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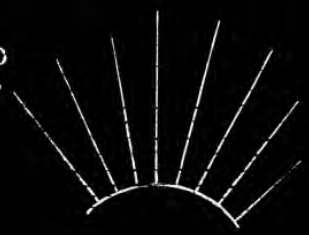

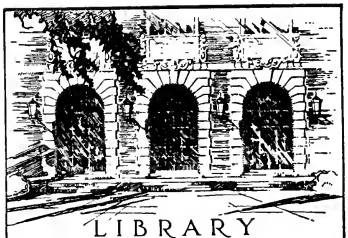

LUTCHMEE AND DILLOO.

LUTCHMEE AND DILLOO

A Study of West Indian Life

BY

EDWARD JENKINS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

IN my account of the results of the Commission of Inquiry in British Guiana, entitled "The Coolie: his Rights and Wrongs," I tried to inform the English public of the gravity of the issues that arose in that inquiry. Flattering as was the reception of that book by the critics, the public little cared to read it. However impartial or exact I had striven to be, it was no wonder that a statement which the desire to be just very likely made too long and detailed should fail to attract popular attention, or to arouse popular sympathies. Not to speak of the natural dryness of the subject, the character of the wrongs complained of

was rather practical than sensational—arose rather out of a permanent process of treatment than from extraordinary outrages, or more often from incompatible relations than from direct collisions between the planters and their Coolies. Meantime I have waited, hoping that those in power whose consciences have been made alive to the necessity of action, *would act* promptly and effectively.

But now I feel the subject to be altogether too important to let it sleep. Another Royal Commission has inquired and reported at prodigious length about the system of Indian indenture in the greatest of the Coolie colonies, and has exposed a state of things in the Mauritius which may well startle the Colonial Minister, and excite the alarm and watchfulness of the

British people. What right have we hotly to discuss slave circulars, and the inviolability of our ships of war as refuges for foreign slaves, or to proclaim our sympathies with Bosnian rayahs or Bulgarian Christians, until our own Mauritius and British Guiana are swept clean and garnished?

These vast blue-books issued by Parliament often entomb and hide away from public eyes the injuries of Government. I am going to try in this tale to disinter the real wrongs and difficulties, and to present them in an appreciable form to those who are ultimately responsible for British honour and British fame—I mean the British people.

I have long since expressed the opinion that a Coolie system, under proper super-

vision and restraint, could be made a system of incalculable benefit to Asiatics. But the sole condition on which we can allow it to exist within our dominions is that our Government shall exercise over it, in its inception and continuance, ceaseless watchfulness and most rigid control. One need hardly insist that we can only insure justice now-a-days by ourselves watching the Government. The worst of the whole matter is that officials seem always to be convinced of the satisfactory nature of an argument when it can be shown that any pecuniary loss or benefit to Englishmen depends upon it. It is only occasionally that we get at the head of an office like the Colonial Office a Carnarvon, who unites a conscience and a heart with a clear head and a firm will. I say this the more freely and cordially

since the Minister concerned works with a party with which I have no association.

There is the greater need for vigilance in the present case, because a body of merchants enriched by the labour of the people whose life I have here faithfully depicted, are organized, astute and powerful in the defence of their interests. I do not assail them for that. They are exercising an undoubted right, many of them conscientiously. I simply call the fact to mind, to show how necessary it is that philanthropy should be equally organized, watchful and astute on the other side.

It therefore occurred to me that I might try to throw the problems of Coolie labour in our Colonies into a concrete and picturesque form. The life of a Coolie man or woman, with its simple incidents. its

petty cares and vexations, its occasional events of terror or sorrow, and all the various feelings, sentiments, and impulses that sway an existence passed amidst the relations of a bond-service, these and their peculiar influences on the higher and more cultivated race, do not at first sight present an attractive ground for fiction. Besides, the subjects and interests seem to be too remote. But happily the ties of universal brotherhood are ever drawing men more closely together. The sorrows of Dilloo or Lutchmee are the sorrows of humanity, differing only in their conditions and their relations from the tragedies of our own homes.

I have endeavoured in these pages to reproduce with exact fidelity the picture of a Coolie's life. Thus I thought I could more clearly show what are the difficulties

and perils of the system of indentureship of Indian and Chinese immigrants in English colonies. Even should I fail from the artist's point of view, which it is to be hoped is not a necessity, I may yet enable many persons to understand the subject better, and that must lead to a more earnest consideration of the questions it involves.

One word of explanation is necessary as to the details of the story. Though it contains no fact which could not be verified in some Coolie-worked colony under the British flag, I wish it to be understood that I do not credit British Guiana with all the evils here represented. I have not in any instance, unless I say so, drawn a character from life, nor have I described under another name any particular scene or estate. My object has been rather to embody many

aspects of character and varieties of incident, the more picturesquely to bring out the lights and shadows of the system. I was obliged to select some colony as the scene of the tale, and naturally selected the one with which I was familiar. But upon this scene will be presented phases of the question which are only to be found in other colonies.

To give greater variety and reality to the tale, to display the system fairly in its proper setting, and above all to make the story a wider and therefore, I hope, a more interesting study of human life, I have not confined its incidents to one race, but have brought into view the whole of that strange mixture which constitutes West Indian society, from the Queen's representative to the African Creole.

The field is a new one for fiction, but human nature still bears out the wisdom of the poet who declared that it does not change with clime. The loves, the hopes, the envies, jealousies and fears, the superstitions, the mutual wrongs, the goodness and wickedness of the human heart, bloom everywhere with similar blossoms, developing into the same fruits of life or death, of sorrow or of joy.

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less gleams of the fire-flies; through the silence sounded far and clear the late croakings of some unsettled crows, or the sharp shriek of a kite; and now a jackal in the neighbouring jungle, or the pariah dogs in the village, shrieked or barked a welcome to the incoming night.

Half-reclining on the grass-grown slope of a tank, whence, with her face towards the setting sun, she had been gazing at the mist-veiled rim of the vast sleepy orb as it sank into the lap of night, was a young Indian girl, whose loose white robe and jacket of coloured cotton scarcely hid one line of the delicate mould of her form, displayed, as it was, by the *abandon* of her posture, in all its grace, litheness and perfection. The long hair from which she had been but lately wringing the water, wherewith her pretty

play in the tank had saturated it, hung black and dishevelled from the symmetrical head, leaving her light-brown oval face, with its regular eyes, arched eyebrows, delicately-chiselled nostrils and well-turned mouth and chin, in fine relief as they were irradiated by the parting glow of the sun. She seemed half-dreaming—a pleasant dream; for now and then a sly movement in her eyes, which, in cunning changes, flashed with dark fire or became gentle as a summer lake, betokened some lively or genial thought. So she lay, reclining on her elbows; joy-lit and dreamy, unconscious of the rapidity with which the shades were deepening round her, unaware of two flashing eyes that were fixed upon her from the shadow of a small palm-grove, not twenty yards away.

Presently she began, in a low, sweet monotone, to sing a simple ditty, rather a rude and free paraphrase of a passage in the *Gitagovinda* :—

"Gentle, sandal-scented air,
Blowing love-sighs from the south;
To my open bosom bear
Aëry kisses from his mouth.

Yet oh give me more than this is!
Bring him to me face to face,
Let me feel his burning kisses,
And sweetly die in his embrace!"

As in soft, listless cadence the song rose and fell, the fiery eyes in the tope grew more bright, and presently a black shadow glided stealthily towards the singer, until it stood behind her, looking down on her unwary figure. It was the form of a tall, powerfully-built man, of extreme darkness

of skin, with a shaggy head of hair and a moustache and beard that added their bristly terrors to a face naturally ugly and deeply pitted with small-pox. Large plain rings of gold decorated his big ears. He wore simply a "dhotee," or loin-cloth, with a short coat thrown over his shoulders and buttoned at the neck.

As the girl ended her song, the man, stooping quickly, pinioned the arms on which she supported herself, and then, leaning over her, pressed his rude lips against her smooth forehead. Loud and long was the shriek that startled the night; but he was not disconcerted.

"Lutchmee," he said, in a deep guttural voice, whilst his features were twisted into the caricature of a smile, "why are you here so late? Has Dilloo deserted you for

Putea? I thought he never left you alone. How long have I watched for such an opportunity as this! The sun is down, the fireflies are flashing in the air, and the bark of the jackal is angry in the jungle. Do you not hear? Ah! Were you waiting and singing for me? Did you linger here to tell me you would at last change your mind, and be more friendly to me?"

Perhaps this foolish hope had really passed through the satyr's thoughts, for his eye grew softer as he spoke, and he relaxed his grip upon the delicate arms. The answer to his address was a sudden and violent jerk of the girl's head into his face and the slipping of the two soft arms from his fingers, as his prey sprang to her feet, and, with another loud shriek, darted away. The blood came from the ruffian's nostrils,

and he was for a moment confused; then rapidly wiping away the red drops on the sleeve of his jacket, he pursued, with an oath, the flying elf. She would have escaped him in the dusk, for the village was not far away, had not the surprise unnerved her, but, mistaking her steps, she suddenly tripped over a clump of grass, and came with violence to the ground. There she lay senseless. The man, who could just distinguish her as he came up, kicked her over with his foot in the madness of his fury, until her pretty little face was turned upward to the sky. Then, with a muttered curse, lifting his heel, he was about to dash it into the delicate features, when a very respectable blow on the side of the head sent him bleeding to the earth. This blow was delivered with the aid of a long smooth

stick, by a young fellow of moderate height, but, for a Hindoo, of unusually fine development. He immediately stooped down, and endeavoured, in the gloom, to examine the young girl's face. Then he wrung his hands and broke out in reproaches on the groaning foe. Then he rose, and taking his stick, played it with remarkable vehemence and skill all over that person's body. Again he knelt beside Lutchmee, and placing his hand on her heart and his ear over her mouth, waited for tokens of life. In a short time she began to respire, then to recover, and, at length, she sat up.

"Lutchmee, Lutchmee!" said the young man; "wake up! I am here. It is Dilloo!"

"Oh, Dilloo!" sobbed the girl, putting her arms round his neck, "is it you? I have had such a frightful dream. I thought

that wicked creature Hunoomaun laid hold of me at the tank: then I got clear of him, and ran away, but while I was running, I tripped and fell down. Oh, I was sure he had me at last!"

"It was not a dream, Lutchmee: 'twas well I heard you scream, my darling, I can tell you. Look there! do you see that dark heap? That is Hunoomaun. I came upon him just in time to save you, and I have drubbed him well with my stick. Do you not hear him groaning? That's fine music, my good fellow!" cried he to the peon. "I'm glad, my Lutchmee, I came up when I did, or your pretty face would have lost its beauty for ever."

"But oh, Dilloo," she said, clinging to him, "what will he do to you? He will kill you. Let us go away."

"No fear," said the sturdy Dilloo: "he is a big fellow, 'tis true, but an arrant coward. Get up, you bully," added he, giving his prostrate antagonist a kick: "get up, and be off with you to Rumcoary or Noonda; they are the sort for you. And listen to me: if ever you come frightening the wife of Dilloo again, I'll finish you with a knife, and not let you off with a beating. You know I always do what I say. Come, my Lutchmee, let us go."

The manly fellow wreathed his arm round the supple waist of his wife, and, half-supporting, half-fondling her, led their way to the village. The baffled ruffian followed as best he could, dragging his stiffening limbs, and vowing a frightful vengeance on the young pair.

CHAPTER II.

THE WATCHMAN.

Of the Bengal village in Behar, where the hero and heroine of our story were born and had lived, the only other character yet presented to the reader, Hunoomaun, was the "chokedar," or watchman; a character, at the time we are writing of, found all over Bengal. The chokedars were not Government police. To them, under the old village system, were assigned, on behalf of the community, the general oversight of the precincts. They were paid by a local rate, or sometimes by the principal zemin-

dar. These officials were of a low order, both of caste and of merit, and their most active occupation consisted in winking at the operations of the rural dacoits (or robbers), and in lending themselves to the corrupt designs of one villager or village-family upon another. Hunoomaun was a chokedar of more than usual ability; as avaricious, sensual and dishonest as any Indian in the province. Prowling about the village at night, on the pretences of his duty, he had innumerable opportunities of gratifying his envy or his passion; and his remarkable cunning, and the invariable retribution that fell upon any persons who in any way crossed him, had created a very real dread of him through the whole community.

Dilloo was a tenant, under one of the zemindars, of a very small plot of ground,

on which there stood a hut of mud and wattle, which Lutchmee kept in beautiful order; while her husband tilled the ground with an assiduity that secured a very fair return. K—— contained about four thousand inhabitants within its bounds. It was near one of the largest villages in the district, which, as a convenient centre of a very populous portion of Behar, had been selected as the head-quarters of a deputy magistrate; in this instance, a European. The vicinity of this magistrate, with his sub-officials, the darogah, jemmadars and burcandazes, rendered Hunoomaun's office extremely unnecessary, and, indeed, exercised over him a somewhat wholesome restraint, while it made him more cunning and cautious in his proceedings. He had many times looked with an evil eye at the bright,

lissome young wife of the ryot; and, with the confidence of a villanous experience, had again and again attempted to get her into his power. But her husband, Dilloo, was a formidable obstacle; he happened to be very fond of her: and he was a fine, strong, ready young fellow, with a taste for athletics and adventure. In his village he was regarded with a certain respect. His performance on the crowns of venturesome rivals in the favourite exercise with the long *lattey*, or single stick, which had proved so fatal to the chokedar's designs, were famous over the whole plain, among villages where not a few skilful players with the same weapon were to be found. In wrestling no one could excel him. His thrift and industry had given him a respectable position. Altogether, therefore, Dilloo was a man, as

Hunoomaun felt, not to be openly fought; and he had accordingly been very cautious in pursuing his infatuated fancy for Lutchmee.

Lutchmee and Dilloo had, by the conventional arrangement between their parents, been betrothed before they knew what love was, or, indeed, before they had ever seen one another. But in this instance, when at twelve years of age the pretty girl was married to the boy of seventeen, the mutual liking that had before sprung up between them grew into a genuine and pure affection. It could hardly be otherwise. Both of them of unusually handsome make, of open dispositions and simple hearts, they seemed to have been fitted by nature for each other's company. Lutchmee almost idolised her strong, active husband: he dwelt with constant pride on his wife's beauty, her obedi-

ence, her humility, her love and attention. There are many Englishmen with the improved modern wife who will be inclined to envy the idyllic charm of this old-fashioned simplicity of things. But as for Dilloo, he, a man of low caste, had, without his own choice, been fortunate enough to attain that which, by the ordinances of Menu, the sacred acolyte was instructed to seek.

"Let him choose for his wife a girl whose form has no defect; who has an agreeable name; who walks gracefully, like the phenicopteros, or like a young elephant; whose hair and teeth are moderate respectively in quantity and in size; whose body has an exquisite softness."

When, on a gala day, Lutchmee's hair was oiled and braided, shining with a silver

pin athwart her well-formed head, and her body, duly anointed, was clothed in a short-armed, slight cholee or jacket, of bright silk, a petticoat of calico, and over all, coquettishly wreathed, a white muslin chudder, the scarf of Hindoo women; and her ears were laden with silver rings, and her arms and ankles tinkled with bracelets and bangles of the same metal; as she walked with the gentle lissome motion of refined indolence, the phenicopteros or the young elephant could hardly have excelled her in grace, and, but for her caste, she might have satisfied the most bigoted disciple of the great lawgiver. Dilloo was proud of his wife, and Lutchmee was proud of her husband—conditions such as may, even in India, bear fruits of happiness. This happiness had been alloyed by the death of

Lutchmee's only child a few weeks after its birth, and by the occasional unpleasantness to which the young wife's attractive beauty exposed her, from Europeans and from men of her own race.

Hunoomaun had been the most persistent, as he was by all odds the most disagreeable of all her admirers. Her detestation of him was extreme. He had annoyed her now and again with stupid compliments, and had surprised her into interviews which, for the sake of peace, and to save the fellow's life, she had hidden from her husband. But the chokedar had never so far committed himself as in the scene we have related, and probably would not then have gone so far but for a dose of arrack with which he had fortified his courage. Hitherto Hunoomaun had care-

fully shirked a collision with the husband of the girl whose beauty had so wrought upon him. The first occasion was a discouraging one. But he knew well how to revenge himself.

Dilloo soon began to know something of the watchman's resentment. His fowls disappeared, his rice was trampled and destroyed. One night there was a dacoity* in his house, evidently managed with great skill, by which he lost part of his savings. Strong as were his suspicions, he could not bring home these crimes to the chokedar, and he dared not act upon them without confirmation.

* Robbery.

CHAPTER III.

THE RECRUITER.

Not long after the events we have narrated, there one day arrived in the village of K—— a stranger, a Bengalee, arrayed, save as to his turban and paejamas, in an imitation of a European uniform. Across his shoulder and body on a belt he wore the chuprass, the badge of official employment. He had the air of a man shrewd and travelled. There was a touch of town-culture about him, and when he began to talk, as he very soon did with the ease of one to whom that was a vocation, he spoke with extreme hyper-

bolism even for an Asiatic. It was not long before he was sitting in an open space in the middle of the village, surrounded by a group of curious natives. Could it be possible that this was their old friend the pilgrim-hunter from Jaganàth, adopted for some fresh purpose of State by a paternal Government, and turning up here in a new guise? Hitherto, from their somewhat sequestered situation, such a visitor as the present had never been known to these villagers.

He had taken his seat with great dignity, and now calmly surveyed the gathering audience, which sought to penetrate him with its keen glances. Presently he took off his turban and slowly extracted therefrom an envelope, out of which he produced a piece of paper, well saturated with oil and other exuded matters, and browned by constant

handling with dirty fingers. This he opened and proceeded to read with great solemnity, as he did so rolling round his eyes to mark its effect upon his hearers. It purported to be a declaration by a great personage, entitled "the Protector of Emigrants" at Calcutta, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen and by authority of the Government of India informing all mankind that Dost Mahommed, the bearer—who bowed to his own name with deep respect—was, by the aforesaid Majesty and august Government, duly licensed to seek for and recruit in the district of B——, persons who were willing to emigrate as labourers to other parts of Her Majesty's dominions; that is to say, to British Guiana, or Trinidad, or Jamaica, etc., etc. This license, moreover, as he showed them with many

flourishes of the paper, had that day been countersigned by the resident, Reginald Howard Walter Wood, Sahib, not unknown by disagreeable personal experience to some of those now listening to him. When he had concluded the reading, the traveller demonstratively folded up the document, placed it in its envelope, restored it to the fold of his turban, and sat silent, with the air of a man who deserved well of his kind. Hindoos are courteous. They admire one who has a good estimate of himself: they hesitate to break the illusion. So there was a pause.

Among those who had gathered to see and hear the traveller, and had listened to his recital with interest, was Dilloo. He manifested, with those around him, wonder as to the meaning of this mysterious docu-

ment, and anxiety to hear it explained. But due time must be allowed to the stranger, who meantime sat silent, in order to give to curiosity a stronger incentive. At length an ancient Brahmin of the village, who sat by, opened his mouth:—

"O Baboo," said he, "we have heard with interest your recital of that long and grave document, by which we learn that you are a messenger of the great Queen and the most august Government at Calcutta! I gather from it that you are directed to go about the country in quest of men and women who may be inclined to take the risk of leaving the land of their birth and the society of their own people to be carried over mountains, rivers and seas, and to labour for Englishmen in far-off parts of the world, as they do in the Indigo districts.

Can this be so? Wherefore should you, a Bengalee, be found helping to persuade your people to desert their own land, and engage in adventures they know not how perilous, and the end of which they cannot foresee?"

"Ah, you are right, sir! But, listen, O friends!" said the wily Dost Mahommed, taking off his turban again, and reproducing the dirty envelope, which he held between his thumb and finger high in air. "This is the command of the great Queen to me, Dost Mahommed, one of the meanest of her servants, to travel about and inform my countrymen of inestimable benefits, boundless riches, and unalloyed happiness which await them, if they like to seek them, in other parts of her wide dominions. It is my duty to tell you, by authority of

the Queen and Government of India, that it is open to any one who hears me to become as rich as a zemindar. Is everything so golden here that you should not do like the English themselves—take your journeys in search of riches and happiness? Look around you! You see how poor millions of our Indian people are! Everywhere the fields are small, the wages are low; everywhere the land is crowded with people—too many mouths and too little money; too many taxes, too much government. Most of you have hard work, bad food, and very little of it. Look at your clothes! I see some of you only with a coarse dhotee: you are obliged, many of you, to be content with the meanest garments. You see me! I am dressed like an Englishman: I wear good quality pae-

jamas and a European coat. You may, if you like, every one of you, do the same!"

A delighted buzz came from the throng as this dazzling prospect was held out to them. It must be true, they thought, for there was the chuprass on the breast of the speaker to vouch for it! Dost Mahommed pursued his advantage, and condescended to particulars.

"All this you may have, and much more, in lands where the sun is warm like the sun of Bengal, and the water is plentiful and pure like the streams and tanks of India, and the earth is richer and more productive than ours; where the mango and banana, and bread-fruit and rice, and sugarcane and cotton grow. Great English sahibs own these lands, and want labourers like you to

cultivate them. They are rich and they are generous. There a man may get every day of his life as much or as little as he likes. The work is easy, like your own garden work; and for such labour a man or a woman can make easily from ten annas to two rupees"—he deliberately counted this extraordinary sum on his fingers as he uttered the magical promise—"for every day's work. See: here is the proof!"

The crowd eagerly leaned forward to look at the paper which he now produced from the breast of his uniform. It was in English, but he gave a very free translation of it. Representations were thereby made that there was a great scarcity of labourers in the West Indies; that thither emigrants would be carried for nothing; would receive a bounty of one hundred rupees; would be

indentured to kind masters; would get house-room for nothing; when sick would be admitted to an hospital, and there be provided with a doctor, medicines, and food free of charge. All this was vouched by the authority of the Governor and Legislature of British Guiana, and certified by a sahib at Calcutta, who dated from Garden Reach on the Hooghly.

It may easily be inferred what curiosity and surprise were awakened in the minds of the ignorant but subtle Indians by this story, afterwards embellished by many additional illustrations from the recounter's vivid fancy. The novelty of the proposal, the romantic halo which invested the unknown possibilities of such an enterprise as he suggested to them, the tempting bribes of a heavy bounty, easy work, plenty of

food, and good wages, excited the imagination of the natives to a high pitch. The great sahib at Calcutta loomed up before their excited vision as a kind divinity, proffering to unworthy wretches entrance into a Paradise of labour. Yet there were not wanting in the crowd timid sceptics whose faith was apt to be regulated and restricted by sight, and who hinted at contingencies quite unworthy of the high authorities by whom these solemn statements were vouched.

"Bah!" said a shrewd vendor from the bazaar, with native sophistry: "if the great sahibs were desirous to give us all these good things, would it not be cheaper to send them to us than to take us to them?"

The fickle crowd admiringly adopted the transparent fallacy, and looked to the re-

cruiter for an answer. It came, however, straight and sharp, from Dilloo.

"Nonsense!" said he: "Samânee knows he is talking like a fool. The baboo tells us we are offered work in a distant country at good wages. Does Samânee wish the Government to carry the country here, and drop it down in Behar?"

Dost Mahommed led the laugh which rewarded this refutation of Samânee's quibble. The tide turned again in favour of the recruiter. He, however, understood his business too well to press the matter any further at that time. He knew that he must do his work in detail,—in this following the example of his prototype the pilgrim-hunter. So he arose and announced that he proposed to spend the night in a neighbouring village, but that he would return next day

to talk with any who desired to ask him any questions.

Dilloo had listened to the man's words with peculiar interest. The natural energy of his character, his taste for adventure, and his imagination were all appealed to by the recruiter's language. Here seemed to be an opening for a new and prosperous life. His relations with Hunoomaun, now his sworn enemy, were likely to render his life in the village unpleasant, even if it were not dangerous. A man in the chokedar's position in India has so many ways of working out his vengeance, and forgiveness is not a Hindoo virtue.

No wonder Dilloo's brain was on fire as he extricated himself from the crowd, and slowly paced in the direction of his home.

CHAPTER IV.

A LONG FAREWELL.

When, the next day, Dost Mahommed came back to the village, Dilloo was among the first to seek him out. Again the recruiter expatiated on the promises of the Government, the bounty-money of fifty dollars, the high wages, the free medical care, the light work. He said nothing—indeed probably had not himself been told—of fever-swamps, of liabilities, under rigid laws, to fines and imprisonments for breaches of the proposed contract, of labour in crop

time for as long as twenty, twenty-five, or thirty hours at a stretch, and sometimes without extra pay—a not universal, but frequent incident of a Coolie's life in the West Indies. Dilloo's mind was gradually won over, and the only remaining doubt was concerning his wife. "Could she go?"

Oh, yes; the recruiter was only too anxious to procure women. They were in great demand. She should have the same bounty and the same wages as he.

But on consideration, Dilloo began to doubt whether he ought to entertain this kind offer. He loved his wife too well rashly to permit her to share what he felt by instinct to be an uncertain experiment; and he was perplexed between his own desire to venture it, and the perils to which

she would be exposed were his protection withdrawn from her. This difficulty was, however, a few days afterwards removed. Mrs. Wood, the wife of the deputy-magistrate, happened to require a maid, and being rather particular, had caused considerable inquiry to be made for the sort of person she wanted. Dilloo took his wife to the magistrate's bungalow at T——. The lady was at once struck with Lutchmee's cleanliness and good looks, and offered to engage her. Dilloo, like most impetuous men, too readily satisfied with temporary solutions, considered that this sufficiently ensured his wife's safety, and urged her to accept the offer. She, while her heart trembled with painful forebodings, was too lovingly obedient to her husband's will to question his desires.

When the day of parting came, Dilloo held Lutchmee in his arms a long while. They could scarcely speak. The pangs of an adieu amongst ourselves are keen enough, but they are mitigated by the knowledge that intercourse is easy and information certain, however far in space hearts may be sundered. What, then, to our young lovers must have been the moment of separation which rested no hopes on certainties or possibilities of communication, which knew only that years must elapse before they could meet again, and that perhaps from parting to meeting no single message could pass between them?

"Lutchmee!" said the young man, "I go away, thinking of you only. I will love you faithfully all the time I am away. I

am promised that in a few years * I shall be able to return with all the money I have made, and then you and I will be well off. We shall be still young, and can spend our lives in prosperity and happiness."

"Ah, Dilloo!" said the girl, with a sob, "how much this is to pay for a hope: is it not?"

Then, feeling that this was half a complaint, and ashamed to raise a doubt which might, at so sore a moment, begloom her husband's heart, she checked herself, and tried to smile.

"I shall be as happy as I can," said she;

* The promise authorized by the Government is ten years; but it is not the recruiter's cue to be too specific in his representations. That this is not an exaggeration is proved by the fact that an order issued to the Indian magistrates to be careful to explain the exact incidents of the contract seriously diminished the immigration to the West Indies, and led to a protest from the planters of British Guiana.

"and the time will run quickly when I think of you. And you will not be afraid that I shall not continue to love you, will you?"

A tender pressure to his heart was the pledge of Dilloo's trust.

"Do your best," said he, "to win the good-will of the Mem-sahib; and if Hunoomaun tries any more tricks with you, go at once to her and ask her to protect you. These English are sometimes cruel and harsh themselves, but they won't allow Hindoos to commit injustice. Be very wary of that rascal. Never go out alone, if you can help it: always go to the tank in the morning in company with the other women. It is well he does not live in the same village with you."

Thus in simple talk these simple hear-

prepared for a parting to them so appalling; and at length, with manly tenderness on the one side and tearful struggles for fortitude on the other, they bade each other farewell.

CHAPTER V.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

NEARLY two years have passed since Dilloo's departure. From the recruiter, when he returned next year to the district, Mr. Wood, whose wife had taken a fancy for Lutchmee, learned that her husband had sailed in good health, within three weeks of their parting. The graceless Dost Mahommed elaborated a fabulous message from the emigrant, descriptive of his well-being, his happiness, and his bright assurances of success, concluding with a hope that it might be possible for Lutchmee to

join him in a year or two, should she not hear from him to the contrary. This message was joyfully received by Lutchmee, to be pondered and dreamed of with unceasing pleasure.

For more than a year Hunoomaun, seeing the young woman to be under the protection of the magistrate's wife, and, indeed, as he had, owing to the distance between the two villages, but slight opportunities of meeting with her, left her undisturbed. She rigorously attended to Dilloo's injunctions, and never went beyond the grounds, to tank or temple or bazaar, unless accompanied by some of her fellow-servants. At the time when we resume her history, one of those rumours that are periodically current in India, of a projected rising of the Mussulman popu-

lation, had excited alarm among English residents. Mr. Wood was a brave man, and really gave no credit to the rumour, but he thought it right to appear to be on the alert, and appointed several of the most trustworthy Hindoo peons and burcandazes to act in turns as armed guards of his house at night. There were always plenty of these hanging about it by day. Among those selected from the neighbourhood was Hunoomaun, who had cleverly managed to give the magistrate the idea that he was a very trusty and effective fellow. At regular intervals he took his station during the night on the verandah in front of the deputy's house, armed with a cutlass and prepared to give warning to the more reliable force, consisting of Mr. Wood, his clerk, and an English servant,

inside. In separate buildings were the justice-rooms, and there the Darogah and some peons were stationed. The verandah covered in three sides of the bungalow: on the right side were the reception-rooms; on the other, those for sleeping and dressing. A lattice, pierced by a door, shut off the verandah leading to the latter from the one in front. Lutchmee preferred sleeping outside her mistress's room, in the side verandah, and Mrs. Wood being attached to the girl, and often needing her attendance in the night, made no objection to it. The chokedar now had occasional opportunities of seeing and addressing Lutchmee. He pretended to have a fancy for another of the women, and treated Lutchmee with distant courtesy. He professed himself pained by her

aversion, again and again begging her not to be afraid of him, to forget the past, and to believe that he no longer entertained any evil designs against her. In this way Lutchmee's apprehensions were gradually soothed, and she allowed herself a little more freedom in her intercourse with the man. When he was on guard, he would peer through the lattice at the young girl as she disposed herself to sleep on the verandah; but he dared not venture within, for he knew the magistrate's ear was quick, and his revolver always ready. One night, however, when it was his watch, after he had had recourse to his old prompter arrack, his quick perception informed him that Lutchmee was restless and awake,—he drew her by a gentle whisper to the lattice.

"What is the matter?" he said: "you do not sleep."

"I have some foreboding," replied the girl timidly. "Did you hear anything like a woman's cry a long way off? And just now I thought I heard a rumbling as of carriages or of a troop of horse."

Hunoomaun started, and listened attentively a full five minutes.

"No," he said, "it was some distant thunder, or the murmuring of the heavy air over the house and through the trees; and the scream, no doubt, was that of a paroquet or a monkey in the wood."

"I cannot rest," said Lutchmee, "I am so frightened. It seems as if some dreadful thing were going to happen. How hot the night is!"

"Come and sit down awhile and talk

with me," said the peon: "it will make you sleep. You are quite safe," he added, judging instinctively that she hesitated, though he could not see her face. "Sahib and Mem-Sahib are close by, and can hear us."

Lutchmee for the moment felt half ashamed of her suspicions, and slipping back the wooden bolt of the door, stepped out on the front verandah beside the dark shadow of the chokedar.

"See," he said, "we will go away from the Sahib, and sit on the seat at the end of the verandah until you get sleepy."

As they took their way along the verandah, their shoeless feet passing silently over the smooth hard clay, Hunoomaun rapidly estimated the opportunities of the situation. Could he not carry her off?

She was slight, and he was a powerful fellow. The thing he had so long desired seemed at length to be nigh, and yet so difficult of attainment. Unobserved by Lutchmee he had, in closing the lattice door, slipped the bolt back again with his finger. The front door opening on the verandah was, at that time, bolted. This verandah measured sixty feet from end to end, including the width of the two side verandahs: no one slept on the right or west side of the bungalow, which was also the farther side from the magisterial offices. In the middle of the verandah on that side there was an opening in the lattice, from which steps led to the compound towards a shrubbery. The rascal's plan was soon formed. He extended their walk round the corner from the front verandah

as far as this outlet. Quietly placing his cutlass on a window-sill as he passed it, he unbound the puggery from his head, and, snatching Lutchmee's hand in his right, suddenly thrust the cloth over her face with his left, while he said in her ear,—

"Do not call out, or I will kill you."

He thus stifled her first cry, and after a minute removed the cloth from her face. But poor Lutchmee was unable to call out. The suddenness of the attack and the deprival of air, had produced the effect which had probably been calculated on, for she fell flaccid and insensible into Hunoomaun's arms. Pressing her to his bosom, he was in the act of carrying his inanimate burden off to the shrubbery, from which he could have escaped to-

wards his own house, when Mrs. Wood's voice was heard shrilly calling out the girl's name. A disturbance immediately followed, assisted by the bass voice of the magistrate. The ruffian was completely disconcerted. He was well aware of Mr. Wood's promptitude of action. If he carried the girl back he would probably be met by the magistrate, and his villany was certain to be exposed; if he left her where she was she would, on recovering, call up the household. While he hesitated, he heard Mr. Wood unfastening the door, and saw the flash of a candle; at the same moment his burden began to revive. There was no time to retrieve and use his cutlass, with which no doubt he would have revenged upon her his disappointment; so, venting an oath at his ill-luck, he

flung her down with all his force, and darted away into the night. When the magistrate, whose quick eye had detected the guard's weapon, reached the place where Lutchmee lay groaning, he found her bleeding severely from a wound in the head, and with her shoulder dislocated. The peon was nowhere to be seen. After shouting for him in vain, and firing two chance shots in the direction of the shrubbery, the resident called his servants and proceeded to treat Lutchmee for her injuries. As soon as she was able to relate her story, Mr. Wood, satisfied of the chokedar's guilt, issued a warrant for his apprehension; but that wily Hindoo had already adjudicated on his own case and condemned himself to a period of exile.

As Lutchmee recovered from the illness

consequent upon this adventure, her mind turned more and more to the absent Dilloo. She felt that there was for her no real safety away from him. Two years of patient resignedness might well have made her weary of the separation, and she recalled with increasingly glad recollections the terms of the fictitious message delivered by the recruiter. At length she decided to make a bold venture and follow her husband. The kind dissuasions of the magistrate and his wife fell on unwilling ears. When at length he saw that grief and suspense threatened to affect her health, Mr. Wood consented that she should join a party of emigrants that happened to be passing the village. He wrote to the depôt at the Hooghly stating the circumstances of her case, and asking for her,

as a woman of respectability, the special attention of the doctor who might have the conduct of the voyage. In the end, Lutchmee, with four hundred and thirty-three others of different ages, sexes, origins, and castes, embarked on board the good ship "Sunda," bound from Calcutta for the port of Georgetown, Demerara.

We have now done with India; the scene changes to other and far different circumstances and conditions of life.

CHAPTER VI.

"WHERE IS HE?"

THE good ship "Sunda," after a voyage of ninety-three days, was standing in before the warm, light, north-east breeze, towards the Georgetown lightship. Little could be seen beyond the expanse of yellow-tinged water,—coloured by the mud of the far interior brought down by the vast rivers which discharge themselves into that sea; the lightship gently rolling in the swell; in the distance a dark line of shore, from which here and there rose slender shafts that looked like reeds—the lighthouse at George-

town, and the chimneys of the coast estates. From galley to forecastle the deck was crowded with Coolies; some eagerly scanning the horizon; others entertaining their comrades with childish exhibitions of joy and curiosity, or with their lively babble; others crouched on their hams, their heads bowed down to their knees in an attitude of despondency.

Lutchmee, whose pretty face and coquettish ways had during the voyage won upon the rough English and foreign sailors, was standing well forward on the forecastle near the look-out, who, with grotesque English and uncouth gestures, tried to make her understand their progress. It was three o'clock in the afternoon. The sun, nearing a level, shot its hot beams sidewise on the Asiatics, nearly all of whom showed signs

of weariness. Lutchmee alone seemed animated with joy. She was looking forward to the meeting with Dilloo, and her little heart beat, and her eyes were shining with a hopeful light. The sailor noticed her gladness.

"Aha, Lutchmee!" said he, with a voice like a rusty coffee-mill,—they had found out that the pretty Hindoo was journeying to meet her husband,—"you glad, eh? You go see Dilloo? Bah! Dilloo marry 'nother woman. Ha! ha! what you do then, Lutchmee? Come back to me, eh?"—putting his hand on what he supposed to be his heart.

Lutchmee understood the good-natured banter, for she had already made herself a little familiar with English. She tossed her head, and laughing in a silvery tone,

put her hands together and bowed towards the shore. The pantomime was pretty, and modest and sincere withal.

"No fear Dilloo: all true Dilloo."

"Hem!" said the sailor to himself, winking his eyes very hard, for the glare was strong: "I only hope so, for the poor wench's sake. If he's true, he's the first honest copper-skin I ever come across. Where's that clumsy tug a-drivin' to?"

The steamer thus spoken of soon approached and hailed the ship. As it was getting late, the captain resolved to engage her to tow his vessel into the river; and before long the "Sunda" was more rapidly cleaving the muddy water. Gradually the long line of shore began to grow clear; then could be discerned the fringing palm trees and the scraggy bush along the bank:

then the wooden houses, here and there; and at length, just in front, the mouth of the river. On the left ran a strong sea-wall, at that hour the promenade of the fashionable world of Georgetown: fatigued officials with their cigars, pale ladies languidly sauntering, children in their perambulators, and the dark buxom nursemaids, gay with their bright-coloured turbans and white dresses. Up and down walked many a wealthy planter, —one, a grand old figure, erect and haughty, with stick on shoulder, a Scotchman who had spent forty-five years in the colony, the Nestor of the planting community. At the corner of this promenade towered up the lighthouse. On the right entrance of the river the low flat banks were maintained by a short piece of sea-wall; and out from the small village protected by it there stretched

in lengthy skeleton the Pouderoyen Stelling, or wharf, which was the landing-place of the ferry for the west bank of the Demerara river. Between the banks flowed the stream, silent, smooth, and muddy; sweeping by many ships and schooners, steamers, barges, and boats, anchored or moving on its ample bosom.

By this time the Coolies swarmed to the sides of the ship, and eagerly peered over the taffrail as the great vessel swung round the corner and disclosed to their eyes the flat site of Georgetown—with its huge sheds of merchandize, its white houses and green blinds, and the familiar cocoa and cabbage palms, lifting their high, graceful heads into the clear air; while in front, on the yellow banks and by the stellings that jutted out into the river, there went on the work

and bustle of a thriving port. Before the strangers could take in all these features, the rattle of the running anchor chain told them that their voyage was at an end, and that now for them a new life had begun. It was the rough knell that marked off their native existence from an experience to these poor, simple creatures, more than novel, unexpected, inconceivable; an experience for not a few of them to be embittered with intensifying and hopeless aggravation until death should become their truest friend.

Scarcely had the anchor sunk into the muddy bottom, when a boat pulled by four powerful blacks in sailors' uniform came alongside: and presently there stepped on board the health-officer of the port, the immigration Agent-General, and an interpreter.

The latter salaamed right and left, and the people delightedly returned the welcome of a countryman. The ship's doctor showed his books. The health-bill was declared satisfactory. The Agent-General, a grey old gentleman of considerable activity, passed round the vessel to take a survey of the new arrivals, here and there putting a kindly question through the interpreter.

"This lot," said he to the captain, "is not a very promising one. I don't believe thirty per cent. of them ever did any field work."

The captain shook his head.

"A whole lot of them were sent aboard not fit to travel. You'd have thought they'd have shaken the life out of themselves the first time they were sick. We had forty or fifty cases of disease among 'em. Look there, now, there's an idiot; and here are

two lepers,—there are more below. How your agent in India comes to pass such creatures as able-bodied, beats me to understand. It don't require a doctor to tell me such a fellow as *that* ain't worth his salt," said he, pointing to a little dark, unhealthy-looking man, who, in the favourite sitting posture, was vacantly regarding them. "Ask him how old he is."

It turned out he was nearly sixty.

"It's a shame!" said the Agent-General, angrily. "If I had my way, I would send half this lot back again. I see by the list five idiots are reported by Dr. Chandle. But there is such a demand for labour, that the planters can't afford to send them back, and so they must make what they can out of them. This bad selection is the beginning of every sort of wrong and evil."

"I'll tell you what," said the shrewd captain, "my opinion is, those Indian recruiters are a set of scoundrels. They don't honestly go up the country and get people really fit to work: they just pick them out of the slums of Calcutta and the large towns; and your agents aren't over particular either about their examination. You should see them passing them at the Hooghly depôt. The examination is a farce: Dr. Chandle will tell you so. But what can I do? I must bring 'em, you know."

Probably every one concerned would have asked the same question, and shrugged his shoulders, and, in the same way, shifted the responsibility on some one else. The cunning Indian recruiters would have shrugged their shoulders, and asked, "What can we

do? We must make a living." The colonial agents would have shrugged their shoulders, and asked, "What can we do? The colony must have people, good or bad." The highly-paid officials of the Indian Government, whose business it was to superintend the emigration, and who were supposed to be responsible for the character of the recruiters, and the condition of the people permitted to emigrate, would have shrugged their shoulders and asked, "What can we do? The people want to go, they understand they will be better off in the West Indies, and, at all events, they can be spared." The Indian Government, the British Government, and the Colonial Government would each have shrugged their shoulders, and said, "What can we do? The evil consequences are much to

be regretted; but, really, no pains are spared to avert them!"

Thus responsibility floats *in nubibus*, while the realities of wrong and sorrow come cruelly home to the victims of a complicated system of shifted obligations.

How many evils of this sort remain in the world unredressed only Heaven knows; but they are often infinitely more pestilent, more difficult to remedy, than the direct and concrete efforts of deliberate tyranny.

Mr. Goodeve, the Agent-General, had noticed Lutchmee, who, clothed in her finest, with her hair daintily dressed, stood curiously watching the small group of gentlemen, as they passed among her country-people.

"That is a fine young woman," said he, stopping to look at her.

"Yes," said the surgeon; "and she has behaved very well on the passage. She is superior to any woman I ever saw coming over. She says that she is married to some man who emigrated two years ago."

"Ask her who it is," said Mr. Goodeve to the interpreter. The answer was rapidly obtained.

"Dilloo!" said he. "Why, if we have one, we have fifty Dilloos on the estates. What ship did he come in?"

Lutchmee did not know. She could tell the year he left her, and the village he came from; but, as the latter information was not kept on record by the Immigration Department, identification by those particulars was impossible. Nor was it of any avail to attempt to describe her husband's appearance. An agent, with thirty or forty thousand

people under his care, could not recall every face that passed under his notice.

"Can I not see him?" inquired the simple woman of the interpreter. "Where is he? I want to find him."

The interpreter shook his head.

"There are many Dilloos," he said. "They are scattered about over a great country. How shall we know the Dilloo whom *you* seek?"

Lutchmee clasped her hands, and the large drops stealing from her eyes jewelled her dark cheeks, as she went on her knees before Mr. Goodeve, and poured out in her own language a passionate appeal to him to take her to her husband. The long-tried patience of years, the ever-pleasing dreams of day and night throughout the voyage, had tended towards this hour as one of

unmixed joy; and the sudden eclipse of her hopes extinguished her fortitude. She had never forecast the disappointment of this moment. Mr. Goodeve was affected, and the sailor who had been watching the interview turned away with a dry cough. The Agent-General took her by the hand and spoke kindly to her, promising to do his best to find her husband, "before she was allotted." Lutchmee had little or no idea what this meant. To her the contract she had made in India was a matter of form—a means of reaching her lover. She had not taken the trouble to think of the nature of her engagement, so absorbed had been her mind in the one aim of affection.

CHAPTER VII.

A DANGEROUS ADMIRER.

The next day the emigrants were disembarked in boats and conveyed to one of the stellings, whence they marched to the Immigration depôt, a wooden barrack situated at the end of a flat marsh behind the sea-wall. At the other end of this marsh were the garrison barracks, inhabited by some companies of one of the West India regiments. The whole of the buildings on the ground were below high-water mark, and lay between open trenches. Arrived at the depôt, the people squatted quietly about the house and beneath the verandah. Then

the Agent-General, assisted by sub-agents, classified them, as required by the local law, according to relationship, and, as far as possible, by placing together friends or fellow-villagers. Subject to this, allotments were then arbitrarily made of batches of them to various estates, in proportion to the number for which the proprietors had applied. Looking forward to this contingency, it was usual for the planters to apply for more than they needed. In due time the agents of the estates, or overseers, attended at the depôt to receive their quota, and the Indians were marched off in bodies, some to the steamers for the Arabian coast, or the Islands, or Berbice, others to the east and west coasts of Demerara. Along with the five idiots who were retained by the Immigration Agent-General to be sent

back to India, Lutchmee was kept at the depôt. She saw her fellow-travellers disperse with a heavy heart, and sadly, through the long hot days, she sat on the verandah, gazing listlessly at the few acres of grassy swamp, watching the morning and evening evolutions of the troops; or in the afternoons, as the sun declined, and the pale people of Georgetown gathered to catch the incoming breeze, she lay upon the grassy bank, looking at the yellow waves or observing the gloomy gaiety of the strollers on the wall.

Thus a fortnight passed, and the sub-agents, though they had made active inquiry, had been unable to identify the missing Dilloo. Six Dilloos had arrived in the ship which, as they judged from the information Lutchmee supplied, had brought her hus-

band. One would have thought that nothing could be easier than to write to the employers of these six Coolies and request them to ascertain whether their servant of that name had been married to a girl called Lutchmee. And, in fact, Mr. Goodeve directed the sub-agents to write to the masters of the six Dilloos; but they were not bound to reply, and only one found it convenient to do so. His Dilloo had only one eye, and hearing a wife had arrived to claim a husband, pretended to have once married a Lutchmee, but she declined to believe in him. Mr. Goodeve was perplexed. He had now retained the woman, without allotting her, an unusual time. Experience had made him suspicious of the excuses of wily Hindoos, and he considered that possibly, nay, in spite of himself he

was beginning to think *probably*, her story was untrue. Fortunately he had the Governor's approval of what he had done; for, indeed, Her Majesty's representative in British Guiana follows with all the minuteness of a tradesman the movements of the Immigration office; and the Agent-General, instead of being a departmental minister, with a seat in the Court of Policy, is practically degraded to the level of a petty clerk, waiting on the nod or the wink of the Viceroy.

One afternoon Lutchmee, as was her wont, strayed to the embankment. She had arrayed herself with her habitual neatness and elegance. The western end of the promenade was frequented by a few of her countrymen, who had interested themselves in the subject of her anxiety. They were

"unbound," that is, freed from their indenture, and one or two of them were wealthy. A lithe little Madrassee pedler and usurer took special notice of her, and, having dealings with most of the estates in the colony, had caused her story to be pretty generally circulated. He held out the hope of being able to find Dilloo. This afternoon, as she was sitting waiting for him, a tall, sharp-eyed man, of middle age, with the dark face and hair and strongly-marked features of a North Anglian, who was taking his afternoon constitutional at a pace rather more energetic than was common among the promenaders, suddenly caught sight of her, and, stopping, conned with the greatest coolness and deliberation her features and figure.

"Hum," said he, aloud, with unconcealed satisfaction, "that's a tidy young girl. The

handsomest Indian I ever saw. Where did she come from?—Whose wife you, eh?"

"Dilloo, massa," said the soft voice.

"Dilloo? Who is Dilloo? Where Dilloo live, eh?"

"No sabby, massa," replied the girl, adopting the Creole *patois* of her new acquaintances on the wall.

"No sabby? What estate?"

She shook her head: this was Greek to her. Just then her Madrassee friend, who knew her questioner too well, came up.

"Salaam, massa!"

"Salaam! Look here, Akaloo, just ask this girl what estate she's on, will you, or who she is living with?"

"She no on any estate, massa. Stay Goody office. No bound * yet. Just come."

* "Bound," the pigeon-English term for "indentured."

He gave a jerk of his thumb over towards the river, where the "Sunda" was still lying.

"Not bound yet? How's that? All the last lot have been on the estate weeks since. What an old rascal that Goodeve is to keep such a fine girl hanging about the depôt! I shall apply for her at once."

He said this out loud, indifferent to his Indian audience. Akaloo, however, who had been keenly watching him, struck in,—

"No, no, massa. She go look for 'usbaun; left her in India: come here. No found 'usbaun estate yet."

"Oh, nonsense: she might look for him till doomsday. Tell her he's dead, or married to someone else. There are four Dilloos at Belle Susanne, one is very likely hers,

and tell her she can have any one of them she likes—eh?" said he, laughing, and patting her cheek.

Lutchmee, half gathering the meaning of his words, indignantly turned her face from his touch, and the ready tears rolled down her cheeks. The gentleman looked at her with some astonishment. Your regular planter has no faith in a Coolie's feelings. To him every act of an Indian, however natural, is acting. But Drummond shrewdly suspected the acting to be this time genuine.

"What," he said, "you love Dilloo? Much want Dilloo?" She nodded assent.

Akaloo explained that she was inconsolable from her disappointment, and that Massa Goodeve was doing all he could to find her husband. Mr. Drummond, after a

cheering word, took his way along the wall to where he knew Mr. Goodeve would at that time be found taking the air, if, indeed, breathing a half-furnace blast may be so favourably described.

"I say, Goodeve," said he, abruptly, "what are you keeping that pretty girl at the depôt for? This won't do: I must report you to the Governor."

"Very well," said the Agent-General, smiling. "Do it in writing, please, and I shall forward a memorandum in reply. But the fact is, that girl is giving me a great deal of anxiety. I have been looking for a man she says is her husband. But, from her story, I shrewdly suspect she is not sure he is here at all. He may have gone to Trinidad or St. Lucia. He left India, she says, two years ago."

"Pshaw!" interrupted the other: "it's a cock-and-bull story. You ought not to keep her here any longer. She must be allotted. Send her to me at Belle Susanne: I'll find a husband for her. I must see old Tom about it."

I regret to say that the "Old Tom" here referred to was no other than His Excellency Governor Thomas Walkingham, who had certainly not won the sobriquet by his cat-like vigilance, or because his spirits were sweet and above proof. He was one of those steady-going mediocrities whom a grateful Colonial Office is apt to value in such inflammable quarters as the West Indies, where the least spark of originality or independence may, in certain conditions, set fire to a whole community. An estimable, good-natured, easy-going man was

Thomas Walkingham, who, never too active a friend of the Coolies, and never too stern a reprover of the planters, retained an imperial reputation for humanity, and was lucky enough to hold one of the richest governments at Her Majesty's disposal.

As Drummond turned away, the Agent-General looked after him doubtfully. This was one of the most powerful planters in the colony; a member of the Court of Policy, and noted for his determined will, strong passions, and practical ability. Mr. Goodeve held a good opinion of him as a master, though he was rather doubtful of him as a man. In the present instance his mind was divided between his suspicions of Drummond and his own growing distrust of Lutchmee. If she were telling the truth he could do nothing less willingly than to

put her in Mr. Drummond's power for five years. Were her story untrue, even his mind was not able to overcome the natural race indifference to what became of her. He knew too well the ordinary and inevitable fate of the small proportion of Coolie women then in the colony; without clear evidence that this one was unlike the rest,—her good looks, indeed, being rather against her,—how could he be expected to get up any special interest in her fate? Subtle, indeed, but powerful are the influences upon the calmest and most honest mind, in those peculiar relations of a superior to an inferior race, of which terms of bondage or terms akin to bondage form a part. If they are difficult for an analyst to define, they are certainly too real and strong for the persons concerned to resist.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECOGNITION.

Mr. Drummond was as good as his word. The next day he applied to the Governor in writing, informing him that "he had ascertained a Coolie woman, *ex* 'Sunda,' still remained at the depôt unallotted; and begging to state that as she appeared to be a respectable person, and he was desirous of securing as many women of that kind as possible on Belle Susanne, he asked that she might be allotted to that estate."

The Governor had hardly ever been on an estate in his life. He was personally incurious. Faith, to an official who must

write home long despatches about his pro-consulate, is superior to sight. He could affirm that the general condition of the immigrants was satisfactory, and the Coolie system a great success, if he only came in contact with the subject in letters, minutes, or despatches, or only saw the people in holiday attire in the course of his afternoon drives. Had he been challenged to say whether he thought Drummond a fit and proper person to whom to deliver up a handsome young Indian woman, he would have said that "he had no reason from any official memoranda to doubt that she would receive at Belle Susanne the same satisfactory attention and care which the reports he had received of the estate led him to believe were characteristic of Mr. Drummond's manage-

ment." The man who can at once satisfy his own conscience and his official superiors with negatives of that sort saves himself and them innumerable inconveniences, and is deemed a most valuable person.

The Governor had already been informed by the Agent-General of the reason why Lutchmee had not been allotted, and had approved of her retention. But there are limits to governmental kindness. Mr. Drummond was too powerful to be disregarded. The matter would get talked about, and talk in a small colony must be avoided. Accordingly a "despatch" was written by the Government Secretary to the Immigration Agent-General, two hundred yards off, stating "that he had the honour to enclose a copy of a letter received from the Hon. C. C. Drummond, and that

His Excellency the Governor recommended that the woman '*Sunda*, 330,' should be allotted to the estate of Belle Susanne."

Mr. Goodeve's humanity never slept. Whatever doubts had sprung up in his mind, he still desired to act the part he deemed the law had assigned to him, of Coolie protector,—a part which the planters thought he acted too extravagantly.* He sent for Lutchmee and told her, through the interpreter, that as her husband had not been found, the Governor had ordered him to allot her to an estate where she must discharge the obligations of her contract made in India, but that if her husband should be found she would be placed wherever he was.

* There is an official who has sat for the portrait of the Agent-General in the tent. I need not mention his name, but it is well known and greatly respected in the West Indies.

Lutchmee had gained from her countrymen on the sea-wall some inkling of estate life. They had described to her the work in the field and the "megass-yard," the houses, the hospitals, and the general conditions. For this she was quite unprepared. The whole impulse of her engagement and voyage had been to regain her husband. To lose him, and find herself bound to perform labours she had never thought of, almost crushed her. She implored Mr. Goodeve to find her husband, or send her back to India. The terrible unfriended desolation of her heart excited her to a loud outburst of grief. The Agent-General was moved by her agitation, but was obliged to return a decided answer. She must go to Belle Susanne.

The poor woman sat down, and covering

her head in her chudder, rocked herself backward and forwards, moaning piteously. The interpreter vainly tried to comfort her. Mr. Goodeve went to her, and put his hand on the bare arm that clasped it, to remove the drapery from her head. The skin was dry and burning.

"Ha!" said he, "she has fever, and very badly, too. Sammy, she must go to the hospital."

The way from the immigration depôt to that admirable public institution, the Georgetown hospital, lay along a road that traversed Eveleery, the garrison fields, and turning at the end of the east coast "dam," or high road, which was cut short by those fields, passed over a wooden bridge that led across a creek to one of the principal streets of the town. Beyond the garrison, right

and left of the east coast dam, was a wilderness of unoccupied land, and on either side of the dam a broad canal, which required every few weeks to be cleared of its weeds. The property belonged to Government, and afforded occupation to a number of short-time convicts, who were led out to their work in gangs of about a dozen.

Lutchmee was borne along in a low hand-cart covered with an awning of cotton, her whole frame burning with fever, and her eyes restlessly wandering over every object they could reach. As the cart reached the bridge, it passed a file of prisoners going out to work, who looked with interest at the sick woman. Before any one could interfere, one of the prisoners, suddenly exclaiming, "Lutchmee!" darted from the line and clasped her in his arms. Her

quick eye had taken in the familiar though altered features, and she had half risen, but the joy was too great, and she lay senseless in the embrace of Dilloo. He was instantly seized and pulled away by the foreman of the gang, who took the strange act of the convict for a sudden frenzy. Dilloo's teeth ground together, and a fierce fire was flaming in his eyes. Fortunately the interpreter had accompanied the party, and after exchanging a few words with the prisoner was soon able to explain his singular conduct. Meanwhile Lutchmee began to recover, and, opening her eyes, stretched out her arms towards her husband, repeating his name. The warder let go his hold, and in a moment, Dilloo, his face wet with tears and his whole body trembling with excitement, sat upon the

edge of the cart, and lifting the sick woman on his knee, laid her burning head on his shoulder, and unmindful of the gathering crowd of Blacks, Indians, Portuguese, and Whites, soothed her with eager words of affection. Among the spectators was Lutchmee's friend the sailor, who happened to be lounging on shore. He drew the back of his hand across his eyes,—he was idiotically soft-hearted.

"Blow me," said he, "if this ain't too much for me! I never see two copper-skins go on so like human bein's afore in all my born days."

At this moment a light covered waggon drawn by a spirited horse, and carrying a gentleman with his Negro servant, came swiftly along the road from the east coast. The spectators blocked the bridge.

"Get out ob de way!" shouted the black fellow, glad like all his race to domineer when well supported. "What you stop up dat bridge for?"

The horse came on, the crowd gave way, shouting to him to stop, and disclosing the pathetic group in its midst; but the Negro never drew rein, and would have seriously if not fatally damaged the interesting scene, had not our sailor jumped forward and seized the horse's head.

"Stop! you black fellow," he cried. "Would you bear down at ten knots on human bein's like a shoal of mackerel?"

The Negro gave one cut with his whip over the sailor's brawny neck. Before he could repeat it, he was seized by the collar, dragged from the waggon, and pitched neck and crop from the bridge into the muddy

water beneath. The previous movement had turned the horse round and broken a shaft. Half a dozen hands held the animal's head.

"There! you wretched black-skin," said the sailor, looking down upon the mud-covered object that was scrambling out of the shallow creek, "that will teach you to keep your fins off an English tar if ever you're tempted to try it again!"

The gentleman had jumped out of the waggon, and in his turn now collared the sailor, amid dangerous murmurs from the crowd.

"What do you mean by stopping my horse and assaulting my servant in that way, sir?" said Drummond, for it was no other.

It was white man against white man this time, and Drummond was powerful

and accustomed to command. The sailor, though not alarmed, was subdued.

"Well, you see, sir," he replied, touching his cap, "your servant warn't over polite to me for a black-skin to an Englishman, as you'll admit; and moreover he was about to drive over this young couple, that haven't spoke or signalled one another this two or three year; and the poor wench too under the weather, and being hauled into dry-dock for repairs."

Drummond's quick eye rested on the couple, and he recognised both of them immediately. Dilloo was too well known to him. He was one of the ablest of his labourers, and, in his opinion, one of the worst of his servants. He did his work rapidly and well, but his independence, energy, and capacity gave him great influence among

the estate's people. Instead of using this in the ordinary Indian manner, to curry favour with his master and advance himself, he rather employed it in organising and aiding the Coolies, against any wrong on the part of their superiors. Upon an estate worked by indentured labourers, that such a man would be likely to become an intolerable nuisance to the manager would not be doubted by the most partial philanthropist, though he and the planter would not draw identical conclusions from the circumstance. Dilloo was now suffering three months' imprisonment for an alleged assault on the very groom of whose condign punishment he was as yet unconscious. That was the first time the cautious Hindoo had given Drummond any legal hold upon him, and indeed his conviction was undeserved.

Drummond was naturally a kind-hearted man. The hardness that had grown in him towards the dark races by whom his wealth was made for him had sprung out of the nature of his relations to them; and somewhat against the grain. In his mind it was based on justice to himself, for he had succeeded in convincing his conscience that their interests and his were rarely compatible, and that when there was collision *they ought to give way*. This is the inevitable tendency of these relations. The glance at Dilloo and Lutchmee touched a soft place in his feelings. He loosed his grasp on the sailor, and at the apparition of Pete, his servant, in the natural dress of a crocodile, chuckled so maliciously, that the crowd gave vent to an inordinate chorus of delight.

"Well, you're an object, Mr. Pete. You will have to walk home, and get dry as you go. Keep your whip in future for horses and black men—though," he added, significantly, "you have not found that answer, either."

The discomfited groom made off amidst the jeers of his countrymen, whose huge lips and shining teeth exhibited the keenest relish of his misfortune.

Drummond meanwhile turned to the young couple. The foreman of the convict gang was getting impatient, and ordered Dilloo to return to his place. The Coolie did not hear him. Drummond put his hand on his shoulder.

"Is this your wife, Dilloo?"

The Indian looked up boldly into the planter's face, and said,—

"Iss, massa."

"She's a fine young woman, then. She is coming to my estate—bound to Belle Susanne. I wish for her sake you were out of gaol. What's the matter with her?"

"Fever."

Drummond's experienced hand sought her pulse, and felt the burning skin.

"She's very bad. You had better let her go to the hospital at once. When she gets out, I'll take care of her. How long have you been in gaol?"

"Two mons."

"Well, it won't be long before you get back to her. She shall live in the hospital till you come home; and I hope, now, after this, you'll keep quiet and get into no more scrapes."

It was with difficulty that Lutchmee could be parted from her husband or he from her; but she was at length removed in a paroxysm of the fever, while Dilloo, resuming his place among the convicts, went on to complete the imprisonment, of which the monotony had been so sadly yet so excitedly broken. When Drummond turned round to his carriage, he found that the sailor, using his knife and some tarred strain from his pockets, had very neatly spliced the broken shaft. As he thanked him the man took off his cap.

"Lookee 'ere, sir," said he, drawing a gold coin from some mysterious hiding-place beneath his belt, "I'm afeard that there young Injin woman's a-going to be very cranky this long while, and mebbe they ain't over partikler how they over-

haul and caulk 'em in that there 'orspital. Will you kindly take keer 'o this, and mebbe 'twill get her some extra stores and better handling, and I couldn't do no more for my own sister?"

"You're a good fellow," said Drummond, kindly taking his hand. "I'll see she is well taken care of. She is my servant now, you know, and I am bound to look after her. Good-day."

CHAPTER IX.

BELLE SUSANNE.

The estate of Belle Susanne lay a considerable distance up the east coast of Demerara, the central county or district of British Guiana. Vast as is the country known by that name, extending deeply into the South American continent, only a selvage of it has been rescued from wilderness by the hand of civilization. The interior consists of impassable swamps, open savannahs, tropical forests where the gigantic trunks of the Mora or Simiri, amongst which rise here and there the

slender shafts of the graceful Eta or Turu palms, are festooned with vast, embowering creepers, while every nook and shoulder of their massive branches is gemmed with rare orchids. Beneath their shadow, great spreading ferns and huge-leaved shrubs exhibit the perfection of tropical vegetation in a soil and climate most favourable to exuberance. In these almost impenetrable scenes, the reign of nature is disturbed only by the wild animals and a few thousands of wandering Indians—Caribs, Arawâks, Acawoios, and Macusi. These people, of light copper skin, short well-made bodies and agreeable countenances, range the endless hunting-grounds, where nothing more dangerous than the deadly Labarri snake, and perhaps nothing more disagreeable than the vampire-bat is to be

found: a harmless people, in a perfect state of nature, both bodily and mental.

It is the flat alluvial land along the banks of the great rivers Demerara, Essequibo, Berbice, and Corentyn, and a strip bordering the sea-coasts of the colony, that have alone been won from nature by European energy. To bring even these parts into culture, the Dutch, who first occupied the country, were obliged to undertake such vast works as were familiar to them in their native land, but they had to carry them out under a burning sun and in a horrible climate. While they erected dykes to shut out the sea and the rivers on one side, or the vast overflowing waters of the inland swamps on the other, they were obliged to create a system of canals and drains to relieve the occupied parts from

the too-domineering water, and to facilitate the conveyance of the produce down the long lines of their estates. The shore or river fringe varies in breadth from two to six miles, and is divided by parallel lines into the various estates, some being not more than a hundred yards wide. The road to these estates is the top of the dam protecting them from the sea, to which joins at right angles the "middle-dam" or centre road of each estate, which runs back as far as the inner boundary, and is drained on either side by navigation and drainage trenches. Looking from the top of the dam across the vast flats, the eye lights only on an occasional tree and on groups of estates' buildings.

Belle Susanne was a long way from Georgetown, but it would scarcely have

mattered up which of the branching dams we turned to find its counterpart. We should discover the same general features and economy on all the estates. Some buildings are distinguished from others by greater neatness, better machinery, and the evidences of more business-like conduct. And Belle Susanne was conspicuous amongst Demerara estates, both for handsome buildings and good management. As you approached the white-painted bridge which connected the front dam with the estate road, the canes along on the right looked tall and green and juicy; and, if you noticed the cane-hills, you saw that they had been weeded and hoed with industrious care. Through such fields on either hand were at length reached the manager's house, in its neat garden; the hospital, a handsome

wooden barrack, erected for a hundred patients; the overseer's quarters: all these buildings elevated on piles, with broad, latticed verandahs, and long-sweeping shingled roofs. Past these the road led straight to the megass-yard, shut in on three sides by its corrugated iron sheds, some hundreds of feet in length, where the dried refuse of the sugar-cane was laid up for the fires that were to boil the next year's crop. To the left was an irregular pile of wooden buildings, over which towered a tall brick chimney, the erection whereof in that fierce sun-glow must have been a Tartarean business. To-day it is vomiting forth abundant smoke, the noise of machinery rumbles within the vast wooden shells, the yard is alive with active men, women, and children; the smithy, with its white head-blacksmith and

his Chinese aids, is wheezy with the blowing bellows and resounding with rapid hammers; for it is crop time, and no idle hand can be allowed to exist out of the hospital. The soil of the megass-yard is almost as black as ink, spongy to the feet, and offensive to the smell. The lees of the rum-still in the corner, which we had forgotten to mention, are discharged incessantly upon the surface, and fermenting the damp mass of earth, produce a fœtor that fouls the air to leeward sometimes for miles. Yet it is beyond and to leeward of this place that lie the eighty or a hundred cottages, huts and barracks, that constitute the "Negro-yard"—an old name, which still lingers, recalling old memories, though Negroes now rarely inhabit any of these estate houses. No grass surrounds the rows of wooden sheds. They

are irregularly placed: here a line of thirty or forty, recently built after a Government pattern on a slight elevation of hard earth; there some two-storied barracks, erected on piles, relics of the Negro-time, when scores were penned together in their numerous rooms; there again a few Hindu-built huts of wattled palm, on a hard mud floor—the Coolie's palaces. By these places are open ditches, some dry and some half full of fœtid water. Their use is misunderstood, or certainly not much appreciated, for everywhere one can see the evidences that the surface of soil nearest the houses is considered the natural and proper receptacle of refuse. Constant must be the vigilance, and heroic the sanitary zeal of the manager who would attempt to enforce on his ignorant people the simplest health laws.

At Belle Susanne, the manager's house was exceptionally clean and comfortable. Mr. Drummond was not married, but a nice-looking Creole woman of about thirty years of age served him as housekeeper, quite as faithfully as she would have done had she been his wife. The sitting and dining-room which occupied the first floor were coolly and simply furnished with a few easy-chairs, dining and card-tables, manager's desk, and a settee. A table crowded with chemicals proved that he understood the scientific parts of his business. At one end of the gallery swung a fine grass hammock. A large side-board graced the dining-room, where the table was long and flanked with a dozen chairs, for the overseers were provided with their meals in the manager's house. Missa Nina, the housekeeper,

looked well after all these things, took charge of the stores, dispensed from them to the hospital-cook the daily supplies and, above all, superintended the preparations of the substantial meals wherewith Europeans fortify themselves against tropical deterioration. Mr. Drummond prided himself on his liberality to those in his employ.

Upstairs, the manager's bedroom was a lofty and roomy place, under the unceiled rafters. One side of it was occupied with pegs, whereon hung every description of male garment, giving it the aspect of an old clothes' shop. Rows of boots ranged beneath increased the resemblance to a Dudley Street warehouse. In the middle of the room stood a great iron-bedstead covered with its mosquito-netting. A plain deal table, a capacious wash-stand, a shav-

ing-glass, a chest of drawers, some trunks, and two chairs completed the furniture. The floor was left uncovered, and afforded no lurking-place for centipedes or scorpions, though it was the constant foraging ground of innumerable ants.

Under the netting, one morning, at five o'clock, lay Drummond, having just been waked by the attentive Missa, who had lit a candle, and bore in her hand a cup of coffee with a small slice of buttered toast.

"Nina," said the manager, taking the cup as she raised the netting, "there is a girl at the hospital called Lutchmee, landed from the last ship. She is the wife of that man Dilloo, who was sent to gaol for licking Pete. Egad! you should have seen Pete in the mud that time!" he interposed, with a chuckle. Pete being a Methodist local-

preacher, was a sort of favourite with Nina. "She's a young handsome girl, and needs to be looked after."

He was intent on his coffee, and did not see the sudden lustre that lit up the dark eyes of the woman, who had been standing looking with admiration at the broad muscular neck and chest which the unbuttoned shirt, with its corners thrown back, exposed to view.

"You had better send for her over here and ration her from the house for a few days.—Halloo! what's the matter with you? Do you mean to say you are jealous?"

"O no, massa: I ought to be used to your ways by this time."

"There you go again! What do you mean by that? See you do what I tell you. I want to do the girl a kindness, and you'd

like to prevent it? Go away: I'm going to dress."

"What does the woman mean?" said Drummond to himself, turning uneasily in his bed. "She's like all those niggers, jealous and conceited. 'Ought to be used to my ways by this time!' What does she mean?"

The fact was, the covert hit in this simple sentence had gone further home than Missa Nina could have expected, or than Mr. Drummond would admit to himself. This creature, whom he had taken as a young girl from her mother's house, had ministered with the fidelity of an animal to his weaknesses, his appetites, his passions. She had nursed him through a dangerous illness; and her devoted attention to his comfort, and patient obedience to his slightest com-

mand, had made her a necessity to what he called his home. But he had long ceased to derive pleasure from her companionship, or to give her his confidence. After all, what was she?

As for her? Her poor mind had few ideas, —her simple nature had early been absorbed in the one passion for this great and glorious being, whose strength, manliness and spirit seemed in her eyes so god-like. The few vague notions of religion she had gathered at the village Sunday-school years ago, and in some occasional paroxysms of religious excitement at the meeting-house in Guineatown, seemed to have awakened in her mind no suspicion that she stood in any other than a proper relation to Drummond: the relation proper for such a person of such a race as she was to such a being of such a

race as his. Indeed, her shallow piety ran towards him, and circled round him, and he was the chief subject of her rare and simple prayers. She was conscious he regarded her rather as he regarded his dog and his horse, as a part of his establishment, and she felt that she ought not to expect to monopolise the entire affection of a man like that; yet, there was something in her which flamed up with fierce, volcanic energy, when she saw him confer on others the favours she had once arrogated to herself. There are few more puzzling psychological studies than these stunted mental and moral natures, embodied in whole races of mankind, and seeming to stand half-way between the Adamite ideal and the pure, unspiritual brutism of lower animals!

As Missa Nina went downstairs from

Drummond's room, the tears were running down her cheeks in a tropical shower. "Azubah !—Desolate—a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit ! "

But she would sooner have lost her life than have disregarded Drummond's slightest fancy. Accordingly, by breakfast-time—that is to say about eleven o'clock, when manager and overseers met after several hours' round of the estates—Lutchmee was sitting on the grass under the manager's house, and receiving some kindly attentions from the poor Creole. The latter had no sooner seen the Indian woman than she was attracted by her beauty. Lutchmee looked doubtingly at the brown, well-formed face of the other, but after a while surrendered to the gentle marks of favour which were shown to her, and though she was unable to ex-

change many ideas with her hostess, began to feel at home. She tried to express her thanks to Missa, who at once, angrily, repudiated any generosity on her part.

"No *me* like you; Massa Drummond," she said, pointing to the house above. "Your massa, who live here. Massa tell me do this, tell me send for Lutchmee."

"Too kind," said Lutchmee.

"Yes—too kind—much—much kind to Coolie woman. Good man to Coolie woman, Massa Drummond."

Nina brought this out rather convulsively, and her tone was slightly satirical. Lutchmee started and gazed in the other's face, but the woman avoided her glance.

"You stay here all day—stay here all time,"' said Nina at length. "Massa Drummond take good care of Lutchmee."

"No, no!" replied the Indian woman, her heart divining some perilous mystery in this arrangement. "Me go live where all Coolie women live: too, too kind, Massa Drummon'."

Nina's woman's instinct told her that this girl was shrinking from something to which she had herself readily yielded. If it were a pleasure for a moment to feel that here she had no rival, it was, on the other hand, a somewhat displeasing reflection upon her, that Lutchmee should be superior to so overwhelming an attraction. So Missa said sharply,—

"You Massa Drummond's Coolie woman; do what Massa Drummond say. Else Massa Drummond beat you, kill you!"

"No!" cried Lutchmee, now thoroughly alarmed. "Massa Drummon' too good

hurt Coolie woman. You too good, too. You good woman—me good woman. You help me. Me go back now to other Coolie women. Please, please."

Lutchmee softly touched the other's cheek, and then gently leaning over, after a moment's hesitation, kissed her on the forehead. Nina's eyes suddenly filled—it was the first pathetic chord that had been touched in her heart for many a year. Often had she wept the tears of passion and grief, but that was the malign tempest: this was the soft and blessed April rain. She held Lutchmee's hand in her own, and silently let the showers come. The Indian, with her delicate, child-like courtesy, took the end of her muslin scarf, and gently wiped away the trickling drops. She began dimly to comprehend something

of Nina's relation to Drummond, and of the reason why she wept. O divine innocence and purity, so often obscured, yet never wholly left without a ray, in the densest and most eclipsed of human souls!

"We two friends," said Lutchmee. "Lutchmee wife of Dilloo. Missa wife of Massa Drummon'. Me, no, *no* go to Massa Drummon'."

As she said this with an energetic elevation of voice, Drummond, who, having dismissed the overseers, had lounged down the back stairs with a cigar in his mouth to take a look at her, and had overheard her last words, struck in with his deep rich voice:—

"Nina, what have you been doing? Setting this girl against me, eh? Now look here, I have a good mind to horse-

whip you. You're the most ungrateful vixen I ever knew. You have everything a nigger like you could wish, and you're as well off as any woman of your sort in British Guiana, and yet you must strike in with your infernal jealousy between me and my servants, and try to set them against me. Go up stairs."

"It's not true," said Missa, facing him with flashing eyes. "I was doing my best for you, when this woman declared she would have nothing to do with you, and was so gentle and kind, I couldn't stand her—indeed, indeed I couldn't, Drummond," said the poor woman, sobbing.

"Massa, massa," cried Lutchmee, with her hands together,—she had half gathered the meaning of the conversation,—"me talk Missa, say me Dilloo woman, no want

leave my man. Massa keep Missa: send Lutchmee dis time to 'ospital."

She went on her knees and wrung her hands and beat her bosom in true Indian fashion. Drummond was touched. In the pursuit of his whims, the remains of generosity and justice in his nature had always hitherto restrained him from any forcible assertion of his wishes. Nor did he meditate revenge. He was good-tempered, easy-going, morally indolent. As soon as he saw that Lutchmee showed a determination to be true to her husband, one which he knew an Indian woman rarely affects unless it is real and earnest, he good-naturedly acquiesced.

"O yes: no hurt Lutchmee," said he, smiling at what he thought to be the absurdity of the scene, and patting her

on the shoulder. "Lutchmee have good food here, but go back to Coolie women each time. Lutchmee, trust me, eh?"

It would have been hard, even for the suspicious Lutchmee, looking into the fine open face and clear eyes of the manager, to believe that any dangerous cunning lurked behind them, or that his word was a fraud. She breathed a new breath, and smiled most charmingly as she took his hand from her shoulder and naïvely kissing it, bowed low to her master.

CHAPTER X.

SIMON PETY.

"SIMON PETY," as he was usually called among his friends and relatives, was a Creole African of perfect type. High and receding was his forehead, crisp and close the wool that clung like a black cap about his conical head; huge were his ears; well capable of supporting the massive rings that strained their enormous lobes. Beneath the prominent brows which stretched like a rugged bow across his front, the small dark orbits of his eyes, set in their pinky whites, rolled restlessly, cunningly, quizzically; and the

crows'-feet on either side trembled with incessant motion. From between these quaint orbs came down a nose the exact resemblance of a top split in half, turned upside down and glued upon the face, with the similarity enhanced by the appearance of two deep and rugged holes, pegged, as it were, into its larger end. Then the descending eye of the observer lighted on a pair of lips brown-red, and full,—lips of a satyr, yet soft and mobile in their motion, and, when open to their full extent in the agony of a great cachinnation, disclosing an Acherontic gulf, with cliffs of rocky ivory shining far within. If we add to these the half-grizzly forest of beard that grew untended on Simon Pety's chin, can our reader believe us that the being we have been describing was a man of gallantry

and one of the lights of Mount Horeb Chapel, at Guineatown, the adjacent Negro village? Yet it was so. More than one damsel of dusky hue—not to mention a certain widow, who, having a house of her own, and a capital plantain-plot, was deep in Simon Pety's regard—had evidence too damning of his indifference to moral laws.

Such a character as that of Simon Pety is an interesting, if also a painful, study in psychology. All sense, instinct, and emotion, combining the shrewdness of some of the finer brutes, with an intellectual power of the narrowest capacity,—nay, seeming rather to be endowed with an intelligence than an intellect,—this strange being, half man, half animal, now and then showed himself capable of spiritual appre-

hensions far beyond his mere intellectual understanding, and could at intervals be swayed by moral emotions to which conscience and not reason gave within him any force or vitality. To do or abstain from doing a thing because it was right and approved itself to his mind, as abstractedly the good and right thing to do, was, so far as you can judge, for Simon Pety an impossible thing; but if you touched his religious emotions, it was a fair chance that in some of his moods you would be able to incite or deter him in a certain course of action. In nine cases out of ten, the animal within him was stronger than the spiritual,—passion surprised and confounded devotion and conscience; and the rally was simply a violent spiritual emotion in the direction of penitence. What missionary who had for

the first time heard Simon Pety praying at Mount Horeb, with florid imagery, vivid eloquence, and pathetic voice, amid the sobs and exclamations and beatings of the breast of the seething congregation, could have believed that, on a summary of Simon Pety's life, any impartial fellow-man must have declared him a hypocrite and a scamp? But, since a being of such mysteriously anomalous construction is to be found, on the whole one must hold with the missionary who, through many failures and discouragements, has been able to redeem from inhumanity worse subjects than this, and who bravely sticks to Simon Pety as a brand yet to be snatched, not utterly to be abandoned as hopeless until he has taken his last breath of earthly air.

On the evening of his misadventure at

Georgetown, Simon Pety, who had walked home, a good five hours' business, in his clay-covered suit, and had, indeed, in the process managed to divest his mind of the humiliation of the morning so far as to convince himself that he had been a martyr for some truth unmentioned and unknown, was sitting in the house of "Missa Sankey," the widow aforesaid, eating voraciously out of a big basin of fou-fou soup,—the thick mucilaginous mixture of boiled plantains and gravy, which is the delight of Creole Africans. The spoon was large and wooden, the soup was sticky, and as Pety's capacious under-jaw dropped down to admit the generous instalments of food, his beard received fresh contributions from moment to moment.

In an old rocking-chair, watching him

with keen enjoyment, sat Missa Sankey. She was a comely black, of shining face, neat figure, and, just now, of cleanly dress, —for she had on a tight-fitting calico, on the bosom whereof just then Pety's progeny and hers, aged two years, was being rocked to sleep. On her head the invariable bandanna, of flaunting colours, diversified the monotony of her own hue. She was, as we have said, a comely woman, and a pleasant withal; and when she spoke her mouth seemed always to smile, as the regular rows of white teeth glistened inside the ruddy lips.

"Poah Simon Pety!" she said, at length, after watching for some time in silence his greedy efforts; "dat dere white fellah ought to be shot: go and serve de good man so."

Simon Pety was getting near the bottom of the bowl, and was correspondingly satisfied. He paused, after a huge gulp. Like many good enthusiasts, Simon Pety was accustomed to air his shallow Scriptural knowledge without particular regard to its relativeness.

"Susan Sankey, de Lord hab said, If you am smote on de right cheek, turn round de left. I'se been maltreated dis day by de enemy of mankind. Dat dere sailor, Susan, he'm a miss'onary ob Satan sent to buffet me. Ha!" said Pete, swallowing another spoonful, "if dine enemy hunger, feed him—it shall be an exc'llent ile dat shall not break his head. I'm sartain dat dere sailor fellah go to de debbil." Another spoonful. "But de Lord keep us from presentiments!"

"But, Pety, why Massa Drummon' let you go be treated dat way? Why he no lick de saila man?"

"Susan Sankey, you kent adop no conclusions 'bout de rules ob action whereby dese yere European whites will registrate dere conduc'. Deys like de 'guana.* You'm got 'em yere, dare you haven't. Massa Drummon' any oder day 'd a knock dat ere sailor man into chips—dis day take a huma de oder way. It's all de debbil, Susan. Massa Drummon' he not one ob de Lord's people; and de way ob de wicked am turned upside down."

Here he heaved a deep sigh, but whether it were at his master's depravity or at the empty state of the calabash from which he

* The Iguana, a huge and very active lizard, which is very good eating.

had been eating it was difficult to guess. He then rose, and, approaching Susan Sankey, stooped down to give her a kiss. It was ill requited.

"Dere, you nassy man, go 'way! Wash your face. Cober my face all over wid de fou-fou soup!"

"Mos' extremely beg pardon, Susan," replied Simon Pety, meekly, for he could not afford to fall out with her. "Dese yere imperials am berry awkwid and imposing. Dey ain't conducted to de consumption of fou-fou soup. I'll cut 'im off if you wish," added he, gallantly.

"Go 'way, you foolish niggah! Go cut off de most butiful features ob yer face. Der ain't sich a whiska in Guineatown. Heah! I'll wash him for you."

And rolling the naked youngling on the

ground, Missa Sankey proceeded to wipe Pete's beard with a wet towel, and then to brush it with the remains of a hair brush; and when this was concluded, she pushed him into the rocking-chair, and, sitting down on his knees, gave him a kiss.

"Ya! ya!" said a shrill voice, which was immediately followed by a small chorus of two or three others: "dere's de preacher and Missa Sankey kissin' in de rocking-chair!"

The sounds came from the cracks of the half-open door, where three or four village juveniles, without a scrap to cover them, had been amusing themselves by watching with their dark eyes the whole of the scene we have been describing. Pete jumped up incontinently, rolling his burthen on the baby, and rushed out after the impudent

cynics, who tumbled off the high stairs into the mud without hesitation, and were out of sight in a twinkling. He was brought back by the united screams of Susan Sankey and her baby, the former having suffered as much in her dignity as the latter had in its feelings.

"Get away, you awkwid niggah," she shouted, shaking the child at him in her passion. "You'm a'mos' kill de baby an' me too. You call yourself a gen'leman, throw me 'bout in dat impropa way. Dere ain't no Christianity in dat dere sort ob rudeness."

"Susan, I hab done wrong; my wrath and anger was 'cited by dose juvenile youngsters protruding on our sacred privacy. I ought to hab born wid meekness de scorning ob de proud and de laughing ob de simple."

"You bigga fool than eber! What you come back for? why you no go catch the little debbils? You 'spose I ain't got no character to lose!"

And here Susan swept off into her kitchen with the squalling baby, slamming the door in Pete's face. He knew it was useless to invade that sanctuary, so, taking up his old hat, Pete ruefully departed homewards, his awkwardness having cost him the glass of rum which invariably solaced his parting moments with the widow. He knew she would not hold her anger long, but he felt grieved that he had lost an opportunity for one more drink.

"Oh!" said Pete, to himself, apropos of nothing,—"O dat I had wings like a dove, den would I fly away and be at rest."

CHAPTER XI.

THE OVERSEERS.

At Belle Susanne there were seven overseers, young men of ages varying from thirty to twenty, and no two of the same country. One was a Creole white; another, the eldest, a coloured man; another was the son of an Englishwoman by a Madeiran father; the three younger had been sent from England by the proprietors, and represented the three kingdoms; the last was a Barbadian Negro. Taken generally, they were men of energy, and one or two of them of

considerable ability. Their duties were onerous and responsible; their life was nearly the most penal that could be devised for any man who is not a slave or a prisoner in a penitentiary. Separated, except in one or two cases, from any society but that of their colleagues—thrown simply, for amusement, upon the wretched resources of an estate, and generally so hard-worked that the zest for amusement was gone; constantly suffering from attacks of fever, in the intervals of which they pursued their occupation, and, debarred from the engaging and civilising influences of female society, one can scarcely imagine, outside a penal establishment, a more dismal post than that of an overseer on the sugar estates of British Guiana; unless, perhaps, when it is miti-

gated in the case of those who are fortunate enough to be within easy reach of Georgetown, and are privileged to enter its society.

At an early hour of the morning these young men turned out of their quarters, to see that their gangs went off to work. Crampton, the senior, looked after the buildings, the rest took charge of the various gangs in the fields, such as the gangs for weeding, shovelling, or hoeing. Each had his book, wherein he noted the names and the time and quality of the work of each person in his gang, and made his remarks thereon. Were any of them absent it was his duty in the afternoon to compare his list with the hospital entries, and ascertain whether sickness was the excuse. In cases of absconding and laziness he was to inform

the manager, who forthwith summoned the delinquent before the magistrate, and, at the hearing, the overseer was expected to attend to prove the case. So much was this a matter of course that Mr. Drummond rarely took the trouble to ask his overseers whether they were able on their own evidence to convict the culprit. They on their part never hesitated to supply it if it were wanting. The defendant rarely understood what was going on, and the mysteries of cross-examination were Sibylline to him. The most conscientious magistrate could hardly be expected to weigh the evidence of Coolie companions who eked out their small modicum of fact with obviously ridiculous fictions or exaggerations, but he too often received with placid confidence any rela-

tion the overseers chose to inflict upon him. One overseer at Belle Susanne, a young Scotchman, named Craig, had given Mr. Drummond some trouble in this respect. He was stupid enough to decline to swear to matters not within his own ken, and in consequence of this had put the manager in one or two cases to the expense of fresh summonses, or had obliged him to drop a case. Drummond pointed out to him that, on the whole, general justice was done, and that to fail in a charge against a labourer was injurious to the discipline of the estate, but Craig was too Scotch to see the humour of this demonstration.

The first business of the morning for the overseers was to go the round of the Negro-yard and rouse the people, and if

they proved, or were known to be, refractory, to enter their dwellings and turn them out. In cases of sudden resistance they sometimes handled the Coolies very roughly. It may be imagined that this often made whole gangs turbulent for the day. In British Guiana I believe the custom has been abandoned.

The most powerful of the overseers was the youngest, whose name we have already mentioned. His ability and spirit had gained for him the manager's good-will. An inch over six feet in height, with broad shoulders, strong frame, bold regular features, of blonde complexion, Craig would have been remarked by any one seeing the overseers together, to be as superior to the rest in tone and manner as he was in appearance. He came from Ayrshire,

where his father was a well-to-do farmer, who had given his son as good an education as was attainable before he reached the age of seventeen. His mother would have made a minister of the really clever stripling, but to the youth himself the "call" was far from clear; and hearing of openings in the West Indies, he had prevailed on his father to procure him from the friend who owned the estate the offer of an overseer apprenticeship at Belle Susanne. Little had young Craig conceived of the true nature of the work to which he had engaged himself for five years, and he often chewed bitter thoughts over his experiences. But a natural buoyancy of disposition, gradual acclimatisation, and the prospect of advancement had somewhat reconciled him to his

lot. Drummond naturally took much to this powerful and diligent youth with his ingenuous face and marked character.

In one point Craig was peculiar among his companions. They were nearly all the children of adventure and misfortune. For them in their young days there had been little experience of domestic happiness; whereas he recalled with the deepest affection a mother of handsome and kindly face, of gentle life, somewhat of an "enthusiast," as the world would take her, strictly true to the principles of Free Kirk and shorter Catechism, a Puritan, but withal a mild one. At her knee he had listened to the simple and devout eloquence with which she spoke of the principles and the example of the noblest life of which we have record; and from

her he had imbibed a gentleness and conscientiousness not seldom found combined in some of the manliest and most rugged Scotch natures. The same creed which in many minds developes the narrow rigidity of the Covenanter, is in other natures found to be consistent with the tenderest spirit and the broadest sympathies. Some of the mother's devoutness, of her superstitious respect for the very words of Scripture, had been transfused into the son's being. He never professed to emulate her piety; but he had a reverence for the Sabbath, and adhered regularly to his solitary though lamentably brief "diet of morning and evening worship." In these habits his physical superiority secured him against the open ridicule of his mates. They regarded these things

with much the same astonishment as was manifested by a professed infidel at one of our Universities, who, declaiming against prayer at the table of one of the most licentious of the undergraduates, was rebuked by the latter, and assured that he, for his part, could never begin or end the day without "saying his prayers!" The result, however, of Craig's education had been to give him a horror of the grosser vices; to ground him in principles of honour and virtue; and to leave generally upon his mind an indefinable but real influence of Calvinistic religion.

To a youth of such a mould, the characteristics of West Indian life were sometimes revolting. In a community where everything is done for one race and class, and where, with slavery disowned, the

relation of the larger portion of the community is that of contemptuous patronage on the one hand, and of sullen self-defence on the other; where the morality of the superior race is, except in a very select portion of the community, unfettered even by the ordinary restraints of civilised societies; and where, among the inferior races animal instinct is too much the overmastering power,—the first sensation of a pure-minded man, in Craig's situation, is one of repulsion from the tone and manners of his associates. They were of that low type of Briton and half-breed, common in tropical latitudes: their morality was only restrained by the capacity of their desires, or by considerations of opportunity and safety. Craig, with a large-hearted wish to be on good terms with every one, could

scarcely govern his repugnance to the language, ideas and acts of his fellow-overseers.

A fortnight after the meeting between Lutchmee and Dilloo, as the young men were returning to their quarters from the evening meal at the manager's house, Martinho, he of Portuguese blood, a lithe, dark, small-faced fellow, who at that time was hospital overseer, said,—

"I discovered something this morning at the hospital,—the prettiest Indian girl that ever I saw. I believe Drummond spotted her somewhere, and insisted on getting her here. But what do you think? She says she is the wife of that rascal Dilloo."

"Nonsense! It's a make-up, of course," said one of the others.

"There is no doubt he knew her. They

recognised each other in Georgetown the day that our psalm-singing Pete had so good a ducking. But these Indian marriages mean nothing, as we very well know."

"Yes, but Dilloo is a determined man," said the Barbadian Chester: "the most dangerous man on the estate. He would kill you or get up a row on the least provocation. I always give him a very wide berth. He's a good workman, too."

"I don't think I have seen much of him," said Craig, whose curiosity and spirit were excited by any hint of danger.

"He has been away since you came," said Chester: "we were obliged to get him three months at Georgetown gaol for that shindy with Pete, though I believe the old scamp was trying some of his tyrannical tricks on the Indian, who is a perfect

demon when he gets in a rage. He shall go to Massaruni next time he breaks out."

Massaruni is a penal settlement on an island some distance up the river Essequibo. In this strong and isolated place convicts for serious crimes expiate their malfeasances in the ordinary routine of English gaols the world over. For an obstreperous Coolie your manager could desire no fitter mode of sequestration than this well-guarded home of the condemned. Within sight of it, at the junction of the Massaruni and Essequibo rivers, is another asylum of outcasts,—the lazaretto of British Guiana; where (in spite of the Report of the Royal Commission against such isolation) those whose physical corruption has made them intolerable to society, surrounded with what alleviation their hopeless

state admits of, sullenly drain in each other's companionship the wretched dregs of life. How well were it if from our social life we could thus exclude its physical and moral corruption, sequester and localise them in lonely spots, and hold society safe from their contagion! But alas, they are sinks that never dry up: the foul scum of humanity rushes up again from below, so soon as we think the horrid outflow has been staunched, and again and again must justice and charity set to work with unflagging efforts to skim it away! . . . .

The overseers pursued their conversation.

"This woman," said Martinho, "is of a better class than we usually get here; and a real devil for temper, I should say—as bad as her husband. I gave her a pinch of the arm and a pat on the cheek, and she

was as savage as Miss Marston would be if I were to take the same liberty with her, —eh, Craig?"

He looked at Craig, but something in his eye warned the Portuguese not to pursue this line. The fellow would not have dared even to address Miss Marston, still less to pinch her arm or pat her cheek; so he went on about Lutchmee.

"She jumped up and faced me like a tigress, and said, 'Massa no put hand on Coolie woman: Dilloo wife!'"

"Ah, she'll soon get over that!" said Loseby, the Englishman, a heavy, sensual-looking youth, of unwholesome colour, who was wont to regard the world in general with cynical stolidity. "Virtue is not an Indian woman's best reward in these regions,—eh?"

He chuckled quietly over his own joke, which one or two of the rest received with appreciative laughter.

"I would recommend any one to let her alone while Dilloo has charge of her," said Chester.

"Why, one would think you were afraid of this fellow Dilloo," put in Craig, himself fearless of anything but dishonour.

Chester repudiated the impeachment; but, in truth, he had good reason to be timid of the Hindoo. We have explained that the estates of British Guiana extend in the rear for a great distance: hence the inner portion is always spoken of as "back." The backdam of Belle Susanne was three miles and a half in a straight line from the buildings: the labourers in its furthest fields were far from sight or sound

of other men. Out there one day with a powerful gang, Chester, who was riding on a mule, had found Dilloo surrounded by a small crowd of his "matties," or *mates*, whom he was excitedly haranguing. Work had so far suffered. The Barbadian, in a rage, raised his whip to cut the Indian over his naked shoulder; but before it had descended, the latter had avoided the stroke, and, leaping up on the mule behind the overseer, clasped his strong arms vigorously round the latter's neck. But for Dilloo's companions, Chester might have been before many minutes ready for unceremonious burial in the adjoining jungle. They pulled the two on the ground, and drew off their angry comrade; but, holding out a threat of instant vengeance in case he should be so unwise

as to tell, they exacted from Chester a solemn promise of silence. He was too great a coward to face the horrible prospect of assassination, or the chances of an application to the Obe man to poison him; and had held his tongue about the affair,—not only because he knew that it would lower him in the estimation of the manager and overseers, but for the sake of his life: he was glad, therefore, to change the subject. The languid interest of his colleagues in Lutchmee had been satisfied for the present.

In a short time, as night had closed in and their work called them up before the sun, they had all tumbled beneath their mosquito nets, and were enlivening the night and the watchful peon under their verandah with a chorus of snores.

CHAPTER XII.

AT HOME!

A FEW days after the scene between Drummond and Missa, let us pass through the Negro-yard to a wattled hut beyond its extreme end—a house well-built of its kind, its roof of Eta palm leaves, rising to an apex, its floor of smooth well-hardened mud, its interior divided by a light bamboo and leaf partition into two rooms or stalls, the whole illuminated and ventilated only through the small doorway. Outside is a limited terrace on which deft hands have moulded a clay fireplace. This tabernacle,

a daring Hindoo had taken advantage of the leisure hours of a single Sunday to uprear, without leave asked or given; thither he had removed his household gods, and out of it, the manager, who knew it to be as good and healthy as any dwelling he could provide, did not care to eject the tenant. That daring Hindoo was Dilloo; and here to-day, in a neat white vest and skirt, Lutchmee was sitting in the cool interior, rubbing, in a sort of mortar scooped out of the hard floor, the rice for their evening meal. She was humming to herself in low tones, but neither with the animation nor the joyous lightness of the song she was singing when we first surprised her in her native home far away. Only the day before yesterday had Dilloo, released from his imprisonment, brought her to his house.

He was loving and tender as ever. When, taking her hand on the verandah of the hospital, and bearing her little bundle of clothes, he led her to the hut of which he had never expected to see her a tenant, there was a touch of sadness about the joy with which, secure from human eye, they indulged the transports of affection. Lutchmee saw and felt that there was a change in her husband. Not only did he look older, but he was graver and more stern in manner. Moreover, she remarked in him a novel habit of reserve. You will say this was quick apprehension, but it was the intuitive intelligence of love. Just then, however, they were very happy.

"Lutchmee," said he, "I rejoice to see you here, my lily, and to clasp you once more in my arms. But this is not the kind

of place I had hoped to find when I listened to that cursed recruiter, and came away here in search of riches I shall never win. My poor Lutchmee," he said, stroking her hair with his supple hand, "you know not what you have come to in looking for your lost Dilloo. How unhappy you will be!"

"Dilloo, why do you talk so? I am always happy with you. With us, so loving and true, hard times cannot make hard hearts. I cannot be sad so long as I can see you and follow you about and work for you."

"Ah! my darling, that is not all you will have to do. You know you are 'bound' now to this estate. Massa Drummond has you in his hands for five years. He and six or seven other sahibs can almost do what they like with you—*unless I watch them*

closely!" said he, in a grim undertone, as he clenched his hands and teeth. "You must work every day in the megass-yard, carrying your burden swiftly, under a Negro-driver, and for very poor wages. And you are pretty, you are graceful and sweet as ever, my own Lutchmee,"—with softening eyes he drew her to his bosom,—"and scoundrels of every race will have opportunities of tempting you and threatening you, and even me."

"No fear of that!" replied Lutchmee, forcing a smile. "I am true to you, Dilloo, and you are true to me, are you not? I was true to you all the time we were apart. Do you know, that vile Hunoomaun again attacked me, and I was only saved at the last moment by Wood Sahib. He was driven away from the country, and some-

times I tremble to think he might have gone to bind himself and come here."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Dilloo, with some excitement; "Hunoomaun went away from K——? Then I think he really is here! When I was being taken to Georgetown prison, I met a body of new-bound men coming along the road from the ship to one of these plantations; and I thought I saw him among them, but could not believe it; yet I thought I knew the villain! He must have come in the ship before yours. He may even be on this estate or the next one."

Lutchmee's heart grew cold with apprehension as she heard this, and she clung tightly to Dilloo's shoulder, not as of old, freshly oiled, soft, and springy as the shoulder of a young deer, but dry, toil-

stained, and hard. In an instant there flashed through her mind all the possibilities of this unwelcome conjunction.

"Never mind," said Dilloo; "see! I have the means of defending you." Placing his hand down a crevice formed by the meeting of the wattle and the low mud wall, he drew forth a cutlass, about two feet long, made in one piece, and used for cutting the canes in crop-time. "Do you see that?" he cried, in a loud determined voice: "I always keep it well sharpened. It shall protect my honour and yours, my Lutchmee, and, if not, we shall die together."

As he stood up there in the dark hut, fierce and glowing, Lutchmee shrank before the fire in her husband's eyes. It was not so much like the frank lionhood of his

former days, as it seemed to her to resemble the sullen savagery of a tiger.

"O Dilloo," she said, covering her eyes with her little hands, "you frighten me!"

He dropped the weapon into its hiding-place, and coming back to her side, wound his arms around her, but said nothing.

Thus it was that Lutchmee and Dilloo met in the golden fields and paradisiac working-grounds of Dost Mahommed, the Government recruiter!

CHAPTER XIII.

A VISITOR.

It was on the second day after Dilloo's return that, as we have said, Lutchmee was sitting in the house preparing the evening meal. Outside, in the fireplace, the brushwood crackled and smoked beneath the pot. As she energetically worked the wooden pestle, the doorway was darkened by the figure of a woman.

"Salaam!" said the woman.

"Salaam!" replied Lutchmee very quietly.

The woman unceremoniously sat down

and watched Lutchmee, who, with Eastern gravity, went on with her work. Her visitor had a not displeasing face, though she was evidently much older than Lutchmee, and her teeth, when she smiled, showed gaps in their blackened rows. She wore a very limited jacket, exposing her plump shoulders; a not over-clean calico skirt; and she was without a scarf. But round her neck were two heavy necklaces —one, a solid collar of silver, the other formed of florins linked together. In her ears, which were pierced with many holes, were rows of rings. Her nose was decorated with a gold ring set with a doubtful stone; and her arms and ankles were loaded with silver bangles.

"Where did you come from?" said the woman.

"From Behar," replied Lutchmee.

"Oho! then you are from the country—a real villager?" exclaimed the woman, scrutinising Lutchmee's face and dress. "We get very few of your sort here, I can tell you," she added, when she had concluded her survey. "How pretty you are!"

"Why, who are you?" inquired Lutchmee, innocently.

"Well, I *was* a dancing-girl when I was younger," replied the other, laughing. "You know what that means, even at K——, don't you? But, you see, I was born in Benares, and lived there all my life. Then I went to other places and lived as best I could. It is very hard living in great bazaars, so I was glad of the chance of coming here as a respectable

woman" (she laughed shrilly), "when I fell in with a recruiter who offered me bounty-money and so many good things."

"And do you like this place?" asked Lutchmee.

"I should think so; I have good reason. The voyage was pleasant. I was sent to this estate—one of the best in the country. I soon found I could have my pick of a husband, and plenty of money besides. See!" she added, with feminine vanity, "I have had all these given to me: they are worth three hundred dollars. I have five cows, and I pay a man to keep them."

"Who gave you all these: your husband?"

The woman laughed again at Lutchmee's simplicity. She had exceeded the woman of Samaria in the number of her husbands,

though she was unlike her in a sense of shame. A husband, among Coolie women in British Guiana, is a varying factor. You cannot understand much that takes place there without knowing this.

Lutchmee's ideas of modesty and sense of delicacy were, no doubt, far inferior to those of an English girl; yet she, by some God-given instinct, shrank from her visitor's bold confessions. She knew not what to say, so she said,—

"What is your name?"

"Ramdoolah. Tell me, is Dilloo really your husband?"

"Yes;—why?"

"I did not believe he was married at all, though he used to say so. He is a close, clever man; and so handsome! Any woman on the estate would have married him. I

know I wanted to ; but he never would look at me."

Lutchmee sprang to her feet, her eyes aglow, her lissome body trembling with passion.

"Stop! you vile woman!" she cried. "Hold your abominable tongue! You speak of my husband, who is a man too good and noble for such carrion as you even to look at. Begone, or I shall tear out your eyes!"

Ramdoolah, also, had risen. She was not a woman, after her experiences, to be afraid of the nails or the tongue of a young girl, and was certainly not moved with bodily fear; but the moral air and posture of Lutchmee were too commanding to be matched with any weapons at the disposal of the bazaar-woman. So she tried to laugh it off.

"Ha! my fine girl," said she; "you are too good for this place, I see. I wouldn't be you for a good deal. Your pride will soon be taken down, or my name is not Ramdoolah!"

By this time the younger woman, in uncontrollable fury, had rushed to the place where the weapon was hidden, and drew forth the cutlass, at sight of which Ramdoolah beat a retreat. Outside the hut she met Dilloo.

"Go in, my handsome lad," she cried, smiling maliciously; "go in, and look after your princess! She's a fine girl to put on such airs. Won't they be taken out of her before long, that's all!"

When Dilloo, without replying, hastily entered the hut, he found his wife there, standing flashing and furious as a Pythoness,

with the cutlass in her hand. In a moment the weapon dropped on the floor with a clang; and she hung, sobbing, on his neck.

"O Dilloo! Dilloo! That wretched woman has been speaking to me about you, as if you were a common fellow that would speak to the like of her. To think you should have been even named by her lips! I could bear it no longer. Have I done wrong?"

"Lutchmee," replied Dilloo, gravely, sitting on the floor, and making his wife sit beside him, "hear me. There is not one woman on this estate who came of a respectable stock. They were poor creatures from great cities, like Lucknow, Benares, or Calcutta. We should think of them pitifully. I should say they are better here than they were there. They

get married, some of them many times over; and a few happily forget their old condition and become better women. I would never have anything to do with them. They cause nearly all the trouble among Coolies in this place. Two men on this estate have been hung for murdering women who were not faithful to them. But you must not quarrel with anyone. We are now obliged to live among them for five years, and your peace and our safety depend on our being on good terms with these people. They are Indians, after all, you know; and we have far more dangerous enemies in the English. Once give this woman a chance, and she might ruin us both. She is the most treacherous woman on the estate."

"O Dilloo! I cannot bear this any longer.

Let us run away from this dreadful place."

"There is no running away from this place, my Lutchmee. The interior lands are wild and swampy, full of snakes, and no runaway could live there. The roads are all kept by Negro police, black people, who hate us. They stop any Coolie travelling without a written pass from the manager. No: our plan is to be patient, watchful, careful of our money; and, perhaps, in a year or two we may be able to buy our freedom and go back to India."

"I will do anything you tell me, Dilloo," said his wife, with her head on his breast; "but, please, put away that cutlass where I cannot find it."

CHAPTER XIV.

MEETING—BUT NO GREETING.

Dilloo had been working for nine hours, and was hungry. His little wife soon quelled her apprehensions and set to work with recovered spirits to prepare his meal. He meanwhile went out to the trench, not many yards off, to wash away the thick clayey soil which coated his legs and hands and arms. Dilloo was one of two or three Coolies on the estate who were able to make wages approximating to the promised *two rupees a day*. It was by hard work, however, though work of which both im-

migrants and Creoles are very fond. For trench-digging the highest wages was paid. Eighty or ninety cents for twelve and a quarter feet of trench twelve feet wide and five feet deep was the usual remuneration.

Standing nearly naked, the labourer digs out the soft wet clay with a long-handled scoop by the sheer strength of arms and shoulders, and then throws it out of the trench some three or four yards. Negroes, being generally more powerful, are preferred for this work, but few of them could surpass at it our lithe and brawny Bengalee. There was this difference between them, however, to the planter. Scarcely any Negro would work more than two days a week, at most three, while Dilloo's indenture, spite of the law, was held by manager and magistrate to bind him to at least five days' labour,

and he often was obliged to work six. In fact, by the system in vogue, the more a Coolie did the more he was compelled to do. The Negro thus had the advantage, for, after making an effort for a day or two, he could lounge for the rest of the week. It spoke well, however, for the effect on Dilloo's constitution, of his steady work, that he was rarely in the hospital. One good result of his industry was a handsome hoard of silver pieces, two cows, and a wonderful conglomerate dress, which he had purchased of a Georgetown dealer, and which looked like the cast-off garments of some stage-strutting monarch. At the Tadja festival it was his wont to come out conspicuous in this gorgeous attire. Quite a trade is done among Coolies in ancient uniforms and coats of many colours, which you may see

them carrying on their heads until they approach their own homes; and then, vanishing behind a hedge, they will reappear in a state of decoration that ravishes their friends.

As Dilloo, now of course wearing nothing but his "babba" or loin-cloth, was washing his feet in the canal, a knot of the new-service immigrants who had been employed at the "back" came along the dam. They looked weary. They had been working in the sun from early morning, and had walked three miles out and three miles home. One man among them was remarkable for his height and size. The villager from Behar stood above the poor weavers and sweepers of Delhi or Calcutta. It was Hunoomaun. Dilloo recognised him in a moment, but preserved his composure. Hunoomaun was

more surprised. Though he had been three months on the estate, and knew that one, Dilloo, among others, was in gaol at Georgetown, it had not occurred to him that it was his old antipathy at K—. He therefore lifted up his hands, and cried,—

"Dilloo?"

"Yes," replied the other, drily. "Hunoomaun, you see Dilloo! You have followed me to this place. We live together on this estate."

"Is it peace or war?" inquired the other, looking doubtfully at the fine limbs of Dilloo, which glistened in the afternoon sun.

"I hold no grudge," replied Dilloo, cautiously. "Years have come and gone since you by your evil-doing made me your enemy. Since then you have been more

base and brutal than ever, and my wife, who is with me here, has told me of your wickedness and flight. I had a mind to kill you,"—Dilloo looked straight at the chokedar, and his eye glared a moment so fiercely that Hunoomaun went back a pace, —"but I am willing to forget the past if you will do so. You must confine your attentions, though, to the other women on the estate. Any one who troubles Lutchmee I will cut into pieces!"

Hunoomaun read a determination in Dilloo's eyes that could not be misinterpreted. He was too cowardly to challenge it just then.

"I will be friendly," said he.

"No," said Dilloo, "we can never be friends: let us agree not to be enemies. It will be better for you! Do not cross my

path, and I will not cross yours. That is my house; do not go near it at your peril. We are obliged to live on this estate together, and all Coolies should agree to help each other, and not quarrel among themselves. All the Coolies here look upon me as their leader," he added, more loudly, with an Asiatic touch of self-assertion.

Some of the others who had listened to this conversation with curiosity testified their assent to this.

"All Coolies trust Dilloo."

The chokedar's overbearing nature, though he was a coward, resented Dilloo's tone, but he held his tongue, while he mentally resolved that the eminence of his foe should not be unassailed if he could help it. Hunoomaun was a man of great acuteness and tact. He had managed, during the

voyage to Demerara, to win the good opinion of the officers of the ship, and was formally reported as a good immigrant. Among his countrymen on board he had gained some respect. About forty Coolies from his ship, the "Benares," were allotted to Belle Susanne. He had not spent many days on the estate before he began to acquire a very fair idea of its economy, and of the means by which he might better his condition. He found that, as a rule, there were placed under the overseers, in immediate charge of the gangs, persons called "drivers,"—a name of no small significance, which had come down from the old Negro times, but was used now to indicate a person acting in the capacity of a foreman. Almost universally these drivers were Negroes. They were with the gangs all day.

They watched the men at work. It was their duty to see that the task was properly done. They took notes mentally, for none of them could write, of the amount of labour done by each person in their gang, and the accuracy of their memory in these particulars was astonishing. Their reports about the individuals in their charge were listened to with attention by the overseers, consequently they wielded a great deal of influence in the estate community. They could play all sorts of tricks with a man's work; could get him sent the long three miles "back" to reach it; or, on the other hand, could favour him by keeping him nearer the buildings, or assigning him lighter tasks: could help to cheat him out of his wages; in fact, they could either make a man feel the full weight of his

obligation or reduce it to an agreeable load. Hunoomaun's quick mind at once fastened on this office as the key of the position. It could be made by an unscrupulous man even more powerful than that of an overseer. He inquired if it was ever held by a Coolie, and found that the Dilloo, who was then in gaol, had held it a short time, but had been degraded because he had taken the part of his former "matties," or companions. This was a misuse of power of which the former chokedar was not likely to be guilty. He ascertained, also, that there were other Coolie "sirdars" on the estate, and resolved to give all his efforts to the attainment of this position.

His plan was to retain the influence he had won on board ship over his fellow-travellers. For the first week of their

arrival they were allowed to lounge about the Negro-yard and do as they pleased, getting rations from the hospital. Each man then received from the stores a cutlass, which he was instructed by the old hands how to sharpen and to smooth at the handle. They were then set to carrying megass, and afterwards to weeding and clearing brush. This is the rank and rapid growth of reeds, bushes, creepers, and weeds which in the tropics a very short time suffices to produce on a fallow field, and it presents the hardest and most tiresome of all the labours to be performed on an estate. Hunoomaun soon learned how to do this work, and made it his business to help his companions to become adepts at it, in this way securing their good will at the same time that he gained the approval of drivers

and overseers. Hence the "Benares' lot" pleased Drummond vastly. They were every way the best addition he had made to the *personnel* of the estate; and all this was due to one clever man among them, who produced this result in pursuing his own ends. At the time when Dilloo and Hunoomaun met, the latter had already won a place in the esteem of his employers and the regard of the people. The more galling, therefore, was Dilloo's patronizing air to the wily chokedar. However, he and Dilloo managed to exchange "salaams" without any further indication of feeling for that interview.

CHAPTER XV.

AGREED.

On the Sunday succeeding the day when Dilloo and Lutchmee had encountered Hunoomaun and Ramdoolah, the two latter, invested in their cleanest and brightest garments, were sauntering together, in the sultry evening, along the smooth, sandy shore, which the ebbing tide had left in front of the fringe of brush to the edge of which it used to flow. The Coolie gentleman, nominally occupying the position of Ramdoolah's husband, was at that moment engaged at a little opium shop in the Chinese quarters,

kept, with an affectation of secrecy, by Ching-a-lung, the ugliest Chinaman outside his own country,—a hopeless dead-weight to managers and overseers, by whom, from mistaken motives of kindness, his illegal traffic was winked at. Achattu, the husband in question, was one of the earlier importations from India, and a Madrassee. At one time he had by thrift and cleverness, as an able-bodied Coolie may do in the West Indies, made a considerable sum of money. He became the owner of three or four cows: he paid a Negro man to look after them,—a change of race relations not unknown in British Guiana. But Achattu had one want—a wife. The number of women on the estates was at first so limited that it would have been impossible for him to get a wife for love or money. As the

proportion of female immigrants increased through the exertions of the Colonial Government and its officials, more opportunities were afforded the wealthier Coolies to select partners, too seldom for life. A curious circumstance was wont to diminish their chances: the long sea voyage worked miraculous results upon the affections. On the discharge from a ship of a cargo of immigrants, sometimes as many as thirty or forty couples were found to have made engagements on the voyage to tie their fates together; and in order that the rule of allotment of relatives to the same estate might be applied to their case, the immigration-depôt at Georgetown became the theatre of a comic scene. The Agent-General caused the aspirants for matrimony to be arranged in two Roger-de-Coverley

lines, the women on one side and the men on the other, each, it is to be hoped, facing the desired partner. Between the lines passed the Agent-General, accompanied by an interpreter, haranguing the parties on the duties, temptations and perils of matrimony. Since many dialects were represented, and the interpreting resources of the Georgetown depôt are limited, the pertinency of this performance must often have been a puzzle to those concerned. At the end of his exhortations, the official, by a single and simple ceremony, made the forty couples happy or miserable, as chance might develope. When so many of the single women were withdrawn from competition before they reached the estates, it may be imagined that the residuary chances left to the older and richer Coolies were

neither extensive nor brilliant. Hence Achattu had lived to himself. He lent money to his needy brethren at astonishing rates of interest; he kept silver dollars in a large chest in his room carefully locked, and secretly disposed of some of his specie in unfrequented parts of the estate; he did not care to let the officials know how rich he was, by depositing it all in the Savings' Bank. But a subtle Chinaman, suspecting Achattu's wealth to be greater than was known, made it his business to study the latter's habits for some months, and followed him till he had discovered the closest of his hiding-places. One day Achattu found himself poorer by several hundred dollars than he had been the day before. All the hair he forthwith pulled out of his head and beard,—all his exertions in dancing a regret-

ful fandango about the outraged spot would not assuage his grief. He took to arrack, and made himself drunk: he sought out the bench of the opium shop, and made himself terribly sick, and, finally, he came across Ramdoolah, who knew all about him, and willingly undertook to soothe his sorrows. He gave her a necklet and a cow: he paid her existent husband another cow and thirty dollars to purchase a voluntary divorce, *a mensa et thoro*, and took Ramdoolah to his heart and home. Through these combined influences Achattu's wealth dwindled away. Ramdoolah soon carried about on her person, in the shape of armlets, necklets, and bangles, most of his secret hoards. The big chest yielded up its deposits, and became an insolvent bank. His debtors were pressed to return their loans; and, as these came in,

Ching-a-lung, or the gambling-room of Chin-a-foo—another institution on the estate—swallowed them up. It can hardly be wondered at, therefore, that Ramdoolah was looking out for another engagement, and was now coquetting with the gallant Hunoomaun; for her practical shrewdness told her that at Belle Susanne he was a coming man. Let us conceal ourselves in the brush and overhear a little of their conversation. Ramdoolah is speaking :—

Ramdoolah. There is a beautiful country-girl who has come here lately, named Lutchmee, who is the most respectable Hindoo woman I ever saw in this place.

Hunoomaun. I know her well. She came from my own village: she is a great fool, and I owe her a grudge. If it had not been for her, I should not have been here.

Ramdoolah. You did not care for her, did you? Was she ever a friend of yours?

Hunoomaun. No, no. A friend of mine, a peon, took a violent fancy to her, and tried to make too free with her. She declared, most falsely, that I was the person. That cursed fellow, Dilloo, believed her, and collecting a number of his friends, gave me a beating. He is my enemy till one or other of us dies. As for the girl, he left her behind him; and she, out of sheer spite at my taking no notice of her, denounced me to the magistrate with whom she lived, and I was obliged to fly from the place.

To a woman of Ramdoolah's character, it seemed so natural for another Indian woman to behave in the manner described by the peon, that she gave a ready belief

to his story, and hastened to take advantage of the information.

Ramdoolah. The little slut! I went in to see her one day, and indeed she is very pretty, but I found her as proud as a bird of paradise, and as haughty as the highest Brahminee. She treated me as if I were the filth of the streets, and when I talked of Dilloo—who, as you say, is an ill-conditioned brute of a fellow—as he deserved, she seized a cutlass, and, had I not escaped, would have wounded me.

Hunoomaun. Oho! She did so, did she? The creature! Then you and she are enemies, of course. You see, our interests are the same. We must agree to live together, and then we can help each other to work out our revenge. How are you to get rid of Achattu?

RAMDOOLAH. Oh, you must manage that! You have only to fill his stomach for a few weeks, lend him a little money, encourage him to drink and gamble, and he will be in your hands. He will then readily sell me to you.

HUNOOMAUN. (In reality caring little for Ramdoolah, but having arrived at the belief that she was the cleverest woman on the estate, and would be a powerful ally in working out his various plots.) Well, my sweet one! delight of my heart! and lustre of my eyes! I will do all that is necessary to win possession of one so handsome, so clever, so desirable. With your help I can secure the highest position of any Coolie on the estate, and all my wealth shall be thrown at your feet.

RAMDOOLAH. It is a bargain, my friend.

Give me ten dollars as the earnest of it, and then I shall be yours!

The shrewd Hindoo showed no hesitation, though he inwardly felt some chagrin, as he disengaged, from a fold in his babba, ten silver dollars, part of his bounty money, and counted them into the outstretched hand of his business-like *fiancée*.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOST!

In accordance with his engagement with Ramdoolah, the peon had now to wind Achattu in his toils, and bring him to a state of mind in which he would consent to part with his wife. Poor Achattu had been indentured three times on as many different estates, and had also spent an interval of several years as a free man. His talents and wealth had procured him a good name and position among his countrymen. He was well known on both the coasts, as they are termed, of the

Demerara county, in Berbice, and even on the less accessible Arabian or Aroebisce coast, beyond the river Essequibo. The place he had once held as a banker and money-lender had been more than filled by Lutchmee's first friend in the colony, Akaloo, who was a free man and travelled from estate to estate in the pursuit of his business. It is from new Coolies that these money-lenders chiefly derive their profits. In the process of acclimatisation, the poor people, from their awkwardness at the unaccustomed labour, or from sheer physical incapacity, often fall behind in their receipts, in spite of the bounty-money with which they begin, and find that they cannot live on their earnings. Though they were at the time when these events occurred, by the law and by its

administration kept strictly to their part of the contract, made in India, and forced to work at least five days a week, the corresponding promise of ten annas to two rupees a day, offered by authority of the Governor and Court of Policy of British Guiana, was not recognized as a contract in the colony, and could not be enforced. A more singular instance of Christian and official easiness of conscience could scarcely be cited than this fact. The legislature of British Guiana, with the connivance and sanction of Her Majesty's representative, passed resolutions affirming a statement of current rates of wages, at a time when it was well known that scarcely an immigrant in the colony was earning anything of the kind. Nay, the recurring injustice of enforcing one side of a con-

tract and overlooking the other was alike disregarded by Governor, legislators, and administrators of the law, so that, as a fact, Coolies who, disheartened by the fraud, failed or refused to work for the indifferent wages available to them, were again and again brought before the magistrates to be fined and imprisoned.

It was in such cases as these that men like Achattu and Akaloo proved to be, to their own profit, real benefactors to their fellow-immigrants. They lent them money to pay off their fines, or to procure the food they could not earn. By this means new Coolies, becoming gradually acclimatised, were at length able to do more work, and thus to earn enough to pay off their debts. Many remained hopelessly in debt during the first five years of their

indenture, and upon re-indenturing themselves for another five years were obliged to sacrifice to their creditors the greater part of the bounty-money they then received. Though these Indian money-lenders were avaricious enough, they performed many acts of forbearance and kindness to their needy brethren, and were by no means commonly regarded with the aversion that attaches to such tradesmen elsewhere. If a Coolie with twenty-five dollars desired to purchase a cow worth fifty or sixty, he could get the necessary sum, at a certain rate of interest, from Akaloo. Various shops were kept on some of the estates, and to their adventurers Akaloo frequently furnished the capital. On occasions of some particularly unjust decision by a magistrate,

involving a fine, both Akaloo and Achattu had been known to pay it off gratuitously.

But, as we have seen, poor Achattu had long given up the pursuit of business. Dollars and "bitts," or fourpennies, as soon as they were earned, now went directly to the opium-shop, or were more rapidly lost in another Chinese den, the gambling-house of Chin-a-foo. This estate "hell" of Mr. Chin-a-foo was a queer place. It was on the westward border of the village, an old tumble-down tenement, ostensibly forbidden to the Coolies by the manager, who to an inspector would have shown surprise at the discovery that anyone professed to inhabit it, or would have alleged that immigrants preferred that sort of tenement, and that it was impossible to keep them out of it. A simple expedient open to the manager in

such cases appeared never to have occurred to him, namely, to pull down the house.

However, here, in a room which the injurious Chin-a-foo had enlarged by a low half-underground out-building of wattle and mud, with door and windows carefully closed; lit by a wretched petroleum lamp, that threw out a dismal glimmer in the reeking atmosphere, there squatted on the floor fifteen or twenty Coolies, most of them Chinese. The Hindoos, at the time of which we are writing, rarely indulged in either of the Chinese dissipations of opium-smoking and gambling, though since then there is no doubt that these vices have largely bitten the Indian immigrants. On a low bench of boards, two Chinese and an Indian—a woman—lay in the helpless torpor that had succeeded their inhalation of the horri-

ble narcotic. Round the lamp the rest squatted or stood, pitting their bitts on the throw of some bamboo dice; eager, yet silent, the strange, unimpressive faces of the Chinamen contrasting with the starting eyes and clenched teeth of the two or three Hindoos. In the midst, most excited of all, was the Madrassee, who, when first he entered that place, had been received with surprise and respect, but who was now regarded with contempt, even by Chin-a-foo himself. That gentleman was an old gambler from Hong-Kong, with a face it would be a work of art to describe. The lines in its bleared and yellow surface were marked out by long-established deposits of dirt. It seemed to have been crumpled and kneaded and flattened by one of the grotesque idol-makers of his own country

into the nearest possible resemblance to a broken-nosed monkey that could be reached by any human artist. The leery slits he used as eyes were only opened sufficiently to let in the knowledge which their owner wanted, and to give no clue to the observer of the emotions or thoughts of the spirit—if there were a spirit—within. In the combination of his features his gums and teeth appeared to have been a matter of difficulty to the designer, and to have been fortuitously placed in the least appropriate relation to his other features. The blue shaven head, with its short grey pigtail, was in harmony, if I may so say, with the grotesqueness of his countenance. Thick was his neck; short, sturdy, and powerful his body, which was clothed in a dirty blue blouse and paejamas of cotton. In a belt round

his waist, but concealed under the wide paejamas, was a knife about two inches broad and fifteen long, tapering to its end, and kept in a state of suspicious brightness. There were few men on the estate who would have tackled Chin-a-foo. He was considered altogether a dangerous problem to solve, and no attempt to solve it was made by any one. Drummond had observed him. He could, when he chose, be a good worker; and when his earnings at the gambling-house failed, as they sometimes did, he took his share, with great address, in the labour of the sugar-house. But more frequently he wandered away to the back of the estate, or a short distance into the savannah behind it, and sometimes brought home birds or snakes, or the iguanas he had caught. Drummond knew that the immigrants at

Belle Susanne would find some means of gambling on the estate, or would go to the next estate for it, so he directed the overseers not to see too much of Mr. Chin-a-foo's business, at the same time warning the sullen rascal that any breach of the peace occurring in his hut would be followed by instant punishment.

To-night, having thrown off his upper garment, thus disclosing from the waist upwards his muscular trunk, the Chinaman glided softly through the place, bearing a coarse jar and a half-cocoa-nut, offering to his patrons and guests some of the illicit arrack which he kept concealed in a corner of his hut.

"Arrack, Achattu!" said he, with a motion of the face intended for a grin, and shaking his diabolical head at the rest of

the company, as he stopped at the Madrassee, whose heavy eyes betokened that he had already had enough, though they were still fixed on the fatal pieces of bamboo with their rude marks; and he was staking his last coins on the chances. Achattu shook his head.

"No." He showed his empty hands. "Trust me?"

Chin-a-foo was decided in his negative.

"You owe me seven dollars. I cannot trust you any more."

Achattu hung down his head. It was a shame, indeed, to have fallen so low that Chin-a-foo would not trust him.

"How much do you want?" said a deep voice from the door-way.

Every one started. The voice was a strange voice in that company: it was,

indeed, that of Hunoomaun. He came forward towards the light.

"I am going to try my luck with my friend Achattu," said he, sitting down beside him. "You do not seem to have done well to-night, Achattu?"

Achattu recognised the peon as a new Coolie, and Chin-a-foo, who, when first startled by the interruption, had looked round nervously with a quick glance, immediately began to play the host to the new-comer with many professions of respect. The fellow had made himself an adept in the language of the Indian Coolies.

"Will my friend drink to the good of my house, since he has placed his worthy feet inside my door?" said he.

Hunoomaun took the cocoa-nut, and, nearly filling its bowl, drank off the sting-

ing liquor at a pull. It seemed to have no effect on him, and the boldness of the act was noted with more admiration by the guests than by their wily host, who had conscientiously watered the spirit in rather excessive proportion.

"Now," said the chokedar, "I and my friend Achattu are going to play together against the whole company, if they like. Achattu," he whispered, "I will lend you five dollars."

The Madrassee's face brightened up, and he called for more liquor. The half stupor of his drunkenness seemed to pass from him. He again exhibited the keen, eager frenzy of a gambler's hope.

The two won. Hunoomaun was cool and apt, and evidently acted upon calculation. The other had the usual gambler's super-

stitions, and would fain have pressed them on his wily partner, but the latter would not listen. After an hour's play there were four dollars to be divided between them. Achattu was in an ecstasy. He drank again and again; he placed his arms around Hunoomaun's neck, and covered him with maudlin caresses. The peon rose as if to go, when Achattu challenged him to a few farewell throws.

"No: I cannot stay. You play for too small stakes. I must go to sleep."

"Wait," said the other, feverishly, holding out the dollars which Hunoomaun had lent him and the two others he had won. "I will toss you for any stake you like; one dollar, two dollars, if you please."

The peon instantly sat down and took up the box. The Chinese and Indians, to

whom such high play was a rare sight, leaned forward over the pair in great excitement.

"Let it be two dollars, then," said Hunoomaun. "Now, what do you say?"

"Three!" cried Achattu.

"Six!" said the peon.

He threw five. It was nearer his guess than the other's.

"You have lost."

The Madrassee seized the box with a trembling hand. It was made from a thick bamboo. He gave it a flourish.

"Seven!" said Hunoomaun.

"Three!" cried Achattu, again.

It was his favourite number. He had thrown it exactly. The excitement grew hotter. The lamp was dying out. The circle pressed forward so eagerly that there

was scarcely room on the floor between the players. Their half-naked bodies glistened with the dew of heat. The dim radiance played weirdly on the strange countenances about it. From the doorway, against which he was leaning, lowered the sweating face of Chin-a-foo, to whom these last moments were always periods of anxiety. The next throw was won by Hunoomaun; the next, and the next. In ten minutes the Madrassee's hand was empty. He seized his hair and cursed his fates, and took another pull at the cocoa-nut.

"Lend me one ten dollars more!" he cried.

The chokedar coolly counted them into his hand, and said, "I will throw you five times for the ten dollars."

He won three out of five throws. Achattu

threw down the dollars. As he made an effort to rise from the squatting posture he had maintained for three hours, he stumbled, and fell down insensible. The Chinaman, after coolly examining him, without a word picked him up and, with the assistance of two others, proceeded to carry him to his house.

As the men lifted their senseless burden, a woman, who, through a crevice in the wooden wall, had been closely watching the scene, glided swiftly away and ran before them to Achattu's house, which she reached and entered unperceived. It was Ramdoolah. The bearers deposited the Madrassee silently on the bank, outside his hut. The woman inside, breathless, listened to the whisperings of the men.

"Shall we call up Ramdoolah?"

"No," replied the Chinaman, coolly: "he will soon come to himself and go in."

Ramdoolah was of the same opinion, and, after listening a few minutes, without hearing any movement on Achattu's part, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHANCE-MEDLEY.

The overseer who, the morning after Achattu's unlucky "corroboree," went the rounds to wake up the Coolies, found the Madrassee lying on the bank as he had been left by his companions. He was stiff and cold. The fact was that the wily Chinaman had the night before discovered the fatal issue to his customer of the last throw, but he kept the information to himself.

Ramdoolah, on being awakened, proceeded to fill the village with her ululations. These, however, were regarded with great stolidity by the crowd of males and females

who soon gathered to look at the body. Hunoomaun, always an early riser, was one of the first to arrive on the scene, and he slipped away to warn Chin-a-foo. That gentleman, looking more dirty and ghastly than usual, then appeared, pulling violently at his pig-tail, holding up his hands, giving vent to nasal and guttural exclamations of great variety and force, and meantime, as they came up, whispering to any of the spectators who had been present at his house the evening before that they were to know nothing about Achattu's last moments. For the poor Madrassee there was a general expression of sympathy. He had once been a head man among them, and few creatures are so degraded as to be insensible to the reverses of fate in the case of a life that is familiar to them. They recalled the wit of

the lively Madrassee; his once genial, easy manner, his strength and aptitude, and his occasional acts of generosity. The feeling gradually grew stronger and stronger against the influences which had brought the poor fellow to his fate, and sarcastic exclamations were uttered by the crowd to the disadvantage of both Chin-a-foo and Ramdoolah.

"She may well cry! See all those silver ornaments he gave her!" said a woman.

"Ah! she'll get over that," said a man,—no other than Nobbeebuckus, who had once made a futile attempt to seduce her from the dead, "as soon as some one else is kind to her."

"I expect he died in good time for her," said another; "she is making too much noise to be in earnest."

By this time three or four overseers were

on the spot. Ramdoolah, who, her head wrapped in a chudder, was sitting on the ground beside the body, still exhibiting considerable animation and vigour in her grief, was sternly ordered to adjourn her lamentations to a fitter season; an injunction she obeyed with admirable self-command.

"Do you know how he came to be lying dead outside your house?" said Crampton to the woman.

"No, massa; no see my man last night. Me go sleep—no see him."

The overseer did himself the credit not to believe a word of this.

"Well," said he, "any other Coolie see him? Chin-a-foo, you sabby Ingliss, sabby Indian talk; ask any Coolie see Achattu any time?"

The Chinaman, peering through the slits

in his face, and preserving an impassive aspect, pitched his voice in the key and tone of a question, but really instructed his matties not to know anything about the dead man's business last evening. Every Coolie present instantly shook his head. Chin-a-foo also opened his palms, and half-shrugging his shoulders, expressed a regret that he had not seen Achattu the night before, since he had apparently been so ill. The Chinaman professed to be something of a doctor. Hereupon Drummond, who had been sent for, arrived. He first of all carefully examined the man, and ascertained that there were no marks of violence upon him. He took note of the fact that he had been drinking. And lastly, opening the clenched hand, he quietly slipped therefrom the die which the poor fellow had

thrown in his last bout with fortune. Drummond's suspicion was that the man had been poisoned.

"Ha! Mr. Chin-a-foo, this Coolie go your house last night, eh? Who put 'ee here?"

"No, massa," replied Chin-a-foo, with exemplary calmness. "Achattu no money, no trust 'im: no come to Chin-a-foo house diss too long time."

"Look here, sir! Do you see that? I just found it in the man's hand."

The face and hands of Chin-a-foo displayed the most grotesque astonishment.

"Yours is the only gambling place on the estate, you know," continued Drummond, talking ordinary English in his excitement, "and the last thing the man was doing was evidently gambling. Lay hold of that fellow, Craig!"

Craig's powerful grasp was on the Chinaman's shoulder in a moment. The next instant there was a flash of steel in the morning sun, and a knife was driven into the side of the young Scotchman,—driven by a steady and accustomed hand. Before the villain could repeat his blow, Drummond's fist had felled him to the ground and his arm had caught the fainting youth. Two overseers disarmed and secured the Chinaman.

All this passed too quickly to be told, but its effect on the Coolies was extraordinary. At sight of the blood on the one hand, and of their "mattie" in the hands of the overseers on the other, the Chinese, especially, became hysterical in their excitement, and loud cries arose on every side. The pigtails brandished their knives, the Hindoos ran for their latties.

There was a Babel of outcries. "Well done, Chin-a-foo! Take him from them," and the like.

Some pressed forward on Drummond, who supported Craig on his left arm, as he shouted to the overseers to stick to the Chinaman at all hazards. At the same moment his right fist levelled a too-audacious Coolie who came within reach of it. The mob closed about him and the overseers, and began to use their sticks. The noise brought out the whole village. The women, with loud shrieks, encouraged the men to the attack. Simon Pety, bravely running to the rescue, excited the mob to such frenzy that he was fain to cut and run for his life, pursued by some infuriated Chinese females. All the pigtails turned out of their quarters, flourishing their

knives; and the rest of the overseers arriving on the scene did good service with both sticks and fists. But Indians and Chinese in a fury are not easily quieted. The Coolies not only held their own, but were getting the better of the Whites. Two overseers were seriously wounded. The Negroes on their way to work watched the fray at a safe distance. Drummond, hampered by his burden, could scarcely keep up under the storm of blows that now rained upon him. At this juncture, Dilloo, with several others, arrived from the extremity of the village. Seeing Drummond nearly overpowered by the numbers who pressed upon him, and observing, in a moment, that the row was over the Chinaman in custody, the Hindoo, without asking a question, dashed into the *mêlée*, and with his redoubtable lattey began

to play about among the Chinese in a way that soon cleared a circle round the manager. His companions seconded him, at the same time calling upon their matties to stop fighting. Hunoomaun, who, to tell the truth, had been standing aloof from the fight, meditating which side he should take, was now seized with a sudden zeal for law and order, and took his place by Dilloo. Nothing could stand before those two men. The immigrants, finding themselves opposed by their own friends, began to fall off, and in a few minutes, carrying off their wounded, retired to the Chinese quarters, where they prepared for a desperate resistance to the now inevitable visit of the police.

Craig was removed to the manager's house and laid on Drummond's own bed. The loss of blood had rendered him insensible;

but Drummond, having stripped him and examined the wound, came to the conclusion that it was not mortal, though he saw that the youth had had a narrow escape. The gambler's nerve and quickness had been trained to a nicety, and his blow was aimed with devilish skill. The doctor, who arrived an hour later, confirmed Drummond's opinion. Any wound is dangerous in that hideous climate, but with rest and quiet and incessant care, he hoped to be able to save the life of the strong and healthy youth.

A force of police soon arrived from the police-station at Guineatown, marching with their rifles to the front of the manager's house, where the inspector in command drew them up in military line. Order is maintained in colonies where Coolies labour and black men are citizens as it is in Ire-

land, by constables armed with rifles and muskets. There was some hesitation about the course to be pursued. The noise from the Negro-yard indicated a continuance of the excitement. It was clear that the advance of the police would give rise to a serious riot. Drummond was anxious to avoid a collision, and proposed to go down and address the men. This was immediately objected to by everyone but Dilloo. He offered to accompany the manager, and assured him of his safety.

"You, Dilloo!" said Drummond, looking into the Indian's open countenance, and at a dull bluish mark in his brown forehead, where a lattey had left the record of its visit. "You fight for manager this day, kill manager to-morrow!"

"Massa," replied the other, proudly,

"me no want massa die, cos Dilloo go prison. Too much Coolie fight massa: Dilloo help him."

"Ha! Then a Coolie may have some sense of honour and fair play!"

Here, Hunoomaun, who had been closely watching the conversation, struck in.

"Hunoomaun too—new Coolie—fight too for manahee. Me and massa go to Coolie people."

Dilloo looked sardonically grave, but said nothing. He felt sure the peon would not risk his skin among the Coolies just then.

"Then shall we all go?" said Drummond.

"No," said Dilloo. "Massa Drummon' and Dilloo one; Massa Drummon' and Hunoomaun one."

Hunoomaun clearly shrank from facing

those with whom he had been fighting, unless he were covered by the rifles of the police.

"Very well," said Drummond. "Look here, Dilloo, I'll trust you. My life will be in your hands, you sabby." The Indian nodded. "But you fought bravely just now, and saved my life, so I will trust you again."

The police were ordered to withdraw into the road. When Drummond and Dilloo appeared boldly advancing towards the Chinese quarters, where three or four hundred immigrants, of whom thirty were Chinese, were assembled, some excited by arrack they had plundered from the cellar of their hero, Chin-a-foo, the enterprise seemed to be one of no little danger; but Dilloo, holding up his hands, explained in a word or two that they had come unarmed

and unaccompanied with any police, to talk with the people; and he asked them to sit down and listen. After a few minutes' hesitation the influence Dilloo had gained among his countrymen told. They squatted on their hams, or lounged against the buildings, and the Coolie and manager walked among them.

"Now," said Drummond, characteristically swearing at them, "what has taken you all to get up a mutiny in this way? and over that scoundrel Chin-a-foo, of all others! Am I not kind to you?"

"Iss, massa," was the reply of those who spoke; the rest nodding their assent.

"I never beat you?"

"No, massa: ovaseah beat Coolie."

Drummond winced at this naïve rejoinder.

"Well, what possessed you to beat *me?*

Overseer beat you, tell me,—every time tell me. You know Chin-a-foo rascal. Eh? look here!" He took off his hat and showed them blood on his forehead, and held out his arm, which was also bleeding. "Coolie do that."

There was a dead silence. The manager could not have produced a better effect by the most elaborate argument than he did by this illustration. The gentle-hearted people, now that a break had been effected in the torrent of their excitement, were completely transformed: they hung down their heads ashamed, all but the Chinese, who remained sullen and angry: Drummond might count that he would never make it up with them. Dilloo took advantage of the moment: he spoke in a language common to both the parties.

"Massa no punis Coolie, s'pose Coolie all still, go work, all shaky hand, no more fight, no more bad heart. Massa and Coolie friend."

As Drummond nodded assent, the Coolies rose, and, crowding round him, put him through a course of hand-shaking worthy of an American President at his installation; and then quietly disappeared along the dams to their work.

In a short time, Mr. Chin-a-foo having been handed over to the police, and the overseers having received directions from Drummond as to their conduct towards the rioters, the manager and Missa devoted themselves to the wounded overseer. The scalp and flesh wounds of the others were treated by the doctor, and formed the subject of lively conversation at breakfast. It

was a curious proof of the confidence that a manager may acquire among his people, that, after they had received Drummond's pledge of forgiveness, those Coolies who had been wounded in the affray came freely to the hospital to be treated, and made no attempt to conceal their complicity in the disturbance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ENGLISH JUSTICE.

THE house of the magistrate of the Macusi district was situated on the other side of Guineatown, about two miles from Belle Susanne. Keeping along the monotonous road, after one had passed the flat swamps, the dirty drains, the jagged and rutted dams, amidst which there seemed to stalk about in straggling discomposure the timber-legged huts and hovels of the villagers of Guineatown, you came upon a barn-like building, shingle-roofed, of unpainted wood raised upon very lofty piles, and with a

steep flight of steps leading from the garden to the verandah.

The garden that surrounded this ugly tenement was really one of great beauty. Divided by clipt hedges of thorny orange, its squares of black rich soil were gay with varieties of shrubs and flowers, some of which were not to be matched even in Guianian gardens; in the forks of the branches of shrubs and trees, such as the Frangipanni, the Cannon-ball tree, the Guava or the Tamarind, grew precious specimens of the orchids, with which, in infinite variety, the trees of the interior forests abound. In a broad trench at the end of the garden floated sleepily the great cups of the Victoria Regia and its mammoth prickly rafts of leaves. The long line of cocoa-palms beyond, the lime and orange trees with

their shining leaves and fruit, the arbour where no one would have dared to sit, for marabuntas, and ants, and centipedes, and those tiny scourges, the *bêtes rouges*, had long since established their kingdom there, and resented the intrusion of foreigners; the straggling, overpowering Stephanotis, with its wealthy festoons of ivory bugles, sharing with a great Passion-flower the decoration of the entire verandah, made altogether an embowering Paradise for the homely though comfortable barrack which was the head-quarters of justice in that neighbourhood.

Here, shaded from the level rays of the early morning sun by the jalousies of the wide verandah, with its rocking-chairs, the invariable hammock, one or two small tables, on which appeared tokens of feminine occu-

pancy, sat, at a large secretary-table, a man of about fifty years of age. Stout, but evidently quick and energetic, from the way in which he turned and spoke when interrupted by some one who suddenly emerged from the dining-room, he was a man on whom time had written the marks of care and disappointment. The dark, wiry hair on head and chin and cheeks was beginning to change its colour, and there were wrinkles on his low, broad forehead—the hieroglyphs of old troubles and passions. As he sat in his shirt-sleeves, his portly form was well displayed in the white-duck waistcoat and trousers it so neatly filled. You would have said, at the first glance, that his face evinced firmness and resolution; but, had you watched him shrewdly, you would have detected that the resolution was that of a

ready, impulsive man; that about the well-formed though too full lips there played the movements of doubt; that the eye was uncertain and fitful in its gaze, varying, indeed, with rather extraordinary changes of expression; and, as he sat at his work, the real nature of the man would have discovered itself to you in his movements. Sometimes he laid down his pen in the middle of a sentence, when his eye had lighted on something in his previous manuscript, or one of the books that were open about him; or perhaps to throw himself back and yawn, and dream a moment about some matter plainly disconnected from his occupation. Once he half rose to pursue a mosquito, more intemperate, keen, and pertinacious than its fellows; and then, suddenly changing his mind, took up his pen

and rattled off with renewed application. Or, again, he leaned back in his chair and watched the impudent marabuntas, as, with loud trumpet accompaniment, they built their clay nests under the joists of the verandah. In fact, Mr. Marston, except for the lack of that element of energy which not only makes a man resolute to begin but to persist in every work he undertakes, might, with his abilities, have raised himself to an almost distinguished position at the English bar. But his study, as well as his practice, had been fortuitous and capricious, whence he had found it convenient to offer to his country talents that seemed incapable of supporting himself. The Colonial Office, that last refuge for mediocre and distressed rank or genius, with a charity that, to begin with, hopeth all things,

though it is ofttimes not so enduring as many of its clients would desire, had given him the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate in Demerara, where he had now spent, with few intervals of absence, nearly twenty years of his life. Five years before, he had lost his wife, who left him six children,—a terrible charge upon a man in his position, with an Englishman's notions of his duty to them in the matter of education, and an Englishman's ideas of what was due to himself in the way of living.

How much trouble and sorrow their proud, but unpractical and extravagant views bring upon fellow-countrymen of ours in all parts of the world it would be hard to estimate, if not, indeed, to exaggerate. The struggles to make both ends meet, the thriftless and unheroic heroism of many a

poor gentleman and lady, brought up in luxury, and schooled, after they have left school, in repression and want, and an economy they never know how to apply, would form a story, the satire of which would need no added bitterness from the pen of sarcasm, so strong is the gall of actual facts. It would be a tragedy none the less real because it was not intensified by its murders, suicides, and fatal passions. This is not the time or the place to consider how far this might be remedied, how far it is possible to change in whole classes of society unpractical ideas and the results of foolish upbringing for a training in the school of utility and restraint. Those who neglect to instil the principles of common sense and economy in earlier years pass on their wards to an academy of adversity,

wherein the scholars too often ignominiously perish.

The person who, as we have said, interrupted the magistrate in his vigorous physical and mental exercitations, was a young girl of slight figure, which happened, on this morning, to be well shown off in a plain white dress, involving from neck to feet the symmetry of her form. She was not tall, but was moulded in the exquisite perfection of outline and proportion whereof tropical countries sometimes give such fine specimens in the earlier stages of life. Her delicate features seemed to shine with a glorious light. The dark hair, smoothed over the ivory forehead, and braided in a coronet on her head,—the pencilled eyebrows,—the large, deep, lustrous eyes, fringed so coyly by the long lashes,—the

slightly aquiline nose, with its chiselled nostrils,—the tender, small, sweet, cherry lips, the little dimpled chin, that curved, in magic beauty of outline,—and the neck, whereon this perfect mask was lifted up—an alabaster tower so small and yet so grand in its proportions—altogether gave Isabel Marston a loveliness lily-like and attractive beyond the play of words to picture.

"Bell," said her father, glad of the interruption,—he suffered from endless *ennui*,—"why are you so restless? You have been going in and out all the morning, and you know how important it is I should have this minute finished. The Governor requires me to send it in by to-morrow."

"That is very cool of you, you naughty justice, when you know that if I sit here you talk to me every five minutes, and work

far better when I am away. There!" said she, pulling back the big, grizzly head, and printing a kiss on the man's forehead, "that is a fine for my absence; and now I want to tell you about something."

"Gonzales sent for his bill again, I suppose. Is there no one who will rescue me from the fellow, and do to death

—That valiant but ignoble Portuguese?

Why, these Madeirans are worse than Jews! Ay, and confound it, worrying a *magistrate* for money! I'll commit him for contempt —I'll imprison him—I'll give judgment against him the very next case he has before me—I'll send him to Massaruni—I'll——"

"Hush! you know perfectly well you

won't do anything of the kind, papa, and he knows it too, or he would never bother you; but someone might overhear you, and take some of your jokes in real earnest, you know."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the magistrate, revelling in the impossible idea. "It would be fun to see Gonzales' face if I were to pay him off every 'bitt,' and leave him without a grievance! The fellow imagines he gets some benefit in his petty-debt cases in my court, because I am obliged to be civil to him; but he *doesn't*, you know. I am always on my guard to give the poor devil he sues the best of justice—treble X. Ah! by the way, did Cumming Brothers send that bottled ale yesterday? We'll have some for breakfast. . . . Yes, the best of justice. I tell you what, I very nearly

convicted him that time the bottle of rum was found in his bed."

At this moment, after a preliminary knock, not at all of a ceremonious character, on the post of the open doorway which led from the verandah to the steps, a short, sturdy man, dressed in dark clothes and wearing a Panama hat, stepped into the gallery. His straight hair, dark eyes, and brown face, with the ruddy tint in the cheeks, discovered the Madeiran, the identical "devil" of the conversation.

"Good-morning, Gonzales!" cried the volatile magistrate, while Isabel drew back with a scarlet face. "What are you doing in this neighbourhood, and so early in the morning? Do you want a summons against anybody, or are you stripping some poor nigger's plantains?"

"No," replied the other, speaking in tolerably good English, and very deliberately; "that is not the cause of my visit to-day. I have been at my shop in Guinea-town, after visiting my cattle farm at Mahaica."

"Ah, you lucky Portuguese! You are buying up the whole country."

"And the magistrates too—eh! eh!" replied the other unadvisedly, as he rubbed his hands together and chuckled to himself.

The Englishman's blood flushed to his face. It is dangerous for a foreigner, especially if he be a creditor, to rally a Briton on his debts! Marston, however, restrained himself, and said, with dignity,—

"Well, Mr. Gonzales, we poor officials are put in your hands by the Government, which refuses to give us the necessaries of

life. They forget that we may be tempted to sell justice to make it up! But you must remember, too, this is an English colony, and your claims are protected by English laws. Don't be too grasping, my friend."

"Eh?" said the other, shrugging his shoulders good-humouredly—he could afford to be genial; "the protection of English law is a very fine thing, eh—eh? This planters' government swindles me at every turn! I am obliged to hide my money to save it from them,—in America, you know," he added, feeling he had admitted too much.

"Oh, don't be afraid of me, Gonzales: I'm not the Inspector-General of Police! It is no business of mine to inquire into your resources."

"Well, let it pass. Protection—eh? They charge me, for instance, five thousand dollars for my spirit licence in Georgetown; twelve hundred dollars at Berbice. I have to put twice as much water in the rum since they passed the new ordinance. I can't keep a drop of spirits or wine in my own house. Always those sub-inspectors, because they get half the fine, and divide it, mind you, with the magistrate,—keep still, sir: not you—you have not the chance!—are coming into my place, turning my wife out of bed, shaking up the mattresses and pillows, looking into——"

"I know all about it. But; Mr. Gonzales, not to refer to your own unspotted honesty and notorious integrity, some of your countrymen are great scoundrels. I admire the candour with which you own to me, as a

magistrate, to watering your rum. You cheat the excise and the public too, and no one can catch you. The Government must raise a revenue."

"Yes: out of Portugee and Coolie. Planters' goods, machines, guano, hogsheads, all come in for nothing; but Coolie rice, ghee, salt-fish, American pork, rum, everything we eat and drink, heavy duty. Ah, you precious English: your protection is expensive, my friend!"

"But what did you want with me?" said the other, rather offended at the familiarity of the Madeiran. "You did not come here to talk about this."

"No, I forgot," said the other, glancing at the young lady; "I drove back from Guineatown. There has been a row at Belle Susanne. One overseer nearly killed

and several wounded: all the police out."

"Indeed!" cried the magistrate, getting up excitedly.

The young lady turned pale and red by turns.

"Who was hurt so badly, Mr. Gonzales, did you hear?" she said.

"Yes. The best man on the estate: a fine young man, very fine young man, name of Craig, stabbed by a Chinee. . . . Eh, eh! look here! What is the matter with the young lady, eh?"

The father and visitor ran together to Isabel, who lay back in the cane chair, with an ashen face, quite motionless. There was the hubbub usual on such occasions. Servants came, water was brought, and presently, after a decent

suspense, Isabel opened her eyes: she was carried away in her father's strong arms and laid on a bed. He satisfied himself that it was only a swoon, caused, as he imagined, by a sense of danger; and, assuring her they were quite safe, he returned to his visitor.

"This young man, Craig, is a friend of your young lady, eh?" said the acute Gonzales.

"We know him. He is a respectable youth, and comes here sometimes: a Scotch farmer's son."

"I am sorry I spoke his name so quick: the young lady perhaps likes him. No? Pardon. Ah, you English are very funny about those things! Well, let me tell you he is the best young overseer in the colony. Never do for this colony. Mister

Drummond soon gets tired of him. He has spoke to you about the treatment of Coolies, eh?"

The magistrate turned round sharply.

"Gonzales, you are too inquisitive: you have no right to ask me about private conversations. What are you driving at?"

"Eh, eh! Well, no matter. Look here, Mister Marston,"—the Portuguese put his finger on Marston's arm, and commanded his attention, for he now spoke in a low, serious tone,—"there is danger: I came to warn you of it. This is not the last row there will be. I travel all over the colony: I know every estate. All Coolie shopkeepers buy my goods; and I tell you things look very bad: bad hearts, bad looks everywhere."

"Yes: these Coolies are never satisfied."

"If you spoke to your young friend, Craig, he will tell you why. Overseers interfere with wives, drivers beat Coolies, swindle in hospital, cheat at pay-table; all which Mister Drummond pretends not to know. But I know he does."

"Hush!" said the magistrate, getting up and looking out to see that no one was eavesdropping. "I cannot hear anything against Drummond. He is a friend of mine. Besides, he is a plaintiff or defendant in every court I hold."

"Yes, yes, I understand. Well, I only say he gets the money they cheat the Coolies out of."

The Portuguese put his fat forefinger on his lip and nodded, as if to hint more than he said. "The same on many other estates. Manager cheats Coolie, cheats

owners too. Makes money both ways, eh?"

"And you grudge him the opportunity, eh? Trust a Portuguese if he could get such a chance."

The other gave a shrug of his shoulders. He did not pretend to peculiar virtue. He was not ready to proclaim himself insensible to temptation. The man was as queer a mixture of cunning and good-heartedness as could be found among the wonderful variety of incongruous natures in this medley of a world.

"Coolies they are all unsatisfied, Mister Marston, from end to end of the colony. Berbice, bad hospitals, stopped wages; Mahaica, stopped wages, bad hospitals; same in Demerary, same on East Coast, same on West Coast, same at Essequibo,

same at Wakenhaam and Arabian Coast. All this is very dangerous. If these people rise nothing will be safe. All our property and lives go."

"Oh! then the Portuguese are getting frightened, are they? Well, if there is a rising, we shall have twenty thousand of you on our side, and all the blacks."

The other shook his head.

"No, sir. Portugee will not fight against the Coolies for you English. We have some spite for you. You are a magistrate and my friend. Let me tell you not to trust that. No Portugee, no black men will help you. But I must go. 'Spose you will ride over to Belle Susanne. Eh?"

"Ah! yes, I forgot, I suppose I must. Well, good morning. By the way, I am

going to pay you off that loan. The interest is too heavy."

"Eh?" The Portuguese shrugged his shoulders slightly, stretched out his hands in deprecation, made a grimace, silently raised his hat, and went away.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PLEASANT NURSE.

Craig's wound for a day or two progressed favourably. Drummond watched at his bedside day and night. The doctor came twice a day. Every appliance that could mitigate the tendency to inflammation was used. Early each morning Pete drove into Georgetown for ice. Missa devoted herself to the sick-room, and quite fell in love with the strong, brave youth who lay so helpless and was yet so patient. On the fourth day the doctor saw with alarm symptoms of inflammation. The feverish heat, quick

pulse, and wandering eye of the sufferer told a story of danger. Drummond's anxiety increased. He would have remained by the young man's bedside all the time, but it was impossible to neglect the estate, and, strong as he was, he could not afford to lose his sleep. It was necessary to find someone to help Missa. After a short consultation, they jointly decided on asking Lutchmee to undertake the duty. When Dilloo had been sent for, and had heard the manager's request, he readily yielded to the proposal, and Lutchmee herself, no longer afraid of her employer, agreed at once to act as an assistant-nurse. She accordingly took her place at the bedside of the overseer and hardly ever left it. Though entreated to take certain periods for sleep, she refused, and sat upon the floor hour after hour,

watching all the changes of the wearisome fever that now set in. She seemed always fresh and always on the alert, possessing that faculty invaluable in a nurse, of being able to take her snatches of rest unobserved.

Thus it was that in his delirium Craig seemed to become conscious of a gentle presence continually moving about him with noiseless ease; and with the softest and deftest of hands placing the ice on his burning brow, or fanning his fevered face; or, anon, holding down the blankets over his chill-stricken limbs. He could not see its features or distinguish its voice, but he called it "mother." And often, during his wild wanderings, Lutchmee stood with clasped hands and palpitating heart to hear him address to her as "mother" a torrent of affectionate phrases; or when the infinite

longings of his excited heart to be once more at home expressed themselves in peevish reproaches to the absent one for ever letting him out of her sight, though Lutchmee could not understand him, many a flood of pure, strange sympathy poured from her eyes.

But, in more lucid moments, Craig's mind, now somewhat awakened to the danger he was in, turned back to the serious lessons of his early boyhood. Several exclamations which Drummond overheard induced him to send across the next estate to the clergyman in charge of the parish church. British Guiana was, after its English occupation, divided into parishes, in each of which the majority of parishioners were permitted to choose a parochial form of religion. Hence, in some parishes An-

glicanism, in others Presbyterianism, had the superiority. It was scarcely of much consequence, since all religious bodies are equally endowed by the colony.

Mr. Telfer, the incumbent, was an Englishman, a Cambridge graduate, of indifferent origin, whose plodding zeal had won him a respectable degree at the University, but was unequal to advancing him in the carnal world. Hundreds of such men, reasonably polished by education and the moderate contact they have had during their College career, with a better society, and who, adopting the Church as a profession, do by and by succeed in working themselves into something of a clerico-spiritual frame of mind, are scattered here and there in the rural districts of England, and dispersed among our colonies. If they are rather

insipid, they discharge the formal duties of their office with neatness and dispatch. An ingenious use of a few familiar rhetorical *formulæ*, of conjunctions and interjections, and of Bible texts, enables them to construct a sermon. They are always respectable units at a provincial or colonial dinner-table, where they generally contrive to obtrude as little as possible of the clerical element. Beginning their earthly walk in a cottage, or a garret, or a four-room flat, or the back-room of a tradesman's shop, they start on their heavenly career from college halls and cloisters, under the benediction of a Bishop's hands. The work is respectable, though the pay be small. They are content to achieve all possible distinction at one leap, by the simple process of ordination, and they quietly roll along a

narrow-gauge tramway which appears to have been expressly constructed for them to the top of Pisgah. It is fortunate for the Church of England that she leans not on such slender ministers as these,—that she is able to appeal to higher and nobler classes of men as the apology for her existence.

Mr. Telfer was a fair specimen of the sort of clergyman we have been describing. His father had been a successful shoemaker at Cambridge. It was because the old man's affectionate pride would not allow the fact of his relationship to be idle or silent that the son found it convenient to change the scene. He accepted a living in British Guiana, whither it was scarcely probable that the senior Telfer would, in face of yellow fever and mosquitos, extend his too demonstratively paternal regard.

The Reverend Adolphus Telfer's charity was suited to his mind,—it was narrow. He rigidly restrained it within the bounds of his own communion. Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Jews, Turks, infidels, heathen, and Coolies shared none of it. No more admirable parochial person could have been devised for British Guiana. He could be on good terms with the planters without entertaining any ingenuous sympathies with either blacks or Asiatics. The young of the former he utilised in white stoles for the services of the church. He baptized their numerous illegitimate children with exemplary catholicity, and when they were dead he read the burial service over them with the same freedom from affectation as he would have shown over the body of a deceased planter. Within the narrow pre-

cincts thus described, however, Mr. Telfer was a tolerable, good-hearted fellow. His clerical clothes seemed too stiff or too thick to let any natural feeling exude through them. Nevertheless when he came to visit Craig, and found him lying in a precarious state, and heard him appealing so frequently to his absent mother, or unconsciously repeating scraps of prayer and verses taught him in childhood, the clergyman's mind opened a little to the pathos of the situation. He often came back to the sick youth, and would read to him in his calmer moments passages of Scripture or try to solace him by reciting a few prayers and collects of the Church. Craig, too feeble to resist any impression, seemed to be grateful for these clerical attentions, and bore them with an evidently not displeased patience.

One person, however, watched these exercitations with singular jealousy. We have said that Lutchmee always remained by the bed-side of the sick man. In her simple mind, as day by day she rendered her services with instinctive quickness and propriety, there had been developed a vague yet powerful interest in her patient. She had never so particularly watched an English face; and this strong youth, with his ruffled auburn locks and pallid features, excited in her mind a sort of fascination which it would be hard to define. It was a pleasure —an honest, simple pleasure—to be near him, to look at him, to cool his brow and fan his face, to touch him, and sometimes to rest that fever-stricken head on her shoulder as she administered a potion. She was too natural to attempt to define these

feelings to herself: she only began to experience a keen and exquisite delight in every act she could perform for the object of her care. Certainly it was nothing like her strong, deep love for Dilloo,—rather was it a strange, half god-worship, than like any mere mortal affection. Had Lutchmee been able to analyze her own feelings, she would have detected danger in the acute jealousy excited in her mind, by the intervention between her and the sick youth of anyone but Missa, for whom she now had a true regard. The clergyman was her special aversion. On his first visit he had looked round carelessly, and said to Drummond, who had brought him in,—

"Who is this person? A Coolie woman! You had better send her away."

"She is one of my Coolies, and acts as

nurse," replied Drummond. "If you are going to say anything that may shock her or do her harm, I will get her to wait outside. But she may be wanted. And besides," added he, maliciously, "who knows what good she may get from you?"

The other was too self-involved to see the irony of Drummond's remarks.

"I fear it is no use," said he, naïvely. "All I have seen of these people convinces me that attempts to convert them are mere loss of time."

Drummond was silent, but he could not help reflecting that when he had any business in hand he was wont to exercise more hope and energy in it than was displayed by this minister of the indefatigable Christ.

Lutchmee, for her part, could not comprehend the remarks that had passed, but

she divined that the "missionary" had tried to exclude her from the room, and her feelings towards him took shape accordingly. When he used to come and read, or, opening a book, knelt down and prayed, she scornfully turned away. The moment he was gone, she tried every method her simple ingenuity could invent to divert Craig's thoughts from the minister or his conversation. One day, far on in the illness, she found him in tears after the clergyman's departure. She wiped them away and very prettily scolded the absent visitor for making her massa cry.

"Oh!" said Craig, half to her and half to himself, "don't say anything against the poor man. He does his best, and I feel the better for it."

This was the first time that Craig had

thoroughly noticed Lutchmee. He had often, since the recovery of his senses, regarded her dreamily and carelessly, as a quiet, useful attendant. The crisis of the fever was now over, and the doctor was beginning to hold out hopes of pulling his patient through in safety.

Craig, this afternoon, somewhat interestedly watched the lissome figure and silent motions of the nurse.

"You're Lutchmee?" said he.

"Iss, massa."

"Have I been sick long?"

She held up three fingers "Tree weeks, massa."

"Oh! I remember; there was a row, wasn't there? Why, I must have been wounded. I can scarcely move. Here, come and help me to sit up."

"O no, massa: no sittee up dis too long time." And in a moment, Lutchmee's two little arms were holding down the young giant, and her brown smiling face hung over his as she shook her head.

"You're about right," said he, looking at her with a sort of half-affectionate feeling that any kindly nurse may excite in her helpless patient. "When *you* can hold *me* down, you little minx, I must be weak indeed."

She smoothed his hair with her hand, smiling the while, to see him better. This she did with the same fondling simplicity with which a dog would have rubbed his head against his master's hand.

"Massa Telfer make um well," she said, thinking she might have done the clergyman an injustice.

Craig was lost in thought and did not notice her. He had been ill so many weeks, and, as he now began for the first time to apprehend, very dangerously. The words Telfer had read to him had recalled vividly to his mind his home life, from the influence of which he felt as if a great gulf just then separated him. A sense of extreme loneliness came over him. Here he was with nothing nearer or more affectionate than this simple and ignorant Coolie woman. The repugnance of race, which, spite of their proverbial adaptability to any circumstances, I fancy to be as extreme in Scotchmen as in other people, forbad the budding of any affectionate esteem in his heart, but he felt arising within him a strong sense of gratitude for her attentions; and, deeper and more insidious than that, a sort

of pleased admiration of her pretty features, lissome figure, and graceful ways. Was she not a pretty animal? Then, in a flash, his mother's face came before him, a homely yet a noble countenance, and, almost to his own surprise, happy as was the vision, it threw a curious, unpleasant light back upon his previous thoughts. Yet he could not recall to his mind one idea that his conscience could reprehend as improper. The difference between the two beings, that absent mother and the present slave, was too great to suggest any comparison of his feelings about them. His analysis was neither deep enough nor acute enough to inform him that probably the revulsion caused by the remembrance at this moment of his purest ideal and real in life must be rather from some hidden and unconscious tendency

of his previous thoughts than from any inherent evil in the thoughts themselves.

So subtle are the beginnings within a man's soul of the conflict between the spirits of Good and Evil.

END OF VOL. I.