknowledge, to the spirit of subordination, industry, and order inspired into their pupils by the Moravian teachers. Alike untinctured by Baptist restlessness and Methodist fanaticism, their loyalty and good sense had prepared a people worthy of the rights, into the enjoyment of which they at last entered; they had made of the slaves under their tutorial care, not only, as the phrase goes, good Christians, but they had also made of them what the majority of other teachers had failed to do, good citizens and good subjects, loyal to their government, respectful to their superiors, orderly among themselves. Obeah and poisoning, serious crimes, indeed, in any form, are almost unknown in Dutch Guiana; camp-meetings, and the disgraceful extravagances of "native Baptist" preachers, mountebanks, and demagogues, entirely so.

Liberty of conscience, and the freedom of every man to choose and follow whatever reli-

gion he will, are very good things; yet even their warmest supporter would hardly hesitate to bring up his children, by preference, in that form of religion to which he himself belongs. Negroes, in their present phase, are children—when newly emancipated they might have been more properly termed babies; and there would certainly have been then no harm, nor even much difficulty, in prescribing for them some one of the many modes of Christianity best adapted to their comprehension and capabilities. And, of all modes, the Moravian, with its simple creed, simple though emotional worship, strict discipline, and absence of priestly casteship, would, I venture to think, have been the best.

These reflections, which, so far as they are merely reflections, the reader-companion of my trip is free to adopt or reject as he pleases, have in this, my narrative, derived their origin from the sight of the barn-like buildings of the Moravian establishment called the Charlottenburg, alongside of which we are now borne on the clear black depths of the Cottica. The high-roofed, conventual-looking mansion occupied by the teachers themselves has a somewhat German

air; the chapel school-house and cattle-sheds—from which last, with garden-cultivation and farming-work on a small scale, the "mission" is chiefly supported—are all spacious and all plain even to ugliness. If we enter the buildings, we shall see little more, or, in truth, nothing whatever, to gratify the artistic sense. Within, as without, any approach to ornamentation—not decorative only, but architectural even—is strictly excluded, though whether for reasons of economy or on some abstract principle I do not know. Perhaps it is a speculative "craze;" for why should not the Moravians have crazes of their own, like other denominations? However, as this fancy—if fancy it be—does not interfere with the practical utility of the constructions, which are cool, roomy, well aired, and well kept, want of beauty may be pardoned, though deplored. The interior arrangements, too, offer nothing to make a description interesting. A school-room—an elementary one especially—is much the same all the world over, whether the scholars be black or white; and the same may be said of a meeting-house and its contents. But, as I have already said, they answer the purposes they were in-

tended for, and, in addition, they really come up to the popular idea. Private dwellings, by African rule of taste, should be small—mere sleeping-coverts, in fact—with an open verandah or shed tacked on, it may be, but as little construction as possible. Public buildings, on the contrary, cannot be too large. For decoration, the African eye has no great discernment; it appreciates bright colours and their combinations, but that is nearly all. In form—imitative form especially—they are at the very first letter of the Art-alphabet; nor were the most gifted of their kind, the ancient Egyptians, much further advanced in either respect. What, then, can be expected from the West Coast national type? But, like the princes of their brotherhood, the light-coloured Africans of the Nile valley, the Congo negro and the naturalized South American creole, understand the value of size in architecture as well as Mr. Ferguson himself, though not equally able perhaps to give the reason of the value; and the spacious assembly-room and wide enclosure of a Central African palace or a Surinam negro meeting-place are the legitimate, though somewhat feeble and degenerate, de-

scendants of the giant structures of Edfou and Carnac.

Cottages and gardens extend far away to the right and left of the open space where stands the central establishment; while cocoa-nut trees form a conspicuous and a very agreeable figure in the general landscape. Sir Charles Dilke asserts, correctly, I take for granted, that 200,000 acres of Ceylon land are shaded by cocoa palms yielding from seven to eight hundred million cocoa-nuts a year, and worth two millions sterling. Amen. There is no reason, or, to put it better, no hindrance, either of climate or soil, to prevent the mainland Dutch settlement of the west from rivalling or excelling, in this respect, the once Dutch island of the east. Nor is much labour, nor much expense, beyond the first outlay of planting, required. Yet even for these men and capital are alike wanting. Well, everything has its day; and Surinam, when her time comes, may be the garden of Guiana: she is for nineteen-twentieths of her extent more like the shrubbery now.

Meanwhile the current and the boat are bearing us on round another curve of the bank; the glittering plantain screen and the infinite inter-

lacings of the cocoa-leaves have closed round the green gap with its long-roofed buildings; last of all, the small painted belfry has, so to speak, been swallowed up among the boughs, and "all the landscape is remade." Here is a remarkably large and handsome residence, with an avenue down to the water's edge, and landing-place to match; the garden, too, and the statues amid its flowers look more numerous and more fantastic than common; the factory is in good working order, the sheds full of megass, the out-houses stocked; everything betokens a prosperous condition. The negroes at the wharf salute us with flags, popguns, and what they are pleased to call singing, as we approach. I inquire the name of the place: it is Munnikendam, the Governor informs me; adding that the estate is remarkable for the conservative tenacity with which, amid all the changes that have from time to time come over the spirit of the colonial dream, it has maintained unchanged old customs, old feelings, old manners and modes of life. Certainly we are now, in what may be termed an out-of-the-way corner, not far from the very extreme limits of European habitation; and central influences may have been

slow in diffusing themselves by Dutch barges up this secluded winding river. Nevertheless, to my English eye the busiest districts of the colony and the capital itself had already appeared remarkably conservative. Not wholly stationary, for progress there certainly is; but it is progress by line and rule, precept and measure—here a little, and there a little,—not on the sweeping scale or by the rapid transitions ordinary in the empirical regions of the New World. So that, thought I, if Paramaribo be comparatively not conservative, the conservation of Munnikendam must be something worth the studying. The Governor assented; and by his order a message was shouted across the stream that on our return we would pay the good folks of the estate a visit; and we continued our way.

My readers will, I hope, accompany us on our visit to Munnikendam in the following chapter, and derive from it as much pleasure in idea as we ourselves did in actual fact. Just now, however, the immediate goal to which we were bound was the estate entitled "La Paix," the remotest of all European settlements or farms from the colonial centre, bordering on what was once the military

frontier, between which and the Maroweyne river the land lies yet open and unreclaimed. East of the Maroweyne commences Surinam's old rival and plunderer, French Cayenne. The distance of "La Paix" from the capital in a straight line is about fifty miles; following the river windings, it cannot be much short of a hundred.

The Cottica, in this part of its course, and above its junction with the Perica, which flows into it a little below Munnikendam, is narrow, often not exceeding eighty yards in width, but extremely deep; the banks, where they have not been cleared for cultivation, or planted over with fruit trees, are a tangled maze of forest, underwood, creeper, leaf, flower, thorn, through which a cat or a snake could hardly find a way. Coffee-bushes, the abandoned relics of plantation, mingle freely with the native growth; tall palms shoot up everywhere; bamboo tufts bend gracefully over the stream; water-lilies, pink, white, and yellow, float on the ink-black waters. From space to space, the opening of some small natural creek or artificial creek enlarges the vista, green and flower-starred to its furthest reach. Amid these Creole cottages and gardens, cocoa-nut and banana

plantations, abound and prosper; there is no sign of insecurity anywhere, still less of want. A mile or so before we reach "La Paix" we pass the large dwelling-house called "Groot Marseille." It is inhabited by three creole negroes, the joint proprietors of the adjoining sugar estate; and these land-owning brethren, though thriving, live together, strange to say, in unity.

La Paix itself, with its 1,760 acres of grant, though not more than one-third of them are under actual cultivation, is a fine sugar estate; the fertility of the soil is evidently only limited by the amount of labour bestowed on it; and the employment of coolies speaks well for the corresponding amount of capital invested. Yet the place has a half-wild frontier look; and in the struggle between the industry of man and the excessive productiveness of nature, the latter seems ever and anon almost on the point of gaining the upper hand. Long grass and fantastic undergrowth shoot up wherever the smallest vacancy is left; the cane-patch shows like a little island surrounded by an encroaching tide of trees; and the tall branches, overshadowing cottage and outhouse, give the habitations a backwood-

settlement appearance, doubtful and undecided. And here, on the twilight verge, where the extremest rays of civilization blend with the dark margin of savage or, at any rate, non-civilized existence beyond, let us pause awhile, before we step on shore, and listen to the strange story of those strange tribes on whose frontiers we now are—the Bush negroes of Surinam.

CHAPTER V.

BUSH NEGROES.

We, boys, we
Will die fighting, or live free.

BYRON.

THE groups that had gathered to greet us as we landed at the large wooden "stelling" in front of "La Paix" had an appearance not unbefitting the general character of the place itself. Mixed together, yet distinct, the slender, ornament-circled limbs and cringing gestures of the turbaned coolies by the wharf contrasted strangely with the sturdy forms and independent demeanour of the Bush negroes, here present in great force, mixed up with the more disciplined creoles, many of whom were, however, scarcely more overburdened with apparel, or, rather, sensible of the want of it, than their Maroon kinsmen around. There was no lack of that general good feeling and willing subordination that characterize the more civilized population nearer the

capital. All were cheerful—the coolies, perhaps, excepted, but cheerfulness is not a Hindoo virtue either at home or abroad—and courteous after a fashion, but somewhat wild.

A painted four-oar boat, with its commodious stern cabin, the overseer's conveyance, lay alongside the wharf; two broad, flat-bottomed barges were moored some way up the main creek that leads to the interior of the estate; and, besides these, were a dozen Maroon corials, mere hollow tree-trunks, the simplest forms of barbaric invention, "survivals," to borrow Mr. Tylor's excellent nomenclature, of a pre-civilized era in river navigation.

The owners of the corials, tall, well-shaped men of colour, varying between dark brown and inky black, with a rag, at most, bound turban-fashion round their bullet heads, and another of scarce ampler dimensions about their loins, muster on the landing-place, and salute the Governor with a courteous deference to which the fullest uniform could add nothing. The women, whose dress may best be described as a scanty kilt, and the children, boys and girls, who have none to describe, keep somewhat in the back-

ground, laughing of course. All seem perfectly at home, without strangeness or even shyness of any kind. Nor, indeed, are they strangers from far off; their villages on the banks of the Upper Cottica itself, and of its tributary stream, the Coermotibo, are almost contiguous to the European estates. The main body of the tribe is, however, far away on the banks of the Saara river, to the south, where their chief resides, and along the west bank of the Maroweyne, the boundary river between Dutch and French Guiana. All this vast region, said, by the few explorers who have visited it, to be in no respect inferior for its fertility and the variety of its products to the best lands of Surinam, has been made over, partly by express treaty, partly by custom, to the maroons, commonly known as the Aucan Bush negroes, the first who, in 1761, obtained a formal recognition of freedom and independence from their European masters. Of the entire district they are now almost the sole occupants, undisturbed even by dark-skinned competitors; for the Indian aborigines, believed to have been once numerous throughout these wooded valleys, have wasted away and disap-

peared, unable not merely to compete but even to co-exist with their African, any better than with their European neighbours. A small Dutch settlement, that of Albina, on the banks of the Maroweyne, alone varies the uniformity of negro possession in these lands.

It was not till after a long struggle and much bloodshed that the Aucan negroes established themselves as the recognized lords of the soil. Nor would they, it is more than probable, have succeeded in doing so, but for the same causes that first determined and gave importance to their revolt—French hostilities and border-war. That a strong rival feeling should, from the very first, have existed between the Dutch and French colonies was natural enough; they were rivals, and local rivalry could not but, in their case, be embittered and intensified by the long-standing hostility between the mother-countries themselves. In the New World, however, as in the Old, it is but justice to the Dutch to say that, not they, but the French were the aggressors.

Border raids, sometimes in concert with the action of the French fleet along the coast, but in general more harassing than dangerous, kept

the Dutch settlement, from the Maroweyne on the east, as far as the central river of Surinam, in a condition of constant disquietude for many years; and while they weakened the planters, encouraged the ever-growing spirit of insubordination among the slaves. Runaways multiplied, and, joining together in small robber-bands, helped the French plunderers in their work of devastation; till, not much after the commencement of the eighteenth century, Cassard's terrible invasion, after nearly involving the entire colony in immediate and irretrievable ruin, only retired to leave behind it a long train of social and financial evils, and, worst of all, a servile war.

That such a war must, sooner or later, have arisen, the normal circumstances of the colony, even had it been absolutely free from outward pressure or accidental difficulties, suffice to show. The number of negroes, mostly stout, able-bodied, and with every feeling of natural hatred against their iniquitous captors yet fresh in their breasts, already exceeded 20,000; while there is no reason to suppose that the total of European residents in the colony ever overpassed one-tenth of that amount. So overwhelming a majority of blacks, however

ignorant and unprovided with the artificial means of strength wielded by their employers, could, of course, be only retained in bondage by a persistent system of extreme severity; and severity was sure to degenerate in many, if not most, instances, into downright and wanton cruelty, thus daily adding new motives of revenge to what might have already seemed more than sufficient. True, the Dutch were not exceptionally hard masters; they might even, as a whole, contrast favourably with many other slave-owning nationalities of the time. But the very tale, briefly told a few pages back, of the lawlessness that all the energy of Van Sommelsdyk for a time failed to suppress, and the savage mutiny in which he lost his life, gives evidence enough, that however temperate, orderly, and law-abiding may have been the leaders of the brave Zeelanders who founded Surinam, they could not but have numbered among the ranks of their followers many rough-handed, turbulent, lawless men, impatient of power in the hands of others, and sure to abuse it when holding it in their own. Even with the better sort, it could hardly, sooner or later, be otherwise. "Never had man absolute

power over man, but he misused it," says the Eastern proverb; it might, for the truth of its application, be a Western one too. There is no need to examine further; the history of slavery and slaves, no less than of slave-owners, is the same everywhere—the worst blot on the pages of time. Alike monotonous in horror is its only episode, insurrection.

Within a small insular inclosure, like Barbados, or even a larger one, such as Jamaica, a negro outbreak, however vigorous and well concerted, was sure to yield, most often speedily, at all events surely, to regular troops and the superiority of European skill. But in a territory of undefined extent, backed on every side by an untracked extent of river forest, insurgents had, and were not long in perceiving that they had, a very different and much better prospect of success; and the Surinam negroes might reasonably hope that the issues of a war in which all the disadvantages were on the side of the regular troops, the advantages on their own, would be for them, if not in conquest, at least in freedom. They wanted but the occasion to begin; it came, and it was Cassard who brought it.

When the French marauders of 1712-13 overspread the land, and chiefly the eastern Commeweyne districts, many of the planters fled for refuge to the capital, leaving their negroes to shift for themselves. That they did; and did it after a fashion that common sense should have told their owners to expect. Joining themselves to the invaders, they helped to plunder the abandoned estates; took what they could, and then, quitting for ever the hated scenes of their past miseries and wrongs, retreated to freedom and savage life in the bordering forests. Here they became a nucleus of avowed revolt, daily augmented by fresh arrivals from other estates; while, encouraged by their example, new bands of runaways gathered and grew in all directions; till from east, west, and south, from the Saramacca to the Maroweyne and the uplands far away, land-owners and colony were girt in by a ring of desperate freebooters, eager for plunder and ruthless with revenge. Like whirlwind gusts bursting all at once from a murky horizon, they broke in when least looked for upon every plantation within their range, lent their too efficient aid to every uprising of their bondsmen-comrades,

and their cutlasses to every massacre of their terrified and outnumbered lords.

Dr. Johnson, than whom, when unblinded by prejudice, no better hater of injustice and wrong ever lived, once, at a public dinner, startled, we are told, the assembled city worthies by the unexpected toast, "To the next negro rising in Jamaica!" And stranger still, the toast, as it appears, was responded to. For, in truth, it is hard not to sympathize, from a distance especially, with the slave against his master, the weak against the strong, the victim against the tyrant. Who has not read and, reading, approved Cowper's spirited protest?—

> "Patience itself is meanness in a slave.
> Or if the will and sovereignty of God
> Bid suffer it awhile and kiss the rod,
> Wait but the dawning of a brighter day,
> And snap the chain the moment when you may."

But warfare of whatever kind, however glorious as a whole, is sickening in its details; and most sickening of all are the details of servile war—cruelty requited with cruelty, horror with horror. The customary restraints imposed by common humanity on the excited passions of the com

batants, the mitigations of civilized forbearance, have here no place; in the struggle the wounded finds no pity, the captive no mercy, the dead no honour; even the scientific interest that belongs to the tactics and manœuvres of ordinary warfare is wanting here; till Cicero's cowardly, "Better peace on the worst terms than war on the best," almost finds an echo in the mind of the reader who is compelled to wade through the weary sameness of forays, ambushes, plunderings, burnings, tortures, executions, reprisals, revenges, that make up the hateful tale.

Enough, then, to say that the raids of the self-emancipated marauders, after fifteen years of ever-increasing frequency, were, in 1730, brought to a climax by the first general rising on record among the slaves themselves. It broke out on the Government plantation of "Berg-en-Daal" ("Hill and Valley"), on the Upper Surinam river, and thence extended to the neighbouring estates; and though, after three years of hard fighting, the insurgents yielded at last to the regular troops, the respite obtained by the colonists was only a temporary one. Before long the war—for it was now no less—between whites and blacks

raged fiercer than ever, until a formal treaty, concluded by Captain Creutz in the name of the Dutch Government, with 1,600 armed rebels, raised the latter in 1749 to the dignity of recognized belligerents. It is worthy of record, not only for the justification of Governor Mauricius, the originator of this treaty, and who was much blamed for it at the time, but more as affording an instance of a marked and persistent difference between the African and the Asiatic character, that in the present and in every following instance the negroes observed their part of the engagements entered into with scrupulous fidelity. It was well for Surinam they did so.

But the 1,600 included in the treaty were a mere handful compared with the ever-growing multitudes of unpacified insurgents, who, under the leadership of their dreaded chief, Samsam, continued the struggle with varying results, till the impolitic severity of the owner of an estate on the Tempatic creek, a confluent of the Upper Commeweyne, brought about in 1757 a general rising of the slaves throughout the southern districts, and gave a formidable accession of

strength to the negro cause. The new insurgents, sensible of the importance of combination, joined themselves to those already in the field, and the united army put itself under the command of a competent leader. The name of this black Spartacus was Arabee—an indication that he, like his predecessor Samsam, belonged to one or other of the Mahometanized African tribes, whose national training, the result of contact with the higher races of their continent, gives them a decided superiority over their pagan fellow-countrymen, especially in war.

Had the negroes now made full use of their advantages, a general massacre of all the whites then within the colony, followed in due course by the most terrible retaliation from the enraged Dutch, might have been the result, alike disastrous to both parties—colonists and slaves. But, fortunately for Surinam, the insurgents had found in Arabee a leader whose moderation equalled his courage, and whose foresight inclined him to prefer a permanent and honourable security to the tempting but delusive gratifications of revenge. Instead of pushing forward hostilities to their utmost, he took the first offered oppor-

tunity to open negotiations of peace on equal terms with the Colonial Government, and at last succeeded in obtaining for himself and his followers, not only liberty and independence, but even an extensive grant of territory to be held in full right, on condition of an alliance offensive and defensive with their former masters. This treaty, of which no subsequent breach is recorded on either side, was after some delay solemnly concluded and sworn to at Auka, a plantation on the shores of the Upper Surinam river, in the year 1761; and to this circumstance the associated negroes owe the name of Aucans, which they have ever since retained as a tribal denomination, distinguishing them from their fellows of the bush. To these Aucans belonged our stalwart, unclad, but not uncourteous or even wholly uncivilized friends, who, in company with their more domesticated creole brethren, now welcomed us on the Upper Cottica, at the landing-place of "La Paix."

Masses, unlike individuals, are not less readily influenced by good example than by bad; and hardly had the Aucans made their peace with Government when a message arrived at Paramaribo

from another considerable body of insurgents, those, namely, who occupied the uplands along the Saramacca river to the east, intimating their desire for a like peaceful settlement of affairs. The Dutch Government, with a wise leniency, at once acceded to their wish; and Louis Nepveu, an enterprising and talented official, who himself some years later became Governor of the colony in difficult times, was deputed to negotiate a treaty, similar in all respects to that concluded with the Aucans. This he accomplished in 1762; and the honours with which he was rewarded by a grateful Administration did not exceed the merit of his services. The pacification of the two great rebel clans, and the repression of the few remainining insurgents, whom the Aucans and Saramaccan negroes, mindful of their recent engagements, now joined with the European soldiery in putting down, seemed to guarantee long years of rest and prosperity to Dutch Guiana.

But the calm was delusive. The very next year a storm, more dangerous than any of the preceding ones, burst on the much-tried colony This time it was not with the negroes of the dis-

tant up-country districts, not with the labourers on the scattered and unimportant plantations, but with the slaves who tilled the close-packed, wealthy coast estates, the very mainstay and life of the settlement, that the Dutch had to contend. Along the entire sea-shore, from the mouth of the Saramacca on the west, where the strong post of Nassau Fort was abandoned and blown up by its fugitive garrison, to the mouth of the Maroweyne east, one only estate, the Government plantation, called Dageraad, resisted the insurgents, and by its central position prevented a junction of their forces that might well have been fatal to Paramaribo itself. Had Dageraad fallen, the colony, cut off from the seabord and deprived of all hope of succour from without, must have perished. Now it was that the treaties so lately concluded with the Aucan and Saramacca negroes stood the colony in good stead; the inland region behind the capital remained undisturbed and faithful; and thus the garrison of Paramaribo found itself sufficiently at leisure to detach a small body of European troops to the help of their besieged comrades in Dageraad. They arrived only just in time; but Dageraad was saved, and with it the

colony. Succour, first from St. Eustatius, then in greater numbers from Holland, now came in; the insurgents lost heart; and by the summer of the following year the worst of the peril was over. But it was not followed by peace. This, for once, was neither sought nor granted; and the blood poured forth in the numerous executions which signalled the first repression of the revolt, though for a moment they damped, could not quench the flame. Now smouldering, now bursting into open blaze, it continued to ravage the easterly districts along the valleys of the Commeweyne and its tributary rivers, where property and life were held on no securer tenure than they had been, twenty years previously, on the Upper Surinam and the frontiers of the south. But the character of the revolt had changed from purely servile to semi-political; for foreign influences were really, though indirectly, at work, circumscribing, while they embittered, the contest. The chiefs of the new freebooters, Bonni and Baron, had established their head-quarters near the Maroweyne river, on the French frontier, within which the connivance of the Cayenne Government seemed to afford them, whenever

hard pressed, a secure place of refuge, and whence they also drew fresh recruits and supplies at need.

Eight years passed thus, during which time many expeditions were undertaken by the European troops against the insurgents; but, owing to the difficulties of the marshy coast-grounds and the neighbourhood of the French territory, with little effect. In 1770, Louis Nepveu assumed the government, and, with the aid of a distinguished officer, Colonel Stoelman by name, organized a black corps, recruited from among the negroes themselves—a measure productive of the greatest advantages, and which sufficiently indicates the change that had come over the spirit of the contest, and the altered relations of the combatant parties. It was no longer a struggle between black and white, but between rebel and Dutch. Negroes though they were, Bonni and Baron were regarded as enemies by the Africans, no less than by the European subjects of the State; and the blacks at large proved themselves, then and ever after, loyal to the Netherlands flag, nor less ready to fight under it than the Zeelanders themselves.

Now was the time for putting the revolt, thus localized and extra-national, completely down; and at last, in 1773, the earnest and long-continued representations made by Governor Nepveu to the States succeeded in obtaining a reinforcement of 800 Dutch soldiers, commanded by Colonel Fourgeoud, a Swiss by birth, and a man of considerable military merit, though quarrelsome and overbearing in temper. With him, and under the same flag, arrived Captain Stedman, an Englishman and a scholar, the destined historian—and by no means an inelegant one—of the campaign. With the arrival of Fourgeoud and his troops, military operations commenced, and were continued in a much more regular manner than formerly, and with better result. Guided and seconded by their black allies, the European soldiers made their way into the furthest forest recesses. Every communication was secured, every advance rendered permanent, by the erection of a fort; while fresh reinforcements gradually raised the numbers of the negro soldiery to about eight hundred, and those of the Dutch troops to double the amount. An expedition on so large a scale, and conducted by men

who understood their work, could not fail of success. Outgeneralled and beaten in a succession of skirmishes, Bonni, who was at this time sole rebel chief, gave up the game for lost, and, with the more obstinate spirits of his band, crossed the Maroweyne, to find permanent shelter in the territory of Cayenne. But the greater number of the insurgents, deprived of their leader, preferred to seek, and by timely submission to obtain, the same conditions of peace that had, on former occasions, been granted to the Aucan and Saramaccan tribes, with which, under the name of Bonni negroes, they became speedily incorporated; others joined the Moesinga or Matrocane clan. By the spring of 1786 the pacification was complete on all sides. And thus, after fifty years of hard fighting, ended the servile wars of Dutch Guiana.

They were never renewed. A strong military cordon of numerous and well-appointed posts, drawn round the cultivated lands, and including all the European settlements and estates, sufficed to keep at distance any chance marauding runaways, whether negroes or others, while the black soldiers, who were called "Guides" from the

nature of the services originally required of them, satisfactorily supplied, for many years, the place of regular troops, and spared the exhausted colony, which had already incurred a debt amounting to 60,000,000 of florins for war cost alone, the heavy expenses of a European garrison. Beyond this cordon lay the territory definitely assigned to the Bush negroes, and from them neither danger nor disquiet had henceforth to be apprehended. Liberty alone was what they had fought for, and, having once secured that for themselves and their children, they regarded all bygone scores of slavery, ill-usage, and war as cancelled in full. Indeed the oft-cited double precept, "Forgive and forget," the first half of which is difficult enough to our European natures, and the latter impossible, is a matter of every-day practice among negroes, with whom benefit obliterates injury, or *vice versâ*, more rapidly and more completely than a Caucasian can even understand. A phenomenon indicative of a good heart, say some; of a weak head, say others. Of both perhaps. But to return to our Bush negroes.

So thoroughly did they henceforth consider their own interests identified with those of the

colony at large, that when, towards the close of the century, Dutch Guiana was being bandied about, now by treaty, now by force of arms, while to-day an English, to-morrow a French flag floated over its forts, and the victors of one hour were the vanquished of the next, the Aucans and their kin, ignorant of European politics, and averse to change, whatever its pretext, came boldly forward of their own accord to the assistance of their old masters against the foreign intruders, and contributed as best they could to the defence of Surinam in difficult times.

Since then more than seventy years have gone by; and with them many of the institutions of the colony have also passed from fact to history, from history to oblivion. The military cordon, so important in its day, exists no longer; and no territorial demarcation now assigns special limits to European denizenship in Surinam. From English rule the colony has returned to Dutch, has prospered, has dwindled, and prospered again; slavery has given place to apprenticeship, and apprenticeship to the equality of freedom. Coolie immigration, produce-experiments, machinery, commerce, have each in turn modified some things, created others,

obliterated not a few. But through all these changes the Bush negroes have remained, with hardly any alteration, on their original footing, true to their first engagements, at peace among themselves, and by no means useless members of the settlement into which they are incorporated, half as subjects, half allies. Their mode of life is agricultural; their labour is partly bestowed on the field-produce sufficient to their own personal wants, partly on the growth and export of rice, with which they supply the estates and the capital. But their chief occupation is woodcutting; and their skill in this department has secured them an almost absolute monopoly of the timber supply that forms a considerable item in the trade-list of Surinam. They hew, trim, divide the planks, and do whatever is requisite for preparing the wood for shipment; then bring it down in the form of rafts, or boat-loads, to Paramaribo, where they exchange it most commonly for arms, powder, cooking utensils, and other household necessaries. Fortunately for themselves, strong drink is not a favourite article of barter among these unregistered and unbaptized disciples of Father Mathew and Sir Wilfrid Lawson. Indeed, in

this, as in many other respects, they present an advantageous contrast with the besotted Indians, whose diminution and almost disappearance from the land have been occasioned by intemperance, much more than by any of the numerous causes assigned on philo-indigenous platforms. With the negro, on the contrary, drunkenness is an exotic vice, and even where it has been implanted it does not flourish largely on his soil.

Their settlements far up among the rivers, and in regions said to be admirably adapted for cultivation, though as yet rarely favoured by European visitors, are grouped together after the fashion of small villages, resembling, I am told, in their principal features, the more accessible hamlet inhabited by emancipated Congo Africans, and called "Bel Air," near Berbice. Their dwellings are reported to be neat and comfortable enough after a fashion. About fifty of these villages are recorded by name; the average number of souls in each equals 300, or thereabouts. The census of the entire Bush negro population is almost conjectural; some bring their numbers down to 8,000, others raise them to 30,000. Of the two extremes, the latter is, I

believe, the nearer to the truth. Negroes, like other Eastern tribes, when required to give an account of themselves, are in the habit of reckoning up their men only, omitting the women altogether, and even the male children, if still at the breast. Fear of taxation is another common motive for under-statement, especially in the presence of official inquiry. Every village has its chief; his office is partly hereditary, partly elective, and he himself is distinguished from his subjects by a uniform, to be worn, however, only on rare and special occasions—a fortunate circumstance in so warm a climate. He also bears a staff of office. These lesser chiefs are again under the orders of the headsman of the tribe, who has a right to wear, when he chooses,—a rare occurrence, let us hope,—a general's uniform, and to bear in his hand a bâton of rule, surmounted by a gilded knob.

The principal divisions of Bush negro nationality are three in number—Aucan, Saramaccan, and Moesinga or Matrocane, names not of ancestral, but of local origin—a circumstance alluded to before. Each group has, however, its own subdivisions, known among the tribesmen

themselves, though hardly recognized by others. Thus, under the general title of Aucans are comprehended the Bonni, Paramaccan, and Poregoedoe negroes; the Luango belong to the Saramaccans; the Koffys, to the Moesingas. The three great tribes were, in fact, at their first beginnings, composed of men held together by no special link, except that of arms, taken up in a common cause. But the grouping, once made, perpetuated itself, and in the course of years it has produced in each instance a distinct type, till what was at first merely nominal and accidental has become permanent and real. Of the three clans, the Aucans rank the highest in general estimation, as being the most manly, intelligent, and industrious. That they have persistently declined to exchange their hereditary paganism for Christianity may pass for an exception to, or a confirmation of, their good qualities, according as the moralist is a disciple of the Rev. Mr. Badger or of the South Sea "Earl." Next in rank come the Saramaccans, amongst whom the Moravians have made not a few disciples; they are said to be of subtler disposition than the Aucans, but inferior to them in energy

and work. The Moesinga or Matrocane negroes occupy the lowest place. Taken, however, all in all, and allowing for the average amount of every-day defects, from which human nature, civilized or uncivilized, negro or non-negro, is rarely free, the Bush negroes hold a good position among men; better, certainly, by far, than that occupied by most of the aboriginal races of the South American continent, or, under Fenimore Cooper's leave, of the Northern either.

The three tribes just enumerated are to a certain degree reunited in the person of the Aucan chief, or "Gramman," Anglicè "Grand Man," to whom his Saramaccan and Moesinga colleagues allow a respectful precedence, and who is, in fact, acknowledged for the supreme head of all Surinam Bush negroes whatsoever, though in rank and in title rather than in power. The name of the present dignitary is Blymaffo; his pedigree remounts up to Pamo, the first Aucan chief, to whom it is duly traced through a line, not of ancestors, but of ancestresses; for negroes, like Shakspeare, consider the recognition of a mother as an easier matter than that of a father, and their pedigrees are accordingly reckoned, not on

the paternal, but the maternal line. The "Grand Man," when appointed, is formally recognized and confirmed by the Colonial Governor, to whom he is bound to present himself in person at the capital; but his authority is on ordinary occasions of a very limited kind; and his position, though it commands respect, can rarely enforce obedience. As much may be said of the other chiefs, each of his tribe, Saramaccan or Moesinga. Frans Bonham is at this moment the fortunate holder of the former title; Noah Kroon, who also rejoices in the more African name "Edraai," reigns by the latter. However, the real and absolute ruler among the Bush negroes is neither "Edraai" nor Bonham, nor even the great Blymaffo himself, but custom—a ruler powerful even among civilized races, absolute among the uncivilized.

Besides the "Grand Man" of their own "skin," in negro phrase, each tribe enjoys or endures the presence of a European official, whom the Colonial Government appoints under the title of "Post-houder," to reside among them, and whose duties chiefly consist in settling the frequent petty contentions that arise between the villagers themselves or their neighbours, regarding rights

of property or land. Most other cases, civil or criminal, fall under the jurisdiction of the tribe itself, and are decided by the unwritten code of usage, often sufficiently barbarous in the punishments that it awards; though the cruellest of all, that of burning alive, is said not to have been inflicted on any one for a generation past. It was the penalty especially reserved for sorcerers, and its discontinuance is attributed to the fact that the sorcerers have themselves, like the witches of Germany or Scotland, disappeared in our day. The truth is that the negroes themselves are less superstitious than of old, and, having discarded the imaginary crime from their belief, have also discarded the real one by which it was supplemented from their practice, just as the erasure of heresy from the catalogue of sins was immediately followed by the extinction of heretic-burning fagots. The beneficent triumphs of Rationalism, so ably chronicled by Lecky, are not confined to Europe and the European races; and the process of the suns brings wider thoughts to other men than the dwellers of the moorland by Locksley Hall.

Sorcerers, indeed, have, it is said,—though

from what cause I cannot readily determine,—been of all times rare articles among the negro colonists of Surinam. So too, though the large majority of the Bush negroes are yet pagans, as were their ancestors before them, when, cutlass in hand, they hewed out their way to freedom, Obeah, so notoriously wide-spread throughout Africa, and, if report say true, not unknown in some West Indian regions, is scarcely ever heard of among them. Yet, did it exist in any notable degree, it could hardly have failed, by the natural contagion of evil, to have established itself also among the creole blacks, their immediate neighbours and kinsmen, who are, however, in general, remarkably free from any imputation of the kind. Nor, again, are the Bush negroes, nowadays at least, addicted to the indiscriminate fetish-worship so often described by modern travellers as prevalent in Africa. Perhaps they may have been so formerly. At present the "ceiba," or "cotton tree," that noblest forest growth of the West Indies, enjoys almost alone, if report says true, the honours of negro worship, avowedly among the Maroons, furtively in the creole villages. I myself have often seen the traces of offerings—

fowls, yams, libations of drink, and the like—scattered round its stem. The spirit-dweller of its branches, thus propitiated, is said to be of an amiable disposition, unlike his demon-brother of the poison-tree, or Hiari, also venerated by some, but out of fear. Idols, in the strict sense of the term, they certainly have none; and their rejection of Roman Catholicism, a circumstance to which I have alluded before, is asserted to have had, at least, for its ostensible motive their dislike of the image-worship embodied in that system.

I would willingly indulge the charitable hope that the Moravian Bush negro converts may possibly have acquired some kind of idea of the virtue commonly designated, though in a restricted use of the word, by the name of morality. It is a virtue with which their pagan brethren are, in a general way, lamentably unacquainted. On principle, if the phrase may be allowed, they are polygamists; but the frequency of divorce renders, it is said, the dignity of a Bush negro's wife more often successional than simultaneous.

Indeed, their avowed laxity in this and analogous directions is sometimes asserted, but how truly I

cannot say, to be one of the chief hindrances to the increase of their numbers. Without going into the particulars of an obscure and unpleasant subject, thus much is clear, that a child which has for its parents "no father and not much of a mother," a normal condition of things in the Bush negro villages, must necessarily commence the infantile struggle for life under somewhat disadvantageous conditions. To this may be added a total absence of medical practitioners—a circumstance which however might, by a cynical mind, be rather reckoned among the counterbalancing advantages of forest existence.

In form and stature the Bush negroes of Surinam may rank among the best specimens of the Ethiopian type. The men are often six feet and more in height, with well-developed limbs and pleasing open countenance; and the women in every physical respect are, to say the least, worthy of their mates. Ill-modelled trunks and disproportioned limbs are, in fact, as rare among them as they are common among some lighter-complexioned races. Their colour is, in general, very dark, and gives no token of the gradual tendency to assume a fairer tint, that may be

observed among the descendants of negroes resident in more northerly latitudes. Their hair, too, is as curly as that of any Niam-niam, or Darfooree chief, or native of Senegal. I have heard it asserted more often than once, that, by long domicilement in the South American continent, the negro type has a tendency to mould itself into one approaching that of the Indian aboriginal. And something of the kind might be looked for, if anywhere, among the Bush negroes of the Surinam interior. But in the specimens that I saw, and they were many, I could not detect any such modification.

Their language is a curious and uncouth mixture. When it is analyzed, English appears to form its basis; next on the list of contributors comes Portuguese; then Dutch, besides a sprinkling of genuine African words thrown in at random, and the thick, soft African pronunciation over all. But of this jargon the negroes themselves make no use in writing, for which they employ Dutch, thereby showing themselves, in this respect, possessed of a truer feeling of the fitness of things than, I regret to say, their Moravian friends, who have taken superfluous

pains to translate books of instruction and devotion into the so-called "negro language," for the supposed benefit of their half-tamed scholars: an instance—one amongst many—of being too practical by half. What is most practical is not always what is most adapted to human nature, nor what answers its purpose best;—a truth I respectfully commend to the consideration of the doctors of the utilitarian school.

Fortunately for the Bush negroes themselves, their ultimate tendency in language, as in everything else, is to uniformity with the general creole colonial type—one not of the very highest, it may be, but much superior to the half or three-quarters savagery in which they at present live. Their little and, so to speak, accidental nationality is composed of elements too feeble and too loosely put together not to be ultimately re-absorbed into the more vigorous and better constructed mass to which, though under differing conditions, it once belonged. A strong centrifugal impulse dispersed them, a century ago, on the outer ring of the colonial orb; the gentler but abiding centripetal force of civilized organization is now drawing them back to the inner circle. Old mis-

trusts and antipathies are fast wearing themselves out in the daily contact with European life; and contact with Europeans never fails to produce, where negroes are concerned, first imitation, then assimilation. So long as slavery lasted, this was, of course, an impossibility for the Bush negroes; it is now a mere question of time, longer or shorter, according to the discretion and tact of the Colonial Government itself, and we may reasonably hope that the sagacity and moderation by which that same Government has thus far always distinguished itself will not fail it in this matter either.

Freedom from taxation and internal autonomy are the special privileges which the Bush negroes in their present condition enjoy: by the latter they set some store; by the former much. On the other hand, they are fully aware of the greater advantages and enjoyments of a more settled and civilized form of life than their own, and would sacrifice much to make it theirs. The result of the exchange would be, undoubtedly, a very beneficial one, not only to the Bush negroes themselves, but to the colony at large. Labour is the one great requisite of Surinam: rich in every gift

of unassisted nature, she is poor of that which alone could enable her to make profit of these gifts. In these Maroon subjects of hers close at hand, she possesses a copious and, as yet, an unemployed reserve force of labour, superior in most respects to the coolie or Chinese article, and, which is a main point, cheaper by far. The complete incorporation into colonial life and work of the negro element, now comparatively isolated and wasted in the bush, would add about a third to the progressiveness and energy of Dutch Surinam.

CHAPTER VI.

MUNNICKENDAM.

> Not a word, a word: we stand upon our manners.
> Come, strike up. (*Music: here a dance.*)
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Byron expanded Cowper's well-known "England, with all her faults," and the rest, into the graceful stanzas of that most graceful of all his poems, 'Beppo,' winding up with his comprehensive "I like all and everything," he gave expression to the genuine conservatism that, whatever the formula and mode of utterance, constitutes the under-depth and assigns the key-note of every great mind. This conservatism is summed up in two words—the one "submission," the other "content"; the former has more in it of human philosophy, the latter of divine.

But in some places, and amid some conditions of life, it is almost impossible to feel contentment, because the restlessness that characterizes them is based, like the phases of being themselves, on

dissatisfaction, and can communicate no other feeling by contact to the mind. A walk in the streets of Chicago or Galata, a day of a New York "gold market" or of a Parisian Commune, the interior of a Stock Exchange, a Home Rule meeting, a Kenealy, a Cleon, these and their kin, all of them things without contentment in themselves, the results of disquiet, the embodiments of unrest, have only power to disturb and vex while they are present, and long after, in their remembrance, mar, like inharmonious notes, the concert of the past. Nor, again, is the feeling of contentment compatible with mere stagnation and listless quiet. Little enough is to be met with of restlessness in the streets of a central Anatolian city, says Sivas, or in the sailorless port of Sidon, or among the sand-strewn ruins of Egyptian Thebes; but of such like scenes the mental result is commonly depression, deepening at times into melancholy gloom. Too little life is almost—I will not say quite—as bad as too much: screaming discord is intolerable; but dead silence is not either what we want. It is where life abounds, but life regulated by moderation and law,—where movement is continuous, not spasmodic and unequal,—

where progress has way, but along the steady lines of order, not down the ringing, jarring grooves of change,—where the present is enough for the day, and the morrow is promised "as to-day, and much more abundant," for the very reason that it is the continuation of to-day,—that contentment exists, and can be found by those who seek it, and when found enjoyed.

So "huzza," not "for Otaheite," but for Munnickendam, of which I have already said that it had been pronounced by the competent authority of his Excellency the Colonial Governor the most conservative "institution" in conservative Surinam. Nor need my Liberal readers, if I am honoured by such, start aside, in horror of a name, from the easy companionship of my tale. By "conservative" I mean—I mean—well, I do not mean anything connected with either side of the House: my use of the word is purely philosophical, not political; and if it were political, why they who, with Pope, "know like Whig minister to Tory," may forgive: where no allusion is intended, no offence should be taken.

Bush negroes are fine fellows of their kind, I have seldom seen finer; Indians are, within cer-

tain limits, picturesque; Chinese, if not ornamental, are decidedly useful; and coolies, though not unfrequently neither, are sometimes both. But, after all said, to be innocuous is the Indian's highest praise; and any notable increase in West Indian lands of "Celestials" is—for reasons not all celestial, but much the reverse—not a thing to be desired; while coolies are expensive to import, and as settlers offer but a dubious future at best. Negroes, with all their defects, are now, as of old times, West Indian labour's best hope; and since "salt-water" blacks and purchased gangs are no longer to be had, creole negroes must to the fore. In this view, if in no other, they are worth study, and where can we study them better than at Munnickendam?

Digression is a fault; I know it; but it is a pet fault of mine, and, like other things under the sun, has its time: let me indulge it here a little longer. Besides, what I am writing is not a guide-book, nor a narrative, nor an essay, in any one of which I grant that digression would be unpardonable; it is, if you will allow the word, and be content to take it in a purely metaphorical sense, a sketch-book; and the arrange-

ment of sketches is a mere matter of convenience, not of principle. And here I would like, though I am not going to do it, to insert a sketch of the little village—not so little neither—near Bel Air, on the way to Berbice, where live the liberated Congoites, or Congoese, or Congonians, rescued by our cruisers from the slave-ships to which they had already been consigned, and brought hither at a recent date. It is a village absolutely picturesque in its details, and, what is perhaps more to the purpose, it offers to view, in itself and in its garden surroundings, abundant evidence of industry, skill, and the manly independence that lives by its own labour, and is content to live so. Another sketch, too, I would willingly give, that of the new quarter of Paramaribo—the one, I mean, situated on the westernmost outskirts of the town, and called "the Plain of the 13th May." That date last year was the jubilee of the Dutch King's reign, and to celebrate the occasion the Governor had offered prizes to the negro workmen who would best excel in laying out the roads and digging the trenches of the proposed suburb. It was opened on the day itself, with great pomp and ceremony, and distribution

of rewards, by his Excellency in person, and was at once made over to its present inhabitants, a class resembling in every respect the tenants of Bel Air. A pretty patchwork of cottages and gardens, well-doing diligent freemen to maintain them in order and comfort—a sight to justify the pride that its originator takes in it—a successful experiment, on a small scale indeed, but arousing a wish for more.

And this is exactly what not I only, but every landowner, every proprietor, every planter in the colony would wish to see, namely, a greater abundance of villages and settlements like those just described, only to a wider purpose, and on a larger scale. Certainly I have no desire to disparage the good qualities of the slave-descended black creoles, or to join in the vague outcries, contradicted everywhere by facts, that ignorance, and still more prejudice, have raised against them. But this much must be allowed, that, from the very circumstance of being slave-descended, they bear, and long will bear, traces of the deteriorating process to which they have been subjected in the persons of their ancestors—a deterioration not moral merely, but mental and even physical.

In fact, their rapid, though as yet only partial, recovery from this very degradation is one proof, among many, of the wonderful elasticity of the negro character. Hesiod, if I remember rightly, or, if not he, some other old coeval Greek, has said, "When Jupiter makes a man a slave, he takes away half his brains from him"; and a truer thing was never said or sung. Cowardice, duplicity, dislike of labour, a habit of theft, sexual immorality, irreflectiveness, apathy, these are the seven daughters of slavery; and they but too often live persistently on, though their ill mother be dead for generations past. Hence the negro who has never been a slave, or who at any rate has never experienced that most crushing form of slavery, the organized task-mastership of a foreign and superior race, has a decided vantage-ground, not over his enslaved fellow-countrymen, but over the descendants of such, on whom his father's sins, and still more the sins of his father's masters, are, by hereditary law, visited even to the third and the fourth generation.

Now, assuming that of all races the negro is by physical constitution the best adapted to the

South American tropics, and that negro labour is, of all others, not the cheapest merely, but also the most efficient in this soil, both of which are propositions that few experienced planters or overseers will dispute, why not organize emigration from Africa to the West Indies after a regular and durable fashion? and as the East African races are undoubtedly superior alike in mind and body to the Western, why not establish an emigration-agency on the east coast?—why not, to fix a locality, at Zanzibar? Have we not lately closed in principle, and shall soon, by means of our cruisers, have closed in fact and deed, the East African slave-trade, doing thereby a deed worthy of England, worthy of ourselves? True; and we look at our work, and justly pronounce it to be "very good." But what if some of the immediate results of our work, in order to be rightly called "very good," also require careful management, and the dexterity that not only destroys what is bad, but replaces it by something better? Have we not, while forbidding the further outpourings of the poison-stream that has for ages flowed in tears and blood from the ports of the East African coast, driven back, in

a manner, the bitter waters to eddy on themselves, and, while stopping a recognized outlet of the unemployed and superabundant population—a wasteful and a wrongful one it is true, yet an outlet—created a novel surplus in the inland African labour-market, where violence and captivity are the only laws of exchange and supply? Have we not also, while depriving Zanzibar of its hateful but long-established trade—the trade that alone gave it importance and wealth—curtailed the revenues, and with the revenues the very kingship, of one whose patrons we had before consented to be, and whom we had ourselves taught to shelter his authority, nay his very existence, under our flag? We may have been right—we have been right—in doing all this; but we are not the less liable for the consequences, nor less in duty bound to obviate the injury we may have indirectly caused, than is the surgeon to tie up the wounds that his needful knife has inflicted on the patient whose cure he has taken in hand. To do evil that good may come, is not well; but to do good so that evil, however indirect, comes of it, is not commendable either.

Now, so it is that for both the evils I have indicated—and neither of them is imaginary—a remedy is within easy reach; a remedy not only efficacious with regard to its immediate object, but beneficial in its ulterior results. "Easy reach," did I say? Yes, easy enough, if only well-meaning ignorance will stand aside, and have the grace to permit what it cannot comprehend. But this is a piece of good fortune to be wished for rather than hoped; and already I seem to hear a horrified outcry of "negro-kidnapping," "disguised slavery," "slave-trade re-established," and the rest, rising from every platform, and re-echoed from every bench of the Anti-Slavery Association and its kindred supporters. What? supply the deficit of West Indian labour by negro importation from the east coast? Give the Seyyid, Sultan, or Sultanlet of Zanzibar, perhaps him of Muscat too, a nominal patronage and a real percentage of an emigration-agency? Load ships with African semi-slaves?—bear them, "far from home and all its pleasures," to the coasts of Surinam, of Demerara, of St. Vincent, &c.? What is all this but to revive the monster we have ourselves

so lately slain; to stultify our own wisdom, annul our own decree?

Nothing of the kind, my respected friend: say, rather, it is to hinder the brood that the monster has left from coming into life, to confirm the decree of self-maintaining freedom, to complete what else, if left imperfect, might speedily bring in question the wisdom of our former deeds. It is to transfer, not by compulsion, but by their own free consent, those who, if they remain at home, cannot, by the nature of things, be other than slaves or slave-makers, to the conditions of honourable labour, self-support, and security; to bring them into the full possession of whatever benefits organized society and equitable law can confer; to substitute, so far as their own former masters are concerned, a fair and beneficial for an unjust and cruel gain; to bestow on the lands of their destination advantages that no other means, no other colonists, can equally secure.

It is certain that, if conducted under regulations and safeguards similar to those provided for the coolie emigrants of Bengal and Madras, and with the same or analogous provisions in matters of engagement, voyage, and occupation,

the unnecessary and burdensome obligation of a return passage being alone omitted, East African emigration would be much less costly, and at the same time much more profitable to the colonies, than Indian or Chinese. The negro is of himself a better agricultural labourer than the Hindoo; he is stronger, healthier, more readily domiciled, more easily ruled, and, an important point, more likely to devote himself to field and country work after the expiration of his indentures. He is also much less disposed than either coolie or Chinaman to swell the town population and the criminal list. I have said that, in his case, the option of a return passage might be safely omitted; for no negro, the solitary hero of Mrs. Hemans's ballad excepted, has any great longing to revisit his own natal land: his country is not where he was born, but where he is well off; no local worship, no sacred rivers, no ties of caste, draw him back to his first home. In him, therefore, is the best, if not the only, hope of supplementing the great, the urgent want of the New World—an indigenous population; for the Guiana Indian must, unfortunately, reckon for nothing, either in number or in available worth; and

thus the benefit derived from him as an indentured labourer would be followed by the still more lasting benefit of an acclimatized and a useful colonist. And, to return to our friends of the Anti-Slavery Association, the evidence collected on all hands, from Anthony Trollope, after his kind, up to the Demerara Inquiry Committee in 1868, after theirs, may surely have convinced the members of that respectable body, that coolie emigration and coolie labour in the West Indies are further removed from hardship, injustice, and slavery than are too often the means by which our own agricultural labour-market is supplied, or the conditions by which it is governed. Let them, then, rest assured that the same system would have no worse result for the East African negro also.

Enough of this. The subject is one that cannot fail to be taken up sooner or later, not in speculative view, but in experimental practice; till then let it rest. Perhaps the time is not come yet; the very extent of the prospect suggests its distance. But a little sooner, a little later, not the less surely it will be reached. An African colony, the Arab, has already half peopled the East; an African law, matured in Egypt, pro-

mulgated on the shores of the Red Sea, remodelled and repromulgated in the deserts of the same coast, rules over half Asia this day. Already the Libyan Sibyl prepares to turn the next page of her book; its writing is the West. A new creation wanted here; and creation of this sort is a work not for the European, or his half-cousin, the Hindoo,—it belongs to the elder races. The Aryan of our day, the Indo-German, can elaborate, can perfect, he cannot originate; art-trained, art-exhausted, the productive energy of nature is his no longer. Unmodified by science, unpruned by art, the rough offshoots of the ever-teeming African stem are vital with the rude vitality of nature; like her, they are prolific too.

Is it a dream? Possibly so—a nature-sent dream, as under the hot sun we float in breezeless calm down the glassy black waters, between high walls of reed and forest, bright flowers, broad leaf, and overtopping palm, up to the intense heaven all aglow; till here before us, on the left river-bank, rise the bower-like avenues of Munnickendam. Here let us land, and from the study of the long-settled creole negroes of this secluded estate let us draw, if so disposed,

some augury as to what their brethren of the East African coast, the colonists of our visionary or visioned future, are likely to be in and for South-American Surinam.

This, at any rate, is no dream: 217 acres; 260 labourers, all, without exception, negro-creole; average yearly produce, 750 hogsheads of sugar, besides molasses and rum! so much for Munnickendam statistics. Machinery of the older and simple sort; factory buildings corresponding; planter's dwelling-house large, old, and three-storied, Dutch in style, with high roof, and fantastic wolves topping the gables by way of weathercocks; a wide, double flight of steps in front, with a paved space, surrounded by an open parapet, before the hall-door: the garden very Dutch in its walks, flower-beds, and statues; long avenues, some of palmiste, some of areka palm, some of almond-trees, with sago palms intermixed, around a green, turfy soil, and a crescent background of cane-fields and forest. So much, and enough, I think, for general description. Negroes very sturdy, very black, very plainly dressed, or half dressed in white and blue; the women rejoicing in variegated turbans; children

à la Cupid and Psyche as to costume, though not perhaps in feature or shape; three or four white men, overseers, straw-hatted of course; lastly, for visitors, the Governor and his party (myself included);—such are the principal accessories of the picture. Time, from five or so in the afternoon to midnight, or thereabouts: we did not very accurately consult our watches.

Night had fallen; but no,—this is a phrase well enough adapted, it may be, to the night of the North—the heavy, murky veil slowly let down, fold after fold, over the pale light that has done duty for day. Here it is not so. Transparent in its starry clearness, its stainless atmosphere, night rises as day had risen before,—a goddess succeeding a goddess; not to blot out the fair world, but to enchase it in a black-diamond circle in place of a white—to change enchantment for enchantment, the magic of shadow for the magic of light. But I am anticipating. A good hour before sunset the covered barge of the estate had set us ashore on the wharf, where, with flowers in their hands, songs on their lips, smiles on every face, and welcome in every gesture, the boys and girls of the place received us from the "stelling."

Between this double human range, that, like an inner and more variegated avenue, lined the over-arching trees from the water's edge up to the dwelling-house, we passed along, while the merry tumult of the assembled crowd and the repeated discharge of the small cannon planted at the landing-place and in the garden mingled together to announce and greet our arrival. The warm though almost level sunbeams lit up the red-brick lines of the central mansion, the tall, tower-like factory chimneys, the statues in the garden, the pretty bush-embosomed cottages of the estate, and tipped with yellow gold the plumy cane-fields beyond. This lasted some time, till the sun set, and for a little while all was orderly and still in the quiet evening light.

But soon night had risen, and with her had risen the white moon, near her full; and now the merry-makers, who had dispersed to their evening meal, re-assembled on the gravel walks and clean-kept open spaces of the garden in front of the dwelling-house, to enjoy the sport of the hour. For in the West Indies as in Africa, in Surinam no less than at Damascus, the night is the negroes' own time; and no member of Parliament in the

later months of the session, no fashionable beauty in her fourth London season, can more persistently invert the solar allotment of the hours than does the negro votary of pleasure; and wherever and however pleasure be attainable, the negro is its votary.

Group by group, distinctly seen in the pale moonlight as if by day, only with an indistincter background, our creole friends flocked on. The preparations for the dance were soon made. Drums, fifes, a shrill violin, and a musical instrument, some say of Indian, some of negro invention, consisting of a notched gourd, that when scraped by a small stick gives out a sound not unlike the chirping of a monster cricket, and accentuates time and measure after the fashion of triangles, were brought from heaven knows what repositories; and with them the tuneful orchestra was complete. The dancers ranged themselves, more than a hundred men and women, mostly young, all dressed in their choicest, for the night's sport. The men, with few exceptions, were attired in white trousers, and shirts of various colours, with a predominance of red; some dandies had wrapped gay sashes round their waists, and

most had provided themselves with sprigs of flowers, jauntily stuck in their hatbands. The women's dresses consisted chiefly of loose white sacques, without the cumbrous under-layer of petticoats, or the other "troublesome disguises" that Europe conceals her beauties withal; and they reserved their assortment of bright but rarely inharmonious colours for their fantastic turbans, some of which were arranged so as to give the effect of one or two moderate-sized horns projecting from the wearer's head, while other girls, with better taste, left an embroidered end hanging down on one side, Eastern fashion. Many of the women were handsome, shapely figures, full-limbed, and full-bosomed; but--must I say it?—the particular charm of delicate feet and hands was universally wanting; nor, indeed, could it have been fairly looked for among a throng of field-labourers, female or male. As to faces, the peculiarities of the negro countenance are well known in caricature; but a truer pattern may be seen, by those who wish to study it, any day among the statues of the Egyptian rooms in the British Museum: the large gentle eye, the full but not over-protruding lips, the rounded contour,

and the good-natured, easy, sensuous expression. This is the genuine African model—one not often, I am aware, to be met with in European or American thoroughfares, where the plastic African too readily acquires the careful look and even the irregularity of the features that surround him, but which is common enough in the villages and fields where he dwells after his own fashion, among his people; most common of all in the tranquil seclusion and congenial climate of a Surinam plantation. There you may find, also, a type neither Asiatic nor European, but distinctly African; with much of independence and vigour in the male physiognomy, and something that approaches, if it does not quite reach, beauty in the female. Rameses and his Queen were cast in no other mould.*

The Governor and ourselves were seated, with becoming dignity, on the wide open balcony atop of the steps leading up to the hall-door, thus commanding a full view of the garden and the people

* I am glad that so keen and so discriminating an observer as the late Mr. Winwood Reade concurs with this very opinion; in support of which he cites the authority of Livingstone himself. *Vide* 'African Sketch Book,' vol. i. page 108.

assembled. Immediately in front of us was a large flower-bed, or rather a labyrinth of flower-beds, among which stood, like white goblins in the moonlight, the quaint statues before mentioned, methodically arranged after the most approved Dutch style, and flanked by two pieces of mimic artillery. Such was the centre-piece, and on either side there opened out a wide, clear space, clean swept, and strewn with "caddy," the usual white mixture of broken shell, coral, and sand, and in each of these spaces to right and left a band of musicians, or rather noise-makers, squatted negro-wise on the ground. Round these centres of attraction the crowd soon gathered in a double group, men and women, all noisy, animated, and ready for the dance. The moon, almost at the full, glittered bright overhead; and her uncertain light, while giving full effect to the half-barbaric picturesqueness of attire and form in the shifting eddy of white-clad figures, served also to veil from too exact view the defects (and they were many) in the clothes, ornaments, and appearance of the performers. Around the garden, and behind it, dark masses of palm, almond-tree, acacia, "saman," and kindred growths rose

against the sky, loftier and denser in seeming than by day; the whole formed an oval picture of brightness and life, amid a dark and silent framework of shadow—a scene part gay, part impressive, and very tropical above all.

The music, or what did duty for such, began. At first it was of a European character, or, rather, travestied from European—disintegrated quadrilles and waltzes to no particular time. The negroes around, shy as they always are when in the presence of those whose criticisms they fear—for no race is more keenly sensitive in regard to ridicule than the African, except it be perhaps the semi-African Arab—did not at once venture to put forth all their prowess, and the performance opened with a few sporadic couples, women dancing with women, men pousseting to men, and either seeming half ashamed of their own audacity. But as the music continued and grew livelier, passing more and more from the imitation European to the unfeigned African style of an unbroken monotonous drone, with one ever-recurring cadence—a mere continuity of clanging sound—the dancers grew more animated; new couples, in which the proper interchange of sex was observed

by the partners, formed themselves; till at last the larger group, that on our left, took up the genuine Ethiopian dance, well known in Oman, and witnessed by me there and elsewhere in the pleasant days, now long since gathered to the ineffectual past, when the East and I were one. A dance of life, where men ranged on one side, and women on the other, advance, retreat, cross, join hands, break into whirling knots of twos and fours, separate, re-form in line, to blend again into a seeming maze of orderly confusion—a whirl of very madness, yet with method in it; the intoxication of movement and sound, poured out in time and measure. He who has witnessed it, if there yet flow within his veins one drop of that primal savage blood, without which mankind, and womanhood too, are not much better than mere titular names, cannot but yield himself up to the influence of the hour, cannot but drink of the bowl, join in the revel: and if any looker-on retains coolness enough to sneer or blame—why, let each follow his bent; but I, for one, had rather be on the side of David than of Michal; and the former had, in the end, I think, the best of the jest, and of the earnest too.

But it is a different thing with those who, amid the decorous surroundings of a European drawing-room, read, paper-cutter in hand, of what they have never experienced; and many a fair woman, and even a brave man, may be a very Michal in spirit to the narrative, who might have been of a different mind if some power had taken them up and set them down again in the flesh amid the moonlight gardens by the Cottica river and Munnickendam. And, therefore, of what was said or done by his Excellency the Governor, or by his ex-Oriental or ex-Egyptian associates, and the other non-Ethiopian beholders of the dance, I will hold my peace; and if all or any of them cast aside the part of critical spectator for that of impassioned partner, if any official of high Batavian rank and dignity forgot, in the unveiled arms—I say no more—of his light-robed, lithe-limbed, though dark-skinned partner, the tight-buttoned, gold-laced uniform in the wardrobe at home,—if any guest who had, once on a time, drunk deep—too deeply, perhaps—of the waters of the Egyptian Nile re-enacted, or at least revived, the memories of its shores on the banks of the South-American river,—the folly or

the wisdom was theirs, and theirs it may remain in story, as in fact, for me.

A Bacchanalian orgie, yet one in which Bacchus himself had no share: Venus alone presided, and sufficed for all beside; or if Bacchus seemed present to her aid, it was not he, but Cupid in disguise. Half an hour—an hour—the revelry continued, while the tumult grew every minute louder, and the dance more vehement; till, with an impulse simultaneous in its suddenness, the double chorus broke up, and, blending in one confused mass, surrounded his Excellency the Governor, while, amid shouts, laughter, and huzzas, half-a-dozen sturdy blacks caught him up in their arms and bore him aloft in triumphal procession three times round the garden, while others gesticulated and pressed alongside; others danced before, all cheered, and we ourselves, aroused from our Africano-Oriental dream by the local significance of the act, hardly knew whether to laugh at or to yield to the enthusiasm of the moment. That the Governor, though maintaining, as far possible, an appearance of passive dignity and deprecatory acquiescence, heartily enjoyed the spontaneous tribute of affection and

loyalty thus tumultuously expressed, I have no doubt; and so would you have enjoyed it, my dear reader, had it been offered you. Besides, he told me as much when, after a tremendous outburst of huzzas, his living throne gently dissolved asunder, and allowed him footing on the ground again.

And what if in the next-enacted pantomime there was less of national or personal loyalty in its impulse, less of subject deference in its manner? To be enthroned, entwined in the rounded arms, and borne aloft on the shapely shoulders of six buxom, laughing damsels, and so carried in a thrice-repeated circle of unsolicited and unexpected triumph, while a whole troup of African sister-beauty danced and cheered around, was a dignity that left him on whom it was conferred nothing to envy in the honours bestowed on the august representative of Dutch royalty himself. But on whom that happiness was lavished, why it was so lavished, how received, how requited—though favours like these are, I allow, beyond all equipoise of requital—I have once more nothing to say; whoever would know, let him take sail or oar up stream to Munnickendam, and inquire there.

Then after a half-hour's pause, congratulations exchanged, healths drunk, and cordial merriment, in which all shared alike, performers, spectators, Europeans, negroes, and the rest, once more to the dance, but now in calmer measure and to a gentler tune. By this the moon, small and dazzling, rode high in the purple heavens, giving warning of midnight near; when escorted down to the water's edge by those whose sports we had witnessed, and perhaps in part shared, we reluctantly threaded the dark shades of the avenue riverwards, and re-embarked on our little steamer that had yet to bear us a mile further along the current before we reached the night's lodging and rest prepared for us by the District Magistrate, in his large and comfortable residence at Ephrata, —so the place was called.

"I wished you to see something of our black creoles as they are among themselves," said the Governor, as next morning we pursued our downward way to the river junction at the Sommelsdyk Fort, and thence turned off southward to explore the upper branch of the Commeweyne, which we had on our way up passed by unvisited. Deep black, and much more rapid than the Cottica, its

current flowed between noble forest-scenes, alternating with cultivated spaces on either bank; but few large sugar estates came in view: plantains, cocoa-nuts, cassava, with cocoa bushes intermixed, seemed the more favourite growths. The yearly amount of sugar manufactured in this district does not exceed 1,000 hogsheads; the mills are all of the simplest kind, and moved by water-power. In general character, the scenery and waterside objects of the Upper Commeweyne nearly resemble those of the Upper Cottica, and have been sufficiently described before; a gradual diminution of underwood, an increase of height and girth in the forest trees, and a greater variety in them and in the flowering creepers that interlace their boughs, being for many miles up country almost the only distinct indications of approach to the higher lands beyond; though the practised eye of a naturalist might doubtless detect many significant varieties in the insects or plants of the region. These things have their interest, their value too; and who has eyes to see them—a Wallace, a Bates, a Darwin,—let him see: my narrower range of vision, limited alike by ignorance and habit, reaches little further than to

the ways and conditions of the human inhabitants, their works and pleasures, progress or decay. No great matters in themselves, it may be; but every man is a link in the chain of conscious intelligence, that binds in one the universe of time and space; and the least result, however capricious seeming, of thought and will has a wider and more durable meaning than the vastest and most regular development of blind unknowing force. Thought underlies that too, but hidden in depths we cannot reach; in man alone it rises to the surface, and to study it there best befits surface-minds, and of these mine is one.

And now as we slowly stem the liquid glass, black as jet, yet pure as crystal, of the strong-flowing Commeweyne, we remark, the Governor and I, the evident and recent increase in the number of small plantations, to the detriment, though a temporary one only, if events run their regular course, of the larger properties. This is a necessary phase of free labour, and through it the Surinam colony, like every other of like kind, must pass before it can reach the firm ground of self-sustaining prosperity. Till then nothing is solid, nothing sure. Giant sugar estates, propped

up or absolutely maintained by extraneous capital, and excluding, or dwarfing into comparative nullity, the varied parcel-cultivation of local ownership and resources, are at best magnificent gambling speculations; most so when the price of their produce is not stored up, but at once applied to widening the enclosures, or purchasing some costly refinements of improved machinery. Establishments like these are every instant at the mercy of a sudden fluctuation of the market, of a new invention, of a tariff; in a word, they lie exposed to every accident of Fortune's caprice; and, capricious as she is throughout her whole domain, nowhere is the goddess more so than in the commercial province. Hence it follows that they who repine at the lengthening catalogue of five-acre and ten-acre lots, railing at their cultivators as idle pumpkin-eating squatters, and raising a desponding moan, occasionally an indignant howl, over the consequent withdrawal of labour from the five-hundred or thousand acre estates, are not more reasonable in their complaints than he who should fall foul of the workmen employed in digging and laying the foundations of the house, and declare them to be lazy loons, and

their labour valueless, because they do not at once bestow it on raising the second story and furnishing the drawing-room. Patience awhile: these things will come in course; but, if the foundation be not first strongly laid, how about the security of the upper stories? — if there be no larder and cellar, what will avail the handsome but sterile furniture of the drawing-room?

Self-interest reasonably pursued is the best interest, not of self only, but of all others besides; and while we admit that the negro small proprietor may very possibly have no one's benefit immediately in view but his own, we must not conclude that he is, by that same reason, less efficaciously assuring the benefit of others. He is in very fact assuring it much more efficaciously and lastingly than if he had hired himself out as day-labourer at the lowest imaginable wages on the biggest sugar estate of the colony.

In Dutch Guiana, taking Paramaribo, the capital, for its centre, we may regard the rest of the territory as made up, after a rough fashion, of three concentric circles. The circumference of the innermost one would, for what concerns the east and the districts we have now been visiting,

pass through the confluence-point of the Commeweyne and Cottica rivers at Sommelsdyk Fort; the second would intersect through the estate of "La Paix," on the Upper Cottica, and the corresponding estate of "Abendsrust," on the Upper Commeweyne; the external limits of the third would be correlative with those of the colonial frontier itself. Within the first circle, large estates, mostly owned by Europeans, or at any rate European creoles, predominate. Throughout the second or intermediate circle, smaller properties, mostly in the hands of coloured or black creoles, are more common. In the outermost space are the villages and provision-grounds, few and far between, of the Bush negroes, between whom and the European landholders the dark creoles thus form a sort of link, social as well as territorial, or, to vary the phrase, a connecting medium, destined, if our conjectures be true, to become ultimately an absorbing one, not only of the more savage, but of the more civilized element also.

But we are forgetting his Excellency. "In the labourers of Munnickendam," he continued, "you have a fair sample of our black creoles.

Throughout the colony they are everywhere essentially the same,—fond enough, as you have seen, of pleasure and amusement when they can get them, but when at work steady, sober, willing, and, which is a fortunate thing for all parties, without a trace of social or political restlessness in any direction. Their only fault is that there is not enough of them; and, what is worse, their numbers do not increase."

Why not? Unhealthy climate, some will say; while others, in concert with a late author, talk in bated breath of gross and ruinous vices, rendering it a question whether negroes should exist on the earth at all for a few generations longer; and others again find in infanticide a third and convenient solution of the question. Let us look a little closer.

And, first, for the climate. Like British Guiana, its Dutch namesake is a low-lying plain, swampy in some places, forest-grown in others, and far within the tropics—none of them at first sight favourable conditions to salubrity of atmosphere. But where fresh sea-winds sweep over the earth day and night, with scarcely interrupted steadiness from year's end to year's end,

an open plain is healthier by far than the sheltered valleys and picturesque nooks of a mountainous district; and, among tidal streams on a tidal coast, the marsh-fevers, that render the moist shores of the stagnant Black Sea pool scarcely less pestilential than those of Lagos itself, find little place. Tropical heat, though here it is never excessive, does not, certainly, in the long run suit European residents; and at Surinam, where 79° Fahr. is the yearly average, the highest ever recorded being 96° Fahr., and the lowest 70°, the climate must be admitted to be a warm one. On the other hand, those who have experience of Africa, the negroes' birthplace, or have seen how much the black suffers in the comparatively moderate chill of winter-season in the northern West Indian Islands, will hardly consider the heat of Dutch Guiana to be too great for the species that forms a good four-fifths of its population.

As to the second-named cause, or collection of causes rather, it is to be regretted that the author of 'At Last' should, from ignorance doubtless, or prejudice, have ever lent such vague and baseless calumnies the sanction of his

respected name. Without being either a "clergyman" or even, though an official, a "police magistrate," I have knowledge enough of negro character and ways to warrant me in asserting, and my readers in believing the assertion, that what is technically called vice is among Africans nearer allied to philoprogenitiveness than among, it may well be, most other races. And without attempting to excuse, much less—as some seem inclined to do—to vindicate, the extreme laxity of their theory and practice in regard of connubial fidelity or maiden virtue, one must allow that their faults in these respects tend much more directly to the increase of the population than to its diminution. And to have done once for all with a topic, the mention of which, though unavoidable, is unpleasing, it may here be added, that excess in alcoholic drink—a fault decidedly opposed, as all who have studied the subject know, to the "increase and multiply" of healthy nature—is rare among the black creoles of the Surinam capital, and rarer still, indeed almost unknown, among those of the country. So much for the second cause assigned.

A mere inspection of the yearly birth-rate, averaging thirty per 1,000, disposes of the third allegation. Murdered children are not entered on parochial registers, nor do the numbers given leave much margin for kindred crimes at an earlier stage.

And yet the annual death-rate exceeds that of births by at least one per cent., as is stated, and this at the best of times. Some years show two per cent., or even higher. How is this? And if neither climate, nor vice, nor crime be the cause, where is it then to be sought?

But here let some indulgence be asked and given. We are on board a pleasure boat; and our attention is being called away every moment, now to gaze on a "tall tree by the side of the river, one half of which was in flames," or rather flowers red as flames, and not less bright, "from the root to the top, and the other half green and in full leaf," that might have reminded Geraint and Enid of their Celtic wonderland; now to acknowledge the shouted welcome of bright figures crowding to some little landing-place on the way; now by an opening vista of glittering plantain groves, now by a tray full of glasses

with appropriate contents, circulating at frequent intervals round the deck. Amid interruptions like these, it must be admitted that profound investigations, statistical columns, and a marshalled array of figures and facts would be hardly less out of place than a sermon at a masked ball. But it is possible to say truth, and even serious truth, without sermonizing—*ridentem dicere vera*, and the rest; we will try.

All have heard, and all who have not merely heard but seen will attest, the fondness of negroes for children; nor their own children only, but any, white, brown, or black,—for children generically taken, in a word. Demonstrative as is their affection, it is none the less genuine; the feeling is instinctive, and the instinct itself is hardly ever absent from among them. I do not put it forward as a matter of praise; I mention it as a fact. If Sir S. Baker's sweeping assertion regarding I forget how many negro tribes, that they have among them no acknowledged form of worship of the Unknown, were exact, which it is not, the existence, the universality, indeed, of baby-worship, at any rate, must be allowed, I think, even by that distinguished

miso-African. Nor is this species of worship limited to the mothers of the babies, or to the womankind at large; it is practised in the same degree by the men, who are not a whit behind the women in their love and care of children, especially the youngest.

But, unfortunately, just as men of all tribes and ages invariably make their gods after their own image and likeness, so also they worship them after their own fashion, and within the limits of their own habits and ways. Now negroes, and—I beg the ladies' pardon, but truth is truth, and must be told—negresses still more, are essentially irreflective; keen-visioned enough for the immediate present, consequences are as nothing in their sight. The "In-sha-Allah," "Allah-Kereem," "Ala-bab-Illah," and so forth, of the Arab, but half express the "happy-go-lucky" habit of mind of his African cousin. And so it comes about that, in the very fervour and ecstasy of her baby-worship, the negress-mother persists in worshipping her little divinity irreflectively, recklessly, and, by a natural consequence, often injuriously, sometimes destructively, to the baby-god itself.

Heated from field-work, excited, overdone, she returns in the late afternoon to her cottage; and the first thing she does when arrived there is to catch up her little brown sprawler from the floor, and put it to her breast. The result needs no guessing. Half an hour later she is howling as only a negress can howl over her offspring, convulsed or dead. Or, perhaps, just as she was about to give, in more orderly fashion, the nourishment that the infant has been faintly wailing after for some time past, a friend comes in to invite her to a dance or merry-making close by. Off she goes, having made Heaven knows what arrangements for the small creature's wants, or it may well be, in her eagerness for amusement, no arrangement at all; purposes to come back in an hour, stays away until midnight, and, on her return home, finds another midnight, the midnight that knows no sunrise, closed over her child. And thus, and more. On over-feeding, injudicious feeding, ailments misunderstood, quack-doctoring, always preferred by the ignorant to all other,—on half-superstitious usages not less injurious than silly,—on violent outbursts of passion—the passions of a negress, and of a negro, too, are at tropical

heat, their rage absolute frenzy,—I need not dwell; suppose what you will, you will be short of the mark. But cease to wonder if, among the most kindly hearted, child-loving, and, I may add, child-producing race in the world, births, however numerous, are less in computation than deaths; if one-third at least by statistical registration, one full half, if to its records be added the unregistered fact, of the negro children in Dutch Guiana die even before they are weaned. The causes, ninety-nine out of a hundred, are those which I have stated or alluded to, and no other.

What is then to be done? An evil, or, rather, an agglomeration of evils like these, that threaten to cut down the main-stem of the future, to dry up the very roots, to destroy the existence of the colony, must be put an end to, all will agree; but how?

"Educate the mothers." Excellent! try it. Education, even among races already at a much higher level of culture than the Guiana negro, is not a thing of a day; no, nor of a generation either. Look at home, and say how much has the omnipotence of an Act of Parliament done to

perfect it, even among "the heirs of all the ages," among ourselves.

Educate: yes, by all means; but if this, my intelligent European friend, be your sole remedy, you will find its application made easy enough, but by a process on which you have not calculated—the process of extinction. For long before the slow-working panacea has so much as begun to exercise its beneficial effects—before the first lessons are well learnt, the first prizes awarded—the number of your scholars will be so few that a child may write them, if, indeed, there are any children left to write.

Well, then, medical supervision, and that immediate, say you. Of the medical staff of the colony, its efficiency and its defects also, I shall have occasion to say something in the next chapter. But in suggesting it in the present instance you have shown yourself to be merely a bachelor, and a theoretical bachelor, too. The infant field is one in which, for every square foot of doctor's ground, whole acres belong to the mother and the nurse—a territory into which the M.D. is not often or willingly called, even by those who understand his value, hardly ever by

those who do not. Did Dutch Guiana possess twenty times more doctors than are now within her limits, and were each one of them twenty times as efficacious in his craft, all their learning and skill would go for little in this matter, do as they might: the evil lies far away, the most part beyond their reach.

Must, then, this waste of life continue unchecked? Is no remedy to be found? There is a remedy, and a very simple one; tried before, and worth trying again. Let us go back in memory to the times when every individual negro life meant so many hundred florins to his owner; when the suppression of the "trade" had cut off the supply from without, and the birth of every slave-child on the estate brought a clear gain to the planter, just as its death represented an actual and heavy loss hard to replace, not to the parents only, but to the owner of parents and children, too. Negroes and negresses might be never so unthinking then—never so reckless about what concerned themselves alone; but their master took good thought that they should not be careless where his own interest was involved. And in few things was it so closely involved,

especially after the treaties of 1815 and 1819, as in the preservation of infant life among the labouring stock; and no precaution was neglected that could insure this, and supplement the defects of maternal care.

Many means were adopted, but the chiefest of all was the appointment, on every estate, of one or more of elderly women, appropriately styled "mammas," chosen from among the negresses themselves, and whose sole duty was to watch each over a given number of infantile negroes, for whose proper care, nourishment, and good condition generally this foster-mother had to answer, and for whose loss, if they drooped and died, she was called to strict account.

The history of slave institutions has been not inappropriately called the "devil's book"; but here, at any rate, is a leaf of it worth taking out for insertion in a better volume. This could easily be done in Surinam. The colony is, from old time, divided into districts, eleven in all, the capital included; and over these, though not in exact correspondence with their number and limits, are set medical officers, appointed by Government, and charged to see to the public

health, and that of the labouring classes in particular. Now my suggestion would be this: Let there be appointed to each district, not a doctor or surgeon only, but "negro mammas," middle-aged women, one or more according to the local requirements, whose duty would be to keep and render account of all the black or coloured children born on the lands, from two years old and downwards, like the babes of Bethlehem, but with opposite intent. To fit them for their charge, these district nurses, to give them a more civilized-sounding name than that borne by their predecessors of old days, should have received sufficient instruction, both in the causes and characters of infantile ailments, and in the right manner of their treatment, so that they might be able of themselves to deal with ordinary cases, and, in general, to prescribe and regulate, when needed, the nourishment and care necessary for maintaining good health among the little folks. They should also be obliged to keep an exact register of every birth, and a list of all the children under their charge, and from time to time, say once a month, they should be called on to report to the medical officer of their district,

to whom, and through him to the Government, they should be responsible within the limits of their district, for the well or ill being, the health, sickness, or death, of those entrusted to them. In a word, they should do for the free-born infants as much, or rather more, and that after a better regulated and more intelligent fashion, than was done on the slave-estates of the pre-emancipation era.

Now, fill up this outline-project with the proper colouring of qualifications, provisoes, regulations, and the remaining supplemental details of theory wrought out into fact, and you will have a scheme for the preservation of infant negro life, or rather the hindrance of its prodigal and ruinous waste, more likely to succeed in its object than any that I have yet heard or seen in practice. Then combine these or similar measures with a reasonable supply of the two needful things, without which neither Surinam nor any other trans-Atlantic colony can prosper or, indeed, exist—capital and immigration. Not the capital of official subsidy, but of private enterprise; nor the immigration of costly and burdensome East-Indian coolies, or the yet costlier and yet more

troublesome Chinese, but of vigorous, healthy, willing East Africans, the ex-slaves of the Zanzibar and Oman markets. Then put these three requisites together, and stand up and prophesy to Dutch Guiana what golden-aged future you will, nor fear being numbered in the latter days among the false prophets; your place will be with the true. This done, spread the gilding of education wide and thick as you please, but first secure the mass to spread it on withal. Is not the life more than meat, even school meat? and the body more than raiment, even the raiment of knowledge, were it gorgeous as that of Solomon himself?

The sea ebb has set the dammed-up waters of the Commeweyne at liberty to follow their natural bent, and we float swiftly down the stream, admiring, commenting, and enjoying, now the ever-varying, ever-recurring scenes of life and labour of tropical nature and European energy, of forest, plantation, mansion, cottage, and field that every river-bend unfolds; now the "feast of reason and the flow of soul,"—a very hackneyed phrase,—as we go; and now more substantial feastings, and the flow of various compo-

sitions very congenial to the Dutch soul and body too, nor less so to the English. But the distance was considerable, and night looked down on us with its thousand starry eyes long before we reached Fort Amsterdam and the broad Surinam waters. An hour later, we disembarked at the Government "Stelling" of the silent capital, well pleased with our river excursion and with each other also.

Not many days after, I was riding out with the Governor on the high road,—that is to say, on the horse-path, for the true high road here, as elsewhere in Guiana, is by water,—leading towards the wooded regions of Para, south-west of Paramaribo, to which, in composition with some other Indian word, it has given its name. Its inhabitants are reckoned, exclusive of Bush negroes, at nearly 5,000. They live in villages, and occupy themselves, to some extent, in sugar-cultivation, but, generally, in small lots, where they grow cocoa, coffee, and plantains. Indigo and tobacco are also among the products of the land. The ground is well raised above the water-level; to the south, indeed, it becomes hilly. The forest scenery is said to surpass in beauty, as in

extent, that of any other district in the colony. "You can ride for seven days in one direction, without ever getting out of the shade," said the Governor, as I noticed the noble outskirts of the woods before us; and he urged on me, almost as a duty, a visit to Para, where, amid the small creole proprietors and the forest-embowered villages, he assured me I should see Surinam negro life to better advantage, witness greater comfort and contentment, act as spectator or sharer, if the fancy took, of gayer festivities, than even on the banks of the Cottica and at Munnickendam. But my hank of Surinam thread was too nearly spun out already; and the colours of other lands were now about to take its place in the fate-woven twine.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COLONY.

"It would be interesting to know the secret of Dutch colonial management, which presents to an outside observer the aspect of minding one's own business, and inducing other people to mind theirs."—*Saturday Review.*

THREE mottoes head this work. The first has its embodiment in the descriptions given, or at least attempted, of places and people. The third assigns the tone of the mental colouring thrown by the seer himself over what he saw. But the second motto is chiefly referable to the summing up; it is a conjecture, the verification of which, if it has the good luck to be verified, must be sought in the conclusion. And this is why I have recalled it to eye and mind at the head of this, the concluding chapter.

Either my narrative has been very inadequate to its subject, or the reader very inattentive, if he has not long ago drawn two distinct and, in some degree, opposite inferences from the preced-

ing chapters: one, that Surinam is not, in a progressive or money-making sense, a very prosperous colony; the other, that it is, on the whole, a remarkably well managed one. But how far its good management may be due to the workings of the twofold secret suggested by the critic, whose clever conjecture I have quoted, is not equally self-evident. "The former," *i.e.*, minding one's own business, is, he subjoins, "usually not easy"; "the latter," *i.e.*, inducing other people to mind theirs, "generally impracticable." If so, all the more credit to those who have compassed them in act. Whether the Dutch lords of Surinam have really done so will, I think, become more apparent on a general though foreshortened view of the colony as a whole.

The beginnings of Dutch Guiana were those of a mere settlement. When early in 1667 the Zeelander, Admiral Krynssen, with three ships and 600 soldiers, wrested the land from its English occupants, he made it over, in right of government as of property, to the particular State whence he had received his commission and equipment, and by which he was himself, under the title of "Commander," appointed Governor of the territory

that he had conquered. His adminstration was wholly military, and the settlers had to accept the rule, no less than the protection, of the garrison and the fleet. A few years later the States General of Holland claimed for themselves the right of nominating the Governor of Surinam; and shortly after the State of Zeeland, dissatisfied with the financial results of its enterprise, sold its territorial right, partly to the Dutch West-Indian Company of those days, partly to the city of Amsterdam. But, however much the external relations of the settlement were modified by these changes, its internal management remained the same; and military rule, unchecked by law, was fast degenerating into mere anarchical tyranny, when the appointment as Governor of the Count of Sommelsdyk not only saved the settlement from disintegration and ruin, but gave it an entirely new and durable character.

In fact, the existence of the colony as such may truly be said to date from the 24th of November, 1683, when this large-minded and high-spirited man landed at Paramaribo. A cursory notice has already been taken of the principal events that marked his short but brilliant

administration. To it and him the colony owes its two main institutions, the Council of Policy and the Court of Justice. Indeed, during the whole of the eighteenth and a portion of the nineteenth century, constant struggles with foreign hostilities —chiefly French—from without, and within servile revolts, followed by stranger-occupation and financial difficulties of the most serious kind, left small leisure for administrative development, and, till a comparatively recent date, the Governor, with the two courts already mentioned, summed up in themselves almost the entire programme of colonial management. But the eight-fold district division introduced in 1842 gave new elasticity to the administration, and this important measure was followed by a series of improvements in every department, that have rendered the machinery of the Government almost as complete in detail as comprehensive in plan.

What, then, is the actual administration of the colony? and, first of all, on what basis is it reared? What is the ground-plan of the simple yet multiple structure that covers and protects the land? And let us not be surprised, much less offended, if it is not entirely in accord with

our own political conceptions: there is always something to be learned from those who disagree with us; rarely from those who agree.

King, Lords, and Commons, a triple machine, with each part equibalanced in the correctest imaginable counterpoise,—such is, in the main, the English constitutional ideal of a government as it should be. On the other hand, caste rule, however disguised, is hardly less generally admitted to be the ideal of a government as it should not be. Both these estimates are, we may safely assert, tolerably correct, where empires of wide extent, and nations that have already attained an advanced degree of development, are concerned; but it does not follow that both or either should be absolute, indisputable truth for all places, at all times, and under all conditions. Systems are very satisfactory things to those who devise them; their only inconvenience is that, when they come to be applied, they are so rarely commensurate with realities. Procrustes doubtless found his bed answer to perfection the purposes for which he designed it; but it is doubtful whether its occupants were generally of the same opinion.

That a certain West-Indian island—I think,

St. Lucia—then on the point of receiving the blessings of a constitution might get as much as possible of the Queen or King, and as little as possible of the Lords and Commons, was the sensible wish of the very sensible Anthony Trollope, when visiting the Caribbean Archipelago some twenty-five years since. Now Dutch Guiana, though geographically part of a very respectable continent, is to all administrative, legislative, and social purposes just as much of an island as St. Lucia itself; and what has been, and rightly, said of the one, may, for these matters, be not less rightly said of the other.

How they have ultimately settled it in St. Lucia I do not know; but in Surinam, at least, the constitution is almost entirely King. The Governor, who holds his appointment direct from the Crown, and to it alone is responsible, through the Colonial Office at the Hague, to which he has to make a tri-monthly report of his proceedings, is, within the common limits of law, almost absolute ruler, so far as the colony itself is concerned. All local appointments, all subordinate posts, are in his gift; he is, by virtue of his office, commander-general of all garrison troops whatever, by land or sea;

every financial measure is subject to his control; the entire administration centres in his person. So much—a lion's share, truly—for the Crown.

Follow Lords and Commons, or, rather, an amalgamation of both; but their joint share, when compared with the foregoing, shows off modest indeed. Till lately, they were "represented" vaguely enough by a council called "Colonial," which was convoked by the Governor, but solely when he thought fit, and then even merely for consultation and advice. In this council the Governor presided, and, with the "Procureur-General," an official inferior in colonial rank and influence only to the Governor himself, the Finance Administrator, and the Colonial Secretary, made up the *ex-officio* element of the Assembly. The non-official consisted of six Crown members, chosen by the Governor himself from among the most respectable landowners in the colony, or their resident agents. To these six was also entrusted the subordinate administration of the eight districts, some singly, some united, into which the Surinam territory was divided, Coronie and Nickerie excepted—these two being allowed separate magistracies of their own.

The council had, accordingly, a double character: consultative in its corporate capacity, it was executive in the individuals who composed it; while under either aspect it might be not unfairly regarded as an extension of the Governor's own personality—little more. It was a Crown aristocracy, with, we may suppose, the customary advantages and drawbacks of such, modified by the national type. The "Commons," that is, the bulk of the population, had, on this plan, neither voice nor expression in the administration; nor, indeed, previous to emancipation and its correlative extension of civic rights, did they require any.

Yet, even in those days, the government of Surinam was not an arbitrary one, far from it. The Colonial Office at the Hague, to which the Governor was obliged to refer everything, and from which all his authority derived, acted as one check. Another existed in the law courts, civil and criminal, over neither of which had he any control. A third was ever present at his side in the person of the "Procureur-General," a nominee of the Hague, and invested with magisterial and even political powers hardly inferior to his

own. A fourth was provided in the "Finance-Administrator," whose concurrence in every measure involving serious expenditure was indispensable. With so many restraints, the government was, it is clear, more likely to err on the side of over-caution than of precipitancy or despotism.

When, however, emancipation had, in 1863, converted the bulk of the population into Dutch citizens, without distinction of colour or caste, some corresponding change became necessary, if not in the essentials, at least in the form of administration. This was done by creating a House of Assembly, where the Governor takes his seat as President, supported by four official or Crown members, nominated by himself, and nine other members, elected by voters, and holding their seats each for six years. Vacancies occasioned by death, retirement, or the course of rotation are filled up by general election; a yearly payment of taxes to the amount of forty florins constitutes a voter. The power of the Assembly is limited to debating on measures submitted to its consideration by the Governor, who is not bound by their opinion, unless, indeed, it coincides

with his own, in which case the measure becomes law, subject always to approval and confirmation from the Hague. The Assembly has no initiative power, nor any direct financial control. Should the Governor find it advisable to act in opposition to the majority of the members, he can do so; but he is bound to supply the dissentients with a written explanation of his motives, with which they are similarly bound to be satisfied, and there ends the matter.

The Assembly is, in fact, nothing but the old deliberative council under another shape, with a decorous flavour of the "Commons," so introduced that they too, on condition of their remaining in accordance with the Governor, may bear a part in the dignity of administration; otherwise they are practically excluded from it. Meanwhile, the creation of seven district commissaries, the Governor's own nominees, between whom the executive sub-management of the entire Surinam territory, from frontier to frontier, is portioned out, while an eighth, as burgomaster, has in charge the capital itself, takes away from the "Assembly" every remnant of the administrative character supported by the "council" of former

days. This has been transferred, within certain limits, to the new "Advising" or "Privy" Council, another phase of the old one, but on a narrower scale, since it now includes three persons only—the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the "Procureur-General," and three other members, selected by the Governor, and nominated by the King. From all which it results that the Governor's hands are, to practical purposes, about as much and as little tied as formerly; nor has the relative official position of King, Lords, and Commons been substantially changed in Dutch Guiana by or since the constitution of the "Assembly" in 1865. Summing up, King, in his own person or those of the Colonial Minister and the Governor, almost everything; Lords, in a consultative capacity, something; Commons, honorary;—such is the government of Surinam.

Or, rather, so is Surinam governed:—passive, not active. The colonial administration is a portion of the home machinery, and obeys the same central force; not a distinct engine working apart.

A system like this has its drawbacks; what system has not? It has also its advantages, and

they are many. Against the absence of spontaneity, it has for set-off the assurance of security. One thing deserves especial notice: it is that, under an administration thus constituted, diversity of colour and race can be safely, as occasion requires, disregarded in the colony; which could never be the case did the officials derive their nomination and powers from the colony itself. White, black, or coloured, all are subjects alike—all equally dependent on an authority beyond the seas; and where such is the common footing, caste-feeling has, it will be admitted, little or nothing to encourage it in the distribution of nominations, towards which its influence has in nowise contributed. Nor are factions likely to quarrel for the decorations of official power or the sweets of official perquisites, nor even to exist at all, where the control of these desirable things is beyond the control of any faction or party whatsoever. Public opinion there certainly is, in Surinam as elsewhere; nor can it be absolutely disregarded with impunity on the banks of the Commeweyne, any more than on those of the Yssel. But public opinion is never more moderate and judicious than when it feels itself to be restricted within

the limits of simple opinion, and has no recognized expression in act. Hence the Governor remains free, or nearly so, to select at pleasure the most capable and the best deserving candidates to fill the many posts of office within his gift, throughout the territory, without needing anxiously to consider in every instance what may be the pedigree, or what the epidermal hue, of the individual appointed. Hence, too, the office-holders themselves, unimpeded by party ties, are all the more likely to devote their entire attention to the satisfactory performance of their duties—a moral impossibility did they owe their position to faction and intrigue. Nor are the good effects confined to the officials themselves; they pervade the whole population: and the secret of getting every one to mind his own business is thus found to resolve itself into the correlative and not more abstruse secret of giving no one the temptation to mind any one's business except his own.

"A most autocratic style of administration, and one that would not at all go down with us," I hear some colonial Briton—Antiguan, it may be, or Grenadan, or Barbadian—say. To such I have no answer to make: if they are content with

themselves and their condition, it is well; and Heaven forbid I should wish them otherwise. But should a like comment be uttered by a friend from Canada, Tasmania, Queensland, Victoria, and so forth, the reply is ready. Remember, then, O Canadian, Tasmanian, or whatever you be, that in colonies, not large like your own, but small, very small, and in the presence, not of a tolerably homogeneous population, but of one in which the vast majority is composed of a race or races inferior, by nature perhaps, perhaps by circumstances actual or antecedent, local self-government involves problems singularly difficult to solve aright. If frankly conceded, it must include all the component members of the colony, and that on an equal footing; if otherwise, it can be nothing but caste rule under a thin disguise. For an example of what the former leads to, take Jamaica from 1836 to 1865; for a specimen of the latter, see . . . but I will not particularize. Which do you prefer—the lordship of misrule, or the lordship of Bumbledom? tumultuous anarchy or respectable stagnation? For to one or the other you must come, according as you follow the former system or the latter, according as you put within the reach

of all, or withhold from some, that most seductive temptation, the temptation of self-rule, after once displaying it as something attainable before their eyes. Much better, say I, not to hold it out at all; and that is just what our Dutch friends of the Hague have done. "Do you mind your business," say they to the colonists, "and we will mind ours. Do you go steadily to work, make the best you can of the land and its products. Government is our affair, and we will look after it":—a wise partition of labour, and deserving the praise not of the Saturday Reviewer only, but of all reviewers who have ever sat in the censor's chair.

In a word, party spirit, colour-antagonism, does not exist in Surinam, because it has never been summoned by opportunity into existence; and to its absence we may, in great measure, attribute the freedom with which intermarriage, climate, and those occult local influences that subtly, but powerfully, modify national types do their work at large in Dutch Guiana, and cast over the entire population that uniformity of tint and guise of which I have already spoken in an earlier chapter of this work.

And now to come to subordinate details,

liberally furnished by the yearly Surinam Blue Books, but of which few only need be mentioned here, and that briefly. And, first, the administration of justice: it is in every respect regulated by Dutch law and custom, and impartially dealt out to all. The Supreme Courts of Justice, civil and criminal, sit at Paramaribo; and to them all cases of importance have to be referred. In addition, six district judges, three of whom enjoy fixed stations, while the three others go on a kind of circuit, have authority in lesser matters, decide disputes between masters and men, and inflict fines or imprisonment, the former not exceeding the sum of 300 florins, the latter limited to two months. These district judges are stipendiary officials, no landowner or trader being allowed to perform their part; while, on the other hand, they themselves are not always members of the legal profession—a serious defect, and productive of much inconvenience. Their sentence, too, is, in the majority of cases, subject to appeal; and this circumstance, added their own want of personal weight, throws back nearly the whole judicial duty on the central courts. To those courts, accordingly, almost every case, trifling or

serious, is ultimately referred, from a rap over the head up to deliberate murder, and from a disputed corial to a lawsuit involving the largest estate in Dutch Guiana. Hence delay and inconvenience without end. A "block" at Temple Bar, before it was pulled down, a Waterloo Station booking-rail on an excursion-day, a Covent Garden box-office on a "Patti" night in the season, feebly image forth the habitual condition of these unlucky courts. Worse still for those who have to come before them. I have myself seen in the Paramaribo Jail *détenus* of more than six months, waiting their turn for a sentence the duration of which, when awarded, would probably not exceed six weeks.

This evil, and it is not a trifling one, might best, I think, be remedied by giving the district magistrates power to deal summarily, and without appeal, as justices of the peace, with minor cases of assault, petty larceny, and the like; at the same time establishing in the districts themselves two or three places of correction, especially destined for carrying out the execution of light sentences, suited to the offences in hand. In a country where intercommunication is easy, and

under a system that can readily provide the requisite supervision, no serious abuse need be feared from such an increase in the local magisterial power; or it could soon be remedied, did it occur. Meanwhile, the work of the central courts would be reduced by more than half; and the now-overcrowded prisons of Paramaribo and Fort Amsterdam proportionately cleared, to the great advantage of all parties. Labour is too valuable an article in Surinam to be kept locked up a day longer than absolutely necessary, whatever the motive.

Another part of the administration that stands in need, not so much of reform as of re-adjustment, is taxation. A poll-tax, however graduated, is invariably odious, almost invariably unfair; and, in the Surinam of the present day, an anachronism besides. The poll-tax of Dutch Guiana owed its origin to the peculiar circumstances of the slave-holding epoch, when the best standard for regulating the taxation of freemen was undoubtedly the number of bondsmen in their employ, as a starting-point from which to arrive at the rough estimate of the incomes to be taxed. But, with emancipation, this state of things passed

away; and the old method is evidently inapplicable to the conditions of free labour. A further inconvenience lies in the difficulty of collection. The bulk of those from whom a poll-tax has to be made up is, of course, formed by the lowest and the poorest classes—field-labourers, woodcutters, charcoal-burners, fishermen, and the like—men who rarely frequent Paramaribo, and are not readily noticed when they do. So the tax-gatherer has to hunt after them himself in their haunts, up the rivers of the interior. But in a region like this, with an unlimited background of wild country, what more easy than to forestall the unwelcome official visit by a temporary absence in the bush? Nor, in the absence of the dweller of the hut, does distraining offer much chance of satisfaction where there is generally nothing, except, maybe, a broken bottle, to distrain; nor demolition, where there is nothing to be demolished that cannot be rebuilt in half a day. So that in every respect the poll-tax is not a success.

Another error is embodied in the colonial export duties, ranging from five to ten per cent. on the value of the goods—an unadvisable source

of revenue, because tending directly to the discouragement and disemployment of labour and produce. However, taxation in Surinam, taken altogether, is not over heavy; nor does the burden require so much to be lightened as to be shifted. The fault consists in this, that the strongest shoulders are not under the present system those that have to bear the most load, but the weakest.

I pass lightly over the remaining administrative departments, because they are in general organization identical with those of our own colonies; the differences are slight and of a local character. For these things, see the annual Reports, in which education, charitable institutions, and public works occupy a large space. The statistics of the first show 5,371 children in regular school attendance; a large number, being in fact one-tenth of the entire population, Bush negroes and Indians excepted. About one-half of the schools throughout the colony are maintained by the Moravian Brotherhood, with or without official subsidy, and more than half the remainder by the Government itself. Naturally the education furnished by most of the town schools and

by all the country ones is merely elementary. Among the charitable institutions, a magnificent hospital, the largest and best appointed I have seen in the West Indies, a poor-house, also spacious and well kept, a solidly funded "Benevolent" Society, an Orphanage, and the Lepers' Asylum, at Batavia in the Coronie district, take the foremost rank. Canals, dams, sluices, bridges, landing-places, and the other adjuncts of water-communication are the principal items on the list of public works. They are maintained, and from time to time extended, with genuine Dutch perseverance and skill.

The medical staff of the colony consists of forty-seven practitioners, apothecaries and midwives included. The police corps, between officers and men, musters 160 strong. Neither of these numbers can be considered adequate to the requirements of so large and so widely scattered a population. A more numerous and better organized police force might besides allow the colony to dispense in great measure with the expensive services of the over-numerous European garrison, at present maintained for show rather than use, in the principal forts. Nor need

the good folks of Surinam go any further to look for the very model and pattern of a police force, than which none better exists anywhere, than to their neighbours of Demerara. Lastly, such a corps, if judiciously blended with the elder institution of "Guides," now for some reason or another left in abeyance, would prove a useful instrument for introducing the beginnings of discipline and social order among the Bush negroes, and thus help to pave the way for the gradual incorporation of these last into the rest of the colony.

Sectarian rivalry, a too frequent cause of discord in colonies, whatever their isothermal lines, has been remarkably innocuous in Surinam, though not for want of diversity of sects. First come the Moravians, whose muster-roll runs on considerably beyond 20,000; next follow Roman Catholics, who boast about half that number; only, while the former are chiefly recruited from among the field-labourers and the negroes, the latter supply their ranks with a medley of Portuguese, Indians, and arrivals from outside. The Dutch-Reformed, whose system is, I am told, not far removed from that of our own Presbyterians,

count only 8,500; but among these are most of the officials and leading men. Their congregation represents, so to speak, the ruling and the burgher element. The peasantry and the land are represented by the Moravian Brotherhood; the lower townsmen and proletarian class, by Roman Catholicism. Lastly, wealth and energy of character bring the Jews, though little over 1,200 in all, to the fore. History, but history only, notices some rather serious bickerings between them and their fellow-colonists; of these and analogous squabbles no trace now remains. Toleration, introduced by the large-mindedness of Van Sommelsdyk, though in the teeth of much opposition and obloquy at the time, has now for two centuries prevailed in principle and in act alike throughout Surinam; nor has any sect had occasion to complain of unfairness in the distribution of official patronage or subsidy. In a word, Government and people have happily agreed in preferring the mellow lotus of dogmatic adiaphorism to the sharp-tasted apple of sectarian discord; may they long abide by their choice. In a field like this, the lotus is the better pasture.

I have made hitherto little mention, and even that incidental only, of the natural products of the land, of its wild animals, birds, or insects, of its trees, plants, fruits, flowers, grasses, and the rest, because they are in the main identical with those of British Guiana, and may be found, by whoever lists, fully catalogued in books descriptive of the latter province. Though ethnographically divided, the two Guianas—Dutch and English—are geographically and physically one; except that a slightly higher elevation above the sea-level gives to the Dutch moiety of this region a somewhat healthier climate and a greater variety of agricultural produce. In the latter regard, the contrast between Demerara, that land of sugar and sugar only, and Surinam is certainly remarkable enough. The yearly statistics of Demeraran productions are well known; and though no exact statement, showing the comparative extent of cane land with that appropriated to other growths, has, to the best of my knowledge, been published, yet an export list like that of 1873, where, out of a total value of 2,217,432*l.*, sugar and its twin offspring, molasses and rum, make up together no less than 2,031,561*l.*, or

almost eleven-twelfths of the whole, sufficiently indicates the lordship, I had almost said the autocracy, of the cane.

In Surinam it is otherwise. There, indeed, the painstaking accuracy of Dutch statistics does not leave us to the complicated and, in a certain degree, conjectural calculation of the relative proportion between the amount of land laid out in cane and that allotted to other growths in the territory. The acres actually under cultivation in 1873 amounted to 27,817; and of these the official report for that year assigns 13,646, or about one-half, to sugar; one-half again of the remaining land is occupied by cocoa; and the residual quarter appears as divided between coffee, cotton, bananas, and the mixed gardening of provision-grounds.

These proportions have not been always the same. Thus, for example, cotton, first introduced in 1752, rose into comparative importance during the English occupation of 1804-16, and soon secured a sort of monopoly in the Coronie district, then newly opened to cultivation. In 1832 the number of cotton-growing estates exceeded sixty: twenty years later it had sunk

to thirty, and of these again seven only have survived down to the present time; five of them are in Coronie, two on the Upper Surinam. Cocoa, the heir-loom of Van Sommelsdyk's administration in 1685, has been more fortunate. For a long time an interloper, and a mere supplementary growth on the spare corners of coffee plantations, it claimed on its own account, even so lately as 1852, only two estates—a number raised in the latest census to thirty-nine, while its produce has absolutely doubled itself within the last five years. On the other hand, coffee, brought hither from Java about the beginning of the eighteenth century, and at one time the main staple of the colony, has steadily dwindled, till, out of 178 plantations registered in 1832, only thirty dragged on a feeble and unproductive existence in 1873. For a diminution like this no satisfactory cause has been assigned; nor can any reason be given why tobacco and indigo, two of the earliest recorded products of the upland of Surinam, should now be represented by a blank in the catalogue of exports.

The extent of the sugar plantations has been already stated. Their number, according to the

latest published surveys, is sixty-five. The amount of their joint produce exported in 1873, exceeded in value two millions and a half of florins. Cocoa furnished half a million more; cotton somewhat over a hundred thousand; coffee scarcely found a mention.

Yet, in truth, there is no tropical field-growth but finds, or might find, a home in Dutch Guiana; no valuable timber but forms part of her boundless forests; no costly spice is a stranger to her soil; no useful extract alien from the list of her resources. Surinam is the triumph of vegetable life: the triumph of human industry alone is wanting to subjugate and complete.

Something has certainly been done, and done well; but how much more remains to do! Out of a million and a half of acres the rough estimate of land superficies in Dutch Guiana, about four hundred thousand acres appear on the public records as having been, not simultaneously, but at different times granted out for cultivation, and of these again not quite thirty thousand are actually occupied. So that the cultivated land stands in proportion to that granted as about one-thirteenth; to the total, of one-fiftieth only. Of

this small oasis amid an ocean of forest, hardly an acre but is situated in the close neighbourhood of the capital, or along the lower courses of the rivers; not a single estate is to be found at a distance of more than forty miles in a straight line from the sea. So much for the east and centre districts. As for Coronie, to the west of the Coppename river, and Nikerie, alongside of the English frontier, they are settlements of recent date, and even more thinly peopled than the rest.

Up the rivers, along the canals, following the bridle-paths, you look around to see what two centuries of Dutch government, of Dutch energy, of Dutch perseverance, have accomplished in a land favoured by nature as are few lands in the New World or the Old. Does the result correspond? Near the capital, indeed, and the harbour, and in the immediate vicinity of the great river-trunks the sight is fair enough; but further up, how unsatisfactory! Estates there certainly are, but how small, how thinly scattered!—rare islets in a trackless ocean of unreclaimed bush, marginal lines by the winding river-courses, desultory fringes to a boundless expanse of wilderness behind. The narrow European domain

includes scarce one-tenth of what the map-maker assigns to the Batavian colours, and of that tenth again it is much if one-fifth be under actual cultivation.

Now pass beyond, and explore the practically non-European nine-tenths of outside territory. There, amid lofty trees and wide savannas, now wholly lonely, or only visited by some stray Bush negro or listless Indian, may yet be seen, we are told, the ruins of spacious and well-constructed dwellings, the blurred outlines of once-flourishing estates, the broken and desecrated tombs of bygone proprietors, the traces of soldierless forts, choked-up canals, and long-perished labour and wealth. Thus for the uplands it is "Ichabod" complete,—they are deserted, dead; for the coast not so bad, but that too is only half alive,—something there is, but the very goodness of that something saddens, because there is so little of it: why is it not more? And if neither the governors nor the governed, neither the Europeans nor the creoles, neither the whites nor the blacks, neither the climate nor the soil, be in fault,—and in matter of fact none of them are so,—who then is to blame?

Strictly speaking, no one. But what if the colony has never had a fair chance?—if, from her first starting till now, she has been, without intermission, too heavily handicapped to allow her even a chance of coming forward in the race? And such precisely has been her lot. Her foul days have been out of all proportion to her fair; her difficulties, from without and from within, greater than her means of surmounting them: that they have stunted her is no wonder; the wonder is that they have not put an end to her altogether.

The retrospect is a strange one. In the early days of the "plantation," as it was then called, the high grounds of the interior were cultivated in preference to the coast, because possessed of a healthier climate and a richer soil. Here were Marshall's first tobacco-fields; here Willoughby's indigo growth; here the great sugar estates of Nassy and his Hebrew followers: fair beginnings of speedy prosperity, as speedily blighted. Before the "savannah" had waved with its tenth harvest, began the French hostilities of 1696, that culminated fourteen years later in the sack of Paramaribo, not merely exhausting the actual resources of the

colony, but loading it with heavy debt, and the still more intolerable burden of a fifty years' servile war, of which Cassard's invasion was, by the prostration it left behind, the direct cause and prelude. Then insurrection followed on insurrection, raid on raid; estate after estate was ravaged; night by night the sky was reddened by the flames of burning plantations, and the earth with the blood of the planters, till the entire inland lay desolate, and whatever energy remained to the colonists was perforce driven to take refuge in the narrow strip of comparative security along the coast.

With a new field before it, industry took a fresh start, and at the beginning of the present century 640 estates along the banks of the Lower Surinam river and its kindred streams made some amends for the losses inland. But the evil genius of the colony lost no time in again interposing with a series of adversities, less tragic indeed in kind than the past, but not a whit less injurious —financial embarrassments, commercial rivalries, social changes. There is no need to reiterate the list: I have read it out, at least the principal headings, before. By 1850 the number of culti-

tivated estates had fallen to 260; in 1862 there were only 229. Matters were now at their worst, and accordingly the turn came. Already in 1867 the estates had risen again to 276; five years later, to 292; at the present date they exceed 300. May they continue to increase and multiply till they fill and replenish the land! there is room and to spare. But this cannot be till the two great wants, the prime requisites of Surinam as of every other colony, are supplied—capital and population.

Of the first deficiency, that of capital, and its causes, I have spoken already. But one main cause is ignorance. Let Surinam be better known, she will be better provided; let her name but become familiar on the European money-market, and the treasures of that market will find their way to her before long,—they could take no better direction, flow into no securer or more remunerative channels.

Remains last in mention, first in importance, population. This is to a colony what action is, if we credit Demosthenes, to an orator; boldness, in Bacon's estimate, to a statesman; patronage, as Blake avers, to a painter, and perhaps to others.

And, so that a colony may flourish, be wealthy, prosperous, successful, what first? Population. What second? Population. What third, thirtieth, three-hundredth if you will? Population. But let not the word be misconstrued. By "population" I do not mean the "sufficient" merely; that is, a population just adequate to the working of large estates, with nothing over—enough for a monopoly of labour and strength, whatever its direction; this is not the "population" I mean. Or rather it is this, and something more; this, and a surplus population into the bargain,—"over-population" in fact, with an ample margin, after the large properties of the land have drawn from it their necessary labour-supply, to create, enclose, and cultivate those small freeholds, that varied minor produce, without which staple products are only an unbuttressed wall; vast exports, a vast risk; and giant estates, a giant instability. No cup is truly full till it runs over; no man rich till he has not enough only, but to spare; no territory flourishing till it has an over-supply of labour and life, sufficient not for great uses only, but for small—for waste at times. And did the

tutelary goddess of Surinam yet enjoy her old pagan advantages, now lost, alas! to her as to her fellow-goddesses, of a being and a voice, "More life and fuller,—*that* I want," would be her answer to the votaries come to inquire of her courts.

"Granted; and to this very end we have within the last three years imported 5,000 coolies," those votaries may reply. So far, so good. But when we recall to memory the 400,000 acres portioned out to cultivation, and only tilled to the extent of 30,000, not to mention the unassigned 1,100,000 acres beyond, the Adamless Eden of the south, we cannot but be reminded of certain five small fishes, not of pagan but Christian tradition, set before a Syrian crowd of 5,000 and more, and exclaim, as some one is said to have then not unnaturally exclaimed, "What are these among so many?" Nor can a miraculous multiplication be hoped for to solve the difficulty nowadays. Bear in mind, too, that of all proposed means for filling up the popular void, coolie immigration is the most costly: the initial outlay alone required for each imported Hindoo—an outlay apart from frequent

extra charges, losses by sickness or death, and all the "sundries" that figure so largely at the foot of every general account—equals or exceeds 34*l.* per head. A Chinese is more expensive still—a serious preliminary absorption of future profits. Prepayments of this kind may be borne once in a way by Dutch Guiana, perhaps twice; but should they have to be often repeated, where, in the name of all the discoverers of unknown quantities, are the funds to come from? The same non-influx of capital that keeps at low ebb, as I have formerly remarked, the vitality of the town, has an even more lowering effect, it is easy to understand, on the vitality of the country. What might happen if the funds were attainable, if Trollope's "million of coolies" loomed as distinct on the Surinam as on the Demerara horizon, I cannot say: millions of hogsheads possibly, and a golden age. But the golden spell for calling them forth from the Indian deep is not written in the estate-books of Dutch Guiana, nor is likely soon to be; certainly not on the "million" scale.

Coolies and Chinese do not, then, form the staff on which Surinam must lean before she can rise.

But European immigration? Tried over and over again, it has failed here neither more completely nor less than elsewhere within the West Indian zone, and for the same reasons. It must always fail. Not because the climate is unhealthy, but because it is unsuited; and experience on this point has been bought so often and so dear, that it is to be hoped no further bands of immigrant European labourers, Dutch, Irish, Scotch, German, or other, will be tempted into buying it again.

But, say some, there is hope of mines to be discovered among the mountain ranges in the far south of the Guiana territory; and on mines what may not follow? Little good, I fear. Long since the world-wide wisdom of "large-browed Verulam" pronounced the sentence, ratified by as world-wide experience, that "the hope of mines is very uncertaine, and useth to make the planters," *i.e.* colonists, "lazie in other things." Mineral treasures are the veriest Pandora-gifts of nature to a land, and that Surinam may be spared the deadly present is the best wish her friends can make in her behalf. Happily, there is not much cause for fearing the contrary. But should ever the ill genius of South America, the "demon

of the mine," set up his yellow throne on the banks of her rivers, should the gold, of which particles, fortunately very small ones, washed down stream have from time to time half awakened the dormant cupidity of discoverers, become to Dutch Guiana what it has been to California or Natal, then, indeed, farewell to estates, to agriculture, to honest industry, to true prosperity, to contentment, to hope itself, in Surinam. All will disappear in the devouring mine-gulf; all melt away, fused down into one common mass of rascality and gold. The territory is too narrow to contain at once two masters, the mine and the field; one or other must speedily give way; and the glittering though delusive vistas opened by the former would inevitably efface the sober and substantial prospects offered by the latter from the landscape. The first man who brings in the news of remunerative gold-fields in Upper Surinam ought to have from the colony a rope for his reward; and if it silences his voice before he has time to make his discovery public, so much the better.

The true product-mines of Surinam are her plantations; they lie above ground, not under.

And her most reliable labour-mine is, as in one way or other it always has been, Africa; and, above all, the eastern coasts of that continent, after the manner I have indicated in a previous chapter. The project has, I allow, its difficulties; it might, probably would, meet with opposition all the more serious because based on well-intentioned error; but its advantages are more than its difficulties, and, to sum up all in one, it is, under existing circumstances, the only practical course for obtaining, not merely an immediate and transitory, but a permanent supply of labour and life. Nor is there, I repeat it, anything to fear for the colony or the colonists from a negro immigration, however numerous, under the combined discipline of Dutch rule and Moravian teachership, that has trained the African native into the Surinam creole, the cannibals of Gaboon into the peasants of Munnickendam; there is everything to hope. May the vision become reality!—

Good wishes have been exchanged, hospitalities acknowledged, their renewal offered, hopes of future meetings expressed—all that makes parting bitter sweet; and now the "stell-

ing" is left; and town and tower lessen and disappear behind the nearer river-margin of plantation and tree. We have passed Fort Amsterdam; the river's mouth opens wide on the Atlantic before us! Our little coasting-steamer—she is commanded by the same cheery, semi-Indian captain who last week had our river-craft in charge—will in a day more cast anchor by the Demeraran shore, off the busy wharfs of Georgetown; and Surinam will for me take its place, a thing of the past, in the picture-gallery of other memories of other lands. Nor will it be the least pleasing in the series, nor the least often recalled to view. And, to borrow for Dutch Guiana the words of the same author and the very same chapter cited when I began, "I cannot end this crude epitome of crude views respecting the colony, without saying that I have never met a pleasanter set of people than I found there, or ever passed my hours much more joyously."

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THE END.

E. J. FRANCIS AND CO., TOOK'S COURT AND WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.