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THE  
LAND OF THE PINK PEARL

OR  
*RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE IN THE  
BAHAMAS*

BY  
L. D. POWLES  
OF THE INNER TEMPLE BARRISTER AT LAW  
LATE CIRCUIT JUSTICE IN THE BAHAMA ISLANDS

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## PREFACE.

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THE day before I corrected the last proof of this work a prominent West Indian merchant said to me, "Why do you waste your time writing about the Bahama Islands? We in the West Indies know no more about the Bahamas than we do about an Irish village."

No doubt he said no more than the truth, for though included in the list of her Majesty's West Indian possessions, the Bahamas have so little in common with the other islands that I believe a man might spend his life travelling about the rest of the West Indies without ever hearing their name, and I am sure he might pass his days in the Bahamas and have no more idea of the mode of life or condition of the people in the rest of the West Indies than if he had never been beyond the limits of an English county.

What can be more noteworthy than the fact that Mr. Froude, in his recently published work, never even mentions the Bahama Islands?

That he should not have visited them was natural enough, for there is no communication by steam between them and the other islands, and



the only way he could have reached their only city, Nassau, would have been by a chance sailing-vessel or by going round by New York, and either plan would have occupied too much time. But that he should not even mention them goes far to prove how little they come within the range of thought or observation of the ordinary West Indian tourist.

Again, Mr. Salmon, whose acquaintance I have had the honour of making during the progress of this work, tells me that until he met me, the idea of including the Bahamas in any scheme of West Indian Confederation never entered his head.

As my friend says, "they are as little known in the West Indies as an Irish village," whilst in the mother country their name is never heard outside the walls of the Colonial Office, unless it be among the supporters of the S.P.G. or the Wesleyan and Baptist Missions.

But many an interesting story has been told of an Irish village, and it may be my readers will find interest in my story of this obscure corner of her Majesty's dominions, which may well be termed *the outpost of the New World*, seeing that it was one of the Bahama Islands that Columbus first sighted.

The present moment is not inopportune to write on West Indian matters, as Mr. Fronde has of late turned the attention of the English reading public in that direction.

His book has provoked a great deal of hostile



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criticism from a portion of the press, principally on two grounds. In the first place it is alleged that he considers the African race incapable of development or improvement; in the second, that the whole work is a philippic against independent representative government in colonies where there is a mixed coloured and white population; while he advocates, almost on every page, that the West Indies should be governed in a manner similar to that at present prevailing in India.

It passes my comprehension to understand how any fair-minded man who reads what Mr. Froude says at page 100 about the Chief Justice at Barbadoes, can accuse him of holding that the negro race is incapable of development or improvement.

With regard to free and independent representative institutions, if I have spoken the truth in the ensuing pages, it will be seen that they have utterly failed in the Bahamas, though they have certainly not had the result anticipated by Mr. Froude, for so far from the African race having become dominant, they are ground down and oppressed in a manner which is a disgrace to British rule.

On the other hand it is equally true that similar institutions have answered very well in Bermuda.

As to what is or is not the best form of government for the West Indies as a whole, I am no more qualified to form an opinion than a foreigner would be to decide as to the best

form of government for Great Britain whose sole knowledge of the subject was derived from a twelvemonth's residence in the Isle of Man.

But though little known in England, the town of Nassau is well known in the northern states of America and Canada as a winter sanatorium; and in conclusion I have to acknowledge my obligations to two American writers on the colony.

To "The Isles of Summer" (New Haven, Conn., 1880), by Mr. Charles Ives, M.A., I am indebted for the names in italics on page 64, for a portion of three hymns on pp. 163 and 164, and for the names of different conch-shells on page 262. To Mr. Drysdale, of the *New York Times*, I am indebted for considerable assistance in chapters VI. and VII., which is fully acknowledged in the text of and notes to those chapters.

L. D. POWLES.

2, TANFIELD COURT, TEMPLE,  
March 21st, 1888.

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MAP OF THE BAHAMAS AND NEIGHBOURING ISLANDS, FOR "THE LAND OF THE PINK PEARL,"

By L. D. POWLES, of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law, late Circuit Justice of the Bahama Islands.





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# THE LAND OF THE PINK PEARL.

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## CHAPTER I.

Discovery of the Bahamas—Difficulty of obtaining information about them—Start from Dartmouth—On board the *Belair*—Slow voyage—A mysterious visitor—Result of insubordination—Pass the Azores—Arrival at Bermuda—Hamilton Harbour—Three days at Hamilton—"The Devil's Hole"—A sad boat-accident—Start for St. George's—Stranded on a reef—"Freddy"—Joyce and Walsingham Caves—Tom Moore's calabash-tree—Sketch of Bermudian history—Bermudian birds—A clever boy—Start for Nassau.

ON an October night, towards the close of the fifteenth century, Christopher Columbus stood on the deck of the *Santa Maria* and watched a light moving upon the dim horizon, which satisfied him that the crowning success of his life was near at hand. Next morning, October 12th, 1492,<sup>1</sup> he set foot for the first time on the outskirts of the New World. He had discovered the Bahama Islands!

<sup>1</sup> This date is variously given; I have taken Sir Arthur Helps as my authority.

Well-nigh 400 years had rolled away since then, yet when in the summer of 1886 I was appointed to the post of stipendiary and circuit justice in the Bahama Islands, I knew little more about them than Christopher Columbus when he first saw that light. I had an idea they were in the West Indies, that was all.

Wherever I applied for information among my own countrymen, I found the same ignorance prevailing about them and everything connected with them, and even persons well acquainted with the rest of the West Indies scarcely seemed to know their name. On one or two occasions I came across persons who volunteered to give me information, but after a minute or two I invariably found they thought I was inquiring about Barbadoes.

On the other hand, all the Americans I came across—and they were not a few—knew something about the Bahamas. But then they only knew the principal city, Nassau, as a pleasant winter health-resort, a sort of tropical Mentone, where there was an excellent hotel open during the season. Of the inhabitants, their habits, the expense of living outside the hotel, and other details, they could tell me nothing.

At the Colonial Office I learned that Nassau was inaccessible by the ordinary West India mail route, and that there were in fact but two ways of



getting there, the one *viâ* New York, the other by Messrs. Scrutton & Co.'s steamers, running direct from London to Belize, in British Honduras, and calling at Nassau *en route*. I chose the latter line, and on Monday, October 4th, 1886, my wife and I joined our vessel at Dartmouth, where we discovered for the first time that we were to call at Bermuda on the way out, instead of going direct to Nassau, as the owners had distinctly told us we should. The idea was by no means unpleasant in itself, as it meant a visit to a beautiful and interesting island which we should most probably never have the chance of seeing again, but unfortunately, in our case, it meant also the loss of at least a fortnight's full pay.

If, however, we might complain of being misled on this point, on another the owners had certainly not deceived us. They had promised us we should be very comfortable, and very comfortable we were. Our steamer, the *Belair*, of Glasgow, was of 1500 tons, and had capital accommodation for a limited number of passengers. We were but thirteen in the saloon; and the commander, Captain D——, we shall always remember with friendship.

Our fellow-passengers consisted of a Government official, two ladies, a little boy and girl, and a maid bound for Belize; four young men, three of whom were going to take orders, a



coloured woman, and our two selves, bound for Nassau.

Besides the human passengers we had four foxhounds, on their way to form the nucleus of a drag pack at Belize, and a pug belonging to one of the ladies.

When not on duty the captain devoted his time mainly to his passengers, who were always glad of his company. As there was no doctor on board, he watched over our physical condition with a solicitude that did him infinite credit, though I fear his favourite remedy for sea-sickness—charcoal and water—was not universally successful.

We were welcome to his chart-room at all hours, save for half an hour at noon, and there we picked up a good deal of information about navigation and geography. The bridge was also always open to us, except in the Channel or when going in or out of port, a privilege we could not possibly have enjoyed on board an Atlantic liner.

Besides an excellent collection of English charts, Captain D—— carries those published monthly by the American Hydrographic Office, and presented to captains of vessels and others in a position to give valuable information, who will keep special logs for the Society. Every voyage he takes, Captain D—— keeps one of these, containing the most

minute information as to wind and weather, or anything else worth noting. On his last voyage he met with a floating wreck in lat.  $32^{\circ}$ , which may still be knocking about the Atlantic highway, to the great danger of anything passing in the dark. This fact was at once communicated to the American Hydrographic Office, and the exact spot marked on the next monthly publication of the Society. The service thus rendered to navigation is enormous.

*Apropos* of charts, how wonderful it seems that every part of the Atlantic should have been exactly measured, and each day at noon, when the navigator takes his observations and finds out where he is, he has but to glance at his chart to see exactly what depth of water he is in!<sup>2</sup>

Our voyage was not specially remarkable in any way except for its extreme slowness.

<sup>2</sup> I was not aware till I learned it from our skipper, that the Board of Trade regulations not only require all vessels to carry charts with all the latest improvements, but also hold the captains responsible for shipwrecks arising from the use of old charts. This is not fair. Many shipowners require captains to find their own charts, and even chronometers, on a salary of 10*l.* or 12*l.* a month. Why should not the present liability be shifted from the captain on to the owner? Again, why should not shipowners be liable to punishment when their captains fail to burn proper lights at night? At present it is very common to meet sailing-vessels in the Atlantic burning no lights at night, to economize oil. Collision or no collision, this is an offence that ought not to go unpunished.

One day when we were at least several hundred miles from land, a little bird like a mule canary paid us a visit and remained with us about two days, during which time it got so tame that it would come close up to us to be fed. All of a sudden it disappeared mysteriously, probably through the agency of the officers' cat.

One night we had a severe lesson against acting on our own responsibility. The captain had ordered all the ports on the starboard side of the vessel to be closed. About two in the morning, all we who slept on that side seem to have obeyed a common impulse which caused us to awaken and open our ports at the same moment. For this act of insubordination we were rewarded by getting everything in our state-rooms drenched with salt water.

On the 9th of October we passed the Azores, between Flores and Corva, though the weather was so thick we could not see them, and it was not until about 5.30 on the afternoon of Thursday, October 21st, we arrived off St. David's Lighthouse, Bermuda, having only averaged 175 miles a day up to this point.

It was quite dark by the time we got close in, so we burned a blue light for a pilot, who shortly afterwards came on board. As he could not take us into harbour till daylight, we had to lay to all night. I have had some experience of laying to



in a sailing-vessel, since then, and it is not a pleasant process; but I think I never went through anything more disagreeable than that night's wobble.

As soon as it was light, we were on the move and most of us on deck, for we had all been reading Lady Brassey's account of the *Sunbeam's* voyage to this place, and were on the look-out for St. George's Narrows, of which she gives so graphic a description, and through which we had to pass on our road to Ireland Island at the entrance to Hamilton Harbour.

We had been fully an hour on our road, looking out on all sides for the first glimpse of the Narrows, when we suddenly discovered to our astonishment that we had been in them all the time. Our imagination had led us completely astray. We had pictured to ourselves a sort of river, bounded by fantastically-shaped coral rocks coming at least half-way up the vessel's side. Instead of this nothing was visible above the surface of the water, the road being through subaqueous coral reefs and marked out by buoys. The whole coast of Bermuda is protected in this way by reefs stretching as far as from ten to fifteen miles out to sea, and if the buoys were removed the island would at once become impregnable, as no vessel of any size could get in. The coast-line from St. David's Lighthouse to Ireland Island is very



pretty. It is bounded all the way by coral rocks and caves, above which rise gently-sloping heights clothed with cedar woods, and studded with houses, of which even the roofs are pure white.

We were about two hours passing through St. George's Narrows, and between 8 and 9 a.m. arrived off Ireland Island, where we had to wait for the afternoon tide to take us up to Hamilton.

We were soon boarded by the steamer's agent, who carried off our captain and one or two of our passengers to Hamilton in a Bermudian dingy, a capital class of sea-boat, very broad in the beam, cutter rigged with a shoulder-of-mutton sail.

Meantime we were left at anchor to contemplate the scene around us, refreshing enough to eyes that for nearly three weeks had gazed on nothing but the ocean. On one side of us lay Mount Langton, the richly-wooded residence of the governor of the island, and on the other the celebrated Bermuda floating dock. Lying close by us were the *Himalaya* and *Orontes* troopships, both under orders to sail next day, the former for England, the latter for Halifax. We could see the redcoats crowding the decks and wharfs, or moving busily to and fro between the two.

Inside the dockyard lay the *Canada*, in which

H.R.H. Prince George of Wales made his first voyage.

On the other side of us lay a big steamer from Hartlepool, and a barque on board of which a windmill was at work. This had attracted our captain's eye as soon as we got in sight of her. He told me the windmill was pumping her out, and expressed it as his opinion that she was probably a condemned English ship which had been purchased cheap by some German who was prepared to send her to sea and run the risk of her sinking or swimming, in order to take the bread out of English sailors' mouths by under-carrying them.

Everything German is a red rag to Captain D——, and I regret to say that some months later the sudden appearance of a British steamer about the same class as the *Belair*, produced a very similar effect on the first officer of an American mail steamer called the *Santiago*.

He was a particularly quiet, civil man, but at the sight of this apparently harmless British steamer sailing quietly into the harbour of New York, he burst out with a torrent of abuse unfit for publication, and said, "provided it could be done without loss of life, he should like to see every ship sunk that sailed between Great Britain and the United States under the Union Jack."

I asked why he was so bitter against our ships? He replied, "Because you work them so cheap you take all the bread out of our Yankee seamen's mouths. I guess you are meaner than the Italians, and they're about the meanest lot out!"

Between 1 and 2 p.m. we got once more under weigh and started for the town of Hamilton. Lady Brassey compares Hamilton Harbour to a Norwegian fiord, and if you reduce the hills in the latter and substitute the cedar for the pine, the likeness to some of the more southern fiords is complete. You seem to pass from one little landlocked sound into another all the way, the banks are undulating, and covered with cedars, which at a little distance are scarcely distinguishable from Norwegian pine-trees.

We had just passed the guardship, the *Terror*, built shortly after Sir John Franklin's time, and called after his famous vessel, when our captain rejoined us, bringing with him a fine water-melon and some fresh bananas. The day was hot, and they were very refreshing, but instead of thanking him, we all exclaimed at once, "Where are the peaches?" The poor captain looked crest-fallen, and was obliged to confess there were none to be got in Hamilton. For the last three weeks he had assured us every day at dinner that as soon as we arrived at Bermuda we should be in the midst of a plethora of fine peaches. And



when our spirits sank within us at the slowness of our voyage, we had kept them up with the prospect of those peaches. Some of us had even dreamt of them! And now where were they? I afterwards learned that they used to be very common, but that an insect which appeared a few years ago has exterminated them throughout the islands.

As soon as we neared the wharf at Hamilton, my old friend, the Chief Justice of Bermuda, came on board to meet us. Not only did he give us a cordial welcome, but showed us much practical kindness during our stay in Hamilton. We dined at his house nearly every day; he made me an honorary member of the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club, introduced us to several nice people, and made our stay generally agreeable.

Hamilton is a pretty town, something like the older part of Bournemouth. The only part of it that looks at all like a street is "Front Street," facing the harbour, where all the business of the town is carried on. The rest consists of houses, very much detached standing in their own grounds, and in groves of cedar. Cedar-wood is in common use in Bermuda for most purposes, and very valuable wood it is. Lying alongside of us in Hamilton Harbour was a barque called the *Sir George Seymour*, built entirely of cedar-wood. She is as old as the

Crimean war, and recently made a voyage from Bermuda to the Start Point, on the Devonshire coast, in twelve days, a fact which speaks well for cedar.

Bermuda abounds in artificial fish-pools made for the purpose of storing live fish. We visited two of these, "The Devil's Hole," and the private pool of the captain-superintendent of the dock-yard.

The former is a regular show place, where they charge 1s. admission, and during the season, when the place is crowded with American visitors, the proprietors must reap a rich harvest. It is a very deep hole, or rather pond, situated in a cave, and crowded with fish. These are so used to being fed that, directly a visitor appears on the scene, they all come to the surface with their heads right out of the water, and their mouths wide open. The foremost inhabitants of this watery colony—or prison—are called groupers; a large, unwieldy fish of a dirty reddish colour, with an enormous mouth and big, fleshy lips, very strong, ferocious, and voracious. A few years ago a poor dog fell into this hole, and was devoured by the groupers before he could escape. The rock-fish is a large, dark species something like a very big black bass.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Such was my description of this fish written at the time. What I subsequently caught in the Bahamas under the same name was totally different in appearance.

There are also some striped fish called "hamlets," and an imitation of our old friend the turbot, called here "turbit." There is also a parrot-fish, with a body much the same colour as a gold-fish, only about ten times the size, and striped with green down the back, and with a green head and tail. But the gem of all the fish in these latitudes is the "angel-fish," of which it is very difficult to give any idea without a coloured illustration. Its shape is peculiar, and its colour blue and gold, but a blue of a greenish character shading off into turquoise. There are also "cow-fish," with faces just like their bovine sponsors, hog-fish with snouts, and a pretty little fish called a sergeant-major, with yellow stripes round his body like those of a non-commissioned officer. In the midst of this crowd a lively-looking turtle swims rapidly about, apparently absorbed in the pleasure of his exercise, and absolutely regardless of anything that is going on around him. Such are the inhabitants of the "Devil's Hole;" and to have seen one Bermudian fish-pond is to have seen all.

On the Saturday during our stay in Hamilton a sad boat accident happened, and singularly enough, the news arrived at the Royal Yacht Club just as somebody was boasting that no accident ever happened to a Bermudian sailing-boat. The boat was seen to capsize with four



men in it, but though assistance was quickly on the spot, up to the time I left Bermuda no trace either of boat or men had been discovered.

The great event of the Sunday was the arrival of the mail steamer *Trinidad*, from New York, with American newspapers only three days old. As the season had not fairly begun, she brought very few two-footed passengers, but a great many four-footed ones, for all the beef consumed in Bermuda is imported from the States ready for killing.

The following day, Monday, we spent the morning at The Cottage, Ireland Island, the residence of the captain-superintendent of the dockyard, and the afternoon and evening with our friend the Chief Justice and his family. This was our last night at Hamilton, for the *Belair* had completed her unloading as far as that port was concerned, and the next morning at 6 a.m. she once more got under weigh, and started for St. George's, at which port she was to discharge the remainder of her Bermuda cargo.

A party of us here deserted the ship to spend the day in visiting different points of interest, and a busy day we had.

First we inspected a gigantic india-rubber tree, and saw it bled. Next we breakfasted uncommonly well at the only hotel open out of the

winter season, a tiny hostelry advertising board at 8s. a day. After breakfast we drove to Gibbs Hill Lighthouse, situated at the southernmost point of the islands, the top of which commands a view of the whole group. For though one speaks carelessly of Bermuda as though it were a single island, in reality the Bermudas are a group of islands, now connected together by causeways, and covering a superficial area of nineteen and a quarter square miles. They form a narrow strip of land shaped like a lobster, and so long that one can drive as much as twenty-five miles from end to end, though the land is nowhere more than three miles broad, and in many parts less than one.

From Gibbs Hill we drove back to Hamilton, and, after lunching at the camp on Prospect Hill, went on to St. George's, where we arrived just after sunset.

On the road we had heard dark rumours that the *Belair* had stranded on a reef, and it was with no small satisfaction that we found her safely moored alongside a Government wharf built by the convicts who were formerly stationed here.

But she had indeed had a narrow escape! Coming into the harbour of St. George's in charge of the pilot, she had gone on to a reef, but had been got off unaided, by the pluck and deter-

mination of Captain D——, who, as soon as she stranded, put the pilot on one side, and assumed the entire responsibility, although he knew nothing of the water. The accident was of course put down to the pilot's negligence, but many respectable inhabitants of St. George's openly expressed their opinion that he did it deliberately, for though the entrance to St. George's Harbour is narrow and intricate, the channel is perfectly well known, and there are no shifting banks. Besides, this opinion was strengthened by the fact that the two harbour tugs appeared upon the scene almost immediately the accident happened, as though they expected it! Had either of these tugs thrown the *Belair* a rope, it would have cost her owners at least 1000*l.* Captain D—— said that had the vessel remained on this reef half an hour, she would have broken to pieces—as it was she escaped with only a slight injury to her screw.<sup>4</sup>

At St. George's we made acquaintance with the Roman Catholic chaplain to the forces, and the

<sup>4</sup> On this voyage the *Belair* did her best to illustrate the old saying that "one misfortune means three." Almost immediately after leaving London, on her way to Dartmouth, she burst a high-pressure valve, which obliged her to put back for a week. Next she stranded on this reef at Bermuda. Thirdly, she stranded again on the Colorado Reef, near Belize, and had to throw a portion of her cargo overboard to get off.



family with whom he boarded, from whom we received much kindness.

He is devoted to animals, and his dog Freddy is a most remarkable person. If he is entrusted with a parcel to carry home, he buries it until the person who gave it him arrives to claim it. One day when he had been marketing with the coloured boy, Freddy, thinking he was loitering too much on the road, took the basket away from him and carried it off home. If his master goes to sleep in the daytime, Freddy will not allow him to be disturbed, and if the big dog—which is twice his size—ventures to come into the room, he seizes him by the ear without making a sound, and purely by the force of a superior nature conducts him out again. He will turn head over heels and perform other tricks like a clown poodle, though there is nothing of the poodle in his blood, and will sit up on a music-stool when ordered, with his forepaws on the keys of the piano and his eyes fixed on the music, and pretend to play.

From St. George's we visited the Joyce and Walsingham Caves. There are several caves in each group, extending for some distance under the rocks. The darkies light up torches made of great bundles of bushes, exposing to view beautiful subterranean lakes of a pure aquamarine colour, and wondrous stalactite roofs. The water in these lakes is quite fresh, though it is merely the

water of the sea filtered through the coral rock. Some of our party made an expedition over a mile long through the Admiral's Cave, the largest of the Joyce group, and so called after Admiral Sir David Milne, father of the present Admiral Sir Alexander.

Sir David took a great interest in these caves, and carried away a stalactite forty cubic feet in size, which is now preserved in a museum in Edinburgh. Our guide told us that forty years afterwards, Sir David's son, Sir Alexander, visited the cave and took away a stalactite measuring just five cubic inches, which had grown on the exact spot where his father had broken off the large piece. If it took forty years to create a stalactite of five cubic inches, how many years must it have taken to create one of forty cubic feet? I leave this sum to be worked out by younger or, at any rate, clearer and more mathematical heads than mine.

Near the Walsingham Caves is a house once occupied by Tom Moore, and a calabash-tree under whose shade he wrote poetry, with the very bench still standing on which he used to sit. The poet was appointed to a lucrative post under government in Bermuda. He went out and remained there three months, at the end of which time he put in a deputy, came home again and drew the pay for the rest of his life, without ever returning

to the colony! We cannot work things like that in the colonial service nowadays.

Before taking final leave of Bermuda a few words as to its past history and present condition may not be out of place.

The Bermudas, or Somers Islands, are situated in lat.  $32^{\circ} 14' 15''$  N., corresponding with Madeira, Tripoli, Jerusalem, Candahar, and Charleston; and in long.  $64^{\circ} 49' 55''$  W., corresponding with Halifax, Nova Scotia, and St. Thomas, West Indies:

They are said to be the coral-reared summit of an isolated submarine mountain, rising abruptly from the bed of the Atlantic at a depth of about 2000 fathoms to a height about equal to that of Mont Blanc. They were first discovered in 1522 by Juan Bermuthez, a Spaniard, who merely sighted and named them, but never landed.

About the same time one Henry May, an Englishman, was shipwrecked on one of the largest of the group. He returned to England in a vessel of cedar-wood, which he built with the assistance of materials collected from the wreck of his own ship, and was the first to publish any account of the islands, then entirely uninhabited.

In 1609, Sir George Somers, Sir Thomas Gates, and Captain Newport were cast upon these



islands on their way out to Virginia as deputy-governors. They also built ships of the cedar-wood they found, in which they went on to Virginia. The following year Sir George Somers returned to Bermuda, where he died shortly after his arrival. Up to this time the islands had been looked upon with great dread by sailors, amongst whom they were commonly known as the Devil's Islands; but after Somers' death his crew sailed for England and made so favourable a report of them that they were almost immediately colonized.

So rapidly did they increase in importance that in 1619 there were already 3000 English settlers established on the islands.

For some years after this it became the fashion among the rich to visit the Bermudas for health and amusement. In 1643 the poet Waller went there after he was condemned by the Parliament, and during the supremacy of Cromwell many Royalists took refuge there.

All through the eighteenth century the colony gradually decreased in importance, as its situation was not at that time favourable to trade, and the liability of the islands to sudden squalls, which in Shakespeare's day earned them the name of "the still vexed Bermuthez," made them still to some extent the dread of navigators. At length the British Government awoke to their immense im-

portance as a military and naval station, and they came once more to the front.

The soil of these islands is very productive, and potatoes and onions are exported from them in large quantities to the United States. In winter—the average temperature of which is about 60°—all European seeds germinate, and in summer those of the tropics. Here we were introduced for the first time to fresh bananas, fresh pines, pawpaw-trees, and numerous other tropical trees and plants as familiar to the people as an ordinary English hedgerow is to us at home. There is, however, very little of our ordinary fruit. I have already noticed the disappearance of the peach, and all the apples and pears are imported from the United States.

As a health-resort, the Bermudas, but more especially the town of Hamilton, are very popular amongst Americans. There are two large hotels, "The Hamilton" and "The Princess," kept by Americans, and crowded with visitors from December to May. In the summer, I need hardly say, they are closed.

There are no springs of fresh water in the islands. Formerly wells were much used both by the inhabitants and for watering ships, but as the water was found to be unwholesome, they fell gradually into disuse, and are now only reserved for seasons of great drought. In ordinary times

the inhabitants supply themselves with fresh water exclusively by the storage of rain-water in tanks. Every house of any pretensions has one or more of these, and a local law now requires that in building a house, provision shall be made for their construction. Alternate tanks are employed to provide for regular cleansing, and the water thus stored is kept tolerably pure as long as the tanks are properly looked after.

The only towns are Hamilton and St. George's. The latter was the capital up to 1790, when the town of Hamilton was built, and called after the Governor of the day. It is now the seat of government, and contains the superior Courts of Justice.

St. George's was until a comparatively short time ago a station for convicts, who have left substantial traces of their presence in the shape of docks, wharves, and other public works. It is an old-fashioned town laid out in narrow streets, and its appearance is a great contrast to that of Hamilton. Some artillery and a regiment of the line are always stationed here. Near Hamilton are two permanent encampments, one on Prospect Hill, the other at a place called Warwick.

But it is as a naval station that Bermuda is of the greatest importance to this country. Is it not inconceivable, with all the wealth there is at the command of the Imperial Government,



that our only naval arsenal in that part of the world should be still unconnected with the mother-country by telegraph?<sup>5</sup>

Many of the old English names are reproduced in this corner of the earth, and one hears people talk of going into Devonshire, Somerset, Warwick, Pembroke, and the like.

Two species of birds, both very beautiful, are indigenous to the Bermudas, the one a brilliant red, the other a brilliant blue. The first of these are called cardinals; I do not know the name of the other. A few years ago the people took it into their heads that these birds were destructive, and large numbers of them were killed off, but the worms and other insects increased so enormously that the Legislature was compelled to pass a stringent law for their preservation.

Until recently the common English sparrow was unknown here, but one fine day it occurred to the wise brain of a Captain Somebody of the

<sup>5</sup> Not only is there no cable communication between Bermuda and England, but the only postal communication is by mail steamer, running once a fortnight between Hamilton and New York. Until recently there was also a mail between Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Bermuda, which was subsidized by the Imperial Government. A few years ago this subsidy was taken away on the understanding that the money was to be given to the laying of a submarine cable. No step, however, has as yet been taken in this direction, so that this all-important naval station is left without telegraph and with only a foreign mail.

British army to import three or four couple. These have so increased and multiplied, that their descendants swarm all over the colony, and have become such a nuisance that the Legislature now pays a premium for sparrows' heads and sparrows' eggs.

We heard of a clever boy at St. George's, who has built a kind of small pigeon-house which he stocks with nest eggs, and makes quite a fortune out of the deluded sparrows who come to lay their eggs there! "*Il ira loin, ce jeune homme-là!*"

At last our unloading was completed, and on the morning of Friday, October 29th, we steamed slowly and carefully out of St. George's Harbour in charge of a fresh pilot, a very magnificent person, and arrived without adventure at Nassau on the morning of Tuesday, November 2nd, having been twenty-nine days on the voyage out from the Start Point.

## CHAPTER II.

Arrival at Nassau—The *Santiago*—Landing—First case—Description of Nassau—Historical sketch—Murder of aborigines by the Spaniards—Discovery of New Providence—Grant by Charles II.—Early Governors—Black-beard—“*Expulsis Piratis*”—Period of prosperity—Emancipation—Disappearance of the planters—Wrecking—Blockade-running—Decay of agriculture—Withdrawal of subsidy—Results—Failure of Government bank—Bankruptcy imminent—“Conchs”—Constitution—Corruption at elections—Circuit Justices’ Act—Jobbery of Lower House—What might have been.

VERY early in the morning we came to an anchor off the Nassau Lighthouse. Alongside of us lay the mail steamer *Santiago*, just arrived from New York, having brought with her several passengers who had left England a fortnight later than we did. After waiting an hour or two till we were boarded by the proper officer, we crossed the bar and went inside the harbour.

The view of Nassau from the sea is certainly striking, but I have often since asked myself whether it was really the beauty of the situation that impressed us, so much as the fact that everything tropical is strangely fascinating to the unaccustomed beholder. It is like realizing for



the first time a picture one has been in the habit of seeing for years.

As soon as we were well at anchor, my colleague came on board and took me on shore with him. We landed at a wharf built of coral limestone, with steps leading up to a piece of ground about an acre in extent, sometimes called Rawson Square, sometimes "The Park," on which were the broken remains of some benches and some dried-up-looking, coarse grass. A crowd varying in colour from the blackest ebony to the lightest yellow, had gathered to "sample" the new magistrate, and see if they could gauge the probable average rate of his punishments by the look of his countenance.

Governor Blake, who was in England, had recommended us when we left to a boarding-house kept by one of the principal officials, an Englishman who had been forty years in the colony; so to his office my companion at once conducted me, and we made the necessary arrangements.

The next few hours were fully occupied in landing our things and passing the Customs—not a very terrible ordeal since it consisted merely in the officers telling us what articles were liable to duty, and taking our word as to the contents of our boxes.

At last our business was all over, and we repaired to our temporary abode, quite ready for

dinner, which was awaiting us, after which we retired to a wide stone verandah, called here a piazza, the view from which was certainly charming.

The house we were in stood well up on a hill, with a large garden sloping down towards the harbour with its shipping, lighthouse, and bar, beyond which lay the broad ocean, resplendent under the golden sunlight in a robe of sapphire such as our European eyes had never seen before. Indeed everything we looked on was bright, peaceful, and lovely.

On all sides strange tropical foliage and brilliant colouring dazzled our vision, whilst not a ripple stirred the water, nor a breath of wind disturbed the universal stillness of that first after-dinner half-hour.

Next morning I sat and tried my first case, a charge against a poor boy for stealing eleven coconuts from a field some distance out of the town. As it was his first offence, I was about to treat the matter very leniently, when my colleague whispered to me that this was a class of offence known as *predial larceny*, very serious in a country where the people had to depend so much on their small holdings for food, and that I ought not to give him less than three months. I had therefore no alternative.

This, my first sentence, set the coloured people

bitterly against me, and the opinion publicly expressed among them was, "*Dey's better send dat dar new judge back to England, or else lynch him.*" Poor people! It was not long before they learned to know me better.

And thus ended my first twenty-four hours in Nassau, New Providence, of which city and island I will now endeavour to give some account.

The city of Nassau is built on the north shore of the island of New Providence. Its harbour is excellent, being protected by a long "Cay"—a name given familiarly to an island in these parts—called Hog Island, which stretches from east to west about half a mile from the shore. The principal entrance to the harbour is at the west end, and is deep enough to admit vessels drawing seventeen feet of water. Within half a mile of the bar the soundings are lost, i.e. they sink suddenly from 15 to 300 fathoms. In an article called "Try the Bahamas," which appeared in the *Fortnightly* for January, 1886, Governor Blake says, speaking of Nassau Harbour:—"The waters, clear as crystal, show ever-varying gradations of colour. No language can describe their tints, and no known pigments can reproduce them." Whilst fully admitting that it requires a much greater command of language than I possess to give an idea of the brilliancy of their tints, I venture to think there are pigments which



in hands that know how to use them can reproduce the colouring of Bahamian waters. Bierstadt, for instance, has done it already, and if our own Sir Frederick were to wander to these shores, why should we suppose the magic pencil that has so often portrayed for us the wondrous beauties of the *Ægean* Sea, would be less successful here?

About 400 feet from the harbour runs a slope ninety feet high, on which the town of Nassau is built. Flowers are everywhere. Every house stands in its own garden, full of broad-leaved wild almond, acacia, and other flowering trees. All sorts of creepers, laden with pink, purple, blue, and yellow masses; hibiscus, poinsettia, roses, jessamine, stephanotis, gardenia, and bougainvillier, grow in great profusion; double oleanders, of which there are three different shades of rose-pink, besides white; the white datura and arbutelon grow to a great height, and cocoanut palms abound all over the island. Gardens are called yards<sup>1</sup> in Nassau, a name that strikes one as peculiar at first. It is, however, singularly appropriate, for one cannot be long in the colony without discovering that it is in spite of, and not thanks to the natives that these things exist and flourish.

<sup>1</sup> I am told the same word is in common use in the United States, but, as will be seen later on, American pronunciation and expressions are the rule throughout the Bahamas.

Along the edge of the harbour is the principal business street, called Bay Street, divided into east and west. From this street the others run up to the crest of the hill, where are situated Government House, the Royal Victoria Hotel, and other houses. The Courts of Justice and all the other public buildings are collected together in a sort of park in the middle of Bay Street.

Between the Chief Justice's Court and the Police Court stands a gigantic specimen of the ceiba, or silk-cotton tree, which is thus described by Mr. Drysdale of the *New York Times* :—" This is the largest tree I ever saw, and by all odds the most curious. As if to support it against the terrible force of the wind it has to encounter, it is provided with a series of natural props, like roots, but forming part of its immense trunk. They grow out at regular intervals, and their peculiar bark gives them the appearance of elephants' ears thickened and enlarged. They reach eight or nine feet from the ground, and extend laterally five or six feet, leaving spaces between them like rooms, each of which is large enough for eight or ten men to stand in."

All around the town are the negro settlements, as the coloured people live all together, and quite apart from the whites.

The early history of the Bahamas is very obscure. Undoubtedly they were discovered by

Christopher Columbus, and later on in this work I have ventured on a discussion as to the exact spot on which he landed. That he ever saw New Providence is extremely improbable, though one account states (without the slightest authority) that he visited that island and called it Fernandina. The more probable story is that he left the Bahamas almost immediately after he had landed, and never returned to that group.

Shortly after this, however, the Spaniards, who had settled in the neighbouring islands, returned there and in a very short time succeeded, by means of one of the most diabolical acts of treachery ever practised, in carrying nearly the whole of the aboriginal population into slavery. These poor people, who were Caribs, believed that after death the departed dwelt in happier and more beautiful islands than they had ever dreamt of on earth. The Spaniards told them that if they would come on board their vessels they would carry them to the Islands of the Blessed, where they would meet their departed friends. Listening to the voice of the white stranger as to the voice of the Deity, they did as they were bid, and were carried off to work in the mines of Hispaniola (now known as Hayti), where in a very few years they became almost entirely extinct.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The tale of the sufferings and deaths of these unhappy victims is not pleasant to dwell upon, but if any of my readers



As far as is known, the first discoverer of the island of New Providence was Captain William Sayle, who was driven into the harbour of Nassau by stress of weather on his passage out to the Carolinas in 1667. The name he gave to the island was in grateful recognition of the good Providence that had led him to this hitherto unknown haven ; and to distinguish it from the colony of Providence in America, he called it New Providence.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after this Charles the Second granted the Bahama Islands to the Duke of Albemarle and certain other persons, who do not appear to have made much use of their gift. Governors were sent out from time, to time but as the inhabitants were mostly pirates, they disposed of these gentlemen much as they pleased. Governor Collingworth was carted off to Jamaica, Governor Cadwallader Jones was locked up till one of the

care to inquire further into the matter, I would refer them to a very excellent paper on "The Bahamas," by Sir A. J. Adderley, K.C.M.G., in the Guide to the West Indian Courts of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886, page 172.

<sup>3</sup> For a great deal of this summary of the history of New Providence and for other valuable information I have to thank the "Nassau Guide and Directory," an excellent little work. Its compilation and publication were due to the late Mr. Percy J. Moseley, proprietor and editor of the *Nassau Guardian*, a young man whose untimely death in May, 1887, deprived the colony of one of its most energetic men of business.

pirates chose to release him, and Governor Clarke was roasted alive. Sometimes the tables were turned, and in the deposition of one Captain Cole, taken in 1702 before a Master in Chancery, strange stories are told of the doings of Governor Haskitt. This worthy seems to have gone about assaulting the citizens and calling them "pitiful curs," and to have levied blackmail on visitors and inhabitants alike whenever he got the chance. Captain Cole had all his private papers seized and was put into prison until he purchased his freedom for 50*l.* and two beaver hats. Told it was not prudent to meddle with an English ship, Haskitt stated he didn't care a d—n for England. He does not appear to have been punished.

In 1703 the town was sacked by the French and Spaniards, and the Governor and inhabitants carried off to Havannah, and when Mr. Birch, the next Governor, arrived, he found the islands totally uninhabited.

For several years after this time the islands were entirely given up to pirates, who, under the leadership of one John Teach, nicknamed "Blackbeard," became the terror of the surrounding waters. The account of this person in "McKinnon's Tour in the West Indies, 1804," represents him as a melodramatic villain of the *penny plain and twopence coloured* order, whose exploits would

have just suited the boards of the Coburg or Victoria theatres in their palmy days.

His depredations were so extensive that the merchants of London and Liverpool petitioned George the First to put him down, and an expedition was sent from the Carolinas, under Lieutenant Maynard of the Royal Navy, which succeeded in capturing his vessel and destroying his gang. Blackbeard was killed in action, and such of his crew as did not share his fate were hung.

Blackbeard's shadow seems to haunt the colony, and wherever you go, you meet with his name in some shape or other. In one place you are shown Blackbeard's Tree, in another Blackbeard's Well, of which should any one drink he is bound to return to the Bahama Islands; and in a third, a pond where Blackbeard is said to have thrown a quantity of treasure to wait till somebody has the good luck to find it. As near as I have been able to calculate there are at least a dozen of these trees, wells, and ponds.

The motto of the colony is "*Expulsis Piratis.*" "*Ingeneratis Piratis*" would be more correct! Unfortunately Maynard contented himself with destroying merely Blackbeard's crew, leaving their seed to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth to such an extent that at the present day a large number of families in the



Bahamas owe their origin to this distinguished source.

After the break up of Blackbeard's gang, one Rogers appears on the scene as Governor, and a period of prosperity commenced for the colony which, with one short break, lasted until the final emancipation of the slaves in 1837.

The only *contretemps* was the taking of the island of New Providence by the Spaniards in the year 1781, when we were too busy looking after our dissatisfied children in North America to trouble ourselves about the Bahamas.

The Spaniards retained possession of the island until the close of the War of Independence, when it was retaken, by means of a clever trick, by Lieutenant Deveaux of the South Carolina Militia. He had but fifty men and a few recruits, principally negroes whom he had picked up on his journey. He appeared suddenly towards night off the east end of the harbour of Nassau, where is situated a fort called Fort Montague. Here he seized the garrison while they were asleep, and immediately took up a position in front of the Governor's house at the upper end of the town, which was garrisoned by 700 men of the Spanish regular army. Although he had but a handful of men, Deveaux, by keeping boats perpetually rowing backwards and forwards with the same men, who merely made a pretence of landing, managed to

delude the Spaniards into the belief that he was backed by a large army, and they surrendered without striking a blow.

Ever since the emancipation of the slaves in 1837, the colony has been gradually going to the bad. One by one the old planters left the country, until at the present time there is scarcely a representative of them left, except such as are descended from their illegitimate offspring.

Many of the old planters handed their plantations over to these illegitimate children, of whom they generally had a plentiful stock. Others left their estates to be cultivated *on share* by their former slaves, but—partly from one cause, partly from another—most of the plantations have been abandoned, and are overgrown with bush. Of what they once were, the only traces now to be found are strongly-built walls—the work of the slaves—intersecting the bush in every direction, and ruins of substantial houses on the English plan, in which their former owners lived in grand style.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of such as are descended from the pirates, most of the present native inhabitants of New Providence descend from persons who in the slave days were engaged in trade or were slave overseers. Some few are descendants of professional men and some of loyalist soldiers who fought for King George in the War of Independence and refused to remain under the Star and Stripes. But though there are plenty of the latter class in the Bahamas, most of them live in the out-islands.

For many years after emancipation, a great deal of money was brought into the colony by systematic wrecking. Hurricanes, shoals, reefs, and shifting banks seem to have conspired with every other known cause to place these waters among the most dangerous in the world. One might, therefore, have imagined they would produce a harvest of wrecks plentiful enough without adventitious aid.

But the greed of the Bahamian natives was not so easily satisfied. Every year one or other of the Nassau merchants went on a foreign trip, and shortly after his return a vessel was wrecked somewhere on the Bahama banks, abandoned as a total loss, and all its materials and salvage stock sold off in Nassau, to the gain of the island of New Providence, and the immense loss of the unhappy underwriters, for she was invariably heavily insured.

Yet, though this system of wrecking by fraudulent agreement was all but openly carried on for years and years—until the very name of the Bahamas became a scandal and a byword—as far as I know, none of the offenders have ever been brought to justice.

After a time the Imperial Government inaugurated an excellent lighthouse system, which has now become so far perfected that, thanks partly to that, and partly to the inquiries on



behalf of the Board of Trade, which magistrates are now compelled to hold whenever a vessel strands in Bahamian waters, wrecking has been reduced to a minimum.

When the War of Secession broke out between North and South, Nassau went in heavily for blockade-running, and a pile of money came into the country, which did not, however, remain long.

Meantime, agricultural interests were neglected, and as nobody had ever troubled themselves to teach the emancipated slave a proper system of cultivation, a great portion of the land was abandoned as worked out and valueless.

The subsidy paid annually to the colony by the Imperial Government was finally taken away in 1880. Without wishing to detract from the merits of one of the most popular Governors that ever reigned in Nassau, and who conferred a great and lasting benefit on the colony by the spurt he gave to the cause of the education of the masses, there is no doubt that for the withdrawal of the subsidy Governor Robinson was principally to blame. Yielding to a temptation which not unfrequently assails colonial governors, he determined to leave a surplus behind him at all risks. With this view he husbanded the money that should have been spent on public works, and at the same time embarked on a system of reducing

the salaries of Government officials—already too low—and amalgamating offices.

In a very short time every official in the colony became a "Pooh Bah," though differing materially from that eminent pluralist in the profits derived from his places. By these means, and a few others, he succeeded in leaving the colony with a nominal balance of 6000*l.*, upon which Lord Kimberley at once took away the subsidy, and Robinson's successor, Governor Leys, was left to spend 10,000*l.* in making good the damage occasioned to public works by his predecessor's neglect. This sum he had to squeeze out of the wretched colony as best he could.

Since then the financial position of the colony has been getting worse and worse. About two years ago the Government bank broke, and it came out that nearly all the principal people in the place had been borrowing money of it, right and left, without security.<sup>5</sup> Somehow the affair

<sup>5</sup> If ever the Imperial Government should be induced to send out a Royal Commission to investigate the condition of this most unhappy colony, it ought to be specially instructed to inquire who among the officials were in debt to the bank at the time of its failure; whether such persons, if any, retained their places, whether such debts were paid, and, if yes, how the money was obtained with which they were so paid, for it is an undoubted fact that at the present moment some persons whose positions render it specially desirable that they should be independent, are so handicapped by their indebtedness to Nassau merchants that they cannot call their souls their own.

was hushed up. Thirty-five thousand pounds were borrowed on debentures and the bank was closed. There is now no bank at all. Even the Colonial Bank has recently refused to open a branch at Nassau on the ground that there is not sufficient business, and the colony is on the verge of actual bankruptcy.

Though I am quite unable to say when the name first originated, the native white inhabitants of the Bahamas are now universally called "Conchs," the word "Creole" being unknown in this part of the West Indies. They are so called after the conch, a mollusc with a handsome shell, which is not only the commonest, but one of the most useful natural products of these islands. The shell is handsome enough to be bought largely by visitors; it is used as a foundation for rough wharves and piers, as a kind of horn by means of which the fishing-vessels communicate with each other, and for fifty other purposes. The body of the creature is a valuable article of food, invaluable as a bait for fish, and above all therein are found "pink pearls" which sometimes are of enormous value.

The constitution of the colony is a sort of government by Queen, Lords, and Commons, without a responsible Ministry. The Governor is assisted by an Executive Council, answering to the Privy Council, appointed by him-



self. He also appoints the members of the Legislative Council or "Upper House," whilst the Legislative Assembly or "Lower House" purports to be elected by the people.

This mockery of representation is the greatest farce in the world. The coloured people have the suffrage, subject to a small property qualification, but have no idea how to use it. The elections are by open voting, and bribery, corruption, and intimidation are carried on in the most unblushing manner, under the very noses of the officers presiding over the polling-booths. Nobody takes any notice, and as the coloured people have not yet learnt the art of political organization, they are powerless to defend themselves. The result is that the House of Assembly is little less than a family gathering of Nassau whites, nearly all of whom are related to each other, either by blood or marriage. Laws are passed simply for the benefit of the family, whilst the coloured people are ground down and oppressed in a manner that is a disgrace to the British flag.

Even on the rare occasions that the House of Assembly tries to legislate for the general weal it makes a mess of it! The Act creating the post to which I was afterwards appointed affords a striking example of this.

In every one of the principal out-islands there are one or more resident magistrates or justices.

They are paid salaries varying from 30*l.* to 200*l.* a year, for which they have also to perform the duties of revenue officers. Formerly, properly qualified magistrates, sent out from England, went regular circuits round these out-islands for the administration of justice; but about thirty years ago the last of these disappeared, and the present system of resident justices was inaugurated.

Against the decisions of these justices, the majority of whom are devoid of any special qualification for their places, there was no appeal except to the Chief Justice sitting in Nassau. The people are all so poor that not only was this appeal virtually a dead-letter, but the jurisdiction of the resident justices being very limited, there were many cases that, for want of means, could never be brought into a Court of First Instance.

Without giving credit either to one story which charges a magistrate with causing the death of a woman by ill-treatment, or to another which relates how a magistrate who did not wish to be bothered, adopted the plan of locking the parties and witnesses all up together till the case was abandoned, there is no doubt that acts of tyranny and oppression were daily committed.<sup>6</sup>

Governor Blake, with a view of preventing this

<sup>6</sup> See the case of five coloured men fined 1*l.* or imprisonment, for entering the Methodist Chapel by the white man's door, p. 111.

sort of thing, and at the same time bringing justice within reach of all, succeeded in passing an Act through the Legislature creating two new officers, to be called Stipendiary and Circuit Magistrates (or shortly Circuit Justices), who should travel circuit periodically round the out-islands to hear appeals against the decisions of the resident justices. Each of these magistrates was to have a salary of 500*l.* a year, out of which he was to pay his circuit expenses.

The first thing to be done was to provide these salaries, no easy task for a colony on the verge of bankruptcy, to which all assistance from the Imperial Exchequer, even for the most laudable objects, is persistently denied!

At the time of the passing of the Act, justice was administered in Nassau by three tribunals: (1) the General or Supreme Court, presided over by a Chief Justice with a salary of 700*l.* a year; (2) the Court of Common Pleas, or small debts court, presided over by a judge with a salary of 250*l.* a year; and (3) the Police Court, presided over by a police magistrate with a salary of 350*l.*

The new Act abolished the judge of the Court of Common Pleas and the police magistrate, and enacted that their duties should be in future performed by the two new officers.

The programme was as follows. For three



months one of the new magistrates was to remain in Nassau and do the combined work of police magistrate and judge of the Common Pleas, whilst his colleague went on circuit, the idea being that this change of parts should be effected four times a year in a country where the regular hurricane season renders all travelling to the last degree dangerous for full three months out of the twelve!

Whilst on circuit the new magistrate was to have all the powers of a judge of final appeal with respect to the decisions of the out-island justices, and the appeal to the Chief Justice was for ever taken away. He was also vested with a limited jurisdiction as judge of first instance.

The next thing to be done was to dispose of vested interests. The case of the police magistrate presented no difficulty. He was in every way fitted for the post, so the Act creating the appointments specially enacted that he should be the first of the two new officers. The case of the judge of the Common Pleas was not so easily dealt with, for both the police magistrate and himself were members of *the family*, and the Governor was determined, if possible, to get an English barrister into the colony.<sup>7</sup> How-

<sup>7</sup> There was not, when I went out, a single legal office in the hands of any one holding a higher rank than that of a colonial attorney! The Chief Justice was a Canadian attorney from

ever, as the judge was in a weak state of health, supposed to be past work, and shortly about to retire, it was thought the matter would soon settle itself, and the Act was made prospective only as far as the Court of Common Pleas was concerned.

As we have seen, each of the new magistrates was to have a salary of 500*l.* a year, but here the Legislature stepped in and did a job for its relative. As police magistrate he had the right to practise as an attorney in civil cases, a privilege highly undesirable on grounds of public policy, and contrary to the spirit of the rules of the colonial service. This privilege was taken from him in his capacity as circuit justice, so in lieu thereof the House gave him 100*l.* a year as a personal allowance as long as he held the office. A bigger job was never done in Lilliput. As police magistrate he had a salary of 350*l.* a year. The family saw well that two circuits a year would soon reduce the extra amount to a very barren grant. Had it not been perfectly well known that the other new magistrate was to come from England, there is no doubt the two salaries would have been made equal, at whatever sum they might have ultimately been fixed.

Montreal, and the Attorney-General, judge of the Common Pleas, and police magistrate, members of *the family* whose only legal training had been in Nassau itself.

And after all the administration of justice in the colony might have been improved simply, effectually, and at a very small expense, in another way. The Chief Justice has at present a salary of 700*l.* a year only. By giving him an increase of 200*l.* or 300*l.* and making him go one circuit a year round the out-islands, every needful reform would have been effected. All that is required for the good of the colony is that the out-island magistrates should be liable to be periodically visited by a superior official, who ought certainly to be armed with all the powers of the Supreme Court. Once a year would be quite enough, and the four circuits required by the present practice are both unnecessary and unworkable.

The offices of judge of the Common Pleas and police magistrate might be rolled into one, and vested in an officer with a salary of 500*l.* a year, which would secure the services of a member of the English, Scotch, or Irish bars, especially if it were an understood thing that the place was to be looked upon as a road to promotion. As a set-off to the extra labour thrown on the Chief Justice, the new judge of the Common Pleas should have a jurisdiction co-extensive with that of an English county-court judge, which would lighten the business of the Supreme Court considerably.



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Constituted on its present basis, the office of circuit justice is thoroughly unsatisfactory, since it goes too far and yet not far enough. On the one hand he is invested with enormous powers over the out-island magistrate up to a certain point; and, on the other, just where his office would be of the greatest possible value, his powers end and he becomes useless.

Besides which, it is, I think, always a mistake to set one man in supreme power over another bearing the same style and title. Alter the title of the superior and any sting is removed at once.

I need hardly say I did not evolve all this out of my inner consciousness as soon as I arrived in the colony, but I was not long getting on the right tack.

## CHAPTER III.

First circuit—The Eastern Queen—Berry Islands—An old negro's grave—The Biminis—Duties of a circuit justice—Wrecking—The slave trade—Ponce de Leon—Grand Bahama—Thoughts of Bierstadt—Life in the out-islands—School inspection—Vargas's English—A dreary calm—"Guaccinango"—Sea-gardens—Diving for sponges—Sunday on board—Green Turtle Cay—Novel mode of assessment—Hopetown—The Queen's English—Abaco and the Abaconians—Mr. McDonald—Return to Nassau—Start again—A week of excitement—Captain Sam. Rahmings—Mr. McGregor—A snow-white sea sprite—Andros Island—Evicting a squatter—Entertainment at Golden Cay—Home again.

I SOMETIMES wonder if a criminal undergoing a term of imprisonment for the first time does not, at the beginning, experience a certain amount of pleasure from the mere novelty of his life.

The first fortnight of our life at Nassau was certainly a very pleasant time, yet looking back upon it, there is but little I can recall that was specially remarkable in any way, save that all around us had the charm of novelty.

It was my turn to go on circuit, and as my arrival in the colony had been so unexpectedly delayed, there was no time to lose if I was to

finish my work by January 1st, 1887. After some little looking about, I hired the schooner *Eastern Queen*, 38 tons, from one John Alfred, a Portuguese hailing from Lisbon, who had adopted this very un-Portuguese cognomen upon joining the United States Navy.

The first view of the *Eastern Queen* was a great step on the path of disillusion. Seen from England, my circuit had seemed the most agreeable part of my official life. A series of pleasant sails from one island to another a few miles off, in a nicely-appointed government boat, gliding gently over summer seas, and constantly stopping at pretty little towns! This was the fancy picture! It was now already clear that I was to travel in a wretched cargo boat, with a cabin void of furniture, comforts, and even decencies. I had yet to learn that this cabin—wretched as it was—was fifty per cent. above the average of Bahamian schooners, as it was thoroughly well ventilated and fairly large! I had also further to learn the important fact, that—in spite of Governor Blake's opinion to the contrary—any one condemned to travel regularly in these waters goes in constant danger of his life. This is partly owing to the natural risks he runs at all seasons—some are better than others, but it is after all only a question of degree—partly to the habitual recklessness of the Bahamian sailors.



I found a companion for the first part of my circuit in the Government Inspector of Schools, a Gloucestershire man, who came out to the Bahamas in 1866. This was a great advantage to me both financially and socially, for he turned out an agreeable, well-informed companion, who sang a good song. He travelled with me also on my second circuit, and though our opinions differed materially on nearly every point, our intercourse was always harmonious, and I reckon the time spent in his company among my pleasant recollections of the Bahama Islands.

At midnight on Monday, November 15th,—or more correctly speaking, at 12 a.m. on Tuesday, November 16th, 1886—we started for the island of Bimini, being altogether thirteen living creatures on board, ten men, one dog, and two black pigs, without counting the inhabitants of the fowl coop. The human element consisted of the inspector, myself, Henry William Carey, P.C., my orderly, Francisco Vargas, captain, Theophilus Rolle, mate, Samuel Gowan, John Rolle, and James Arnett, seamen, and Matteo Imenez, cook. The captain and cook were Cubans, Carey and Gowan very light coloured men, and the two Rolles and James Arnett, full-blooded Africans.

As we beat out of the harbour we had to pass close to the *Santiago* which had that afternoon come in from Cuba, and was waiting to continue

her voyage to New York. As I gazed at her brilliantly illuminated hull, and heard the whirr of her engines, which were slowly getting up steam for a start, how I envied the occupants of those luxurious state-rooms, about to sail to a land brimfull of modern civilization, and from thence, some of them perhaps, to the dear home across the Atlantic.

My companions were soon fast asleep, but I could not tear myself away from the deck, so fascinated was I by the still novel sight of the great bright stars that globe themselves in the heavens in those latitudes, and throw long trails of light upon the waters. The night was lovely, with just enough breeze to propel the vessel gently over a smooth sea. What wind there was was fair, and everything on deck was silent, save that the man at the wheel kept on chanting Negro hymns to himself in a low tone, the melodious murmur of which was not unpleasant to listen to.

Next morning we were running past the Berry Islands, belonging to the Bahama group, but too thinly populated to be of any account. A friend of mine visited one of them when on a fishing expedition and found it inhabited by a solitary couple, an old negro and his wife. Next year he went there again. The old man was dead, and the old lady had buried him just outside the door of their hut, "for company" she said.

No cruise in Bahamian waters is complete without a "wreck," and on the afternoon of this first day of my first circuit we passed the wreck of the *Juliet*, a fine English steamer that had gone ashore on a bank called the "Gingerbread ground" about a month before. She was surrounded with schooners busily engaged in taking off her cargo and materials.

It was not until nine o'clock at night that we got near to Bimini, as Vargas, who is a very careful man, had preferred to make the distance 145 miles instead of 105, which he might easily have done by going through a certain passage with which he was not intimately acquainted. He is a stamp of man who not only does not shirk responsibility, but will share it with no one, and even when we had a pilot on board he would often take a round-about route, causing us to lose many a weary hour. I cursed his prudence repeatedly at the time, but on my second circuit I often wished him back.

As everybody in the out-islands usually goes to bed about seven o'clock in the evening, there were no lights to be seen on the shore, so we did not dare to go close in till daylight; but almost as soon as the sun was up Mr. G. V. Stuart, the resident magistrate, arrived to escort me to the settlement.

But one appeal had been entered for hearing, which had been withdrawn before I arrived, so there was no regular work for me to do. Here,



however, and indeed everywhere else, I found the irregular work the Circuit Justice was expected to do was endless. First the magistrate expects him to listen to a long tale of complaints and represent them all to the Government, and to advise him about everything. Secondly, the constable considers he has the same claims on him as the magistrate; and thirdly, everybody else in the settlement considers he or she has exactly the same claims as both magistrate and constable!

I was expected not only to advise the people on points of law, but also as to their most private affairs, and once I was even asked by a man whether he might not commit bigamy!

I found Mr. Stuart a very superior man, to whom it was a real pleasure to be of service, and I spent that day and evening in his company. My first day's experience convinced me that it would be necessary to extend the scope of my powers to render my office effective, for as soon as they heard I was in the settlement people flocked to me with cases they wanted tried. They were all matters which ought to have been settled but which I had no power to try, and probably never would be settled at all because the parties were all too poor to go to the Chief Justice's court at Nassau.

There are two Biminis, North and South. The

former alone is inhabited, and the latter used exclusively for agricultural purposes.

North Bimini contains a population—according to the last census—of 663 persons, who reside in two collections of shanties, dignified respectively by the names of “Alice Town” and “Bayley’s Town.” It is covered almost entirely by a beautiful grove of cocoa-nut trees coming right down to the water’s edge, and the houses dotted among it, regardless of arrangement or order, give it a very picturesque appearance. It was originally settled in the year 1848 by five families, containing forty souls in all.

Formerly the inhabitants devoted themselves entirely to wrecking, and the harbour and roadstead were celebrated as a rendezvous for wreckers. Since wrecks have become less common the people have been driven to try and get a living by more honest means, such as agriculture, spongeing and turtling. Now and then, however, a big wreck such as the *Juliet* comes along, and then the whole population, like old hunters hearing the voice of the hounds, break away from everything and follow on.

“What’s become of Old Buck Saunders?” asked an inquiring voice of one of the inhabitants.

“Guess he’s dead,” was the reply.

“He was a shocking old scoundrel,” said the voice.

“Don't know about that,” said the man; “but he was a rare one to earn money with!”

It appears “Old Buck Saunders” was a typical Bahamian wrecker. He owned a schooner, with which he was wont to hang about the Great Bahama Bank, close to the Biminis. If he saw a likely-looking vessel coming along, he would board her, and sometimes succeed in bribing the captain to let him run her ashore. No doubt “he was a rare one to earn money with.”

Strange that with so much money as has been earned in this way in the Bahamas, so little of it should have stuck.

From what I could learn, some portion of the Biminites formerly engaged with their neighbours the Cubans in the slave trade, and near here is a small cay where the Cuban slavers used formerly to land their human freight until they could get a chance of taking it on in detachments. There was also a small sugar factory here; but, like most others in the Bahamas, it is now closed.

South Bimini is about double the size of North Bimini, from which it is separated only by a narrow channel. Most of the inhabitants work holdings here. It possesses a large lagoon of clear water with a sandy bottom running through groves of mangroves, where flocks of ducks come in the winter from Florida.

In the early days of the Spanish discovery the



fountain of perpetual youth was supposed to be situated here; and one Ponce de Leon fitted out an expedition, and wasted much time and money in trying to discover it.

The great difficulty the agriculturists in these islands have hitherto had to contend with was finding a market for their produce, and in 1885 no less than 7000 cocoa-nuts were rotting on the ground. This was merely because, as everywhere else in the Bahamas, they have hitherto had no idea of any foreign trade except through the medium of Nassau and Nassau merchants. They are now beginning to realize that they are but forty miles from the coast of Florida, and just before I left the colony an American was negotiating with Mr. Stuart for establishing a castor-oil plantation and mills on the island.

In scarcely any of the out-islands is there a doctor or anything in the nature of medical advice except a few old women with some knowledge of simples, and in one or two places a clergyman of the Church of England who has had some medical training. Even children are brought into the world in the most primitive manner, often with the most serious results to the unhappy mothers. The day I was at Bimini I was implored to come and see a poor young woman suffering from puerperal fever. Having no medical knowledge, I could of course be of no use. A day or two

afterwards a doctor came quite accidentally from Nassau, and saw her, but he was too late. The day I was there he might have been in time.

About 11 p.m. we got once more under weigh, and early next morning were off the island of Grand Bahama, the next place at which I had to hold a court.

As we hove in sight the waves were breaking against the reefs that surround this island in every part, just as they are represented in Bierstadt's picture of "A Nor'wester in the Bahama Islands," which was exhibited in the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1886 and the American Exhibition of 1887. If it is going too far to say they were "mountains high," they certainly were "hills high;" for every time they broke they completely hid some houses that stood on high ground just in front of us. Landing in a small boat under such circumstances is not a pleasant operation, especially if you happen to be lame of one leg, and it is a matter of importance to jump on shore just at the right moment. However, we escaped with nothing worse than a wetting.

There was no work for me here, but my companion had to inspect the school, and in the then condition of wind and waves it was impossible for our vessel to remain long where she was. It was therefore arranged that she should be sent round

in charge of a pilot, to meet us next day on the other side of the island.

Meantime we were to be the guests of Mr. Joseph E. Adderley, an African gentleman, who is both magistrate and schoolmaster—a combination not uncommon in the smaller settlements. He owns a great deal of land, and keeps a number of cows of a small but pretty breed. This is almost the only island where the people now own cattle in any quantity, but they complain that the price they fetch in Nassau is so low that it does not pay to rear them.

The soil of this island is good, and might, with judicious manuring, be made very productive; and it is so near Florida that a trade might easily be established with the States. In the days of slavery it was fairly flourishing, but now the curse of Nassau and the Nassau merchant is upon it.

It is about ninety miles long, and in some parts of considerable width; yet, with all its advantages, it has but a population of 700 people, who can barely exist.

Nearly all the inhabitants are black, some few only showing traces of white blood. The slave-owners here must have been principally Scotchmen, for the emancipated slaves all took their masters' names, and the names here are nearly all Scotch, such as McPherson, Hepburn, and Grant.



Shipbuilding goes on here to a limited extent, but owing to the prevalence of the truck system the unhappy workman derives but little benefit therefrom. Mr. Adderley brought to my notice a case in which men building a schooner for a Nassau merchant were being paid, at a low rate of wages, in flour instead of cash. We "sampled" the flour, which was invoiced to them at 1*l.* 16*s.* a barrel, and found it not fit for human food.

I attended the inspection of the school, where ninety-nine young darkies, of all ages, are educated. The pupils were examined in the three R's, and geography, history, and music. The latter was evidently the favourite subject, and the children sang well. But it was funny to watch ninety-nine black youngsters singing such songs as "When the stormy winds do blow," and "The Blue Bells of Scotland."

The annual visit of the inspector of schools is a gala day in all these settlements. Old and young are dressed in their best, homes are deserted, work left to do itself as best it can, and the school-house and adjoining yard are crowded with an excited throng. Those inside—the audience I mean, not the pupils—stare open-mouthed at the proceedings, showing rows of great pearly teeth; whilst those outside keep up a perpetual chatter all the time.

Mr. Adderley and his family do all their own

farm work; and, as they have been utilizing seaweed for manure, are tolerably successful. This was one of the very few places in the out-islands where I tasted fresh milk, and the only one in the Bahamas in which I tasted fresh butter, which is unknown even in Nassau itself. Here, too, I ate sugar-cane for the first time. It is rather like stick at first, but very nice when you get used to it.

A great deal of damage is done here to crops of all kinds by birds called "blackbirds," that look like black parrots, and are in no way related to their English namesakes.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Adderley's house is a fair specimen of the dwelling of a well-to-do out-islander. The outside walls, up to a certain height, are built of stone and covered with plaster, above which point they are continued by upright pieces of pine wood, commonly called lumber, connected together by wattled palmetto leaves. As soon as the walls are completed, uprights are erected to support a piazza. Both house and piazza are then covered in with a large sloping roof common to both, thickly thatched with palmetto leaves, which form a most useful and substantial shelter. The interior is then divided by partitions into what are

<sup>1</sup> My friend Mr. R. Bowdler Sharpe, of the Natural History Department of the British Museum, tells me the proper name of these birds is the "Savannah Cuckoo."

called the rooms. With few exceptions, ceilings and glass are unknown in the out-islands. But though the Adderley house is thus primitive, it is not devoid of some of the elegancies of life, and the scrupulous cleanliness of every portion of the interior is very pleasant to look upon.

After a night comfortably spent on a bed stuffed with what is called bed-grass, our crew came to fetch us, and we started to walk a mile to the head of a large lagoon called Hawksbill Creek, where our schooner's boat was awaiting us. The hawksbill is the sort of turtle out of whose shell "tortoiseshell" ornaments are made. So the name raised hopes of catching something that might fetch a price in the Nassau market. But we were out of luck, for no turtles came our way.

A row of several hours brought us to where the *Eastern Queen* was lying, about four miles out at sea. We found Captain Vargas in a great state of excitement. He hurried us on board, exclaiming, "Oh, la! la! Peckso, getty we sho'," meaning thereby that the vessel would get ashore if we did not make haste and get off. Vargas's mode of speaking English is original. Though he has been forty years in the colony he has never succeeded in mastering the language. "Peckso" is a great expression of his. It means "I expect so." When sailing against the wind he will ex-



claim, "Tinky we tacky tackle," meaning that he proposes to "tack," as sailors say. Conversation with him under these circumstances is not easy; and Matteo, his Cuban cook, is even more difficult to understand. Still, as the former is a good sailor, and the latter an excellent cook, one is glad to overlook their little eccentricities of speech.

It was about 3 p.m. on Friday, November 19th, when we started for Green Turtle Cay—would not the heart of a City alderman leap for joy at the sound!—which was distant just one hundred miles. It was just 3 p.m. on Wednesday, November 24th, when we reached it.

The first day or two we were haunted perpetually by the shadows of two places called Mangrove Cay and Seal Cay. The former we never seemed able to get away from, the latter we never seemed able to reach. In whatever direction we tacked they were for ever appearing, disappearing, and reappearing. I never was able to form the faintest notion of when either of them first came in sight or finally disappeared. I only know we did get past them at last.

The two pigs afforded constant occupation. They ran loose about the deck, but were not supposed to come further aft than the companion. As they could not read, it was not much use putting up a notice, so the only practical way of impressing them with a sense of duty was to

attack them with any missile that happened to come handy. After about nine days at sea, I think they began to have an idea that campstools were not agreeable when brought suddenly and heavily down on the back, and that a voyage of discovery to the after part of the vessel was apt to entail unpleasant consequences.

"Guaccinango," the dog, was a Cuban. If Captain Vargas or Matteo the cook were asked any question as to his breed, they would reply with very solemn looks, "Oh, la! la! Cuba dog, gooda for hog, gooda for sheep, gooda for duck, gooda for everyting." Good for nothing would have been nearer the mark, for a more abject cur never lived. The very sight of a gun drove him to the verge of distraction, and he would rush wildly howling up and down the deck, torn in two between his terror of hearing the gun fired and his terror of jumping overboard to avoid it. It was next to impossible to make friends with him, for he always rushed away howling if one attempted to pat him. Only, very occasionally, at meals, would hunger tempt him to sneak close enough to take any morsel that might be offered, with which he would immediately rush to the furthest corner of the deck, for fear it should be taken away again. Nature had not done much for the appearance of this remarkable animal, who was long, wolfish-looking, and singularly

lean, and art had stepped in and destroyed whatever beauty he ever possessed, by chopping his tail off close to his stern, and cropping his ears in the shape of a letter V.

From the Friday to the Monday we had all but dead calms, and on the Saturday we passed over one of those wonderful sea gardens for which these waters are famous. There is one near Nassau, well known to American visitors, but this one is superior to it in every way.

These marine gardens are made up of the most exquisite submerged coral bowers and grottoes, rivalling the choicest productions of the vegetable world in form and colour. One can hardly believe one's eyes when all their unexpected beauties are revealed for the first time. The *madrepora* or branching coral is very abundant, as are also the *astræa* or brain coral, *alcyonoid polyyps* (delicate coral shrubs), and *algæ*, all of which are of fairy form and attractive in colour. Gorgonias and sea fans, much diversified in size and colour, and clusters of purple sea feathers wave gracefully in the clear water, like flowering shrubs in the wind.

It would be impossible to imagine any situation better for the thorough examination of a sea garden than that in which we found ourselves on this particular morning. Our vessel was not going fast enough to interfere with the most



minute investigation of every object on the sea bottom, and yet just moving sufficiently to enable us to see fresh forms of coral beauty every minute, each more lovely than its predecessor. Into deep alcoves and recesses, under shelving masses of coral, did we peer with wondering eyes, almost looking for some Lurline or sea-nymph basking in the sunlight that seemed to penetrate right down into this glorious submerged coral world. The fish that dart about or lie sleeping in these coral caves harmonize well with the general beauty of the scene, for their colouring is gorgeous, and their motions extremely graceful. Some are yellow, some emerald, some a rich scarlet; some silver and satin, others ringed, striped, fringed, tipped, or spotted with all the colours of the rainbow. Sponges abound in every direction, clinging to the coral rock.

If the surface of the water is at all ruffled, it is necessary to look at these things through what is called a "water-glass," or wooden box about eight or ten inches square, open at the top, the bottom glazed with ordinary window-glass, and a longish wooden handle attached. The glazed end of this machine laid on the top of the water makes a perfectly smooth surface for the eye to look through. On the day of which I write no glass was needed, for the surface was perfectly calm, and through the water, which is clear as crystal in these latitudes,

every object on the sea-bottom could be seen as distinctly as though held in the hand.

I set my boys—every darky, however old, is a boy—to work diving. Whatever I threw over they fished up, and also brought me up three sponges that, after having seen them in their natural state, I might watch them through the process of curing to the final stage. I not only had the pleasure of watching the process of curing, but of smelling it too, which is not pleasant. The sponges were first left on deck for two or three days till they were dead and certain parts rotted off, then put in a bucket of water for several more days, then dried in the sun, and finally nicely trimmed and made ready to be preserved as reminiscences of my first circuit.

The next day (Sunday) we did a lot of fishing, but the day was not allowed to pass without an attempt at religious observance. Carey, my orderly, read the Bible aloud to a congregation consisting of Theophilus Rolle, John Rolle, and Sam Gowan; Jem Arnett, a sturdy Episcopalian, sat by the wheel apart reading the Church service; the captain and Matteo, who were Catholics, kept aloof from all the proceedings. A good part of the day the boys spent singing hymns. In fact the Bahamian darkies generally are singing hymns when they are not either working, eating, drinking or sleeping.

Though they are devoted to music, they seem to have no idea of anything but hymns or what they call "antems." "Dar ain't much diff'rence tween de two, sar," explains Mr. Carey. "Dey's bof sperritooal songs dey is, on'y one's more like a song dan t'oder! A hymn's more melodious dan wot an antem is, sar!"

At last we were sufficiently near the place with the aldermanic name to take to our boat and leave the schooner to beat up. At 3 p.m. on Wednesday, November 24th, we landed, having only done an average of twenty miles a day for five days.

Green Turtle Cay does great credit to the resident justice, who has managed to get the settlement into excellent order. Among his multifarious duties he has to assess the rental of the houses for the purpose of taxation. I found seventeen appeals against his assessments set down for hearing. From conversations with him and the Church of England clergyman, I gathered there was scarcely a house in the place of the clear annual value of 10*l.*, the lowest sum on which the tax is payable, so I inquired of the worthy magistrate on what "basis" he had made his assessments? The word "basis" seemed to puzzle him dreadfully! As far as I could make out, he had an idea the legislature would not have imposed a house duty unless



they intended to get something out of it, and that it was his duty to find some 10*l.* houses somehow. So he had just walked round the settlement, picked out all the best-looking houses, and assessed them at that amount.

As we had lost so much time on the road, we were determined by hook or by crook to get off that night. So my companion got his school together, and I held a court at 7 p.m., much to the disgust of the respectable inhabitants, who usually retire to rest about that hour. However, as I allowed nearly all their appeals, they forgave me.

Besides "Green Turtle Cay," we had to visit two other places in Abaco—"Hopetown" (or "Great Harbour") and "Cherokee Sound."

At Hopetown the magistrate, the board of works, and the constable all wanted advice as to their various duties, and apparently as to the meaning of the Queen's English as well. An Act of Parliament had been passed empowering the local authorities in the out-islands to give permission to any person to build a wharf, "whose land abuts upon any harbour." These worthies inquired of me whether a person who had no land adjoining the harbour, but had land joining on to that of somebody else whose land did adjoin it, was not a person entitled to build a wharf under the Act. After which example of the combined

wisdom and intelligence of Hopetown, I was not surprised at anything I afterwards met with on circuit.

After getting aground, getting off again, and having to run under the lee of a little bay to take shelter for twenty-four hours from a gale, during which time it rained incessantly, we arrived off Cherokee Sound on Sunday morning, November 28th.

The landing here is very disagreeable, as one has to wade for about half a mile, and run the risk of cutting one's feet with broken conch shells, or else ride on a man's back, and take the chance of being pitched over if he happens to stumble. Going on shore, I ventured to wade, but found the foot-cutting process so disagreeable that coming back, I yielded at once to Jem's earnest entreaty, "Git up dar, Boss! Git up dar! I'se strong enough to carry you, Boss!" and allowed myself to be carried ignominiously to the boat on his back. I have often been carried on shore since then, sometimes pick-a-back, sometimes in a man's arms—baby fashion; but I have never again tried the wading process.

The island of Abaco contains about 496,700 acres, and its population in 1881 was 3610. The sea, as a rule, abounds in fish and turtle; but in 1886 the fisheries failed altogether, and when I was at Cherokee Sound the inhabitants were on

the verge of starvation, as the crops had failed at the same time. In such distress was this settlement that Captain Vargas bought a boat for 6*l.*, which would have been cheap at 10*l.*!

In point of intellect the Abaconians are about on a par with the English agricultural labourer, as he was before the days of school boards, save that they have a talent for ship-building, which looks as though there was something behind that was capable of development. They come of a fine stock, for they are nearly all the descendants of Loyalist soldiers, who fought for the king in the War of Independence, and were rewarded by grants of land in this island. Their one idea has been to keep the stream of their white blood pure, and they have married in and in till nearly all the whites in the island are related by ties of consanguinity. They are now in such a debased condition that they have lost all trace of their origin, and men with good old English and Scotch names have no idea where the cradle of their race is to be found. Probably their apparent want of brain power is due to in-breeding. Or was it, perhaps, that all that America possessed of intelligence was enlisted in that struggle on the side of independence, and that those who fought for the "Old Régime" had no brains to transmit?

They are nearly all Wesleyan Methodists, and,



as an instance of the depth of ignorance in which they are sunk, one of their leading men assured a friend of mine that the Pope had recently "turned Methodist, and joined class!" In spite of their religious proclivities, they have always been reckoned among the most persistent of Bahamian wreckers; but the two lighthouses erected by the Imperial Government at "Elbow Cay" and "The Hole in the Wall" have for many years much interfered with their gains.

The coloured people they look upon as the dirt beneath their feet, though there is little to choose between them, and both alike are ground down by the Nassau merchants by means of the truck system—that many-headed monster which is devouring the colony.

But there are exceptions to every rule, and in Abaco the exception is Mr. McDonald of Cherokee Sound. The Sunday we spent with him was very pleasant. His house stands in a tropical orchard fair to look upon, where numerous rabbits run about and increase and multiply to their hearts' content. He has also a fine flock of flamingoes, an aviary for doves, and other pets. For this worthy magistrate is fond of animals, and my colleague quotes a story of how a pair of wild mocking-birds came and built their nest, and brought up a family close by his house, as a proof that animals know where to find their friends. His house is filled with

rare birds' wings, products of the sea and local curiosities, which he has collected himself, and knows all about, whilst on his table may be seen George Eliot's novels! As a magistrate and schoolmaster he has earned golden opinions. His great-grandfather was a ship-builder on the Clyde, and his grandfather a Loyalist soldier, and nowhere north of the Tweed could you find a family of a more perfect Scotch type than that which assembles daily in the little parlour at Cherokee Sound.

*Apropos* of types, I met at Hopetown a family named "Malone." At the lowest computation they must have been at least a hundred years out of Ireland, and most of the present generation have seldom been further than Nassau, or seen anything more Irish than themselves. Yet they still speak with a pronounced Irish brogue!

A line of smaller cays or keys—cay is really the Spanish form, but both spellings are used indiscriminately—fringe the whole of one side of the island of Abaco, and the space between them and the mainland affords excellent sailing-ground for vessels not drawing more than ten feet of water.

At the extreme end of the island, nearest Nassau, is "The Hole in the Wall," sometimes spoken of in connection with a similar freak of nature on the island of Eleuthera as "The glass

windows of the Bahamas." It consists of a large opening in, and just below the top of, a ridge of calcareous rock, which persons on board ship can see right through. It is said the setting sun, seen through this opening, looks like a globe of fire in a framework of coral rock.

About noon on Monday, November 28th, as soon as we had finished our business at Cherokee Sound, we started for Nassau, where we arrived the same night, having been absent just fourteen days.

It is a curious sensation to a person accustomed to the ordinary course of nineteenth century every-day life, to travel in a country where there are no telegraphs, and the wife, who is awaiting his return, merely knows that he is knocking about somewhere among a cluster of islands, and may be back perhaps to-morrow, perhaps next week, perhaps next month, perhaps not at all. Neither is it altogether satisfactory to land in an all but strange city at 2 a.m., and have to find your way to a house that you have only seen once, and may find it difficult to "*locate*" in the dark; with the certainty before you that you will find no door-bell and no servants sleeping on the premises, and the possible risk of knocking up a strange family at that unearthly hour!

Such was my position that night, as I stepped



on shore at Rawson Square, on the very spot where the Governor had landed a few hours before on his return from England. My wife had moved into a new house, and it was with nervous steps that I walked on to what I thought to be the right piazza, and tapped at the window. However, the familiar voice soon reassured me, and a minute later I crossed the threshold of my new home.

The furniture was not up to much, and would have looked bare and miserable enough in England, but there were old friends in the shape of books, pictures, and knickknacks about, and after the out-islands it seemed little short of a Belgravian mansion.

As I was not well the Governor kindly allowed me to remain at home and rest until December 8th, when I started again. In order that I might finish my work by the end of the year he had excused me from calling anywhere except at the islands of San Salvador, Inagua, and Andros. In the last two chapters I have said so much about the two former islands that I will confine this account of the second half of my first circuit to the island of Andros, which I did not again visit.

Some alteration had taken place in the *personnel* of the *Eastern Queen* since I last saw her. I had lost my agreeable cabin companion. Captain

Vargas had to remain at home sick, and his place was filled by a black man named Sam Rahmings, who turned out a good-for-nothing fellow, and incompetent to boot. I regretted Vargas as it was; had I known as much about the carelessness of Bahamian sailors as I afterwards learned I should have regretted him still more. Jem Arnett, too, was gone, his "mamma"—Bahamian darkies never have mothers—requiring his presence at home at Watling Island. I missed Jem, who was always civil and obliging, and had a low-comedy solemnity about him that was positively delicious! He was wont to look so intensely serious that I said I would give a shilling to see Jem laugh. One day something gave him the necessary impetus, and when once started we thought he would never stop. He got his shilling, but his risibility had passed away, and he received it in his usual severe and solemn manner. Guaccinango, too, had been given away, Vargas having discovered that—even in the Bahamas—he was not a marketable article, and one of the pigs had gone the way of all porcine flesh.

Shortly after my first landing in the colony a native white said to me, "The morals of this place are neither better nor worse than the rest of the West Indies, only here we live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy which you do not find elsewhere." My new captain, Sam Rahmings, was an example

of what passes for religion in the Bahamas. He would not allow me to have a tow-line out on Sunday for the chance of catching a fish, neither would he permit the decks to be washed on that day, although cleanliness becomes important on board a small vessel in a tropical climate where you have a pig running about loose day and night. Yet at one of the islands at which we called Carey discovered this worthy person making arrangements with a friend's wife to elope with him! So much for Sam's Sabbatarianism. He was incompetent as well, and on one occasion, if Theophilus Rolle had not had the pluck to knock him down and take the wheel himself, he would have wrecked the vessel on a reef known as "The Hogsties." Unfortunately, too, he was hired for the trip only, and paid by the day, so he put every difficulty in the way of progress until we almost gave up the idea of ever arriving at Andros Island.

The week just passed had not been uneventful, for a political disturbance, something of the storm-in-a-teacup order, had shaken the whole fabric of Nassau society to its very base. Governor Blake, on his return, had been received with many marks of favour; but he had not landed twenty-four hours before the edifice of his popularity crumbled into the dust. Two vacancies had to be filled up, one in the Executive, the other



in the Legislative Council. To the first of these the Governor appointed an English jeweller, named Brown, to the second one of the local "Pooh Bahs!" named Crawford, formerly a sergeant in a West India regiment, now Governor of the jail, Postmaster, and Acting Inspector of Police.

The Governor had ruined a right idea by carrying it out in a wrong way. He wished to strike a blow at the domination of the native white clan by appointing persons who had come out from home, but he chose the wrong men. No doubt Brown was a competent man, but as a member of the Lower House he had always opposed the Governor, and even spoken of him disrespectfully in the course of a debate, so that people said openly, "You had only to bully Blake if you wanted to get anything out of him." Besides, as an attack on the domination of the clan his appointment was useless, for all his interests were identified with the native whites, and he had become *plus conchist que les conchs*.

Crawford's appointment was on every ground indefensible. He had had no legislative experience, neither—though a person of great respectability—was his elevation warranted by his antecedents, his education, his influence in the colony, or any other reason, and whatever motive prompted it, the appointment could only appear as

an insult to the whole native community, and they looked upon it as such.

Had the Governor wished to strike a really effective blow against the domination of the native white clan, he had the materials ready to hand in the persons of two prominent members of the coloured community, whose elevation would have been a real benefit to the colony.

Though I started alone, I was not destined to travel alone all the time. For three days I had the company of Mr. McGregor, the magistrate of the island of Inagua, one of the ablest and most conscientious of public servants, who, had he been born in another part of the West Indies, or had a white face instead of a black, would probably have been high up in the tree of official life long ago. From Inagua back to Nassau I had also the company of a Mr. Evans, tide-waiter at the former place, who had been for many years in command of a schooner trading between Nassau and the West Indies, and had plenty of sea tales to tell.

One fine starlight but moonless night, as we were sailing along, we were aware of a beautiful little cutter-rigged craft coming towards us at full speed like an angry swan breasting the waves. So fast and furious was her pace that she seemed like the ghost of one of the old pirate craft rushing on to the attack! When she came up to us she turned out to be the *Santa Clara*, of ten tons, from San

Domingo. Her compass had broken, and she didn't know where she was. It was important for her to keep near us till morning, but she could only manage it by sailing round and round us all night. At break of day she spread her wings and vanished. It was a pretty incident, she looked so like a snow-white sea sprite! The little thing had come all the way from San Domingo to Nassau (some 600 miles) and was now returning.

We arrived off Mangrove Cay, Andros Island, on the afternoon of Monday, December 20th, and had to walk three or four miles through the bush to the house of Mr. Ceruti, the magistrate. The way was over coral rocks with holes in them, a path not easy to find by daylight, and impossible after dark, so we had to trespass on the magistrate's hospitality for the night. Besides Mr. Evans and myself, there were a Mr. Bode, who had come over to do me honour, Mr. Ceruti, his wife, three children, and two servants, all caged together for the night in a little one-storied shanty containing four small rooms, one of which has to do duty as police-court, post-office, and every other sort of public office.

Mr. Ceruti was for many years a ship's captain, but in 1885 he entered the Government service. He is a pleasant man, who has seen a good deal of the world, and as Mr. Bode was at school at Guildford, and had remained several years in



England, we managed to spend a pleasant evening together. How the others passed the night I do not know, the bedroom was hospitably given up to me, so I had a very good time.

Next day I had to try an action of ejectment against a squatter on Crown lands. The land question at Andros Island is threatening to assume Irish proportions, but the fault lies entirely with the Government, who have been in the habit of allowing the people to apply for land, pay a deposit, and take possession, but have habitually neglected to send a surveyor down to measure out the land to them.

For years the squatters had been left alone to do as they pleased, and some persons having grants of ten acres were working 100, when Governor Blake suddenly made up his mind to put his foot down to stop it. So I was placed in the unpleasant position of pioneer of the new order of things. A test case had been brought against a squatter, whom I ejected unless he paid for his land by a certain day, warning all the others that they would be similarly treated next circuit. It was not a pleasant position, for it was the universal opinion that "Dat dar new man from England, he done it all. Eberrybody know de Gub'ner, he de poor man's friend!"

I had also to try another case, which went sorely against the grain. A new policeman had

been sent down from Nassau. The morning after his arrival he went out, and after throwing out tempting baits in two directions, succeeded in persuading a poor woman to sell him some rum without a licence, and at once gave information, hoping to get half the reward. It was a dirty business, and I am glad to say the man was discharged a few months later for another reason.

Work over, we repaired to Mr. Bode's establishment on Golden Cay, a little island adjoining the mainland of Andros, where sponges are collected to be sent on to Nassau. Mr. Bode gave us a capital dinner, and I can only regret that, being no artist, I must rely upon description for a picture of how a judge on circuit is entertained in the out-island settlements of the Bahama Islands.

The *locus in quo* consists of two large stores-repositories for all sorts of things, opening one, into the other. At one end of the building is a really good library-table with a bureau in it, alongside of it is a bed for the master, in another part a bed for his white clerk, a little distance off a mattress on the floor for the female housekeeper. In the midst a table covered with clean linen with a civilized European appearance. The doors are all wide open, and darkies keep coming in and out all the time.

It was an amusing experience, marred only by

the presence of a big crapulous negro, who would persist in boring us with his drunken attentions.

It was past midnight when we got back to the schooner, which we had some difficulty in finding, for it was pitch dark, and the Sanctimonious Samuel had neglected to burn a light to show us where he was. On the way we passed two gigantic sharks, almost as big as our boat, sailing along near the top of the water—not pleasant customers to encounter if a sudden gust of wind had happened to upset us.

Andros Island is the largest of the Bahamian group, and contains about 500 square miles. It is ninety miles long, and as much as forty miles broad in the widest part. It is intersected by creeks, communicating with a large fresh-water lake in the middle of the island. It produces a good many fancy woods, among them—cedar, Madeira, horse-flesh mahogany, mastic, lignum-vitæ, ebony, brazilletto, logwood, and fustic. Sugar-canes, oranges and bananas are largely cultivated, and there is no doubt that the island—a great part of which is still unexplored—has considerable resources capable of development. An American gentleman said to me once, “Why, the island of Andros alone could supply a great portion of the States with fresh vegetables in winter.” This may be true or false. I only repeat the



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words as they were spoken. Its present population numbers 3434 souls.

We left Andros early on the morning of Wednesday, the 22nd, and arrived at Nassau at 3 p.m. on Thursday, the 23rd of December. And thus ended my first circuit.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CONDITION OF THE COLOURED RACE IN THE BAHAMA ISLANDS.

The truck system—Modern slavery—Sponge and turtle fisheries—Pine-apple industry—Sold in slavery to Surinam—Governor Blake's views—*The Freeman*—Letter from *The Key of the Gulf*—Cases of oppression and injustice—Difficulties in the way of equal justice between black and white—Possible results—Possible remedies.

“THE bulk of them are just as much slaves as they were fifty years ago!”

These words were said to me shortly after my arrival in the Bahamas, by a gentleman who had had excellent opportunities of judging of the real condition of the coloured race, and was well acquainted with it.

I asked him what he meant. He replied, “I mean that by means of the truck system the bulk of them are in a condition of bondage far more galling and far less profitable to the individual than the old slavery of fifty years ago.”

This was a startling statement, and difficult to believe, for the first impression one gets on landing in the Bahamas is that the coloured people appear

so remarkably contented that there cannot be much the matter with their condition. Wherever one meets them they seem cheerful and happy. On all hands too I had heard complaints of their uppishness, laziness, and general good-for-nothingness. One day I observed to a high official that the independent assembly was a simple absurdity, and that the little place ought to be made a Crown colony at once. Said he, "As a Government official I should be very glad to see it made a Crown colony, but it would never do; the negroes would be as well off as they are in the rest of the West Indies."

Were they, then, not as well off as they were in the rest of the West Indies? Was there anything analogous to slavery going on in this obscure corner of the empire in this year of Jubilee? At any rate I made up my mind to get to the bottom of the question, and I need hardly add that what I am now writing was not the result of the observations of a week or day, but the collective experience of my whole residence in the colony.

The "truck system," called by the Americans "the store order system," is, as every one knows, the substitution of payment in kind for payment in cash. It is undeniable that in some cases this system may work well, and I have myself seen it acted upon with very good results in one of



the smaller islands in the Bahamas, where there are salt-ponds. For many years the price of salt has been so low that it has been next to impossible to ship a cargo at a profit, and most of the salt islands are at present without trade. In this particular island, when a vessel comes in, the principal salt-owners take their net, go hauling, and divide the take among the men who carry the salt on board. In this way they shipped 38,000 bushels of salt at a profit in less than five months. All the island has benefited, for the weight of fish given the men far exceeds in value the amount they would have received had they been paid for their labour in cash. But this is a small island, containing only some three or four hundred inhabitants, where a patriarchal state of things exists.

Very different is the working of the truck system between the Nassau merchant and the unhappy negro, whom, by means of it, he grinds down and oppresses for years and years. The principal industries of the colony are the sponge and turtle fisheries, and the cultivation of pine-apples. Through the truck system the benefit derived from these sources by the working man is not only reduced to a minimum, but he is virtually kept in bondage to his employer. The sponger and turtler are the greatest sufferers, because they are kept under seaman's articles all the time.

Let us follow the career of one of these unfortunates from its commencement. He applies to the owner of a craft engaged in the sponge or turtle fisheries, generally in the two combined, to go on a fishing voyage. He is not to be paid by wages, but to receive a share of the profits of the take, thus being theoretically in partnership with his owner. At once comes into play the infernal machine, which grinds him down and keeps him a slave for years and years—often for life. His employer invariably keeps, or is in private partnership with some one else who keeps, a store, which exists principally for the purpose of robbing the employé, and is stocked with the offscourings of the American market—rubbish, unsaleable anywhere else. As soon as a man engages he has to sign seaman's articles, which render him liable to be sent on board his vessel at any time by order of a magistrate. He is then invited, and practically forced, to take an advance upon his anticipated share of profits.

Under the auspices of Governor Blake a Bill was passed in the House of Assembly, in the Session of 1885, limiting these advances to ten shillings; but any merit there was in the Bill was destroyed by an amendment, permitting them to be made "in kind or in cash." Besides, all through the time I was in the Bahamas this law virtually remained a dead-letter, as—I do not hesitate to

affirm—has been the case in the colony with every law passed for the benefit of the coloured race, that at all militates against the interests of the native whites.

These advances, I need hardly say, are generally made in kind, consisting of flour, sugar, tobacco, articles of clothing, or some other portion of the rubbish that constitutes the employer's stock-in-trade. Probably the fisherman does not want the goods, or, at any rate, he wants money more to leave with his family; and in order to get it he sells the goods at about half the price at which they are charged to him. I was about to say half their value, but this would be grossly incorrect, for the goods are usually worth next to nothing, whereas they are charged to the fisherman at a price which would be dear for a first-rate article. In the last chapter I have instanced the case of the men building a schooner in the island of Grand Bahama, who were paid in flour invoiced to them at 1*l.* 16*s.* a barrel, which was not fit for pigs.

It is undeniable that of late, in some few cases, advances have been made in cash, but this is only a clever move by which the employer intends to benefit himself in the long run. The people of the Bahamas are daily coming more and more in contact with Key West on the Florida coast, and are gradually finding out that there are places in



the world where not only a high rate of wages is paid, but the people get paid in cash. The Bahamian employer, therefore, is beginning to think it wise to make a show of liberality—4s. or so in cash is about the outside—knowing perfectly well that by a very easy shuffle of the cards he can prevent the employé from deriving the slightest benefit from it.

Preliminaries settled, the fisherman starts on his sponging or turtling voyage, and remains away from six to twelve weeks, when he returns with his cargo of sponges. These he cannot by law take anywhere, except to Nassau, where they have to be sold in the Sponge Exchange by a system of tender.

If ever anything analogous to the Jamaica *émeute* should cause Great Britain to send a Royal Commission out to inquire into the condition of this unhappy colony, the truth about these sales may come out. Personally, I hold the strongest opinion that they are fraudulent. The seller is a Nassau merchant, the buyer—usually the agent of a New York firm—is also a Nassau merchant; and that the two agree together and arrange a bogus sale, by means of which they rob the unhappy fisherman, I am convinced.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is but fair to add that Mr. James C. Smith, whose name is mentioned further on, says I am wrong on this point. I retain my opinion nevertheless.

Just before my last circuit, Sam Gowan—one of my boys, whose name often occurs in the last chapter—had been away for five weeks in charge of a sponging schooner. They had brought back 900 strings of sponges called beads. These beads—taking large and small together—averaged, Gowan told me, nine sponges each, or 8100 in all. He and his crew had not only taken this cargo of sponges, but had cleaned and dried them as well—a very troublesome process. The whole cargo fetched, in the Sponge Exchange, 11*l.* sterling, or less than a halfpenny a sponge all round. Yet many of these sponges would fetch five or six shillings in a shop in London, whilst the smallest would not be likely to fetch less than 6*d.* Here is a case in point.

Besides, if these sales be not fraudulent, perhaps the Nassau merchant can explain how it happens that on the Florida Coast, under exactly the same conditions as to water and the quality of the sponge, the fishermen can earn twice and three times as much as those who fish in Bahamian waters.

The sale over, the amount realized is declared, and owner and fishermen proceed to share. The fisherman is already liable to the owner for his original advance, and his share of the expense of provisioning the vessel. Nine times out of ten the former makes out that there has been a loss,

and the 'fisherman is in debt to him, or, at any rate, that there is nothing to divide.<sup>2</sup>

The latter has then no resource but to sign articles for a fresh voyage, in return for which the merchant advances him the wherewithal to keep body and soul together out of his rubbish-laden granary. The man has sold himself, and the relations of master and slave are established!

Sometimes, though very rarely, the take is so good that no amount of dishonesty on the part of the Nassau merchants can prevent the fisherman from getting something substantial, without the fraud becoming too palpable to escape discovery. Then he is free once more for the time, and if he is wise he bolts to Key West, otherwise his emancipation is likely to be but of very short duration.

I extract the following paragraphs from three articles, called "The Truck System; or, Modern Slavery," that appeared in *The Freeman*, a paper, the history of which is given later on in this chapter:—

"The truck system permeates almost the whole of the agricultural, and the sponging and turtling industries. The agricultural problem is very

<sup>2</sup> In Sam Gowan's case the share of each man was twelve shillings. Deduct from this what he owed for his share of provisioning the vessel, and what would the remuneration for his five weeks' labour represent, *even if it had been paid in cash*, to say nothing of the daily risk to life and limb?



complex, being mixed up with the land tenure system; but with respect to the sponging and turtling industries the problem is simple.

“The ‘harvest of the sea’ is planted by nature on common property, and though reaped by the sponge and turtle fishermen, is controlled absolutely by the outfitters, who do not gather in the harvest of the sponge and turtle fields, but who simply advance the food and material—the outfit—for a fishing voyage. Verily, outfitters are as gods, reaping where they had not sown, and gathering and controlling exclusively where they had strewn jointly.

“There are about 500 vessels engaged in the sponge and turtle fisheries, employing on an average about eight men each, in all about 4000 fishermen.

“There are about sixty outfitters and owners, who control the fishing fleet and the ‘catch.’ The annual value of the ‘catch,’ as delivered by the fishermen, is about 60,000*l.* sterling. The division of this wealth, which is the joint product of the work of the fishermen and owners and outfitters, is in about the following proportions:—60 per cent. goes to the fishermen; 40 per cent. to the owners and outfitters. The latter item is made up as follows:—33½ per cent. for the owner of the vessel; 5 per cent. for the outfitter or broker who sells the sponge or turtle shell, and

who in a very large number, perhaps the majority of cases, is also the owner of the vessel; and  $1\frac{2}{3}$  per cent. for wharfage, cartage, and other contingencies.

“60 per cent. of 60,000*l.* = 36,000*l.* ÷ 4000 fishermen = 9*l.* as the average annual share of each fisherman.

“40 per cent. of 60,000*l.* = 24,000*l.* ÷ sixty owners and outfitters = 400*l.* as the average annual share of each owner and outfitter.

“The fishermen and other employés have themselves very much to blame for their present condition. They are improvident and wasteful, but these deplorable features of their character are very much the consequences, the results of the influence of the truck system under which they and their ancestors have been living for the past fifty years.

“They have been accustomed to take up or receive commodities which they do not really need, at one price, and to dispose of them immediately afterwards at a very much lower price in order to obtain money with which to procure the commodities they really do need. This has been going on from day to day for half a century, and it is not surprising that such practical lessons in improvidence and wastefulness have now become thoroughly learned.

“The condition of the fisherman is daily becoming more and more unendurable; the best and most

honest and energetic of them are emigrating to the Southern States, and a most alarming feature is the steady deterioration in the physique of the men and their families as a consequence of the low standard of living which the accursed system imposes upon them. These men and their families are badly fed, clothed, and housed ; there is overcrowding in the cabins (?) and holds of the fishing vessels, and in numberless ways sanitary rules are set at defiance through ignorance. If our labouring population did not belong to an iron race, they would have died out or become imbeciles long ere this from the effects of excessive exposure conjoined with a low standard of living. The truck system holds these unfortunates as in the grasp of death, and until it is utterly and completely abolished, it will be impossible to make any real or lasting improvement in the material, intellectual, or moral condition of this poorly paid portion of our population. The system will last as long as the ignorance and recklessness which it engenders last ; and the system is itself one of the most formidable foes of education, in that it keeps so large a portion of our population so poor that they cannot even avail themselves of the facilities offered by the public and other common schools, such as they are and where they exist, for dispelling the cloud of ignorance which hovers over and almost completely envelops this portion of our population.



“And, unless and until the truck system is destroyed, root and branch, all attempts to elevate in the scale of being those who live under its blasting influences are doomed to failure. All intellectual and moral life is founded on the physical, and until men are delivered from complete and incessant thralldom to the wants of mere physical existence, we should expect very little, if any, improvement in their intellectual or moral life.

“The easiest, speediest, and most effective way to deal with the truck system would be to pass a law preventing employers from recovering through the Law Courts of the colony any debt for merchandise advanced by them to their employés, and when such a law is passed, the new, real, and effective proclamation of emancipation will have been promulgated in the Bahamas. But however the reform may be brought about, we can heartily recommend the utterance of his Excellency Governor Blake, quoted hereunder, to the careful consideration of all. ‘I hope the labouring population will realize that until the “Truck” system has been changed for ready-money settlement of all their dealings, there is no hope of improvement in their condition, and that the beginning of every transaction by the contraction of a load of debt is a self-abandonment to voluntary slavery.’”

The condition of the labourer in the pine-apple

fields, almost the only fruit of the soil that is at present exported to any extent, is only so far better than that of the fisherman in that, as his work has to be done on land and not by sea, he cannot, like his fellow-sufferer, be kept continually under seaman's articles, but, except in one or two places where the people have been roused by a leading spirit, he is kept in a perpetual state of debt through the truck system.

In some cases the pine-apple cultivator is a peasant proprietor, in others he cultivates for the owner of the soil upon share. In both cases the Nassau merchant appears on the scene with his pack of rubbish on his back, and establishes a temporary store. Like "the flowers that bloom in the spring," he appears with the pine-apple season and disappears with it; save that instead of a flower he is a upas-tree, blasting and withering wherever he sets his accursed foot. Sometimes he appears in the character of owner of the soil, sometimes in that of agent. In the former case he contracts on his own behalf with the captains of the vessels that call for pine-apples; in the latter on behalf of the cultivators. In both cases the coloured peasantry have to suffer, for they are in his hands. He receives cash for the pine-apples from the captains, and pays them with his worthless goods. Where he is an agent he often has a twofold opportunity for robbery,



of which he generally—I do not say invariably—avails himself, by accepting a *douceur* from the captain to persuade his clients to sell at a less price than the captain has come prepared to give.

In one case that happened within my own knowledge, one of these light-fingered gentry accepted—or said he had accepted—bills for the amount due for pine-apples from an American firm, which bills were never met, and several old people died of starvation in consequence. When I arrived at the settlement in question, the haggard looks of the poor folk told their piteous story far more eloquently than the flood of words in which they poured it out to me. This conduct was absolutely inexcusable, for plenty of vessels call every year for pine-apples, and there is never the slightest necessity to ship a cargo without cash down, and I have little doubt the person in question was bribed to behave as he did.

The cultivator thus gets a low price for his pines, and gets it in goods which, as in the case of the fisherman, are invoiced to him at the price of real good stuff, but are of so poor a quality that they will not go far. The result is that long before the next pine-apple season, he is threatened with starvation, and mortgages his next year's crop to the Nassau merchant in return for an advance, and the relations of master and slave are established.



I am bound in common fairness to add that the native white Bahamian is not alone guilty, for when a black man gets into the position of an employer of labour he is usually quite as bad, but then it is but natural that he should imitate what he has been brought up to look upon as the superior race.

In fact there are very few among the working classes of the Bahamas who know what it is to handle cash at all, except domestic servants and skilled work-people; and we have already seen that in the out-islands even ship-builders do not always get paid in cash. Still as a general rule these two classes do get it.

Whilst on the subject of slavery, it may be as well to mention a case that, as far as I know, has never been brought to the notice of the British public, but which certainly ought to be known.

About eighteen years ago, one of the Nassau merchants acted as agent for the Dutch government, to hire labourers to go to Surinam on a contract of service analogous to that under which coolies are at present hired in many parts of the West Indies. A number of coloured Bahamians engaged themselves, and were shipped off. Only one has ever returned. He had the courage to put to sea in an open boat, and the luck to meet with a passing vessel which carried him to England,

whence he was sent back to Nassau. The tale he tells is sad to the last degree. The men had no sooner landed in Surinam than they were told they were slaves, put in irons, and subjected to all sorts of hardships. Some pined away and died, one poor fellow—who had been a school-master at home—cut his throat, unable to endure the shame and degradation of his position. Of the fate of a good many, the survivor can give no information, but I have heard my colleague express the opinion that some of them may be still alive. It is strange that I have forgotten the name of the poor fellow who survived, though I have often seen and talked to him, and he is as well known to everybody in Nassau as the streets of the city. He is now slightly deranged from the effects of his sufferings, but has lucid intervals, during which he can give an intelligent account of what he knows. To the credit of the people of Nassau be it said, he is kindly treated by everybody, and is commonly spoken of as “the poor man who was sold for a slave.” To the best of my knowledge and belief no communication has ever been received by the friends and relatives of any other individual who started on that ill-fated expedition.

To the best of my belief also, no action has ever been taken by the Imperial Government in this matter. Yet every one of these men was a

free-born British subject, as much entitled to the protection of our flag as the first nobleman in the land. Is it even now too late for something to be done for our fellow-subjects who may at this moment be languishing in slavery?

Shortly after my first circuit I had many conversations with Governor Blake upon the condition of the coloured race in the colony, and I am convinced that no man was ever more sincerely anxious to benefit them than he was, at that time.

In many other speeches, besides the one cited by the author of the articles in *The Freeman*, he pointed out to the people that as long as the Truck system existed, they were in slavery, as every man must be who is in debt.

Considering whom he was addressing, "slave" and "slavery" were dangerous words to use.

To the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of those who were emancipated in 1837, these words represent something tangible that they can understand and realize. The rest of the sentence, explaining the sense in which the words were used, would express nothing to their minds. And so it turned out, for if I have had it said to me once, I have had it said fifty times, "De gubner say we slaves."

In one of the conversations I had with him early in my career, Governor Blake said to me,



"It is very difficult to do anything practical for them as long as they have no public opinion and no press."

I do not mean to say that he intended me to take any action on these words, for I do not think he did, but I made up my mind that they should have a press, and with this object I first made acquaintance with Mr. James C. Smith, a light-coloured gentleman of integrity and ability. He represents the western district of the island of New Providence in the House of Assembly, and has for years devoted himself with singleness of purpose to the complete emancipation of his race. He had for a long time had in his head the idea of starting a paper to be devoted to the interests of the coloured people of the Bahamas. My conversations with him clinched the nail, and the first number of *The Freeman* appeared on the 8th of March, 1887, with the motto, "For God, and Right, and Queen, and Country."

Shortly before its appearance I mentioned the fact that it was coming out to Governor Blake, and he said he was "glad to hear it." No further allusion was ever made to the subject in any subsequent conversation between us.

The following letter appeared in *The Key of the Gulf*, an American newspaper published at Key West, Florida, on May 14th, 1887.

## A VOICE FROM THE BAHAMAS.

“EDITOR—*Key of the Gulf*:—

“Will you allow me, through your columns, to make an appeal to the Native Bahamian residents at Key West to assist me to keep going *The Freeman*, the little sheet published here, which you have already been good enough to notice?

“For the first time in the history of the Bahama Islands, an attempt has been made to issue a little sheet—scarcely big enough, indeed, to be called a newspaper—to be devoted solely to the interests of the coloured people.

“Our people are fond of Scripture; let me then assure them, this sheet will be like the ‘cloud not bigger than a man’s hand’ that arose out of the sea, covered the sky, and developed into a mighty tempest!

“It must seem strange indeed to you, sir, living in the strong light of day, that it should be difficult to get 400 subscribers at three cents a week each, to keep alive a paper born to so high a destiny! Yet such is the case. Printing is very dear, and we, the little handful of workers who support *The Freeman* are poor men who cannot afford to lose money for three whole years.

“Why three whole years? you will ask. I will endeavour to explain.

“Ever since the Emancipation in 1837, this

country has been dominated by a small gang of native whites and so-called whites, whose main object has been, since they could no longer keep the coloured people in slavery, to prevent their ever rising to be anything more than hewers of wood and drawers of water. They look upon them as dogs, and as dogs they treat them, not unkindly as a rule, but with the kindness they show their dogs, neither more nor less.

"In order to carry out their ideas of keeping down the coloured people, no effort worthy of the name has been made towards making education general, until quite of late years, and though things are improving rapidly, the standard of education is about 75 per cent. below that of the mother-country or of America.

"The native whites have been further assisted in their conspiracy by the geographical situation of the country, which is cut off from the rest of the British possessions in the West Indies. Whilst then the rest of the West India Islands have gradually become connected with the mother-country, with America, and with each other, by means of the electric telegraph and fast lines of steam-packets, the Bahama Islands have remained out in the cold, cut off from the rest. They have no telegraph, and their only steam communication is with America and a slow line of steamers that call at Nassau once a month,





on their road to and fro between Belize and England.

“In the age in which we live, a country without telegraphs or railways and only the occasional sight of a steamboat, must go right out of the race, and that is what we have been doing here. England knows nothing, and the rest of the West India Islands next to nothing about us, America knows us, but has no interest in improving us, and no power to do so if she had.

“Meantime the greater portion of the coloured people have vegetated with just enough to eat and drink and a place to sleep in, and the native whites have ruled the roast just as they pleased. Not that the coloured people are contented, they have a strong idea things are not all right, and that they are little better than slaves, but they neither see where the remedy lies nor know how to apply it. What they want are “lights, not rights.” Rights they have had in plenty for fifty years, but their rights have done them no good since they have no lights to teach them how to utilize those rights. Lights are coming to them in two ways, rapidly from Key West, and more slowly through the schools.

“The object of *The Freeman* is to supply them with a third light, which shall teach them how to use the other two to the best purpose. But they have everything to learn, and first of all they have to learn the value of having an organ of their own.

"At present they hardly realize what a newspaper is, and still less do they guess what it can do; and we calculate that at the slow rate at which things progress here, it will take three years to teach them the rudiments of this knowledge.

"If ever there was a time when a newspaper was needed to speak out and tell the truth it is the present. A cruel wrong is being perpetrated in our midst, and there is no voice save that of *The Freeman* to protest.

"In the course of last year our Governor, Mr. Blake, got us out an English magistrate, Mr. Powles; in February last, Mr. Powles convicted a white man named James Lightbourn of assaulting and beating his black female servant, a delicate young girl, and sentenced him to a month's imprisonment without the option of a fine. Mr. Powles had previously sent three or four black men to prison for assaults on women, and nobody objected, but because he has treated black and white alike, he has been subjected to every species of persecution by the native whites for the last two months, and to crown all, the House of Assembly have refused to pay Mr. Powles 250 dollars for his passage out and that of his wife, which had been promised him by the English Government at home.

"Whatever excuse is put forward by the House of Assembly for not paying that money, every one here knows the real reason is because he has sent a

white man to prison, instead of fining him, for striking a black girl.<sup>3</sup>

“In any other country but this the people would hold mass meetings, and petition the authorities to do justice to the man who has tried to do justice to them. Our people are not wanting in generosity, but they are so behind the world they do not understand these things.

“Will not the native Bahamians at Key West help us by sending subscriptions to keep alive *The Freeman*, and help it to grow into the dimensions of a respectable journal? Subscriptions may be sent to Mr. E. J. Flemming, at the office of the *Key of the Gulf*, Key West. The subscription will be at present, for at least one year, 2 dollars per annum for each copy, including postage.

“I must not conclude without stating clearly that I, the writer, am alone responsible for sending this letter, and for the sentiments it contains.”

“A VOICE FROM THE BAHAMAS.”

Nassau, N.P., Bahamas, April 21, 1887.

The accusation that the whites have not until recently done anything worth doing for the cause of education—although I believe it to be absolutely true—is a little difficult to prove, for it is undeniable that there has been a system of schools

<sup>3</sup> The story of this case is fully related in the Appendix to this book.



and school inspection at work for forty years, which looks very well on paper. But if the proof of the pudding be in the eating, it has proved a most deadly failure, for—taking the poorer classes of the colony as a whole—there are not more than 5 per cent. of them of the age of twenty-one years and upwards that can read and write.

The first real spurt to education was given by Governor Robinson, and it is now certainly going ahead.

I am happy to hear *The Freeman* is also now going ahead, and has become a respectable-sized newspaper, but the treatment it received during the interregnum between the departure of Governor Blake and the arrival of Sir Ambrose Shea is indicative of the sort of treatment anything like the public expression of opinion on the part of the coloured population is likely to meet with at the hands of the native whites. During this time the Government was administered by the Colonial Secretary. *The Freeman* had always been sent to the Government House every week as it appeared, and after Governor Blake's departure it was sent as usual. The administrator simply declined to receive it. Yet this very man, as we shall see almost immediately, dared thirty years ago to do justice in the face of fearful odds and suffered for it. *Quantum mutatus ab illo.*

A case brought to my notice by Professor

Brooks of Baltimore I hardly know whether to class under the head of the "Truck system," or to call by an uglier name. The professor being engaged during the winter of 1886-7 in a scientific examination of the sea-water, hired a coloured workman through the agency of a white Nassau merchant. The merchant was to pay the man, who was to receive 1*l.* a week. Subsequently Professor Brooks discovered that the merchant was paying the man 6*s.* a week and pocketing 14*s.*! The professor immediately paid the man himself, and the merchant threatened him with an action for damages.

The merchant in question belongs to a powerful family, and is connected either by blood or marriage with whatever there is of influence or money in the town of Nassau. Incredible as it must appear, I have little doubt that had he brought an action against Professor Brooks in the Court of Common Pleas, he would have succeeded, as the judge would have been afraid to offend so influential a connection.

And this story leads naturally on to the question whether justice is equally administered between black and white. Of course it will be alleged against me that I am unfairly prejudiced. Of that I am ready to take my chance, but I unhesitatingly assert that even-handed justice between black and white is all but unknown in the



Bahamas. Neither will it ever become a general rule as long as a single judicial office remains in the hands of a native white. How can it be otherwise? All the native whites are connected with each other, and the higher officers are so badly paid that independence is all but an impossibility even where men are actuated by high motives. God forbid that I should deny that in Nassau, as elsewhere, there are many men and women with good instincts, but is not human nature the same all the world over? A man has a miserable salary and no retiring pension; perhaps he has a family to support? He lives in a small place where he is connected with every one of the dominant race, a narrow-minded, overbearing clique, who imagine themselves to be a species of untitled aristocracy; a sort of thirty tyrants of Athens; an Oligarchy irresponsible save to itself. All his hopes of any active assistance outside his official salary, of any comfortable social intercourse, of an endurable existence in fact, depend upon his relations with these people! In heaven's name how can he equal justice unless he be a man cast in an iron mould?

The white natives are very fond of citing the case of the present Colonial Secretary, who thirty years ago suffered severely for doing equal justice between black and white. At that time he was police magistrate, and had to convict and fine his father-in-law for assaulting a black boatman. His



father-in-law immediately turned him out of doors, and persecuted him in every way for the rest of his life. Whilst sympathizing with him to the fullest extent, it must be evident that, after all, he had only kept the oath he took on taking office, a thing every British judge or magistrate is supposed to do as a matter of course. The treatment he received at the hands of his father-in-law only shows what any member of the clique must expect, who dares to oppose the will of the rest, and how much moral courage a man requires to do his duty against such odds.

The above is the only case the native whites ever cite on their side of the question. The cases on the other side are endless; I will instance a few that have happened quite of late years.

Some little time ago a member of the clique was charged before the sitting magistrate with tying a black boy to a tree and beating him nearly to death. The doctor in charge of the asylum heard the child's shrieks, and had he not sent one of the asylum nurses over to interfere, it is extremely probable that the child would have been killed. For this offence the accused was fined 50s., which was thought a very severe punishment. Can any one doubt that if he had been a black man he would either have been sent to prison without the option of a fine or else committed for trial?

Shortly after my arrival an instance occurred

which showed me how impossible it was for one of these natives to do justice. My colleague was in charge of the Police Court, and I was standing by talking to him, when a girl named Rosa Poictier came in to apply for a summons against one of the principal men in Nassau and a member of the Executive Council, for assaulting her and turning her out of doors without paying her wages, her offence being that she insisted on wearing a piece of green ribbon, the badge at that time of those who supported Governor Blake. The girl's story may have been true or false, I cannot tell, but at any rate she was entitled to be heard. But my colleague sent her off to the Civil Court to bring an action for wages, ignoring the charge of assault altogether! He did not dare do otherwise!

Some time ago at Harbour Island, the second place in the Bahamas in importance, five coloured men, named Israel Lowe, John D. Lowe, David Tynes, William Alfred Johnson, and Joseph Whyly, determined to test the right of the authorities of the Methodist Church to prevent a coloured man from entering the chapel by the same door as a white man. With this view they walked quietly in at the white man's door and up the aisle. The service was discontinued until they were turned out, and prosecuted the next day before the resident justice who convicted them of brawling, and fined them 20s. each, with the

alternative of imprisonment. And yet the men so treated had contributed both by money and manual labour to the construction of this chapel.

Whilst I was sitting in the Police Court at Nassau in the early part of 1887, a case occurred showing the ideas prevailing in the colony on the subject of equal rights. Mr. George Bosfield, an educated coloured gentleman, was summoned before me for violating an Act of Parliament, compelling houses, within the limits of the city, to be built in a certain way. Being possessed of a considerable amount of gumption, Mr. Bosfield filed informations against seventeen leading white men for violations of the Act, whom acting Police-Inspector Crawford was compelled to summon. After repeated applications for adjournment, the summonses were withdrawn, and the House of Assembly repealed the Act! How different would the case have been had these seventeen been coloured instead of white!

Not long ago a certain local Attorney was appointed acting magistrate. Some few years before there had been an application to strike this person off the rolls for gross professional misconduct; subsequently, when Acting Inspector of Schools, he had misappropriated public funds, and would no doubt have been prosecuted had he been a coloured man. Being a white man, and related to some of the most influential members of the



clique, he was allowed to repay the money in instalments.

In two cases in which white men prosecuted black for larceny, there being no evidence whatever to support a conviction, this person convicted and inflicted a nominal fine to prevent an action being brought against the prosecutor!

My own experience of the result of trying to do equal justice between man and man is related in the Appendix.

About two years ago a white man named Sands shot a black policeman. Sands was undoubtedly mad, and was acquitted on that ground. The way the whites talked of this habitually was, "that the man was only a nigger, and it was a pity a few more were not shot."<sup>4</sup>

I extract the following from a letter sent me by an intelligent coloured man :—

"The family alliance is too great, its ramifications extend throughout every branch of the

<sup>4</sup> I had a striking instance one day of the way in which the native Bahamian white looks down upon the coloured race. I was standing in the street in Nassau talking to a young native white, as good-hearted a fellow as ever lived, when a feeble old negress, who was passing, dropped the bundle she was carrying and stooped, evidently with great difficulty, to pick it up. Obeying an instinct, which would have been just as strong in him had she been white, however poor and miserable, I went to her assistance. But she was only a negress, and I shall never forget the look of mingled astonishment and contempt with which he watched me.

Government, Executive, Legislative, Judicial, and Revenual. There is no hope for us except through the removal of the present holders of office.

“For many years the press of the colony has obstinately refused to publish our grievances, and the people are cowed down, afraid to make any public lawful demonstration or stand up for their rights, liberties, and privileges, as they are deterred by the oft-repeated threat of reading the Riot Act, and bayoneting the people by the soldiers. The dominant minority have the ear of the Government at home, and make use of their influence and prestige to crush and oppress us. We have no chance in the Halls of Justice, if our opponent be a member of the clique. In the public service we are superseded by the sons and younger brothers of powerful members of it, and our services, though long and faithful, are ignored.

“For us as a people, there is no hope, unless the present higher officials—who are either connected with the clique or else in debt to them—are removed, and their places filled by men from England. Unless we get help and aid from Great Britain, our condition will soon become unbearable!”

A member of the New York Yacht Club, who knows the Bahamas thoroughly, once said to me, “I was here the day Sands was arrested, and I

never shall forget it as long as I live! No one who saw that crowd could doubt there was an undercurrent of race-hatred with which the White Conchs will have to reckon sooner or later." There was an American lady staying at the hotel last winter, who made it her business to get at the bottom of the coloured people's thoughts and feelings. She went out sailing every day with the same boatman, and completely gained his confidence. One day he said to her, "If it wasn't for the soldiers, we would cut the throats of every white Conch in Nassau."

I am told that shortly before I left, Jamaica men were going about telling the people the history of the Jamaica outbreak in Governor Eyre's time, and one of them even went the length of saying, "If you burn down Bay Street, the whites haven't got a saviour among them. In Jamaica they had lots of saviours, but we burnt the town." This, my informant explains to me, meant that whereas in Jamaica, white and coloured people held property side by side; Bay Street, which is the principal business street in Nassau, belongs entirely to the white merchants.

Would that my pen might have power enough to impress upon the Colonial Office the necessity of being wise in time, and not lightly setting aside a petition for a Royal Commission if it should happen that one is sent in with that object.



These people know enough of the history of Jamaica to know that the blacks were oppressed there ; that they broke out under Governor Eyre, and that, though Gordon was hung, a Royal Commission was sent out, and the coloured people have been better off ever since.

In fact I am told on all hands that not only in Jamaica, but throughout the West Indies, the coloured people are a great deal too well off, and it is common to say they are unbearable. Whether this be true or false, I have no means of knowing. I do know what their condition is in the Bahama Islands, I know that it is a disgrace to the British flag, and above all I know that I have promised them to do my best to bring their wrongs before the British public.

If the struggle for emancipation fifty years ago was really a struggle for a principle and not merely a struggle to get rid of an ugly-sounding name, if the soil that produced a Granville Sharp, a Wilberforce, and a Clarkson, still bears fruit of a like kind, they ought not to cry to England for assistance in vain. For never was there a time when the maxim that " a black man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect," was more firmly believed in or more persistently acted on, than it was in the year of Jubilee in the Bahama Islands.

For this state of things I believe there are two

remedies.<sup>5</sup> Let England persuade the United States to take over the country; or, failing that, at once turn it into a Crown Colony. In the first case the independent assembly would disappear, and the country would become "Bahama County, Florida," or "South Carolina," to which state it belonged before the separation from England. It would send one, or at the outside two, deputies to the State legislature, one good Yankee firm would eat up all the little Nassau hucksters without stopping to take breath; the interests of the place as a winter sanatorium would be pushed, and the whole condition of things transformed in an incredibly short space of time.

As an Englishman of course I dismiss the idea of annexation to America as not to be entertained, but I cannot shut my eyes to the advantages that would accrue to the country from it, and if a colony is worth keeping under the English flag,

<sup>5</sup> "I do not mean to say that a West Indian Confederation might not be as effectual a remedy as either of the other two. It is not a question on which I feel myself competent to form an opinion as yet, and my mind is perfectly open to conviction. But is it not a fact that the curse of isolation has rested so long on this unhappy colony, that it has never yet been included in any scheme of West Indian Confederation? Of two things, however, I am certain. First, that nothing can be worse for it than its present constitution. Secondly, that no scheme will be of any benefit to it that will not eliminate the native white element from any share in the government of the colony for some time at least.

England should do her duty by it, and that she certainly does not do in the case of the Bahama Islands.

The coloured people would not sever their connection with this country on any consideration. They associate England, and especially Queen Victoria, with emancipation, and are intensely loyal, because they are a grateful people, though their enemies are for ever proclaiming the contrary. Their faith in the Queen is unbounded, they call her "The good missus," and believe firmly that if she only knew their troubles, they would be redressed at once.

It is of course not easy to change the constitution of a colony,<sup>6</sup> but it would be very easy for England to promote some of the present holders of office, who are men of ability and really good instincts, and who, in another colony away from the ties of family, would be good and useful servants to the State. Where they are it is next to impossible for them to do their duty.

But in order to fill their places with really good men from England, it will be necessary to increase the salaries sufficiently to make it worth the while of men who are worth having to take the places.

A very small modicum of the subsidy of which

It might have been done at the time of the Bank failure in 1885.



the country was unfairly deprived in 1880 would do this ; at present the salaries in this colony are a disgrace to the Imperial Government.

But in any case, if I have not grossly exaggerated the state of the country, I have made out a case for a Royal Commission which ought to be sent out as soon as possible. In order to be effective it should sit with closed doors and be armed with large powers enabling it to protect all persons giving evidence before it, and to punish severely anything like intimidation and boycotting of witnesses. Neither should it confine its operations to Nassau, but should visit every one of the out-islands and see the state of things for itself.

If this were done, there might be some hope of wiping out this blot on the Imperial escutcheon.

## CHAPTER V.

Nassau society—The upper crust—Children of Ham—Social conservatism—Indifference to the outer world—The nobles of the land—Accent and pronunciation—“Boa-constrictor meal”—Afternoon visits—Scandal—Sterling good qualities—Dancing—Hospitality—Difficulties as to food—Government House etiquette—Opening of the Houses—Debate in the Lower House.

NASSAU Society may be divided into “the Upper Upper ten,” eligible for invitation to Government House on all occasions, the “lower Upper ten,” only invited on state occasions; the “respectable middle class,” including everybody who does not go to Government House, but is acknowledged as white, and the “lower classes,” including everybody who is admittedly coloured. Some of the last are occasionally invited to Government House, but the Conchs include them among “the lower classes” all the same.

Although there is plenty of pure unspotted white blood scattered throughout the Bahamas, a good deal of that of the upper crust of Nassau Society is decidedly mixed, and in truth many of the so-called white families owe their right to that

title to an old statute which enacts that every person who is more than three degrees removed from the African shall rank as white. Though the skins of most of them are fair enough to pass for pure white anywhere in Europe, their African blood would at once be detected by any southerner or West Indian.

The position of people—such as these in the southern states—is well recognized. There, one drop of black blood stamps a man or woman as “a child of Ham,” and no amount of whitewashing will give one of them the *entrée* to the society of pure whites, or even admission to that part of a steamboat on which pure whites are travelling. On the other hand they will not associate with any one a shade darker than themselves, so they live and die a race apart.

If the southerners are narrow-minded on this point, at least they are logical. They object to any risk of intermarriage with a “child of Ham,” however slight his or her taint may be, and for the purpose of exclusion from white society one drop of black blood is as effective as ten thousand.

Not so in Nassau. There, unless you are an expert in human hybridism, you never can tell whether the fair-faced lady or gentleman to whom you are talking is pure white, or what Mr. Whistler might call an arrangement in white and brown.



If this meant that the Conch was more liberal in his ideas than the southerner, and admitted the universal brotherhood of the human family, not merely in theory but in practice, it would be a matter for congratulation. But it is nothing of the kind. Let a man who is admittedly coloured, presume to address a lady belonging to one of these *so-called* white families, on anything like equal terms, and he will soon find himself looked down upon from a pinnacle only attainable by a very light coloured person, when dealing with one the stream of whose coloured blood is somewhat thicker than his own. The southerner contents himself with simply declining any social intercourse with persons of coloured blood. The whitewashed Conch looks upon his darker brother as a dog, and lets him know he does so.

In Nassau, any one who passes for white, though he may be unable to converse intelligently on any rational topic outside his business, is considered fit to sit down to table with any lady, whilst his next-door neighbour, well read, intelligent, and an agreeable companion, is tabooed because he is considered to belong to the coloured race. Yet the latter is often scarcely a shade darker than the former, and the former's black ancestor is well remembered by many persons still alive.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an article in the American magazine, *The Century*, I think for February, 1887, by a Mr. Church, one of the Ameri-

Where the line that separates the white man, *so-called*, from the coloured, is drawn in Nassau, must ever remain a mystery to the uninitiated stranger. If of a poetical turn, he might parody a well-known epigram anent this state of things :

“ God bless the white folks one and all, though hark ye,  
 I see no harm in blessing too the darky !  
 But which the darky is and which the white !  
 God bless us all ! That is beyond me quite ! ”

can winter visitors to Nassau, the writer speaks of the utter absence of race prejudice in Nassau. How little did he realize that the people he met in society and took for coloured, imagined themselves to be white ! He also speaks of a high official, a full-blooded African, who is received everywhere. How little did he know the true position held by this gentleman in Nassau society ! As long as he is content to confine his acquaintance with the white ladies to a salute when he happens to meet them in the street, and a very occasional morning call ; as long as he is content to go to Government House on state occasions and hang about the anteroom and piazza, without presuming to attempt to dance, the white Conch gentlemen are willing to use his pleasant piazza as a sort of club, and the Conch ladies are willing to say with a patronizing air, “ Oh, yes, Mr. — is certainly a gentleman ; he knows his place so well.” Yet he is one of the best fellows I ever met, be his colour what it may. Another coloured gentleman “ does not know his place,” and it is the fashion to cite him as an instance of how impossible it is to show any civility to the coloured race. This gentleman once went to a ball at Government House, and actually asked the governor’s sister to dance. For this awful act of insolence he is denounced in most uncompromising terms. Yet he is intellectually, morally, and in point of education the superior of any white Conch I ever met, to say nothing of the fact that he is the legitimate son of an Englishman, and three parts white

An amusing anecdote is told of how a leading white citizen of Nassau once had his pride humbled in the Southern States. Shortly before the War of Secession broke out, this gentleman, who, with the exception of a possibly suspicious curl in his hair, unnoticeable by the ordinary European eye, might belong to the purest Anglo-Saxon type—and for aught I know to the contrary he does—went to Charleston on business. No sooner had he landed than he was at once suspected by the wily southerner of being “a child of Ham,” because he came from Nassau, and promptly popped into gaol, to his intense astonishment and annoyance.

In answer to his inquiry as to what offence he had committed, and what excuse they had to offer for putting a free-born British subject into durance vile, he was informed that he had done nothing, but that they had had a good many “persons of his colour coming around that way of late, preaching anti-slavery doctrines, and didn’t feel inclined to trust any more.” Protests were of no avail. He was kindly treated, but kept under safe custody, till a vessel could be found to carry him back from whence he came.

In most small places society is fairly opinionated, but the upper crust of Nassau is more than usually so. If any one ventures to suggest an innovation, he is at once told “it has never been



the custom in Nassau," against which form of clôture there is no appeal.

On one point only the Conchs are wanting in self-confidence. They are sometimes haunted with a suspicion that the local educational establishments may leave something to be desired, and when they can afford it, they send their children to America or England to be educated. But as for society, no doubt ever disturbs their minds. The upper circle of Nassau is their *summum bonum* of social perfection, their earthly "Nirvana!"

It is a matter of no moment to them that they have neither railways nor telegraphs; that their streets are not lighted on the darkest night; that they are deficient in most of the comforts of modern life; and that, save for the universal use of lucifer-matches and the occasional visit of a steamboat, they have scarcely anything that was not available to their ancestors one hundred years ago.

As for the outer world, its politics, manners, and customs, the majority seem to trouble themselves but very little about them.

If London is a metropolitan city, so is Nassau. Has it not its Governor, its army of eighty soldiers, its Privy Council, and its House of Lords and Commons? For, incredible as it may seem, the Conchs really do believe that the members of their "Upper House" belong in some extra-

ordinary and undefined way to the nobility of the Empire. One day a gentleman high in official life spoke to me of the Attorney-General as "the first *commoner* in the colony," and on my asking him what he meant, explained that he was "only speaker of the House of Commons, and not a member of the House of Lords."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> When Mr. Crawford, acting inspector of police, was elevated to the Upper House, he was presented with the following congratulatory address. It may be all very well to say it emanates from a body of ignorant coloured policemen. It was the upper crust that put the idea of the nobility of the Upper House into their heads!

"NASSAU POLICE BARRACKS,

"March 4th, 1887.

"*The Honourable R. C. Crawford,*

"DEAR SIR,

"We, the undersigned, and members of the police force, do feel it a pleasure gratifying to us, from the high esteem which we bear towards you as our chief officer, to tender you our high congratulations, and to the highest degree for the honour conferred on you by her Majesty the Queen, through his Excellency the governor, to a seat among the nobles of this colony.

"We also return many thanks to his Excellency for recommending you to such honour. His Excellency, we may truly say, as governor, has been, and is to us, as Joseph was to the Israelites, whose keen eyes are always on the alert for the delimitation of those under his care.

"We now commend you to the care of the Almighty, who we assure you can keep and direct you in the right path, so that you may be able to carry out all affairs entrusted to your care discreetly and satisfactorily.

"In conclusion, sir, we hope that whilst you are elevated to a temporal seat, that yourself and family may at the end of time

The Conchs are more English than American in thought and feeling, but they speak with a perfervid Yankee twang, that would make a thorough-bred down-easter open his eyes with amazement, and are intensely American in their mode of expressing themselves. They "fix" everything, are perpetually "guessing" and "calculating," substitute "all the time" for "always," "two weeks" for "a fortnight," talk of having "quite a good time," and commonly use such expressions as, "Why certainly," "hurry up," "real nice," *et hoc genus omne*. "Papa" becomes "*Pappa*," and "mamma" is similarly pronounced, whilst in some words they affect a drawl on the penultimate syllable, where it ought to be short, as "Piarzer" for "Piazza."

The Conch conventional dinner-time is at 3 p.m., a most unreasonable hour in a climate where eating anything but ice or fruit during the heat of the day is rather a trouble than a pleasure. This 3 o'clock dinner, which a friend has dubbed "*the boa-constrictor meal*," is an odious ordeal, but it is the offspring of circumstances. Except in one or two of the very best houses, all the servants in the colony go home to sleep, leaving their

be also elevated to the heavenly seat which will never be vacated, nor any one will dare to envy.

" We remain, dear sir,  
" Your respectful and obedient servants.



masters and mistresses to shift for themselves as best they can from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

The dinner-hour being at 3 p.m., it follows not unnaturally in a country where the sun sets on the longest day about 6.40 and on the shortest an hour earlier, that the time for paying formal afternoon visits should be from four to six.

An afternoon call at Nassau is a very serious affair, and if you wish to be considered to belong to the *crème de la crème*, there are certain formalities you must never omit. No matter whether the family on whom you are calling are at home or not, you must never fail to send in your card. This is *de rigueur*, and although the servant knows perfectly well who is at the door, and you may be on fairly intimate terms with your hosts, she always appears with a tray in her hand, ready to receive the inevitable pasteboard. If you object to oblige her, and propose merely sending in your name, she stares at you with that inquiring expression of solemn disapproval peculiar to the coloured people when they can't quite make you out. In some houses the sitting-room opens right on to the *piazza*, and the lady of the house may chance to open the door herself. When this happens, the farce of card delivery should be played, not as a *Lever du rideau*, but as an *Entr'acte*; you should rise in the middle of your

call and place your cards on the table, whilst your hostess assumes an air of unconsciousness.

Although the thermometer may be at 98° in the shade, it is the fashion for the gentlemen to put on a tall black hat and black coat to pay a formal afternoon call, and Englishmen who venture to assume a garb more suitable to a tropical climate are commented on for their want of good manners.

Conversation on these occasions is apt to be limited. The upper crust does not read much, and has not often the chance of seeing what is going on in the world; therefore, when the small talk about dress, domestic matters, and local topics is exhausted there is little to fall back upon. At certain seasons there is the weather, and a favourite topic of conversation is the iniquities of the coloured servants, and the inferiority of the coloured race in general. The upper crust is fairly fond of scandal, but an outsider should take care how he allows himself to launch out in this direction until he is quite *au fait* of the various ramifications of relationship, and exact amount of brotherly love existing amongst his acquaintance. Whilst a novice, he will do well to confine himself—if he goes into the scandal line of business at all—to the American visitors, of whom there are always plenty at the hotel in the winter time, and about whom he

may say what he pleases with safety. But he should never forget that whatever he says will be carefully noted and busily canvassed by all mutual friends within the succeeding forty-eight hours. For Nassau scandal is chiefly remarkable for the rapidity with which it spreads, and the absolute certainty you may always feel that it has no foundation in fact. Malicious it is not, as a rule, and, as far as my experience went,—with the exception of some ladies who were not natives at all—all the worst scandal-mongers belonged to the male sex.

Sometimes unavoidable complications arise, as when one family happens to call and find another in possession of the field with whom it is not on speaking terms, and there is rarely a time when one or two of the first families are not in this amiable frame of mind towards each other.

The upper crust of Nassau has, as a rule, very little sense of humour, therefore jokes have been voted ill-bred. Venture on one before a Conch lady, and she will make a painstaking and conscientious mental effort to discover whether she ought to laugh or not. If her inner consciousness answers this question in the affirmative, she will venture on a smile; if she is in doubt, she will probably compromise the matter by exclaiming, "Oh my!"

This is a favourite expression with them on all



occasions. If they hear a friend has bought a new dress or is going to be married, they exclaim, "Oh my!" or if the friend has died or had his house burnt down, they exclaim, "Oh my!" all the same.

Having said this much in their disparagement, it is but fair to add that no people could be more free from false shame than the upper crust of Nassau society. Nobody is looked down upon because he is poor, neither are the ladies the least ashamed of acknowledging that they make their own dresses, assist in their households, or try to earn their own living. These are sterling qualities, and certainly weigh heavily in the scale against their many little social absurdities and prejudices.

Their favourite amusement is dancing, and their devotion to Terpsichore is positively abnormal, considering the heat of the climate, which renders physical exertion more or less trying at the best of times.

In fact the upper crust rarely unbend except at a dance. Then dignity is laid aside for the nonce, and Governor, Commander-in-chief, Privy Councillors, Nobles, and Commoners, mingle with reckless youngsters in one wild and giddy whirl. Proh Sudor!

There is not much of the poetry of motion about their dancing, but unquestionably there is

a great deal of go. But they are wedded to their own style, and when an English lady, who was particularly graceful in her movements, ventured to suggest one or two improvements, she was not thanked.

The Conchs are given to hospitality, and formerly dinner-parties were, I believe, quite common, but the bank failure of 1885 has so impoverished the country that they are now of rare occurrence. Still, whenever one of the upper crust entertains, he does so on the most lavish scale.

The wine is always of the best, the food the best that can be got, but the class of food one has to live on at Nassau now-a-days is not appetizing, and the subject is neither savoury nor pleasant. Beef is not easy to get, and, unless brought on ice from the States, uneatable. Fish is plentiful, but not nice eating. Fowls are cheap in one sense and very dear in another, for when first bought they have no flesh on their bones; and if you try to fat them, they either die of old age before the process is completed, or else become so tough that you can't get your teeth through them. Good turkeys I have occasionally met with, and I need not say turtle is always nice, but these things are not to be got every day. The water abounds with a delicious cray-fish, but for some reason or other the upper crust think it bad

form to eat them, and will pay a large sum to make a salad of tinned salmon, when the materials for an excellent mayonnaise of lobster are to be had for next to nothing. Eggs are about the size of English pigeons' eggs and very dear, and cows' milk is 8*d.* a quart.

One dish there is which is, I believe, peculiar to Nassau, and that is a turtle baked in its own shell—which serves for a dish—and covered over with a light crust. It is an excellent dish, and it would be well worth the while of some of our European restaurateurs to send a special artist to Nassau to learn the secret, which is at present, I am informed, in the possession of only a few coloured women, chief of whom is one Rebecca Maclean. This may or may not be true, but, after the manner of Herodotus, I do but record what I have been told.

It is among the special charms of the winter season that, as nearly all the provisions at the Hotel are brought once a fortnight from New York and kept on ice, a good meal may be secured at any time by paying for it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It was with great astonishment that I read of the numerous delicacies Mr. Froude met with during his travels in the West Indies. The baked turtle was the only one I ever met with in the Bahamas. But this is only another proof of a proposition as to which I have quite made up my mind, viz., that a man may spend his life in the Bahamas without having the least



The Bahamas being a very small Colonial Government, to which the Imperial authorities are wont to send the untried to test their virgin armour, the etiquette adopted at Government House is usually of an unostentatious character.

Tradition, however, tells of a certain Governor who saw fit to assume the etiquette of the Vice-Regal Court of Dublin. In his time, a call or a dinner-party was either awful or comic, according to the sense of humour of the visitor. His wife blossomed suddenly into "Her Excellency," and all public announcements about them, instead of running in the usual form, "His Excellency the Governor and Mrs.——" were ordered to run, "Their Excellencies the Governor and Mrs. ——" Invitations ran, "The Private Secretary is directed by their Excellencies the Governor and Mrs. —— to request the pleasure of, &c." All the rest was in the same style! At a dinner-party the guests were received by the Private Secretary, "Their Excellencies" never coming in till everybody had arrived, when they sailed in and shook hands all round with the guests, who were expected to stand at attention during the performance. This course of conduct gave great offence to Nassau society, for which I am sure no one will feel inclined to blame it.

idea what life in the rest of the West Indies is like. And I dare say the converse of the proposition is equally true.

For my part I never heard the Conchs talk of this mimic Court—which they not unfrequently did—without being reminded of an American gentleman I came across at Mentone in 1876, who said he had dined with nearly every crowned head in Europe, but never knew what etiquette was until he dined with the Prince of Monaco!

The opening of the Houses of Assembly is a great day for Nassau, but the ceremony is rather trying to one's sense of humour. One tries to behave with decency and look impressed, but it is very difficult to help laughing.

Even funnier is a meeting of the Lower House, or 'ouse as some of its members call it. Every member is allowed to speak twice on the same matter, and he generally does. The speeches are often remarkable for an amount of unconscious humour that is truly delicious. At one meeting of this august body I heard a member make an ingenuous confession that I think can never have been surpassed outside the walls of the Palace of Truth. He was speaking to a Bill before the House to prohibit the employment of children under the age of twelve in the Sponge Fisheries. After dilating for some time upon the duty of preserving these young lambs from corruption, and saying over and over again that every worldly interest ought to be as nothing in comparison to it, he concluded thus :—" And besides, gentlemen,

I do not think this Bill will injure the Sponge trade. If I thought it was likely to prove bad for trade, of course I would vote against it."

The honourable member sat down amidst much laughter, to his very great amazement.



## CHAPTER VI.

The lower crust of Nassau society—Obligations to Mr. Drysdale—Coloured settlements—Soil of New Providence—Is the negro really lazy?—Question of feeding—Thoughts on emancipation—Market weights and measures—Food of the people—Nassau pigs—Unhealthy nature of negro settlements—Duty of Imperial Government—Inner life—Manners and customs—Dance-houses—Fire dances—Houses of the coloured people—Nassau dogs and cocks—Grog-shops—Costume—boots and shoes—Nassau negro-logy—Swearing—Names—Money—African thatch—Shouter hymns—Negro proverbs—Mr. Drysdale's "Evening at Morley's"—Mr. Drysdale on the lower crust.

IN this and the following chapter I have borrowed considerably from "In Sunny Lands" (Harper Brothers, New York), by Mr. William Drysdale, of *The New York Times*.<sup>1</sup>

I say this here, for I have always held that the

<sup>1</sup> It is almost impossible for me to state exactly the extent to which I am indebted in these two chapters to this writer. Wherever I have copied from him I have used inverted commas, and noted the fact, but there are other places where I have imbibed his spirit and clothed it with my own matter. How often I have done so is not now quite clear even to myself.

practice of acknowledging one's obligations only in a preface, savours strongly of hypocrisy. For, whilst on the one hand, it satisfies the conscience of the plagiarist, on the other, as few general readers ever read prefaces, it does but little good by way of advertisement to the author from whom he has borrowed.

In truth there are many parts of the island of New Providence into which I never penetrated, and which yet are well known to many casual visitors to Nassau. This was partly because so many hours of my day were consumed by work that I was too tired to move about during the remainder of it, and partly because I never guessed my stay would be so short, and in Lat. 25° one soon gets into the way of never doing to-day anything one can conveniently put off till to-morrow. On the other hand, few people who have spent all their lives in the colony know as much about the out-islands of the Bahama group as I do.

I have already said that the coloured population lives quite apart from the white, in suburbs of the city, commonly called settlements. The principal of these is Grant's Town, besides which there are Bain Town, De Lancey Town, the Eastern and Western Settlements, familiarly spoken of as "to the East'ard and to the West'ard," and others, as Fox Hills and Adelaide. The two latter are at some

distance from Nassau, and were originally settled by native Africans rescued from slavers.<sup>2</sup>

Every shanty in the coloured settlements has its own garden, called a yard, sometimes two or three acres in extent, filled with trees, flowers, vegetables, and fruit. In fact, there is scarcely one of the owners of these yards that could not grow cotton, sugar, coffee, spice, and, for the matter of that, tobacco as well.

“The whole island is a mass of stone of the coral limestone order. But this rock is soft, and trees and plants grow in it almost as well as in earth. There is hardly a bare spot in the whole island, except where it has been cleared. In some places are large tracts of pine woods; in others the ground is hidden by denses masses of a sort of chapparal, growing ten or twelve feet high, and nobody would suspect the foundation. There is a foot or two of soil in some places that has come from nobody knows where. But the usual process of making a garden is to break an acre or so of the rock with a sledge or crowbar, mash it up fine, and mix in enough earth to prevent the rock from hardening again. In this compound anything under the sun will grow, and grow luxu-

<sup>2</sup> I believe the last occasion on which a cargo of slaves was rescued by our men-of-war and landed at Nassau was about twenty-five years ago. They were 300 in number, and a great part of them are still alive.



riantly. A man who takes this much trouble to make a garden can have green peas and fresh lettuce, and all the other vegetables on his table every day in the year. There is no season when vegetation does not flourish, and when the garden is once made, it is always there. Men go out with crowbars and set cocoanut-trees, and in a few years they are tall and beautiful, and bear a cocoanut (so the saying goes) for every day in the year. There is nourishment for plants in the material of the rock. Where this coral limestone rock came from is a question that scientific people can settle to suit themselves. It makes no difference where it came from, it is here, and is very useful. Nearly all the houses are built of it. You have only to saw down into the quarries to get beautiful big blocks of it that make handsome and substantial houses. The blocks harden by exposure to the air, and in this climate soon become as durable as granite. Out of the rock, too, water-tanks are built to catch rain-water. Every house has its tank. There are springs and wells, but I believe the rain-water is considered healthier to drink."

The above is Mr. Drysdale's description of the soil of the island of New Providence, and he ought to know what he is talking about, for he took a good-sized place just outside Nassau and went in for gardening on a considerable scale.

But he does not mention the fact that at the time of the abolition of slavery, New Providence was one vast plantation, where, in this same limestone rock soil, coffee, sugar, and cotton were produced at a considerable profit. All these plantations are now covered with thick bush. It is the fashion to say it is impossible to produce anything by free negro labour, but perhaps if the Imperial Government would establish an agricultural college and give the coloured race in the Bahamas a fair chance, we might see a different state of things.

Mr. James C. Smith once asked me to come with him and see what "a lazy nigger could do with a bit of coral rock." He took me to visit one David Patten, a full-blooded African, who has created a farm of a few acres, on which he successfully cultivates a great variety of things. But then he has been a well-to-do and well-fed man for years, and there is more in this question of feeding the African than appears at first sight. It is all very well to call him lazy, but he is by nature a large eater, and unless he gets a considerable quantity of food he cannot work. The present race are poorly fed, and their condition in this respect is not likely to improve. The casual observer imagines them to be well-to-do, because in the Bahamas the negro can exist, and laugh and sing and dance and appear contented and happy

and jolly on very little. This is due partly to the genial temperature of the islands, partly to an inordinate power of sleep which he possesses, and which makes up to him for a great deal. In the slave days the food given to the slaves was no doubt coarse in quality, but they had as much as they could eat, and got it regularly, and no one can compare the darkies born in slavery, or even those born shortly after that time, with the present race, without seeing at once that the latter are physically inferior in every respect. Unfortunately too, whilst the quality is depreciated, the quantity increases in a most unhealthy proportion. It is strange that the great and good men who fought the battle of emancipation could not see that, unless they were prepared to leave it as a sacred charge to their descendants to watch over and protect the coloured race for fifty years at least, they had better have left them as they were. As it was, they merely abandoned them to the tender mercies of a race, who cared not whether they lived or died, except for what they could get out of them, who began by owing them a grudge for being free at all, and were determined, if they could prevent it, that the emancipated slaves and their descendants should never rise to be anything higher than hewers of wood and drawers of water.

At present there are but few large producers,



and few people bring more than very small quantities of stuff to market at a time. If one strolls towards Grant's Town in the early morning, one is sure to meet numbers of coloured women with large trays on their heads, but generally nearly empty. Now and then you may meet one with her tray piled high with bananas, oranges, vegetables and other things, all laid neatly out in layers, but such wealth as this is uncommon. More frequently they have just a few bananas or oranges, or a couple of cabbages. They are often accompanied by children carrying palmetto thatch or large palmetto leaves, which are also sold in the market, to be separated into fine pieces and made into hats; some of these hats are elaborate and very neatly made, but heavy to wear as compared with our best English straw. The Nassau market is always well supplied with fruits and vegetables, but nearly everything that comes into it is brought piecemeal on the people's heads.

Vegetables, and most other things generally known as market stuff, are not sold in Nassau market on anything like our system of weight and measurement, but are laid out in small heaps at so much a lot. Mr. Drysdale says: "The coloured people have no idea of selling anything edible by the quantity. The other day a girl came along with a trayful of okras. She had about half a bushel of them, and as she set her tray down on

the door sill and squatted down beside it, I asked her what she would take for the lot. She looked up surprised, and evidently did not know what I meant. I explained it to her, and she began to lay them out in lots, a handful to the lot, saying, 'I can't tell, boss, till I measure them out.'

The principal food of the coloured population is Indian corn, grits, and fish. *Grits*, "Nuttall's Dictionary" says, are "the coarse parts of meal, oats coarsely ground, sand or hard sandstone." The grits sold in Nassau come from the States, and are, as a rule, of the very worst quality, containing probably some of all the three ingredients mentioned in Nuttall's definition. The people boil it and make with it what is called *hominy*, but very different from the dish known by that name in the United States. Meat, eggs, and milk they rarely know the taste of, for there are only just enough cows to supply the wants of the richer portion of the population, and though they all keep fowls, they cannot afford to eat either them or their eggs. Fruits and plantains they get in plenty, but sugar-cane, which their hearts love, is comparatively speaking rare in the island of New Providence, and therefore dear. When they do get meat, it is generally pork, and such pork! A Nassau hog (the word "pig" is rarely heard) is a kind of cross between a small wild boar and tapir, for he is usually hairy, and the length of his snout is



phenomenal. In fact, they seem generally to be running to seed, and have so little flesh on their bones, one might imagine all the food they ate went to increase their weedy and lengthy appearance. The cheapest tea is 4s. a pound, and coffee, though cheaper, is unreasonably dear and execrably bad.

“Now just look ahere, boss,” said a working carpenter, who was in the act of eating his dinner, “what sort of stuff a man has to eat here”—mouth full of grits which he was rapidly grinding finer. “Why ’taint fit for hawgs. You know that yourself, boss; this stuff ain’t no more’n fit to feed hawgs. Why, I’ve been over to New Orleans, and I didn’t see nobody eating grits there at all, not a soul! Over there, that some sort of a country to live in, and they frow grits to the hawgs, but they don’t eat it theirselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Besides the wretched food they get, one of the great causes of the physical deterioration of the coloured people in the island of New Providence is the very unhealthy nature of the places in which they are compelled to live. This is due mainly to white selfishness and meanness. After the slave days, the coloured people were of no further use as chattels, so one of the means adopted to extort money from them was to make them pay rent for shanties in the most unhealthy parts of the city, where nobody else would live.

<sup>3</sup> See “In Sunny Lands.”



Yet there are waste spaces on the higher ground belonging to the State, which might be utilized to establish settlements where the coloured people might live and bring up children who would grow into healthy men and women.

It is impossible to look towards Grant's Town in the early morning, at any season of the year, without finding it enveloped in a dense white fog, showing the unhealthy, swampy nature of the ground. Neither do the people's habits help matters. They are very fond of air in their own way and at their own time, but if the slightest drop of rain is falling, or if they want to sleep, they will shut up every door and window, and stuff up every hole and cranny. After a night spent in this unwholesome way, they will get up quite early in the morning, open everything, and go out into the damp, misty air with scarcely a rag of clothing on, and bare feet. What wonder if, even in that climate, they become consumptive?

The whole question of the negro settlements is one that should be looked into by a Royal Commission. The people ought to be settled on the high ground, and the present negro settlements converted into vast gardens, for which they are admirably suited, as it is just this unhealthy soil which is best for cultivation. All the roses in Nassau, except those in one or two private gardens, come from Grant's Town. There are no

flower-shops or flower-stalls, and one man has a monopoly of the entire rose trade. He does a roaring business all through the winter, for the Americans are fond of flowers, and habitually make presents of large bouquets to one another. In the early part of 1887, a steamer ran regularly between Nassau and Jacksonville in Florida, and every trip she used to carry away large quantities of roses from Nassau, laid upon ice to preserve them during the thirty hours' passage.

Inside these settlements the coloured people lead a life apart, and have some curious customs and amusements. The Africans still retain their tribal distinctions, and are divided into Yourabas, Egbas, Ebos, Congos, &c. Every August some of these tribes elect a queen whose will is law on certain matters. I doubt if any of them have the least notion who Guy Fawkes was, or what he did, but they would not omit observing Guy Fawkes' Day on any consideration. Every 5th of November his effigy is carried in procession with bands of music and torches, and solemnly hung on a gallows prepared for that purpose. The darkies are fond of processions, and never miss an opportunity of getting one up.

About Christmas time they seem to march about day and night with lanterns and bands of music, and they fire off crackers everywhere. This is a terrible nuisance, but the custom has the sanction

of antiquity, though no doubt it would have been put down long ago if the white young gentlemen had not exhibited a taste for the same amusement.

They are very fond of dancing, and I am afraid no amount of preaching or singing hymns will ever be able to put down the dance-houses, which are terrible thorns in the side of both magistrate and inspector of police.

A form of open-air dancing has also a great hold upon them. It is called a "fire-dance," and is, no doubt, a relic of savage life. I had heard so much about these fire-dances that I arranged with the sergeant of police to have one got up for my especial benefit, and I went to see it in company with a Russian gentleman who happened to be staying at the hotel. The people formed a circle, and a fire was lighted in their midst. The music consisted of two drums that would not work unless frequently warmed at the fire. The company clapped their hands without ceasing all through the dance, chanting all the while in a sort of dreary monotone, "Oh kindoiah ! kindoiah ! Mary, come along ! " When the dance was about half through, the refrain was suddenly changed to " Come down, come down," repeated over and over again in the same dreary monotone. Every now and then a man or a woman, or a couple together would rush into the centre of the circle and dance wildly

<sup>4</sup> Two African words.



about. There appeared to be no step or idea of figure about the performance, the aim and object of the dancers, as far as one could make it out, being to execute as many extravagant capers in and over, and around, and about the fire as they could without burning themselves. It was, in short, a savage African dance in European dress. Another evening Mr. James C. Smith and myself came suddenly upon one of these "fire-dances;" on this occasion the refrain they sang was, "Go along, Yankee, poor old man."

Mr. Drysdale estimates that all the houses in Grant's Town could be built twice over for about 400*l*. Perhaps his estimate is correct, but there is as much difference between the houses of the richer and poorer inhabitants of these settlements as there is in most other communities. The interior of a well-to-do coloured man's house—David Patten's for instance—is neat and clean, with glass windows and nice white ceilings. There is always as much furniture as he can cram in, and the most showy coloured prints and ornaments he can get hold of are hanging on the wall or dispersed about the room. If you are admitted to view the bedroom, you will be struck at once with the snowy whiteness of the bed-linen, and the remarkable stiffness of the starched pillow-cases, bordered all round with lace. From this height the shanties gravitate downwards to those

of the poorest, which are little better than collections of boards knocked together and thatched with palmetto-straw, with just a bed, table, and chair, and a few cooking utensils, by way of furniture.

They are fond of pictures, and if they cannot get the gaudy-coloured prints in which their souls delight, they will paste over their walls with anything they can get hold of, cuttings from English and American illustrated papers, or fashions from *Myra's* or *The Young Ladies' Journal*. Where they pick them up is a mystery, for such things are not easily obtainable in Nassau.

I saw a good deal of the inner life of the coloured people of Nassau, for—with a view to book-making—I wandered about their settlements, and in and out of their houses at all hours. I was often warned I should lose my character if I was seen so much about these quarters of the city, but, having an object in view, I was obliged to disregard public opinion. The origin of the extraordinary collection of mongrels that inhabit this city and its suburbs and pass for dogs, must ever remain a puzzle. Mr. Drysdale says they are “the most fearful and wonderful productions of nature.” Like the majority of living things in Nassau they are half starved, and spend their nights wandering about the wealthier parts of the city, trying to pick up scraps. Their

howlings, and the crowing of the cocks, who invariably commence at 11 p.m., and continue for several hours without ceasing, make night hideous. Some time ago a dog-tax was imposed by the Legislature, but it became so unpopular, and so extremely difficult to collect that it had to be ignominiously abandoned. Wherever you go in the coloured settlements, dogs run out every minute to bark at you, but I never heard of their biting any one, and they run away if you merely turn round and look at them.

Grant's Town also abounds in grog-shops, licensed and unlicensed, for the licensing laws in the Bahamas are so absurdly stringent that they have defeated their own ends, and the people get drink at all hours without any interference on the part of the police, though the rewards for giving information in these cases are very substantial.<sup>5</sup> And yet there is very little drunkenness among the lower crust. All through the Christmas holidays there was not a single case came into the police-court that arose through drink.

On Sundays and holidays the coloured women usually wear cotton dresses of various shades of blue, rose-pink, and white, the latter predominating. Occasionally you see a coloured lady grandly attired in silk, satin, and velveteen, or even velvet,

<sup>5</sup> The case mentioned at Andros Island, Chapter III., was only one of those exceptions that prove the rule.



with a fashionable hat, and probably coloured stockings and tight white boots or shoes. They nearly always wear shady hats, mostly trimmed with white, with some colour introduced, and on the whole their dress is pretty and tasteful, and very suitable to the climate.

They do not usually wear shoes or stockings except on Sundays, high days and holidays, and then their great delight is to pinch their feet into a pair of white boots very much too small for them, which cause them to walk with difficulty. By nature they are noiseless in their movements, but some few of them will put on shoes even on week-days, and then they generally get hold of a pair of old ones very much too large for them, and always down at heel, in which they shuffle along, making a cloud of dust, and a clatter that you can hear half a mile off. They would be much better and more comfortable without, but of course they must try and emulate the white folks.

The men will save up their scanty earnings to buy a suit of broadcloth and a tall black hat for Sundays, in a climate where nothing is so suitable as a white suit and a straw hat.

Mr. Drysdale observes there is something about the West Indies that is fatal to the tall silk hat, and that he never saw one in the tropics on the head of a native, either in Mexico, Cuba, or the Bahamas, that was not a generation behind the correct shape.

As far as my limited experience goes, I agree with him.

As every one knows, the coloured people talk English in a manner peculiar to themselves. Here are a few specimens of Nassau Negrology. I will begin with Mr. Drysdale, who has just caught a coloured lady chewing an almond outside his gate.

“ Now, young lady, you’ve been at my almond-trees ? ”

“ No, boss,” she replies; “ I didn’t get it off’n de trees, I meet it laying on de ground.”

When she says she “ meet ” it, she only uses the common Nassau expression for saying that she found it, and like all her happy-go-lucky sisters, she uses the present tense instead of the past.

It is common enough, too, to hear a man say of anything he is carrying along, “ I ketched it down de road,” the verb “ to catch ” being used where we should use the verb “ to get.”

There is a great prejudice against letters “ p,” “ th,”<sup>6</sup> and final letters generally. For instance, they call wasps “ wasts,” and nobody goes “ through ” a gate. He goes “ trew ” it, or pays “ tree ” pence for tobacco.

<sup>6</sup> It is not quite correct to say they do not use the “ th.” They do use it, but in the most capricious manner. They will substitute “ d ” for it through the greater part of a conversation, and every now and then, without any apparent reason, pronounce it quite correctly.

Land is usually measured by the coloured people by the "tass." They mean "task." This is a relic of the slave days, when the slaves had so much land marked out to them to work within a given time.

They have a particular dislike to the possessive "s." No Nassau darcy would ever speak of Mr. Brown's house or Mr. Smith's house. They say "Mr. Brown house," "Mr. Smith house," "de Gub'ner house," "de magistrate house," and so on.

No married woman, not even excepting the Governor's wife, is ever accorded the title of "Mrs," but all ladies, married or single, are called "Miss" or "Missey" indiscriminately.<sup>7</sup> A gentleman is usually addressed as "Boss" or "Buckra."

Another peculiarity of theirs is that they never "speak" or "talk" to any one, but always "commune."

"V's" and "w's" are a great puzzle to them; not that they have any difficulty in pronouncing either letter, but they never seem able to do so at the right time. For example, a coloured preacher will talk of "Werdant pastures," and "Conwersion," or state that "wirtue will earn a golden crown"—they are very fond of golden

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Blake was always called "Miss Blake," unless spoken of as "De Gub'ner lady."



crowns, golden slippers, golden stairs, and all sorts of other golden things—or that “Wice is a Wiper,” but in the same breath he will inquire “vere” you expect to go to, or impress upon you that “vere e’er” you are, you must “bevare” of this or that “vickedness,” or he will call on you to “vait” patiently for this or that blessing. Our gracious Sovereign is always spoken of as “Wictoria.”

In some words “v’s” become “b’s,” as in “Governor,” which is always pronounced “Gubner.”<sup>8</sup>

I once heard a darky, who had a certain amount of education, reading the Bible in chapel. He got on very well till he was confronted with the word “concupiscence.” This was a teaser. He hesitated for a moment, looked at the fence carefully, then suddenly determined to take it with a run, and out it came—“Concusspishensh.”

They are reverential by nature, and swearing is by no means common among them. Certainly, the name of God is everlastingly in their mouths, but it is by way of pious ejaculation rather than as an expletive or even carelessly, that it is used. For instance, if you ask a coloured lady her name she will probably give you the required informa-

<sup>8</sup> I have omitted to notice that in the use of the words “he,” “she,” “him,” and “her,” the pure Africans jumble up the genders in such a marvellous manner, that it is often impossible to tell whether they are talking of a man or a woman, except by the context.

tion, adding "Praise God," or "Bless God," or "Tank God." The name itself will be something short, simple, and unpretentious, as "Daphne Brinhilda Mabala McPherson." She is sure not to say "My name is so-and-so," but "My nameso-and-so." If the Bahamian negro desires to use the Divine name as an expletive or mere careless ejaculation, he usually does it in the form of "Oh, my Fader!"

Even when they use the most awful threats they use them in a manner rather solemn than blasphemous. For example, a woman of bad character was once brought before me for threatening the life of another woman of the same sort. The form she adopted was, "If you do not leave me alone, I will send you to see your Jesus to-night," and from the evidence I gathered that this expression was not used as a brutal form of blasphemy, but as the solemn enunciation of an intense determination.

Darkies have always been notorious for their fondness for high-sounding names. In America they are very apt to christen their children "George Washington." In the Bahamas there are innumerable Prince of Wales's, Prince Alberts, and Prince Alfreds.<sup>9</sup> There is a man named Tiberius Gracchus, a boy named Thaddeus de

<sup>9</sup> The Duke of Edinburgh once went to Nassau in the days when he was Prince Alfred.

Warsaw Toot, and a sergeant Duke of Wellington, and they have now begun christening children "Randolph Churchill." It is a common practice to call children after the month or day of the week on which they were born or christened, as "March," "July," "Monday," "Friday," &c., &c. Scripture names are very common, so are names descriptive of a class, as "Evangelist;" and from some of the clergy I heard of parents who wished to have their children christened "Iniquity," "Miserere Lizzy," and "Solomou's Porch."<sup>1</sup>

Among female names I have met with Brinhilda, Clotilda, Cassandra, Savelita, Malvina, Eulalia, Denisia, Daphne, and a host of others, religious, classical, ordinary, and Spanish, but every one of them high sounding. Granville is a common christian name for men, after "Granville Sharp," the great pioneer of emancipation.

The surnames are all derived from the old planters, and are mostly Scotch, as McDonald, McPherson, McGregor, Finlay, Hepburn, Ferguson, &c., &c.

English money is in use in Nassau, of course, but it is often called by American names. The darkies familiarly speak of twenty-five cents or "a quarter"

<sup>1</sup> In another part of the West Indies some poor people christened a child "John Barbadoes and the Windward Islands," the full signature of the Bishop of Barbadoes.



(i.e. of a dollar) when they mean a shilling. Most of the silver is English, but American silver passes equally well.<sup>2</sup> There is but little English gold, but the American five-dollar gold pieces are taken at their full value, *1l. 0s. 10d.* A sovereign is spoken of as five dollars, *10s.* as two dollars and a half, and a florin as half a dollar. The darkies, when they do not talk in cents, call a penny "a big copper," a halfpenny "a small copper." Fourpence halfpenny is called "a bit," three halfpence are called "a cheque," and there are still a great many three-halfpenny silver coins current in this colony. It is very puzzling, till you get used to it, to be told that a thing costs "a cheque," or "a bit," or "two bits and a cheque."

When the coloured people speak of sixpence, a shilling, or half a crown, they always mean *3d.*, *6d.*, or *1s. 3d.*, unless they add the word sterling.

The Africans rescued from the slave-ships brought with them from Africa the secret of making the genuine African thatch. I have been told that either they cannot or will not impart this secret, so that it will become a lost art when they die out. Some of the houses in Grant's Town, and one church are roofed with this thatch. Mr.

<sup>2</sup> There is so little gold in the colony that one's salary is generally paid in silver, sometimes half of it in threepenny and fourpenny pieces. In a colony where there is no bank this is inconvenient.

Drysdale calls the latter "the handsomest roof on the inside that I ever saw, not even excepting one of our own church buildings." I never saw it myself.

This church belongs to a sect popularly known as "The Shouters," but whose proper title, so my orderly, Carey, informed me, was "The African Methodist Episcopal Church." I never got as far as the Shouters myself, but it is a favourite amusement among the winter visitors at the hotel to get up parties to go to the Shouter church on a Sunday evening.

Hymn-singing is the great feature of their service, and some of their hymns are of the most extraordinary description. The following collection I got partly from my boys whilst sailing on circuit, partly from my cook, Mrs. Malvina Whitehead. The first three are called "antems" as distinguished from hymns. I have already given Mr. Carey's definition of the two, but as far as I can make out the difference between them consists in that in the case of the antem the refrain is repeated after every line.

"Hail, King ob de Jews!  
Oh, yes, it is Jesus, my Lord!  
I come to worship Thee!  
Oh, yes, &c,  
Look ober yonder what I see!  
Oh, yes, &c.

See dem children rise and fall !  
 Oh, yes, &c.  
 If de Lord Jesus gib to me !  
 Oh, yes, &c.  
 De wings ob an eagle, I fly way !  
 Oh, yes, &c.  
 De tallest tree in Paradise !  
 Oh, yes, &c.  
 Christian, call it tree ob life !  
 Oh, yes, &c.  
 Lot's wife turn to pillar ob salt !  
 Oh, yes, &c.  
 Run along Moses, don't get late !  
 Oh, yes, &c.  
 Before Lord Jesus, shut de gate,  
 Oh, yes, &c."

" You may talk, talk, talk, you may talk deceitful talk ?  
 When de general roll is called may I be dar !  
     Yes, I'll be dar !  
     I want to be dar !  
 When de general roll is called may I be dar !  
 You may laugh, laugh, laugh, you may laugh deceitful laugh.  
     When de general roll, &c., &c.  
 You may tink, tink, tink, you may tink deceitful tings !  
     When de general roll, &c., &c.  
 Fine trees grow, grow, grow, dey grow in Paradise !  
     When the general roll, &c., &c.  
 King Jesus, tell, tell, tell, He tell me once before,  
     When de general roll, &c., &c.,  
 To go, go, go in peace and sin no more !  
     When de general roll, &c., &c."

" Unbeliever, don't you hear de hammer ring !  
     De hammer ring ! De hammer ring !  
 Unbeliever, don't you hear de hammer ring !  
     Dat nail Him to de tree ! "



Every succeeding verse is exactly the same, substituting "Blasphemer," "Backbiter," "Liar," "Slanderer," "Drunkard," and so on, for the first word.

It must not be imagined that the above are complete editions of these "*antems*," for the singers improvise as they go along, and never stop until they are fairly exhausted.

A favourite amusement is to sit in a circle and sing the following chorus, taking the company's names all round. If the name is popular, he is "always ready when de bridegroom come." If the reverse, then he is, "nebbber ready when de bridegroom come." Sometimes opinions differ, and a certain amount of feeling is excited.

"Brudder — he always ready when de Bridegroom come !

Brudder — he always ready when de Bridegroom come !

Brudder — he always ready when de Bridegroom come !

Oh, my! dars no *sighing*

When de Bridegroom come."

I never was able to make out whether the word in italics was "*sighing*," "*saying*," or "*Zion*." I have distinctly heard all three, but though I have often asked which it was, I never could get an answer. For some reason or other, probably because they think you are making fun of them, they will not tell you anything about these hymns, for which they seem to rely entirely upon oral tradition. They will sing for you as long as you

please, but you cannot induce them to repeat the words. The only way I could get hold of a great part of my collection was by constantly standing by, note-book in hand, whilst they were singing.<sup>3</sup>

The following is a favourite chorus :—

“ Oh, what'll I do when de lamp go out ?  
 When de lamp go out? When de lamp go out ?  
 Oh, what'll I do when de lamp go out ?  
 What will I do dat day ?  
 Oh, I want to see my Jesus when de lamp go out !  
 When de lamp go out, when de lamp go out !  
 So I'll send for my elder when de lamp go out !  
 Dat what I'll do dat day ! ”

Mr. Willshere, the superintendent minister of Baptist Missions, is deservedly a great favourite among them. For some reason he is always called “ Fader Willshere ”—a somewhat peculiar title for a Baptist clergyman—and it is very common to substitute his name as the doctor of souls who is to be called in “ when the lamp goes out.”

The following hymn contains about twenty-five verses. It was a great favourite with Theophilus Rolle, mate of the *Eastern Queen* during my first voyage. Often as I have heard him sing it, I could never catch more than the first verse.

“ When I go down to de wood for to pray,  
 Ole Satan, he say to me,  
 You Jesus dead, and de Lord, he gone away,  
 And he no hear you pray !

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<sup>3</sup> That is whilst sailing on circuit.

Oh, Lord, remember me ! oh, Lord, remember me !  
 Remember me as de year roll round !  
 Oh, Lord, remember me !”

The following also pass for hymns :—

“ I am climbing Jacob's ladder ;  
 I am going higher and higher !  
 I am climbing higher and higher,  
 Soldier of de Cross.

*Chorus.*

D'you tink I'se climbing higher and higher !  
 Soldier ob de Cross !

“ Day star is arising !  
 Tell de Lord I'se coming !  
 Gabriel, blow de trumpet !  
 Soldier ob de Cross.”

*Repeat chorus.*

“ I'd rather pray my life away !  
 Oh ! oh ! oh !  
 Dan go to hell and burn away !

*Chorus.*

Save me, Lord, from sinking down !  
 Oh ! oh ! oh !  
 Save me, Lord, from sinking down !

“ I had a book, 'twas gib to me !  
 Save me, Lord, from sinking down !  
 And every line convicted me !

*Repeat chorus.*

“ Ole Satan make a catch at me !  
 Oh ! oh ! oh !  
 He miss my soul and catch my sins.

*Repeat chorus.*

“ I had a book, 'twas gib to me !  
 Save me, Lord, from sinking down !  
 In every line was victory !

*Repeat chorus.*



“ Tell me, Lord, shall I be dar now ?

To sit on Zion Hill,

Wrestle wid de angels,

Till de break ob day ?

Tell me, Lord, shall I be dar ?

Sit on Zion Hill all night,

And take a wrestle wid de angels ?

All night ! All night !

Till de break ob day !

Oh, tell me, God, shall I be dar now ?

Oh, tell me, God, shall I be dar now ?

Oh, tell me, God, shall I be dar now ?

Sit on Zion Hill !

Wrestle wid de angels !

All night ! All night !

Till de break ob day.”

“ Ole Satan say he no go way ;

He hab my soul de judgment day !

I rather pray my life away !

Dan go to hell and spend one day !

Carry de news ! carry de news !

Sister, carry, carry the news !

I'se bound to glory.

Go, carry de news !

Go, carry de news !

Go, carry de news !

I'se bound to glory !”

“ Come along, my sister, come along !

Come along, my sister, come along !

De angels say dars noting to do

But ring dat charming bell.

We'se almost gone, we'se almost gone,

But de angels say dars noting to do

But ring that charming bell !

Come along, my sister, &c.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> These shouting hymns are sometimes performed in the

The darkies are also great at proverbs. I subjoin a small collection.

"Come see me is noting, come lib wid me someting!"

"Follow fashion break monkey neck!"

"Goat say him hab wool; sheep say him hab har!"

court of the hotel for the amusement of the visitors. Amongst the performers on these occasions, two boys, nick-named "Moody" and "Sankey," were especially famous for a sort of sacro-comic duet and dance. "Moody" had disappeared before my time, but "Sankey" still survived. This hopeful, whose real name is Thaddeus de Warsaw Toot, is one of the cleverest young rascals I ever met. He is about fourteen years of age, and might be trained to anything, and I feel convinced if the enterprising Augustus Harris could see him, he would at once import him for Drury Lane. He has now gone out of the sacro-comic duet and dance line of business, and does odd jobs—good or bad is all the same to Sankey—for any one who will employ him. His best quality is fidelity to his employer for the time being, for when he lets himself out to any one he sells himself body and soul, and is incorruptible. As soon as he passes into another employment he transfers his fidelity, and would have no scruple about robbing his old master on behalf of his new one. He was once done whilst I was in Nassau, and the way he revenged himself was characteristic. Being sent with five shillings to buy sponges, he purchased a boxful from a man who sold him a lot of old pieces covered over with a layer of good sponges. Sankey was terribly crestfallen, but to retrieve his character he followed that man about till he saw him in the act of receiving five shillings. Sankey cut in like a knife, collared the money, with which he refused to part on any terms until he received the balance of sponges due to him. In a civilized country he would probably rise to a good position, or go for a long term of penal servitude. In earlier times he might have concluded a short, but brilliant, career upon the gallows!

- “ Greedy choke puppy ! ”  
 “ Hab money hab friend ! ”  
 “ Hog run for him life ; dog run for him character ! ”  
 “ Hungry fowl wake soon . ”

This proverb is particularly appropriate to Nassau.

- “ If you see a fippence you know how dollar made ! ”  
 “ John Crow nebber make house till rain come ! ”  
 “ Lizard no plant corn but him hab plenty . ”  
 “ Man can't whistle and smoke one time . ”

This is a favourite proverb, but I deny its truth.

- “ Misfortune nebber trow cloud . ”  
 “ No eberyting you yerry (hear) good fe talk ! ”  
 “ No trow away dirty water before you hab clean ! ”  
 “ Ole firestick no hard fo catch . ”  
 “ One tief no like see oder tief carry long bag . ”

This proverb reminds me of a story of a negro Methodist who had stolen some goods which were afterwards stolen from him. Next time he went to class-meeting he ejaculated, “ Oh, Lord, de tief am bad, but when tief tief from tief, oh, Lord, him too much proboking ! ”

- “ Parson christen him own pickaninny first . ”  
 “ Rain nebber fall at one man door . ”  
 “ Stone at sea bottom no know sun hot . ”  
 “ Seven year no 'nough for washy speckle off guinea hen back . ”  
 “ Shoe know if stocking hab hole . ”  
 “ Sleep hab no massa . ”  
 “ Spider and fly no make bargain . ”



"When man no done climb hill he should no trow away him stick."

"John Crow tink him pickaninny white."

"When man say him no mind, den he mind."

"When hand full him hab plenty company."

"You shake man hand, you no shake him heart."

"Trouble nebber blow shell."

This is an allusion to the custom of using shells as horns to blow through.

"Time longer dan rope."

"When fowl drinky water him lift up him head and say, 'Tank God,' but man drinky water and no say noting."

"When eye no see, mout no talk."

"When man no done grow him nebber should cuss long man."

"Stranger no know whar de deep water."

"Cuss cuss (*calling names*) no bore hole in skin."

"Cunning better dan strong."

"De rope you pulling, no de rope I cutting."

"Ebbery day fishing day, but no ebbery day catchy fish."

"Hot needle burn thread."

"Big blanket make man sleep late."

"When cockroach gib dance him no ax fowl."

"Cockroach nebber so drunk he no crossy fowl-yard."

"Dead hog no fear biling water."

Under the heading of "An Evening at Morley's," Mr. Drysdale has given a most amusing picture of negro life, of which the following is an abridged version. When I first saw it, it struck me as worth reproducing if ever I wrote a book on the Bahamas, so in order to test its correctness I visited many of the smaller shops and watched what went on. I can only say it is true to the life.

"I want to take you into one of the little shops

that abound on this island, and give you a close look at the people who buy things in them, and buy them generally in such small quantities that one is struck with wonder and admiration at the shopkeeper who has the patience to measure them out.

“Here is the shop we are to visit just ahead of us. It is only one of a dozen we might have gone into, and I have picked it out at random. This is Morley’s shop. It is not much of a place architecturally, as we see before we go in. Indeed, it looks very much like some of the small board buildings put up in very young Western towns, not more than twelve feet square, one story high, with holes in the walls for windows, which at night are closed with stout wooden shutters. But it is a storehouse of good things nevertheless. Here are hams hanging from the ceiling, and strips of bacon; and here are barrels of salt pork, and tubs of lard and barrels of sugar, and caddies of tea and tins full of coffee, and rows of bottles of Bass’s ale, and more rows of bottles of sarsaparilla and ginger beer, and bundles of cigars stood up on end; and here is a plateful of home-made cocoanut candy; and there stands part of a cheese protected by a wire box, and near by a barrel of crackers. And there are loaves of bread, and tins of canned goods, and an open barrel of flour, another of grits, and a great

heap of bags of rice, and part of a tub of butter; and there are tins of ginger-snaps and a big basket of guinea corn. All these things are before the counter and behind it, as if all the customers were honest as saints, and would never touch anything they hadn't bought. And on the counter are a heap of stalks of sugar-cane ready to be chewed into white fibre by the first youngster who comes along with a small copper. The only wonder, Mr. Morley, is, how you got all these things into such a little shop without using a battering-ram.

“But here comes a customer—a bare-headed and bare-footed girl, with a skin rather more than dusky, and an air evidently designed to tell us all she doesn't care a continental for anybody or anything. She goes up to the counter, takes a big copper and a little one out of her mouth, and slaps them on the board with a bang, and proceeds immediately to business without wasting any words about it.

“‘Check lard,’ is all she says.

“The ‘flyest’ of New York grocery clerks, I think, would be staggered by such an order. Mr. Morley is not. He tears off a small piece from a large sheet of brown paper, takes it to the lard tub, and squeezes it up. Handing the lard to the girl, he wipes the big copper and the little one into the drawer and resumes the conversation with us.



“Presently, another customer comes. This time it is a woman, one of the residents of Fox Hill. She carries on her head a large wooden tray, in which are sundry small parcels. Taking the tray down, and resting it on an unoccupied barrel head, she looks smilingly about the shop and says,—

“‘Good evenin’, boss; evenin’, gentlemen. How does you all do dis evenin’?’

“We all tell her ‘very well,’ and inquire solicitously about her health.

“‘I’se pretty well to-day, bless God,’ she replies. ‘But it’s de first day in a good while, please God. I’se had de feber.’

“She does not mean that she has had any fever in particular, but that she has been ailing; for every sickness here is called the fever.

“‘Has you got some grits?’ she asks of the shopkeeper, taking from her head the turban on which the tray rested, which is nothing more than a big bandana handkerchief rolled up into a thick pad.

“Mr. Morley tells her that he has plenty of grits, and she inquires the price. He wants five cents a quart for them, and she tells him she can buy them down town for four. He says they have gone up; she says they haven’t. He says he has just come from town, and that if she could have bought them there for four she would have done it. She says she wouldn’t. He says his grits are

a very fine quality. She says the last she bought of him weren't so very good. He says they cost him nearly five cents a quart at wholesale. She says then he got cheated. He says, 'How many will you have?' She says, 'Give me two bits' worth.'

" 'I'll let you have half a peck for two bits, as you're an old customer,' says Mr. Morley; and forthwith proceeds to measure them out, while we light fresh cigars and watch the proceedings with interest. Two bits are equivalent to eighteen cents; she had only seventeen. She went down deep in an apparently fathomless pocket, searched through three or four cans in her tray, shook her bandana, looked again in her pocket, looked on the floor, counted it all over again, and gave the bandana another shake, but the 'small copper' refused to appear.

" 'Look again,' said Mr. Morley. 'You'll find it somewhere. Or I can take out a quart and give you two cents back.'

"The lady continued her search, but the copper was still missing; and it was not till the shop-keeper was about to take back one quart of grits, and give her three quarts for fifteen cents, that she found it.

" 'Oh, yes; here it is,' said she, putting her hand up to her mouth and taking therefrom the missing coin. I know'd I must have put it some

place. A poor woman like me can't afford to be losing her money, please God !'

"Perhaps she has really had the money stored away in some odd corner of her mouth and forgotten it, but from the peculiar way in which the shopkeeper said, 'I thought you'd find it,' I am led to believe that he knew his customer, and was acquainted with her ways.

"Here comes a stylish equipage up the street. It is a Fox Hill barouche—otherwise a donkey-cart. It rattles up to the door and stops with a flourish. A gentleman of colour steps out, and we see at once that he is a man who thinks a great deal of himself, if only from the way he bounces into the shop.

"'Let me have a check tobacco,' he says ; and, while Mr. Morley is cutting it off for him, he takes up a handful of grits and lets them run back into the barrel, and makes himself generally at home. The tobacco cut off, he tosses the coppers upon the counter, and walks out, and in half a minute more his gallant but long-eared steed is carrying him down the road and out of sight. This 'check tobacco,' or three cents' worth of tobacco, that he has bought is the great solace of many a Nassau man. It is a small piece cut from a black plug, but it answers a two-fold purpose. If its owner wishes to chew, it is all ready. If he desires to smoke, he tears or cuts off some



small bits, rolls them between the palms of his hands till they are in a proper condition, puts them in his clay pipe, and smokes them. A 'check's worth' will last him all day.

"The next customer is a pretty young yellow girl. She would pass for over eighteen years old in America, but it is doubtful whether she is over fifteen, for Nassau girls mature very rapidly, and begin to keep their eyes open for young beaux before they are old enough to leave school. This one, seeing two strangers sitting in the shop, is shy about coming in. But she has some purchases to make, and goes modestly up to the counter and asks Mr. Morley if he has any handkerchiefs to sell. No, he does not keep handkerchiefs. Then, has he any scent? Yes, he has scent. And he goes to a small glass-case that fills one end of the counter, and brings out of it several bottles of perfumery none too large, and doubtless none too strong, but with showy labels. The girl pays her 'two shillin''<sup>5</sup> (twenty-four cents) for one of the bottles, and goes out, leaving us to guess—and the guess is pretty nearly correct, doubtless—that she is preparing to captivate some Nassau beau on Sunday.

"'Do you sell much perfumery?' we ask the

<sup>5</sup> What is called in Nassau "*two shillings currency*," equal to one shilling sterling.

shopkeeper, and he tells us, 'Yes, a great deal;' his customers are very fond of it. They buy a great many of these small bottles for Sunday use when they come out in their good clothes.

"Here come a party of four young gentlemen of colour, who all salute us with 'Good evenin', boss,' as they enter, and order four glasses of ale, for which one of the party pays. A boy comes in with a copper, and buys a small stalk of sugar-cane, and leans against the heap of bags and munches it, looking curiously at us and grinning.

"'That's a young ourang-outang,' says Mr. Morley, nodding his head at the boy.

"'I ain't no rank-otank neither,' the boy angrily replies, his smiles suddenly changing to a look of anger; and he does not resume his good-humour till we tell him we are sure he is not a 'rank-otank,' but a very good little boy.

"A party of four or five young fellows go by with tambourines and mouth-organs, but they do not stop. And here comes an elderly woman, black as a coal, with some scars on her face. She has a tray on her head, piled up more than a foot high with bundles and bottles and cans, and under her right arm another big bundle, and in her left hand a large basket full of things. She makes us a curtsy as she comes in, says 'Good evenin', boss,' and almost immediately asks us whether we 'can't do nothin' for a poor woman, boss?

Times is so hard.' She is a Congo woman, a native of Africa, and the scars on her face were made years ago in Africa, perhaps for ornament, perhaps for other reasons.

“‘If you want the gentlemen to give you something, aunty,’ says Mr. Morley, ‘you ought to dance for them.’

“There is something surprising about seeing a woman of her age drawing her scant skirts together in preparation for a dance; but she is as erect as a girl of twenty and strong as a man, and almost before we know what is going on, she is dancing in the small open space in the middle of the floor—dancing to a strange tune she hums herself, of which the short words come out in jerks. She throws herself about wildly, giving us one of the half-graceful, half-awkward Congo dances we have often seen before. When it is done, and she is not a bit tired from the exertion, she looks at us in a way that says plainly enough, ‘There, now, what are you going to give me for that?’ Of course we can do no less than give her a quarter, and she thanks us many times for it, invokes blessings upon our heads, invests a ‘check’ of it in tobacco, resumes her tray, her bundle, and her pail, and goes on her way.

“The lamps were lighted long ago, and more customers are coming. But I think we had better



go before some of the younger and prettier girls come along and want to dance for us, and then I will have trouble to get you away."

Mr. Drysdale is right when he says a check's worth of tobacco is of value to a Nassau man, but apparently he does not realize its full value. There is an ex-policeman at Nassau who has saved a considerable sum of money by care and economy, and has now commenced a successful career as a money-lender. One of his pet economies was to chew his tobacco thoroughly, till he had extracted all the juice and prevented his appetite rising to too expensive a pitch, and then dry the *débris* of his chewings in the sun and smoke them as a luxury!

I will conclude with the following quotation from Mr. Drysdale as to the lower crust of Nassau society, and have much pleasure in endorsing every word of it:—

"Outside of busy Bay Street, I soon found, every negro speaks to every white person he meets, touching his hat and expecting a nod in return. A nod or a smile really seems to make the Nassau darky happy, and they are so cheap I don't see how anybody could refuse them; but in the country the coloured people generally ask you for a penny. But I have noticed that if you give them a smile and no penny they are better pleased than if you give them a penny and treat them

unkindly. They are as good-natured and good-hearted as any people in the world. When they have only a penny, and buy a meal of sugar-cane with it, they will give you half the sugar-cane if you ask them for it."

## CHAPTER VII.

Royal Victoria Hotel—Climatic advantages of Nassau as a health resort—No fear of yellow fever—Road from England—Ward line of steamers—Management of hotel—Life at hotel—Polo and Base Ball—Practical jokes—Visit to Shouter Church—Some visitors to Nassau—General Armstrong of Hampton, Virginia, and his work—Sights of Nassau—Fort Charlotte—Fish market—Tortoiseshell shops—Queen's staircase—Eastern parade—St. Matthew's churchyard—Thompson's folly—Fort Montagu—Sandilands and Foxhills—The lake of fire—Lakes Killarney and Cunningham—Caves—Adelaide—Clifton—Departed glories.

ONE of the pleasantest features of life in Nassau is the Royal Victoria Hotel, open from November to May.

The winter climate is so highly thought of by American doctors that it has become very popular as a health resort, and every fortnight during the season a host of pleasant people from the United States and Canada arrive by the mail steamer, bringing with them a refreshing breeze of life-giving air from the outside world.

I commend the following passage from Mr. Drysdale's book—but especially the concluding sentence—to the attention of medical men :—



“If there is any place where people with weak lungs can go and be benefitted by the climate, I believe that place to be Nassau. There were no invalids about the hotel. Out of the two hundred guests, with perhaps two or three exceptions, you would not have suspected there was a person who knew he had lungs. Every man, woman, and child of them was out in the sun and wind all day, and was consequently brown and hungry and came in at dinner-time ready for a good square meal. Barring the two or three exceptions I have noted, I don't think I heard a cough in all Nassau. Everybody looked healthy and happy. I started northward the first time in the steamer leaving March 3rd, and a number of Americans came at the same time. It was not till we were about two days out, when the steamer was somewhere off Charleston, that anybody would have suspected there was an invalid on board. But then that colder and more bracing air began to tell on the weak lungs, and people began to cough; men and women who, down in Nassau, had looked the picture of health, who had been driving, or riding, or sailing every day, who had been playing polo and attending balls, who had been sometimes (alas!) drinking rum and smoking strong cigars, who were brown, rosy, and active—then these people were reminded that they had lungs (or parts of them) still left, and began to

wish themselves back in Nassau. I have in mind particularly a young New Yorker who was conspicuous in all the polo matches and lawn-tennis games while I was there, who was every day out boating, or swimming, or fishing, and who knew too well the colour of Nassau brandy and the flavour of Nassau cigars. He came up in the same ship, and I was surprised to hear him coughing when he got into cold weather; so I asked one of the other passengers whether he was an invalid. 'Why,' said the passenger, 'didn't you know that he reached Nassau almost dead? He went to the steamship office in New York and asked whether they thought he could get to Nassau alive, and whether it would do him any good. From his far-gone appearance they were in some doubt about it, but advised him to try it, for he was sure to die if he stayed in New York. So he went, and was carried ashore on a stretcher. He had only been there two weeks when you got there, and you know what he was then—apparently as well as anybody. He was there a month or six weeks all told, and considers himself cured. *But of course he is coming home entirely too soon.*'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following are the thermometrical readings for the year 1878 :

Average temperature in the shade, taken at 3 p.m. :—  
January, 73·3°; February, 73·9°; March, 76·7°; April,

I often wonder that more of our wealthy invalids who fly from the English winter every year and care but little for expense, have not discovered Nassau. Perhaps the dread of yellow-fever—which is generally supposed to pervade, more or less, every part of the West Indies—may have something to do with it.

But though Yellow Jack has once or twice, at long intervals, hoisted his flag in the Bahamas—when he has been brought by an infected vessel—he has never stayed there, and the quarantine regulations are now strictly carried out. In fact, the casual visitor to Nassau is in less danger from yellow-fever than a visitor to London is in any ordinary season from cholera.

The voyage out *viâ* New York, though expensive, is certainly not long. From New York the traveller goes on to Nassau in three days and a half, in the Cuba mail, an excellent line of steamers, managed by James E. Ward and Co., of 113, Wall Street. These steamers are not only well appointed in every way, but all the employés on board, from the captain downwards, seem to look upon the passengers as thei

80·4°; May, 81·8°; June, 84°; July, 85·8°; August, 85·8°; September, 84·2°; October, 81·1°; November, 76·1°; December, 73·8°.

Greatest heat of the sun :—January, 140°; February, 146°; March, 149·5°; April, 150·2°; May, 156·5°; June, 154°; July, 159°; August, 157·9°; September, 153°; October, 153°; November, 157·5°; December, 155°.



personal friends. The table is on the most liberal scale, and, besides the regular meals, such little luxuries as lemonade, tea, coffee, or chocolate are always at the disposal of the passengers, free of charge, and served with a kindly goodwill that is very pleasant. These steamers run once a fortnight, from December to May, between New York and Cuba, calling at Nassau on the road out and home. The traveller can take a ticket for the round trip, which will enable him to stop at Nassau, and at any time during the six months for which it is available to go on to Cuba. The trip from Nassau to Cuba and back occupies a fortnight, and the steamer stops at two of the Cuban ports, remaining a few days at each. During that time the passenger has no occasion to go to an hotel, for his ticket entitles him to board and lodging on board his comfortable floating home all the time.

During the winter I was in the Bahamas there was one steamer running weekly between Nassau and Jacksonville, in Florida, and another between Nassau and Key West, but whether they will continue to run is problematical.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> It would be well if the English doctors would inquire into the value of the Bermudas and the Bahamas as a health resort. The former is the most accessible, as it is but two and a half instead of three and a half days from New York. Besides it has other advantages, being gayer and altogether more European. The grave objection to both is the winter passage to

The hotel itself is American, and was at one time managed by Mr. Lewis Cleveland, the brother of the present President of the United States. This gentleman, who unfortunately lost his life in a steamer that was burnt off Abaco, on its passage from New York to Nassau, earned for the "Royal Victoria" the reputation of being the best hotel in the West Indies,<sup>3</sup> a character it well sustains under its present manager, Mr. S. S. Morton, of 837, Broadway, a very prince among hotel-keepers. During the hotel season pleasant little dances—called the "hotel hops"—are given every Saturday, and on February 22nd, Washington's birthday, Mr. Morton gives a grand ball, on which occasion he cuts his tiller

New York, but this might be avoided by getting a sufficient number of invalids together to charter a steamer to run to Nassau *viâ* Bermuda. The invalids would then find themselves travelling in a congenial atmosphere, over seas at that period of the year probably free from gales. Of course, if England ever became alive to the value of these places as health-resorts, steamers would soon begin to run direct.

<sup>3</sup> A story told of Mr. Cleveland, I commend to the notice of hoteliers all over the world. He forbade any of his servants to receive gratuities, because he would not allow a guest who did not choose to give to be at a disadvantage. One Christmas Day he discharged a servant then and there for receiving a present from a lady, and though the man was afterwards reinstated at the lady's earnest request, it was only on condition that the money was returned. This is a particularly good rule in health-resorts, where many people are compelled to go at an expense they can but ill afford.



ropes, and lets his generous and hospitable nature go it with a run, and the entertainment is on the most liberal scale. But besides these festive occasions, in and about the hotel is always to be found a pleasant company, both of men and women.

The expense of living at the hotel is from three dollars a day upwards, which—considering that all the meat and most other provisions consumed in the house have to be brought from New York, and preserved in ice—cannot be called dear.

In the hotel grounds are a billiard-room, bar, and barber's shop, all combined in one, around which hover, during a goodly portion of the afternoon, a medley of conchs and foreigners of the male sex, drinking, smoking, playing billiards and other games, and talking scandal.

“Through a stone archway,” says Mr. Drysdale, “we entered the hotel, and were soon in the cool office. People lounged about in armchairs. The fragrance of flowers filled the air. One end of the hotel is rounded off like the stern of a steamboat (so that when you sit there you keep unconsciously waiting for the bell to ring and the boat to start), and with a stone arched court in front, where a breeze always blows, and where from breakfast till bedtime a fair is always in progress. It looks like an Oriental bazaar. Coloured men and women, boys and girls, some of them so nearly



white you could hardly tell the difference, and many of them exceedingly pretty, filled the open archways when we reached the hotel. Twenty people had things for sale, and a hundred more stood in the background waiting to see something sold. At last we had the satisfaction of sitting down to a meal in the dining-room of the Royal Victoria Hotel—a great room, perfumed with flowers (it was February 19th), shady and cool,—and of eating from tables loaded with good things.

“It is necessary to go from the freezing North in midwinter direct to the sunny South to appreciate such a scene. It is about as near an approach to fairy-land as can be found. It seemed almost like walking into a Saratoga hotel in summer. Every door and window, of course, was open, and the thermometer was somewhere about 75°. The Nassau band was playing on the lawn. Hotel guests were sitting out under the arches and under the trees, talking with the negroes, reading, sewing, smoking. There were some late New York papers in the reading-room, and maps of the Bahamas on the walls, and comfortable sofas. Altogether it was a very proper picture of a morning in the West Indies, where, of course, nobody has anything to do, and where anybody who has anything to do don't do it.”

Indeed, the court of the hotel generally pre-

sents a very lively appearance between meal-times. The broad piazzas, well supplied with comfortable chairs occupied by the visitors, form the auditorium.

The rest of the court is filled with a motley crowd of performers. Captains of one or two sailing-yachts advertise their craft, the sea-gardens, and the wonders to be done in the fishing line. Carriages—or rather sardine boxes on wheels—ply for hire, and the drivers keep up an incessant clatter of tongues while waiting. Coloured people of both sexes and all ages, with fruit, shells, shell-work, baskets, canes and all sorts of other wares, stand about waiting for chance customers. Conspicuous among them are the vendors of a kind of work something like open lace, called Spanish work. Coloured boys scramble for pennies upon the hard pavements and brick. Sometimes the crowd sing Shouter hymns and dance for the amusement of the company. Now and then donkey races are got up from one gate of the hotel to the other and round three streets. On these occasions the grand-stand is the big piazza on the first floor, where there is no lack of merriment.

The outside amusements are boating, fishing, driving, and picnicking. Every Friday afternoon polo is played, and everyone in the place goes, not to look at the game, but as an excuse for meeting

and small talk. Now and then matches at "base ball" are played on the polo ground between the hotel and the town, but as all of the hotel players are Americans and understand the game, and most of the other side are not Americans and don't, "the town," as a rule, is nowhere. Duck and Coot shooting is to be had in plenty in different parts of the island, and in some of the out-islands wild hog are to be got, but the visitors do not, as a rule, trouble themselves about such things.

A favourite amusement is to go down to Rawson Square, and make the younger darkies dive for coppers. They are very expert, and never lose a copper by any chance.

The arrival and departure of a steamboat are important events in Nassau at the hotel no less than elsewhere. As a rule they both happen on the same day, and up at the hotel the visitors are all gathered round the door to "welcome the coming, speed the parting guests." A heap of trunks stands near the door—some just come in, some just going away. The new-comers have to run the gauntlet of a hundred pair of eyes as they go up to ornament the register with their names. Some of them come only for a few hours, being bound for Cuba, and having come ashore to look at Nassau, and enjoy a short visit to dry land. The departing visitors always go



away laden with bouquets, and the tender looks like a floating rose garden as she steams out to the big mail boat. Rawson Square is crowded all day long, and even the dogs and cats go down to see the passengers arrive or start.

Practical jokes are not unknown at the hotel, and some three years ago a Cabinet Minister of the United States, the Hon. Daniel Manning, was made the subject of one. A party of conspirators travelled all round the coloured settlements, announcing that there was a gentleman at the hotel who was willing to give as much as 1*l.* for a real good Nassau dog, and that any one who had a dog for sale had better bring him up to the hotel by nine o'clock the following morning, and ask for Mr. Manning. By six a.m. the court of the hotel was crowded with darkies and dogs, and the scene that followed can be more easily imagined than described.

Occasionally, by way of relief from the monotonous dulness of a Nassau Sunday, a party is made up to visit the Shouter Church. Mr. Drysdale has given an account of one of these expeditions in which he joined :—

“The minister of this little flock is a coloured gentleman, and he had been ‘seen’ by a committee, sent in advance from the hotel to make arrangements. For the shouters do not always shout, but only when the spirit moves, or when

Americans want to invest a few dollars in seeing the fun. The committee came back, and reported that the minister had agreed to give a good display for five dollars, 'or to raise the very old Nick for ten dollars.' This story may have been genuine, or it may have been invented by the committee; I can't vouch for it. At any rate they contracted for a show the following Sunday evening, and paid for it; and on Sunday evening we got into some carriages and drove over, ready for any amount of religious or sacrilegious zeal. A coloured gentleman made his way to the door, and took us in charge, saying,—

“‘Step this way, gentlemen; there are seats reserved for you.’

“That ten dollars worked beautifully. Led by our coloured guide, we walked up between two rows of darkies, standing (the church was so crowded) up to and past the chancel rail, through the chancel, up the pulpit steps, and up into the pulpit itself, right behind the minister, where six chairs were waiting for us.

“The congregation sang several curious hymns, the minister prayed, and afterwards preached a sermon, warming up towards the last till he had some of his women hearers excitedly rocking their bodies to and fro, crying amen, and giving the other signs of excitement often seen in ‘re-

vival' meetings. But he failed to make the grand sensation he had contracted for. There was no more commotion than can be seen in any lively Methodist meeting, and the shouting part was a miserable failure. We were all satisfied that we had had the worth of our money without the shouting. It is not in every church you can see a child put inside the chancel rail for safe keeping, and then, when it begins to nod, see its mother make her way up to the front and give it a good cuffing. I should have had more real benefit from the service if the other gentlemen had not been continually whispering funny things in my ears to make me laugh, for fate had put me in the very front seat in the pulpit, just beside the minister."

I am sorry to expose Mr. Drysdale, who has been of so much use to me; but truth compels me to state that I am informed it was that gifted journalist himself, and not his friends, who was guilty of the ribaldry of which he would fain have us believe he disapproved. My informant also states that Mr. Drysdale went the length of keeping the minister in his place by holding on to his coat-tails, and denounced him as an impostor, and would not allow him to have his honorarium till he had brought in a contingent of loud-lunged brethren from outside and given a supplementary exhibition. The sermon for the



occasion was, I believe, on "De beautifullest subjec' ob de female influence ob de woman ober de man."

Amongst the visitors to Nassau in the early part of 1887 was General Sir Owen Lanyon, so that England was not unrepresented. He was a sad sufferer, but his kindly, gentle manner, and the great appreciation he showed of even the most trifling acts of attention that were paid him, won all hearts. He died in the States shortly after leaving. A distinguished American engineer, Captain Eades, died at Nassau about the same time. He had deepened the mouths of the Mississippi River, built a celebrated bridge at St. Louis, and, at the time of his death, was about to construct a ship railway across the isthmus of Panama. General Perkins, of the New York Yacht Club, spends most of his winters at Nassau. He always brings his yacht, the *Nirvana*, on board of which he gives most hospitable entertainments. These parties are rendered doubly agreeable by the presence of his sister, Mrs. McCurdy, a perfect hostess. Mrs. Bierstadt, wife of the celebrated American artist, is a frequent visitor at the Royal Victoria, where her *salon*, hung round with her husband's sketches, is the scene of many pleasant afternoon and evening gatherings.

In the month of February the most Rev. Dr.

Corrigan, Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York, came down to Nassau to consecrate the chapel that had lately been erected. The archbishop became extremely popular in the hotel, and entertainments in his honour were arranged almost daily.

The day of the consecration he sang High Mass, assisted by music got up for him by two ladies from the hotel. The excitement on the occasion was tremendous, both in the hotel and out of it; the chapel might have been filled four times over, and the whole yard was crowded with an excited throng of darkies trying to look in through the windows. Altogether it was one of the liveliest Sabbaths I ever spent in the Bahamas.

Amongst the visitors I must not forget to mention the name of General Armstrong, of Hampton, Virginia, who is devoting his life to the education of the coloured race, and also, to a certain extent of the Red Indians, in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The general is one of those rare men whom it is one's privilege to meet only once or twice in a lifetime. He spends a portion of the year travelling about and inquiring into the condition of the coloured race in different parts. A lucky chance for me landed him this year at Nassau. He stayed but a few days, during which time, however, I had several conversations with him. One of his observations struck me particularly. "I know of no subject," said he, "on which you hear such diametrically opposite opinions as you do about the



The sights of Nassau do not take long to run through, and a lacquais-de-place would make but a poor living by showing them, even if he had a monopoly of the business. Still there are a few.

At the western end of the city is Fort Charlotte, the walls of which were built in 1788 by Lord Dunmore, though the foundations are certainly much older, and were probably laid by the Spaniards. But the people of New Providence have been at so little trouble to preserve any records of their history that in this, as well as other matters, it is difficult to arrive at the truth. Certain it is that most of the city was built in the reigns of the three earlier Georges, and, besides Fort Charlotte, many of the streets were named after members of the royal family, as George Street, Frederick Street, Cumberland

coloured people. I have heard two men in the same town, each of them a large employer of coloured labour, and each of them with equal experience, say the direct opposite, the one claiming that the coloured race might be developed to any extent, the other that there was nothing to be done for them."

At the general's place, "The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute," he educates some 600 or so young coloured people and Indians. Six sects are represented on his committee, but the education is absolutely unsectarian.

The establishment, which is said to be very complete and in every way remarkable, is supported entirely by voluntary contributions. All particulars relating to it and its history may be obtained on application to General S. C. Armstrong, Hampton, Virginia, U.S.A.



Street, whilst the name of Nassau itself was no doubt a compliment to the House of Hanover.

There are a number of subterranean chambers attached to this fort which are worth a visit. Common rumour says these are connected with Government House, two miles away, by a subterranean passage, but this is all nonsense. The fort is surrounded with a dry moat, crossed by a drawbridge. From the top of the fort you realize how many islands surround New Providence, and also how little of the island itself is under cultivation. Wherever the eye travels to seaward it rests on clusters of little islands looking like big fish with their bodies half out of the water; to landward it rests on nothing but green bush! And yet, only fifty years ago, this island was a rich garden, producing cotton, coffee, sugar, and many other things that go to stock the markets of the world! "So much for free negro labour," cry most people! "So much for suddenly emancipating a race that have been in bondage for generations, and leaving them to shift for themselves," say I! Look at the work which is being done by General Armstrong in Virginia! Unless the Wilberforces, Buxtons, and Clarksons meant to impose it as a sacred duty on their children to carry on similar works for at least fifty years after emancipation, they were the enemies, not the friends, of the African race!

I am aware I have said this before, and I may even say it again, for it cannot be too often repeated until Englishmen are aroused to inquire into the condition of their African fellow-subjects in this obscure corner of the West Indies, in this latter half of the nineteenth century.

Coming down from Fort Charlotte, and proceeding along Bay Street to the eastward, the visitor passes the Fish Market, which is well worth looking in upon, the Vendue House, where auctions are held, and the Sponge Exchange, where the sponges are sold. Neither of the latter are worth stopping at, but if he can get a chance of visiting a large sponge yard he ought by all means to do so. The shops where the tortoise-shell work is sold are worth calling at, but if any one thinks he is going to pick up a bargain he is mistaken.

A turning up the hill by the public buildings<sup>6</sup> leads to the Queen's staircase, a great passage way cut in the rock some sixty or seventy feet deep, probably originally constructed to make a quick masked road between the fort which stands just above it and the shore. Ascending the stair-

<sup>6</sup> Among the public buildings is included a very good library, formerly the gaol. After the American War, when the Nassauvians imagined their population was going to double and treble itself, they built a magnificent prison, large enough to hold half the island. Happily it is generally three parts empty.

case one comes upon the fort itself, called "Fort Fincastle," principally remarkable for the fact that, seen from one point, it looks exactly like a paddle-wheel steamboat. There is a fine view from the top, but all the views in Nassau are much the same.

Close by here is the residence of the Anglican Bishop, called Addington House, one of the prettiest places in Nassau, though, like everything else in and about the city, not excepting Government House, it looks as if it was in Chancery.

Descending into the main street the visitor can drive, if he pleases, along a fairly good road—for the Bahamas—to the easternmost point of the island.<sup>6</sup> In East Bay Street he will first pass a collection of very curious houses belonging to the coloured people, and then arrive at the Eastern Parade, where the Polo and Base-ball matches are played. Just beyond here is the church of St. Matthew, the churchyard of which still bears traces of a hurricane by which it was devastated a few years ago. A little further on is a building standing on a point of rising ground, apparently exposed to the fury of the wind from whatever

<sup>6</sup> I cannot understand why Drysdale and other American writers talk so much about the smoothness of the roads in the Bahamas, unless the roads in the States are so bad that anything seems good by comparison. I always found a drive in the Bahamas a regular bonesetting operation on account of the holes in the road.



quarter it may chance to blow. This building was erected by one of the many Thompsons that abound in the Bahamas and, on account of its extraordinary situation was nicknamed "*Thompson's Folly*." Strange to say it has ridden out several hurricanes in safety, whilst houses in far more protected situations have been wrecked. In the garden is a celebrated specimen of the banyan-tree. A little further on is Fort Montagu, of which nothing seems to be known except that it is fairly old. None of the three forts, Charlotte, Fincastle, or Montagu, are of the slightest use now except from an artistic point of view.

Between Fort Montagu and the eastern end of the island lie the settlements of Fox Hills and Sandilands, inhabited almost entirely by native Africans and their immediate descendants. But, save that the people here are nearly all quite coal-black and the older ones almost unintelligible in their talk, there is little difference between this and any other negro settlement in the island.

There are drives all over the island, but outside the limits of the city the principal places usually visited by the stranger are "Waterloo, or the Lake of fire," and Lakes Killarney and Cunningham.

The first is simply a phosphorescent lake, 1000 feet long by 300 broad, but the phosphorescence

is so powerful, that the effect of it is, I believe, unsurpassed in any part of the world.

The lake should of course be visited at night, and the darker the night the better. There is no unusual appearance of phosphorescence on the surface of the water, until one gets into a boat and pulls off.

“The first stroke of the oars gives you a fine start, for as soon as they stir the water up they seem to be dipped in melted gold, and one cannot resist the belief that there is actual fire there.”<sup>7</sup>

It is usual for the visitor to be accompanied by men swimming alongside the boat, who produce the most extraordinary effect imaginable. As they move along one distinctly sees the outline of their limbs beneath the water, swathed as it were in fiery golden drapery, mystic and wonderful, setting off a black ebony head clearly visible by the unnatural light, and making a *tout-ensemble* quite unearthly. “The headings and larger print of newspapers are distinctly legible by the light caused by the oars. Whenever a boat travels through water there is of course a cutting of water at the bow and an eddy left just behind the stern. At Waterloo, that cutwater and eddy are of flaming fire.”<sup>8</sup>

The lake is full of fish, and, as the boat moves along, frightened fish dart about on all sides,

<sup>7</sup> “In Sunny Lands.”

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

leaving fiery trails behind them. Now and then a turtle is disturbed, and as he moves along he looks like a revolving sun. As the more distant fish move about they form little vapoury clouds of fire flashing and darting about on the surface, like the northern lights.

No description can give an adequate idea of the lake of fire at Waterloo, and no effect of phosphorescence ordinarily seen, even in the tropics, can suggest the faintest notion of it.

The most curious part of the whole affair is that it has not as yet been accounted for. The lake, which is artificial, was constructed by a Mr. Williams to store turtles. The bed is cut out of the solid rock, and is only a few hundred yards from the sea, with which it is connected by a small canal, also cut through the rock. When the gate in this canal is open the tide rises and falls in the lake. No matter how often the water is changed, its phosphorescence is never destroyed and, though it has been several times analyzed, no light has ever been thrown on the subject.

Lakes Killarney and Cunningham are on the western side of the island, and are about two square miles in size. The water in these lakes is brackish, and rises and falls with the tide. There is nothing remarkable about them except that they abound in duck and coot all through the winter and are a favourite picnic ground.



A little further to the westward are some caves somewhat resembling, but inferior to, those at Bermuda.

A favourite drive is to the African settlement of Adelaide, on the southern side of the island; but, like the views, one drive in New Providence is the same as another, and I have already said the same of the African settlements.

But perhaps the most interesting and one of the least known of all the expeditions to be made from Nassau is to Clifton, at the extreme south-west point of the island. Here you get a bird's-eye view of the history of the colony for the last few years. Clifton is the only spot on the island where anything like a bluff or cliff is to be seen. For the last two or three miles, as you approach it, the carriage can hardly get along through the thick bush. Hard by the cliff are the remains of what was once a private bath and bath-house. A little to the left, if you can make up your mind to fight through thick bush, which it is difficult to penetrate, you will find the remains of large gates, and what was once a wide carriage-drive, now completely overgrown with really good-sized trees and undergrowth and leading to the ruins of a large three-storied house on the English plan, with the remains of coach-house and stabling for several carriage-horses, with large slave buildings attached.

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Fifty years ago this was the house of a wealthy planter, who lived here in style with troops of slaves, and drove to Nassau over a good road kept in order by them.

To-day you can scarcely fight your way through thorns and briars to look at its ruins.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Start on second circuit—The *Albury and Malone*—Dunmore Town, Harbour Island—Curious land tenure—Highly paid officials—What the bell says—Spanish wells—The bluff—A formal reception—“‘Count o’ dem hogs” —Race prejudice—“Current Settlement” The narrow passage and the glass windows—The Cove—A morning’s tossing—Hatchard’s Bay—A deputation—Starving through the truck system—Asked to license bigamy—Governor’s Harbour—Carey again—Mr. Drysdale’s namesake—Genuine hospitality—The Cay Lawyer—Agricultural prospects—Onions and pine-apples—A lucky loss—An honest wreck—St. Patrick to the rescue—Demoralization of Lulu—Savannah Sound—The brothers Gibson—An African schoolmaster—Struck blind—Pretty birds—Tarpum Bay—A vindictive policeman—Rock Sound—The ocean hole—A handsome Sambo—Captain Billy—Wemys’s Bight—Millar’s Sound—“Dem hogs” again—San Salvador or Cat Island—Arthur’s Town—The bight—Spot for an agricultural college—Past and present—Rev. F. Barrow Matthews—Work of the Anglican Church—Obeah—The cemetery—Savannah cuckoos—Port Howe—Mrs. Smith’s hospitality—A precocious child—Landfall of Columbus—Modern theories *versus* ancient tradition—Origin of name of Cat Island—Longevity of inhabitants.

ON the 21st of April, 1887, I started on my second circuit, this time accompanied by my wife as well as my former travelling-companion the Inspector of schools.



Our vessel was an Abaco-built schooner of fifty-eight tons, called the *Albury and Malone*, a matter-of-fact, business-like name that seemed to knock all the poetry out of the situation. The worst of it was that she had been for a year under the Mexican flag, during which time she was called the *Arizapa*, which would have looked and sounded much better.

We had a crew of seven men all told, Edward Moss, captain—commonly called "*Captain Bill*"—his brother Murray Moss, mate, Arthur Luke, Isaiah Rolle, and Hilton Williamson, seamen, John Malcolm, cook, and Evangelist Bullard, pilot.

The two Mosses, Luke and Malcolm are very nearly white. Bullard, Rolle, and Williamson are darkies.

Besides the humans we were accompanied by a sort of hound named Lulu, Tommy, a tabby cat, a coopful of fowls, and the inevitable pig.

This time I was not honoured with an orderly, as the revenues of the Colony were in so bad a way that the Governor had announced a deficit at the opening of the House, and the Government did not consider itself justified in incurring an expense of 1s 6d. a day to sustain the dignity of the magisterial office.

Our first stopping-place was Harbour Island, situated off the north coast of the island of Eleuthera. Here we arrived without adventure,

save the sight of three gorgeous dolphins who played close around the vessel for some time in a calm sea, but were not to be tempted by any bait.

This island, though comprising only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  square miles, contains the most important settlement in the Bahamas—Nassau only excepted—called Dunmore Town, after Lord Dunmore, who had a summer residence here during his Governorship of the Colony, somewhere about the year 1786.

The settlement is situated on the slope of what passes for a hill in this colony, and the air is considered so good that it is called "The Montpellier of the Bahamas." The houses are well built and quite equal to the average of Nassau, and the inhabitants—numbering about 2000—fairly well to do. There are several white families in the island, most of whom are descendants of the Buccaneers. The Harbour Islanders assisted Colonel Deveaux in the capture of Nassau from the Spaniards, for which service a large tract on the mainland was granted to them in perpetuity, where they cultivate pine-apples, Indian corn, potatoes, yams, melons, tomatoes, and sugar-canes, and within the last few years three sugar-mills have been established at Dunmore Town. The tenure of this land is peculiar. The right of everybody residing on Harbour Island to cultivate it is the same, and the people lay out

lots on any unoccupied space they find. There are no boundaries, and the individual acquires no proprietary rights in anything but the crop which is the result of his labour. This species of tenure is somewhat inconvenient, and complications not unfrequently arise requiring the intervention of the magistrate.

The soil is now getting worked out, and here, as in most other places in the colony, although seaweed manure abounds, it is not utilized, because there is no one to teach the people how to use it, and they are in danger of losing a valuable property, which a little technical knowledge might preserve to them and their descendants for generations. As it is, they are already giving up their future and emigrating in large numbers to Key West.

There are no cattle in the island, and the food of the people is confined almost entirely to poultry, vegetables, fish, and salt meat.

Though there was no work for me, I remained here two days whilst my companion was examining his schools, and spent my time walking about the coloured people's settlement, and inquiring into their condition. With the exception of a few who had been to Key West and Jacksonville, they did not seem to have an idea beyond their own island and their cultivations on the mainland of Eleuthera.



The magistrate here has 215*l.* a year and a boat allowance of 20*l.*, making 235*l.* in all. Besides being magistrate he has to act as Revenue Officer as well. For this beggarly pittance he has often to travel twenty-five miles in an open boat along a dangerous coast to hold an inquest! His predecessor, for the magisterial work alone, had 335*l.* a year, his successor will have only 150*l.*! Yet Harbour Island is the second place in the colony and still doing a considerable trade with the United States, though it has decreased of late years and is still decreasing.

What hope can there be for the future of a colony whilst its Government is compelled to pay an officer discharging duties requiring intelligence and integrity, to say nothing of technical knowledge, after this fashion, because the Imperial Government refuses to assist it?

In Harbour Island itself there is little worth noticing except some cocoa-nut groves which are decidedly picturesque, and the north beach, a long stretch of beautiful sand, so hard that it forms a capital galloping-ground. Here wells are sunk in the sand, formed of barrels with the bottoms knocked out, placed one on top of the other, which keep the people constantly supplied with fresh water. Strange to say, although so close to the ocean, this water is not even brackish, and there is no fresh water, except rain water,

to be obtained in any other part of the island.

There is no clock in Dunmore Town, but in lieu thereof a policeman strikes the hours from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on a bell outside the Police Office. After he has struck the hour of nine he solemnly gives three final strokes on the bell. This is the Harbour Island curfew. After it has struck no one with a character to lose dare be seen in the streets. Lovers in the midst of their moonlight rambles part suddenly and fly affrighted at the sound, for flirting that five minutes before was harmless now becomes dangerous, nay even sinful! I have even heard it suggested that the three strokes on the bell distinctly say, "Kiss! no! more!"

We left Harbour Island on Tuesday, April 26th, and the following morning early, after rounding a curious point called "Ridley's Head," because it is shaped exactly like the nose and mouth of a man, we anchored off Spanish Wells, situated on a tiny islet called St. George's Cay at the north-west point of the island of Eleuthera. This settlement contains a population of 440 persons, for the most part white, principally engaged in the cultivation of pine-apples and oranges for export and of provisions for their own use.

We did not stay here long, but went on almost immediately to our next stopping-place, called



"The Bluff," about five miles distant to the southward.

Here we had to encounter something like an organized reception. This was probably due to the fact that the settlement owned a band and wanted to show it off. We were received by three drums, a fife, and several penny whistles, and a salute of three shots fired from a very ancient musket. We walked from our boat up a short but steep rocky ascent to the school-house, preceded by the band—making a maddening din all the time, and a party of black gentlemen who had come down as a deputation to meet us.

Around the school-house was gathered the bulk of the population, old and young, male and female. The head man of the village—at least he seemed to have assumed that position by tacit consent—was a certain Mr. Neely, "*Ole John Neely, Senior, you please to tell de Gub'ner, sar,*" he explained. He introduced me to the two constables, who had to take a back seat while he was talking. "*De people dey's all well, sar, 'cepttn de pinch belly, 'cos dey can't get nuffin to eat, consekens ob de drouf,*" announced Mr. Neely with emphasis. He made several speeches, not very intelligible, but he repeatedly gave it as his opinion, that "*Wictoria don't know lots o' tings 'bout us poor people, else she wouldn't let tings be as dey is,*" a sentiment which was



received with many signs of approbation by the bystanders.

Whilst the school was inspected we marched round the settlement, accompanied by the band, which no amount of heat seemed to tire out.

Here, as well as at several other settlements, the people asked me to report in favour of their having a paid constable. The reason given was in every case the same, "Count o' dem hogs!—Cos you see, Boss, dem hogs is always running 'bout ober de land and spiling it, and de folks won't keep 'em put up!" "But if the hogs damage your land, why don't you summon the owners?" I would ask. "'Cos you see, Boss, if her hog run ober my land, my hog run ober her land." His and her, it must be remembered, are applied impartially to both sexes. "But if you are not inclined to prosecute each other, why do you want a paid policeman?" "Dat true, Boss, but if we got a paid p'leeceman, he got to carry 'em."

The English of all this was that if the policeman was paid he would impound the stray hogs, report the case to the nearest magistrate, who would punish the offenders, and so gradually abate the nuisance. It is equally the duty of the unpaid constable—of which every settlement possesses at least one—to do the same, but the unpaid official would lose a great deal of time, for

which he would get no remuneration, and incur a great deal of odium as well. This illustrates a curious feature in the character of the Bahamian negro, who is very law-abiding. Directly the constable was paid for his services, he would be looked upon as an officer of the law performing the duties of his office for his living. His acts would then be regarded as done in the way of business, and he would have as good a chance of popularity as any of his neighbours. Not so the unpaid constable, who, if he dares to interfere in any matter not of the gravest importance, is considered a meddling upstart.

But, in the case of "The Bluff," though "*dem hogs*" were, as usual, put forward as the excuse, I found the real reason they wanted a paid constable was, because "Spanish Wells," with only 440 inhabitants, had already got one, whilst they, with over 500, were still out in the cold. "And dats 'cos dey's white folks, Boss, and we'se black."

"Spanish Wells," "The Bluff," and several other settlements, are in the Harbour Island District, where race prejudice runs higher than perhaps anywhere else in the colony. It was here, it will be remembered, that five black men were sentenced to a fine with the alternative of imprisonment, for merely walking into the methodist chapel by a door set apart for white

people, and on board *The Dart*, the mail schooner plying between Harbour Island and Nassau, no passenger of colour is allowed to enter the cabin. And this on board a vessel sailing under the British flag, which is recognized as a portion of that land that can be trodden by the free alone!

“The Bluff” is a very pretty settlement devoted entirely to fruit-growing. At the farther end is a long straggling valley, the bottom of which is covered with a lagoon about four miles long, very picturesque when seen from the higher ground.

Having purchased some long strings of Palmetto plaiting, we returned on board our schooner, hoping to arrive at our next stopping-place, “Current Settlement,” or “The Current,” the same evening. But, alas! there was no wind, and we were compelled to remain where we were, very near the land, and almost devoured by the mosquitoes that came about us in armies as the sun went down.

However, we did get off at last, and about 11 a.m. next day, April 28th, arrived at “The Current,” a nice clean, well-to-do settlement, from which a fair quantity of cocoa-nuts, oranges, limes, and bananas are shipped to the United States.

Most of the inhabitants here are white, or



nearly so, are very good fishermen, and make more of a business of it than they do in most places. Mr. Drysdale describes a captain of a "Current" fishing smack, whom he asked to dinner because he was "*Ham Peggotty in the flesh.*" I was very anxious to see this living portrait, whom there was no difficulty in identifying, for everybody in the place knew who the man was who had been to Nassau and dined with the American gentleman. I was told his name was "James Elden," but unfortunately he was away with his vessel, so my curiosity was not gratified.

The women here make a great deal of shell-work, which they sell at lower prices than at Nassau. The houses are well built and above the average, with the exception of some wretched huts constructed entirely of Palmetto thatching, where the very poorest of the coloured population live. We visited several of the people, who seemed much pleased to have an English lady among them. Most of the people here are Methodists, but the Church of England is represented, and religious feeling runs high. The Anglicans invited us to come and see their chapel; whilst doing so the conversation turned upon religious differences.

One old gentleman sagely observed: "'Course all folks don't think alike. I 'member I was piloting a Yankee vessel. Captain, knowin' I

came from here says : 'I s'pose you one o' them d——d canting Methodists?' 'No,' says I, 'I'm a staunch Churchman!' 'Oh, are you,' says he, 'then you belong to the worst ——s of all!'

One lady, presuming I was a partisan, took me aside to express a hope that, if I wanted any shell-work to send to England, I would send my order exclusively to the Church people. "You see," said she, "there's only me and that gentleman's wife that does the shell-work, that belongs to the Church. His daughter does it too, and she's a Churchwoman; but now she's married a Methodist, and we don't know yet how that will turn out!"

Shortly after leaving "The Current," we passed two of the natural curiosities of the Bahamas, "The narrow passage," and "the glass window." The first is so called because here the mainland of Eleuthera becomes so narrow, that for a few yards it consists of a mere ledge of rock joining one headland to another, and this alone prevents it from being two islands instead of one. In rough weather the seas break over this passage, rendering it very dangerous to cross, especially as the rocks are jagged and slippery. This is the direct land route for persons coming from the lower part of Eleuthera to get to Harbour Island. Having crossed the narrow passage and got on to the high ground above, they light a beacon-fire as a signal, and a boat from Dunmore Town comes and takes

them across. The Government have never done anything to make this road less dangerous, though several persons have been drowned whilst crossing, the last only a week before I passed that way. Just above the narrow passage the rocks rise to a considerable height, and here is situated "The glass window," a freak of nature precisely similar to "The Hole in the Wall" at Abaco, which I have already described.

We anchored off "Gregory Town," otherwise "The Cove," about sunset, and were boarded at once by the Revenue Officer, a Jamaica man, who stayed some time, and made himself very agreeable. He assured me there was no occasion for me to go ashore, but nevertheless I went to bed fully determined to accompany the inspector when he went to examine his school in the morning.

I have a very sleepy recollection of hearing some conversation somewhere about daylight, and having a vague idea that somebody had gone ashore in a boat. But when an hour or two afterwards I went on deck, I found I must give up all idea of landing at the Cove, unless I was prepared to lose a day. It had come on to blow hard in the night, and the schooner had been compelled to weigh her anchor, and lay to, to avoid getting on the rocks. Between us and the shore lay a seething, angry mass of water, in which it seemed



to the unpractised eye impossible for a boat to live. Anyhow, the men who had taken my companion ashore had not cared to try the experiment by coming back to fetch me, and there was no possibility of hailing them, so I concluded—as the Yankees say—to leave the Cove alone.

The discomfort of that night and morning was nearly equal to that of the night we spent off St. David's lighthouse, Bermuda. The vessel was not still an instant, standing was difficult, and moving about an impossibility, so there was nothing for it but to try to sleep.

The inspector returned at last, and in less than an hour we were anchored in a delicious little bight in perfectly smooth water, off a place called Hatchard's Bay, or East End Point. This was not one of my regular stopping-places, and I had not intended to land, but the people sent a deputation off, begging me to come on shore, as they wished to ask me a few questions. As Hatchard's Bay is a sort of appendage to the Cove, which is one of the chief pine-growing settlements in Eleuthera, I thought it would be an admirable opportunity for atoning for my sin of omission in the morning, if indeed I had committed any.

The people here had a sad tale to tell of starvation for many months. They had sold their crop of pine-apples as usual the previous year, but had

not received a farthing for it, until shortly before I arrived, when they had been paid a portion of the purchase-money in flour, which my cook, Malcolm, pronounced to be "*not flour at all!*" The consequence was they had suffered the extremity of hunger during the winter, and one or two old people had actually died of starvation.

As at the Bluff, one of the company had constituted himself head man of the village, and the rest seemed willing to admit his claim. He was the chief speaker, and said a good deal about what the *Good Missus* would do for them if she only knew their condition. These poor people firmly believe the Queen to be an absolute monarch, and their confidence in, and affection for her are unbounded. Just to see what he would say, we asked him whom he meant by the *Good Missus*. "Why, Wictoria, of course," he replied at once with an air of sovereign contempt.

Having said all he had to say on behalf of the village, my friend the head man proceeded to ask a question on his own account. He wanted to know if he might not commit bigamy, as his wife had left him seven years before, though he knew she was alive, and where she was living. He seemed incredulous when I told him I could not give him leave to marry again unless he got a regular divorce. His face assumed an air of sad-

ness. He was evidently disappointed, and parted from me, I fear, with a doubt in his mind whether I was not a fraud.

About five in the afternoon of the same day, Friday, April 29th, we reached Governor's Harbour, which was to be our resting-place until the following Sunday night. On landing, we were received by police constable William Henry Carey, formerly my orderly, but now in charge of the morals of this settlement—his native place. He was followed almost immediately by the Rev. Mr. Vincent, who came out with us from England in *The Belair*, and was ordained shortly afterwards to the cure of St. Patrick's Church, Governor's Harbour. He insisted on our making the parsonage our home during our stay, an invitation only too welcome after our recent knocking about off the Cove.

In a minute or two we were joined by Mr. Preston, the Resident Magistrate, accompanied by a black retriever, named "Drysdale"—after the gentleman with whom the reader is already acquainted—and a knowing-looking, half-bred bull terrier called "Bully," who proceeded to exchange greetings with "Lulu" whilst we made acquaintance with their master.

Mr. Preston is an Englishman from Hertfordshire, and a wonderful advertisement for the climate of the Bahamas. Thirty years ago he



came out to Nassau, warned by the doctor that he would never see thirty unless he got away from the English winter. He is now fifty-eight years of age, as hale and hearty a man, and as likely to live to be eighty or ninety, as could be met with on a summer's day.

He came out originally to engage in a commercial enterprise, but after a time settled down at Governor's Harbour where his wife had land, and ten years ago accepted the post of Resident Justice. During the time he has held office he has devoted himself to his duties with the conscientious energy of a true Englishman. Like all the other out-island justices, he is Magistrate, Revenue Officer, Coroner, Chairman of the Board of Works, Postmaster, and everything else rolled into one, and for all combined he has but 150*l.* a year, and a boat allowance which is not sufficient to pay his expenses! Yet, to say nothing of his magisterial work, his duties as Revenue Officer are most important, for many vessels from America call here during the season for pine-apples.

The settlement was originally situated entirely on a rock some 300 yards long, by 100 wide, connected with the mainland by a narrow neck of sand; but of late years the more wealthy inhabitants have established themselves on the mainland on the side of a good-sized hill. Over this neck

of sand a well-built, substantial causeway has been erected during the reign of Mr. Preston, who has also made a good hard road right up to the top of the hill. The houses on this hill-side are white and clean, standing each of them in its own garden, and the whole place, thanks to Mr. Preston's energetic superintendence of public works, looks very like a pretty little English watering-place.

English people quickly foregather in a strange land. Mr. Vincent was of course an old friend. Before we had arrived at the parsonage, situated halfway up the hill-side, Mr. Preston was already in the same category, and it was a happy Saturday and Sunday we spent between the parsonage and Mr. Preston's house.

On the Saturday I sat four hours in Court to hear complaints, but they were all of the most trivial description, being principally promoted by a black man, who, on account of his litigious character, has been dubbed "The Cay Lawyer."

On the Sunday morning Mr. Preston took me through his fruit orchards, and explained his system of grafting the sweet orange on to the sour, instead of raising it by seed, which was the old plan. In this way he claims to produce a better result in two years than could formerly have been obtained in seven. He pointed out what are called pastures—simply portions of the bush

divided off by railings. Nothing would be easier than to clear these and plant grass, but the people will not try it. Their one idea is pine-apple growing, and nothing else. He says their hesitation to develop new classes of crops is not so much an unwillingness to learn, as a fear of trying experiments on a limited capital. Mr. Preston and his son have done a great deal in this direction, and have so far succeeded that there is little doubt if the former could make up his mind to abandon his unremunerative Government appointment, and devote himself exclusively to agriculture, he would be a gainer. They have already proved that fruit orchards may be made twice as productive as formerly. They have done well by exporting tomatoes to the States, and their last experiment seems likely to prove entirely successful. This is the cultivation of onions, which have been exported in large quantities from Bermuda to America for many years. If the soil of Bermuda will produce them, there is no reason why that of the Bahamas should not do the same in places. The Prestons first tried the experiment on a small scale two years ago. They imported seed from the Canary Islands, and planted a small piece of ground at a cost of 6*l.* The first year this piece left them 4*l.* in debt. The second year it gave them a net profit on the two years of 20*l.* The third year, 1887, the



colony was scourged with an exceptional drought, yet their success has been sufficient to prove that even in the worst years onion cultivation in the Bahamas must pay.

About a mile beyond Mr. Preston's house is the north shore of Eleuthera. Just before reaching it the land, which has been descending for some time, rises again before sloping down to the beach, thus forming a bottom of what is called white, i.e. sandy land, stretching several miles, along which all the corn consumed in the settlement is grown.

As at Harbour Island, the only fresh water supply—except rain-water—is derived from wells, sunk in the sand near the north shore, from whence the women have to carry it daily on their heads, a distance of above two miles. Beside these wells all the clothes of the settlement are washed.

One of the most interesting features of this Sunday morning's walk was to see the mango-trees putting forth their spring leaves, which in infancy are of a rich brown colour, developing gradually into a delicate shade of green as the tree grows older.

In the afternoon Mr. Preston's son took me through the pine-apple fields, and gave me a lecture on pine-apple cultivation. The soil used for this purpose is "*red land*," or good soil, as distin-

guished from "*white land*," or sandy soil. It is cleared by the simple process of burning the bush, without any attempt at grubbing up the roots. The field is then planted with suckers, after which it requires no further cultivation. The suckers produce no fruit for the first eighteen months, at the end of which time they bring forth their first crop of pines. With the fruit appears a new sucker growing out of the root of the plant, which, after the fruit has been cut off, develops into a new plant, and produces fruit the next year, whilst the old plant, having done its work, withers away and dies. This process of automatic reproduction is carried on for four, five, six, or even seven years, according to the goodness of the soil, until the land becomes exhausted and useless. It is then allowed to lie fallow, and go under bush for fifteen or twenty years, or even longer, before any attempt is made to cultivate it again. Besides the main sucker, the pine-apple plant produces other suckers just below the fruit, which are cut off to plant new fields. When pine-apples are shipped for the English market, they have to be cut off below the suckers to preserve them during the long voyage. For the American market they are cut off at the base just as we see them on our tables.

It has yet to be demonstrated whether the old system of allowing the land to lie idle for a long



term of years might not be avoided by a judicious use of manure, and a proper system of fallowing the land by rotation of crops. The Messrs. Preston have already been trying American fertilizers on their land, and by means of them have succeeded in producing pine-apples in soil where it would have been considered impossible a year or two ago. The fields where the fertilizer has been used can be recognized at once by the colouring of the pine-apple plants, which are much darker, but it has yet to be demonstrated whether the exhaustion consequent on the use of it may not be too great for the soil. How great a boon would an agricultural college be to this colony!

In the course of this afternoon's walk we met an old darky who joined the navy in 1840, and went to the China war, where he lost his arm in 1841. Since that time he has been in receipt of a pension of 1s. a day, and is now quite a rich landowner. He says he doesn't regret his arm at the price.

Governor's Harbour is a great contrast to Dunmore Town, Harbour Island. At the former place—thanks to the fact that an Englishman is at the head of affairs—improvement is in the air, at the latter decay, but it is only fair to add that this is also partly due to the fact that the Harbour Islanders have always been persistent wreckers,



whilst the people of Governor's Harbour have devoted themselves to agriculture.

Apropos of wrecking, I heard here of a scandalous case. An English steamer once went aground on the north shore of Eleuthera. She was immediately boarded by wrecking schooners from Harbour Island, who took all her cargo quietly off, the captain, passengers, and crew living comfortably on board all the time, as though nothing had happened. When the last load of cargo was taken out, the passengers and crew were taken in schooners to Nassau, and the vessel abandoned, to be sold by auction for anything she would fetch. She was perfectly sound, but rather old. Although only an episode in the story, it is an interesting fact that the cargo arrived at Nassau 3000*l.* short! What place could flourish that depends on such a rascally trade for its prosperity?

We shall always retain a pleasant recollection of our visit to Governor's Harbour, and of all the kindness we received from our hospitable friends, the Prestons, and at St. Patrick's parsonage.

What on earth St. Patrick can have to do with Eleuthera, where there are not, and, to the best of my belief, never have been, any Irish, is a puzzle. Yet for some occult reason the Anglican chapel at this place is dedicated to the Hibernian saint. There are no poisonous reptiles to turn

out, but if he could be persuaded to get rid of the mosquitoes, the dedication would be of some practical use. Every evening, though the weather was burning hot, we had to sit some time at the back of Mr. Preston's house, enveloped in the smoke of a large wood fire, to enable us to bear them; and a few weeks afterwards, when the Anglican bishop came round, he was compelled by them to abandon the chapel, and hold a service in the open air close to the sea!

Here, as everywhere else, where they are established in the Bahamas, the Ritualists are gaining ground among the coloured people every day. This is not to be wondered at, for, whether one agrees with them or not, it is undeniable that their faith is to be seen in their daily lives. They live among the people and with them, there is no thought of a colour-line in their hearts, and the people have learned to love and trust them. Even those who do not join them frequently attend their services, and do not hesitate to go to them for advice or assistance, for all alike are objects of their benevolence.

The churches at Eleuthera had been without a clergyman for some time until Mr. Vincent and his colleague, Mr. Smith, came out with us to take charge of the island. They were ordained the Sunday after we arrived, and when we were at Governor's Harbour had sole charge of several



churches, which they visited in turn as best they could. The Sundays the clergyman is absent prayers are read by an official called a catechist. St. Patrick's Church is very prettily decorated, and the hymn-singing, always a great attraction to the coloured people, perfect.

It was quite a wrench when, at 10.30 p.m. Sunday, May 1st, we bid good-bye to our kind friends, and went once more on board the *Albury and Malone*, bound for "Savannah Sound," ten miles distant. The two nights on shore had done us all good, including "Lulu," who, no doubt, found sleeping on a cassock in Mr. Vincent's bedroom preferable to the schooner's deck.<sup>1</sup>

We reached Savannah Sound early the follow-

<sup>1</sup> Whether it was the demoralization consequent on excess of luxury I cannot tell, but certain it is that, after leaving Governor's Harbour, no amount of thrashing would keep "Lulu" out of the cabin at night. At last we had to yield to the force of circumstances and make a bed for her in an empty berth. Some time ago this intelligent animal discovered that the "hotel" was the best place in Nassau to live in, so regularly every year she leaves her home in November and boards at the hotel until it shuts in May. Yet she is not devoid of feeling, for last winter discovering through some canine channel of information that her mistress was seriously ill, she went home and did not return to the hotel till she was better. When I went on circuit I borrowed her from her owner, and she remained faithful and devoted to me till I left the colony. But when I returned to Nassau the hotel was closed, and I fear her devotion would not have outlived its reopening in the November following.



ing morning, and had a walk of a mile from the landing-place to the settlement. We had been told that the people of Savannah Sound, who are exclusively engaged in agricultural pursuits, were superior to any on the Eleutheran shore, and they certainly appeared to be so. This goes a long way to prove that, where the coloured people have opportunities and a guiding hand to teach them how to use them, they are not slow to take advantage of them. Most of the land here is owned by a family of coloured brothers named Gibson, the grandchildren of a Scotch planter, who left all his property to his coloured offspring. The Gibson brothers were originally eight in number, but they are now reduced to five. They were all absent but one, and if he is to be taken as a specimen, they must be very much above the average of the Conch, white or black, for not only did he talk intelligently on general topics, but was well posted in European and American politics. But then the brothers Gibson own a large three-masted schooner, called *The Brothers*, and trade direct with the States, without allowing the blighting shadow of Nassau to cross their path.

The schoolmaster here, "Symonette" by name, is a full-blooded African, whom the inspector admits to be one of the very best masters he has in his employment. We attended the inspection,

and found the school in admirable condition. The singing was particularly good. As at Grand Bahama, the children sang the "Bluebells of Scotland," and to hear the old familiar strain rattled out by a chorus of little darkys gave one a queer sort of feeling. Without wishing to be irreverent, it sounded like singing "the Lord's song in a strange land." The children were well up in every subject in which they were examined, and I should have thought them a very intelligent lot if they had not mistaken "Lulu" for a sheep, a name which, I regret to say, stuck to her for the rest of the voyage.

Bullard, the pilot, had an aged mother here, to whom he carried two dollars. We went to visit the old lady, who is ninety years of age, and stone blind. She told us her sight had been failing for some time, till one day she saw a bright light that looked like the trunk of a tree covered with shining gold, and then everything became dark to her for ever. She lived in a wretched hut constructed entirely of palmetto thatching, and not high enough for a grown-up person to stand upright in.

We walked over to the Sound, from which the settlement derives its name. Seen from this part of the land, it looks like an inland lake, but in reality it runs in from the Atlantic Ocean, with which it is connected by a tortuous passage. Its banks are richly wooded, and it is very pretty,



but unfortunately it is too shallow to be utilized as a harbour except by vessels not drawing more than two or three feet of water.

I see I have made a note in my diary as to the quantity of humming-birds, mocking-birds, and tobacco-doves we saw here, but I can hardly tell now why I did so, for we met them nearly everywhere. Most of my readers are acquainted with the humming-bird. The mocking-bird has a sweet note, very like that of an English thrush, but his appearance is very different, for he is of a light dove-colour, and has a longer beak. The tobacco-dove is much smaller than an ordinary dove, with a light-brown body and red wings.

Walking down to the boat, we picked some pale-blue wild convolvulus and some of the yellow flowers of the fever-plant, which the darkies use to make into tea in cases of fever. In fact, what they call bush tea is their sovereign remedy for every malady under the sun.

As we rowed off to the schooner, we could not help noticing the water, the colour of which, near the beach, is of the purest aquamarine.

About three-quarters of an hour's sail before the wind brought us to Tarpum Bay, a very flourishing-looking settlement some eight miles off. This was almost the only good view we had all through the cruise, for the wind was against us on nearly every occasion.

Here I had one or two land cases to try, and a



curious appeal by the local constable against the local justice because the latter had not convicted a man the former had charged before him in the ordinary course of his duty. Apart from the absurdity of a policeman appealing against the acquittal of a prisoner, the magistrate was perfectly right ; but it is not one of the least evils of the system that prevails in this wretched colony, that constable and magistrate are too often so much on the same social level that it is scarcely possible to expect the one to treat the other with that amount of deference which is indispensable for the proper working of their respective offices.

From Tarpum Bay we proceeded to Rock Sound, a most important place in the days of slavery, where some of the larger pine-planters still occasionally reside in summer-time. In old documents the name appears as Wreck Sound, for the inhabitants were formerly much given to wrecking. Agriculture is now their principal pursuit, their chief productions being pineapples and tomatoes ; and they have also a pineapple-preserving factory here. The harbour is excellent, but none but vessels of light draught can enter. About a mile from the settlement is an extraordinary sheet of water called "the Ocean Hole," which rises and falls with the tide, and is said to be as much as twenty-five fathoms deep in some

places. There are also some very interesting caves near the settlement.

There was no work here, which was just as well, as we were anxious to get on; and the assistant resident justice is also the schoolmaster, and would not have been able to attend to my companion and myself at the same time. Whilst the school inspection was going on, we paid a visit to the justice's wife, and also to several coloured families who were related to one of our servants. They all seemed well-to-do, and the settlement, on the whole, fairly flourishing.

The constable here is a *rara avis*, a really handsome black man, in face and feature as well as form. He has travelled a good deal, and has a large family of children of all ages, ranging from a lighthouse keeper in the Imperial service down to a mite of six. From his handsome features I guessed he had white blood somewhere, but he was very black in colour. I was told he was what is called a "Sambo," or the child of a mulatto and a black. Whilst in his company I met a coloured native who had been for many years in the employ of the Elevated Railway Company at New York, and was home for a holiday. He was an intelligent man, and was eloquent on the deplorable condition of his race in the Bahama Islands. He said in the States it did not signify to the coloured people whether



the whites despised them or not. It was all the same to them, as they could make a good living if they chose to work, and got equal rights before the law. In the Bahamas they were not only despised, but could neither get their rights nor make a living!

At Rock Sound resides a remarkable character, known as "Captain Billy." She—yes, the captain is a woman, though a bearded one—long ago abandoned the idea of getting her living by any of the means in common use among her sex, and took to fishing and piloting; she is reckoned one of the best fishermen and pilots in the place. The upper part of her person she dresses always in man's clothes, but, to save appearances, still condescends to wear a short skirt.

From Rock Sound we proceeded to Wemys's Bight, distant about eighty miles, a settlement where pineapples, oranges, and corn are grown in considerable quantities. At the extreme east end are the ruins of one or two estates bearing traces of better days, and of having been once in a high state of cultivation.

The last proprietor of the slave days, Mr. Wemys, left his estate to his coloured offspring, who divided the land and got it properly marked off. We were kindly received at the house of his granddaughter, Mrs. Bethel, a handsome quadroon woman still young, who in her earliest youth must have been nothing short of lovely.



I tried several cases here, and in the afternoon went on with the magistrate to try another at a place called "Millar's Sound," a few miles distant. Here, too, the land had been left by a former proprietor to his people, but had never been divided off, and is held in common up to this day. The result is most curious. The people live in a sort of Irish village, with pigs, sheep, and goats running about wild all over the place. As the land belongs to everybody, everybody's creatures have a right to go everywhere, and the hogs devastate every square yard of land for some distance around the settlement. The consequence is that land which might be covered with cotton and coffee crops is now allowed to lie waste.

This was our last place on the Eleuthera shore, and we bid good-bye to the island with some satisfaction, for we had already been fourteen days out, having accomplished an amount of work we ought to have got through in nine or ten at the outside, and we had a long round before us. But, with the exception of one brisk run from Tarpum Bay, we had had head-winds against us all the way, and were doomed to have them till nearly the end of our cruise.

We were now approaching historic ground, for the next island at which we were to touch was the one tradition has pointed to for nigh four hundred years as the San Salvador of Columbus, the first land he made on the American side of the Atlantic.

On Friday morning, May 6th, we arrived at Arthur's Town, our first halting-place on this celebrated island. Here I had to try a quantity of claims to land, most of which it was impossible to decide because the land had never been surveyed, and the boundaries were therefore not marked out.

We left Arthur's Town the same night, and arrived the next morning at the Bight, where we were received under the hospitable roof of the Rev. F. Barrow Matthews, rector of the island.

San Salvador, or Cat Island, is one of the finest for agricultural purposes in the Bahamian group, and in the slave days contained some very flourishing plantations and substantial planters' houses, all of which are now in ruins. Pineapples and bananas are still largely exported, but the people have been so robbed here as elsewhere by the truck system that they are far from flourishing. The island contains 102,400 acres, and its population in 1881 was 4226. As in the case of Italy, its shape resembles a boot; its length is about sixty miles, and its average breadth four. This would be the spot on which to establish an agricultural college, as there is a quantity of Crown land that would be well suited to the purpose. In the slave days, thousands of head of cattle were reared here, now there is scarcely one to be seen in the island. Yet the facilities for breeding them are the same



as ever. Horses there are, and in the slave days stallions were imported from England to improve the breed, whose blood is still visible in their descendants.

The Bight is the chief settlement in San Salvador, and there are six others, the two principal ones being Arthur's Town and Port Howe. Between the Bight and Port Howe the Manchester Cotton Company formerly had large estates—now completely covered with thick bush. It is incredible that only fifty years ago there was here a territorial aristocracy surrounded with all the luxuries of life and living in well-built mansions, where now there is not a house up to the level of the residence of the poorest English farmer.

We spent Saturday, Sunday, and Monday with Mr. Matthews, or Father Matthews as he is called by Church people and Baptist alike. He is a universal favourite, and since his arrival the Church has been very largely recruited. He is doing a great work, and indeed the High Church party of the Church of England is the only body that, up to the present, has made any attempt really to affect the daily lives or to imbue the poorer classes of this colony with anything like practical Christianity. Until the autumn of 1886 the Catholic Church had no place of worship in the Bahamas at all, and other bodies have been con-



tent to teach the people to come to church or chapel, hear sermons, and sing hymns, leaving them to do much as they pleased outside. At Cat Island Mr. and Mrs. Matthews have founded a guild, which is an untold blessing to the girls. In order to be a member a girl must conduct herself properly, and they value membership so highly that a code of morality hitherto unknown and undreamt of among the coloured people is rapidly coming into being, and likely to become established. No doubt this is greatly due to the presence of an English lady, who lives among them, goes about among them, and makes them feel every day that her heart beats in unison with theirs, and feels for their welfare without regard to creed or colour.

Let me attempt to describe the sort of place an English clergyman, his wife and two children have to live in to carry on this work. A house larger than, but about on a level with an English labourer's cottage, containing two rooms and an apology for a study something like a store-closet. No ceiling, merely a partition between the sitting-room and bedroom, that any one could look over by standing on a chair; only a solitary window glazed, and scarcely one of the little comforts that would be found in the poorest home in England. And this not in a savage land, but in a country which has been nominally civilized

for one hundred and fifty years, and where but fifty years ago the planters lived as I have described!<sup>2</sup>

Apart from every other consideration, it is no sinecure to be rector of a parish sixty miles long by four wide, with seven churches to serve as best you may. Some of his journeys he makes by water, some on horseback. There are still plenty of roads in San Salvador, though many that existed in the days of slavery are now completely overgrown; but they are not roads in our sense of the word, merely tracks over the coral rock with holes like pitfalls every few yards. A San Salvador horse has something of the goat in

<sup>2</sup> About eighteen years ago the Church was disestablished, and its financial position has now become very sad indeed. Mr. Matthews's predecessor, who belonged to the Establishment, got 250*l.* a year. He only gets 150*l.*, half of which comes from the S.P.G., and half from the people. In 1886 they were too poor to pay their dues, and he had to go 30*l.* short. All the clergy appointed since the disestablishment are in the same boat. There are but thirteen Anglican clergy all told in the Bahamas, and they have charge of a large number of parishes, which they visit as best they can, their place being supplied in their absence by catechists, (most of whom are coloured) who are licensed to read prayers, preach, baptize, and marry. Wherever I went where there was a Wesleyan minister I found him well housed and well cared for, and all mainly through the action of the Wesleyan Conference in England. The Churchmen in the colony are too poor to support the Church, let their will be as good as it may. What are the rich Church people in England about? Are they a less wealthy body than the Wesleyans?



his composition, for he goes along these tracks fairly fast and without ever stumbling. On an ordinary high-road he would probably tumble down.

The people here are very superstitious, and what is called "Obeahism" is very common among them. I have never been able to find out exactly what the "Obeah-men" are supposed to do, further than that they are a species of African magicians, who, for a trifling consideration, will bewitch your enemies and charm your fields, so that any one stealing from them will be punished by supernatural agency without the intervention of the policeman or the magistrate.

On the Sunday evening we took a walk to the cemetery, from whence the eye stretches over a large expanse of hill and dale covered with green bush, which so completely hides the coral rock as to give to the whole landscape quite an English effect. The cemetery is haunted by blackbirds—the Savannah cuckoo mentioned in Chapter III.—which breed in large families, and remain together until long after they have flown. They keep up a perpetual screeching, little in harmony with the solemnity of the place. Besides the blackbirds there was an old owl who had a family of young ones in a deep burrow under ground. We could distinctly hear their twitter under our feet, and the parent bird hovered



about over our heads, occasionally flying off in one direction or another, and "toowhit toowhooing" loudly as though to attract our attention from the spot where her nest lay hidden.

We got through our work at the Bight, and left for Port Howe about 10 p.m. on Monday, May 9th. In the morning we landed the inspector about 7 o'clock at a place called the Devil's Point, where he had to inspect a school. The place was aptly named, as far as we are concerned, for it seemed as though we should never get round it, and it was not till late in the afternoon that we reached our destination, only a few miles off.<sup>3</sup>

Here I sat late into the evening, and tried several cases, and afterwards we had supper with Mrs. Smith, the mother of my friend James C. Smith of Nassau, with whose name the reader is already acquainted. She lives in great comfort

<sup>3</sup> At Port Howe I met with an extraordinary instance of juvenile precocity. When I was there in December, 1886, a woman was brought before me charged with stealing flour. The only evidence was that of a child four years of age, which is no evidence at all according to English law, so I had to dismiss the case. My curiosity was however aroused, so I went to see the child, and heard its story first in the presence of its mother, and afterwards alone. I tested it in every way, and it gave a clear account of the robbery which had been committed in its presence, and I have little doubt it spoke the truth. When I went again I saw the child, and asked if it remembered me. It said "Yes." "When did you see me?" I inquired. "De day Tina Rolle steal ma' flour," it replied, without a moment's hesitation.

for an out-islander, and is well known for her lavish hospitality. Her house is always open to strangers, but her great delight is to entertain the clergy, no matter to what denomination they belong. We are not likely to forget her kindness to us.

Near Port Howe is Columbus Point, the spot pointed out by tradition as the landfall of Columbus. Of late years geographers have taken exception to this theory, and seem to agree that "Watling's Island," which we shall visit presently, and not Cat Island, is the real San Salvador of Columbus. The principal reasons put forward for this startling discovery—which after all may be but one of many proofs of the restless desire of change that characterizes the latter half of the nineteenth century—are two in number. The first is that he says he sailed all round the island in a day; the second, that when he left it he steered a S.W. course, and made the island of Cuba, neither of which would be possible if Cat Island were the real San Salvador. With respect to the first point it would be hardly fair, especially having regard to the inflated style of writing common to the time, to let it weigh against a tradition that has held its own for nearly four hundred years. With respect to the second, I commend to my readers the observations that have been kindly written down for me by my friend, the Rev. F. Barrow Matthews:—



“Those who oppose the idea of San Salvador (Cat Island) being the actual landfall of Columbus generally manage to leave out of their argument a point which is to my mind very important. Columbus says, in his journal, that the night before he sighted land he was on the look-out. He was steering S.E. about 10 p.m., when he saw what he took to be a light on his port bow. He asked the man on the look-out what he thought of it, who said it looked either like people walking about or fishing; but they had had so many false alarms lately they concluded to say nothing until daylight made matters plainer. So he kept on his course with a light wind, and in the early morning he saw on his starboard bow a high bluff at the end of a large bay. To this he steered, and landed. Now, if we take the map, we shall see that the lights on the port-bow were most likely Watling’s Island, and the morning revealed the high bluff of San Salvador, which bluff has ever since been known as Columbus Bluff or Point.

“A great stumbling-block is that Columbus states that from San Salvador he steered S.W. to Cuba, which is well known to be an impossibility. But a way out of this difficulty is easily found, and one which is recognized by residents and sailors who cruise in these waters.

“Between San Salvador and Watling’s run very strong currents, and it is probable that Columbus,



who was ignorant of currents, got swept to the north side of Watling's whilst steering S.W. If so, he could quite easily have steered to Cuba from Watling's.

“A curious corroboration of the above theory is supplied by an Inspector of Schools, who started from Port Howe (a settlement about one mile from Columbus's landing-place) for Long Island, 45 miles due S.W. He left at 8 p.m., and all night long there was a calm. In the morning he went to spy through the glass the land which was in sight, supposing it to be Long Island, 45 miles S.W. from where he started the night before. To his astonishment he found it to be Watling's Island, 30 miles due E. from where he had started. The strong current had swept his vessel so far out of her proper course. This is most probably what happened to Columbus, though he was ignorant of the fact, and this is also probably why he states he steered S.W. from San Salvador for Cuba.”

Besides the points mentioned by Mr. Matthews there are one or two more worth consideration. Columbus says, when he made land, he found a bay large enough to contain all the navies in the world. There is a good-sized bay at Columbus's Bluff, and in those days there were few ships over 100 tons, so that the expression is not so ridiculous as it seems at first. He also says he climbed the

Bluff and saw three small lakes. These lakes are to be found at San Salvador. At Watling's there is no bay, and only one lake.

Though there are plenty of wild cats at San Salvador, the modern name "Cat Island" is in no way connected with this circumstance. When Columbus landed, the natives told him the island was called "Guanahani." Some few years ago somebody started a theory that "Guanahani" meant a cat. Nobody really knows anything about the matter, for every trace of the aboriginal language has been lost.

The inhabitants of San Salvador are famous for longevity. In November, 1886, died one Samuel Hunter, of whose age all that was known was that he was at least 110. He remembered the landing of Lord Dunmore, when he came out as Governor of the Bahamas in 1786. About a fortnight before he died, Mr. Matthews paid him a pastoral visit, and sat chatting with him for two hours. He was stone blind, but otherwise his faculties remained unimpaired to the last. Samuel Hunter's father, nicknamed Daddy Sundown, died at the early age of 120 years. He remembered Nassau when there was not a house there except a solitary hut. Whilst at the Bight we were visited by an old lady called "Ma'am Fyffe." Like most of the older coloured people, she does not know her age. All she could tell us about it was

that she was, as she expressed it, "*done married*" before slavery was abolished, and that she was called in to nurse a certain gentleman, who must be now nearer seventy than sixty, when he was nine days old. Yet she works in the fields like a young man, and often walks with a load on her head from the Bight to Port Howe and back—a distance of seventeen miles each way—in one day.



## CHAPTER IX.

Catching a kingfish—Rum Cay—Another highly paid official—A flying mail—Sail *versus* steam—A new lighthouse—Watling's Island—Lighthouse tender *Richmond*—Captain Clapp—Grave of Captain Savage—Negro superstition—Hunting in couples—"De ole Standard"—Jem Arnett again—"Isaiah"—Arrival at Fortune Island—Firing a salute—Life at Fortune Island—Miss — — Rum stops the way—Off again—A solemn pelican—The Margate fish—The Conch and the pink pearl—A monarch of the sea—Running for shelter—Jamaica Bay—A good afternoon's fishing—A Job's comforter—A tedious journey—Catching a dolphin—Inagua past and present—A Devonshire lady—Post-office eccentricities—A fat shark—Ragged Island—Her Majesty's birthday—Hauling—The House of Assembly and the out-islands—A curious career—The magistrate on the Cubans—Another tedious journey—Long Island—A tropical walk—Mr. O'Connor—A lizard at dinner—Good-bye to the inspector—Slow locomotion—Man proposes—"Jem" the pig—Warnings despised—A short tornado and narrow escape—Will the coloured people work?—Long Cay again—Generous hospitality—A fair wind at last—Return to Nassau—The out-islanders—Their opinions—Their kindness and hospitality—More evils of present constitution—Her Majesty's jubilee—Conclusion.

WE left Port Howe about 3 a.m. on Wednesday, May 11th, and after a tedious beat of more than twenty-four hours, arrived at Rum Cay in

the course of the following morning. On the road we caught a fine "kingfish" with the tow-line; a sort of gigantic mackerel, I should say, but whatever it is, it is better eating than any other fish that swims in Bahamian waters.

Rum Cay is about nine and a half miles long, and from two to five broad. It contains two settlements, Port Boyd and Port Nelson the port of entry, where the magistrate lives, and near which is a large salt-pond, once very flourishing, but now doing little or nothing. The failure of the salt-trade in the Bahamas is universal, and is due entirely to the high tariff on imports in the States. On the north-east of the island is a cave containing some Indian figures engraved on the rock.

The magistrate here has 30*l.* a year, and his wife and family eke out their scanty means by keeping a small school and a small shop! Here we met the *Argosy* mail schooner lying at anchor for a few hours. The only postal communication these islands have with Nassau is once a month, when this schooner visits them, and being a sailing-vessel, the times of her visits are entirely dependent on wind and weather. Often Mr. and Mrs. Matthews do not get their English letters until some weeks after they have arrived at Nassau. A steamer would cost the Government but little, and would give an impetus to advance-



ment in every way. But the Government is controlled by the Nassau merchants, who do not want advancement, for that might benefit the out-islanders; and they have a foolish notion that anything that benefits the out-islanders is against the interest of Nassau.

We left Rum Cay the same afternoon, laden with cakes, fresh cocoa-nuts, and cabbages. Our destination was Watling's Island, the San Salvador of the modern American geographers; but, as usual, the wind was against us, and when night fell we were still beating about off the extreme point of Rum Cay. As soon as it was quite dark we distinctly saw the flash from the lighthouse at Watling's, distant about forty miles. This is the last lighthouse erected in the Bahamas by the Imperial Government, and was only opened on April 1st, 1887. It had been long wanted, and ought to have been erected years ago; but now they have done it the Government has made a magnificent piece of work of it. It is a flash light, showing at intervals twenty seconds apart.

We arrived at Watling's Island early the following morning, and anchored off a place called Riding Rocks, close to the shore. The anchorage here is most peculiar. There is only a narrow belt of shallow water between low-water mark and the ocean, and from being out of soundings you pass



instantly, and without the slightest warning, into your anchorage, and *vice versa*.

Here, in the month of April, 1887, the lighthouse tender *Richmond* was driven ashore in a gale, and was only got off after days of labour through the pluck, energy, and perseverance of Staff-Commander Clapp, R.N., the Lighthouse Inspector. Just above the spot where she went ashore, stands the cemetery containing the grave of Captain Savage, R.N., Captain Clapp's predecessor, who died suddenly at Watling's Island. The people of the island all believed the *Richmond*, knowing she could not last long, had gone ashore there of her own act to lay her bones by those of her old commander. When I left the colony she was being put into thorough repair, and looked as if she would go her rounds among the lighthouses for many years to come.

Watling's Island, or shortly "Watling's," as it is always called, is twelve miles long by about from five to seven broad, its shores being slightly indented. In the interior is a large salt-water lagoon, in whose waters it is said no fish can live, and which—contrary to the rule that generally holds in these islands—does not rise and fall with the tide.

In the days of slavery the island was very flourishing, and there are many ruins of the old planters' houses to be seen. The soil was con-

sidered good and the exports were numerous, including *lignum vitæ* and other woods in abundance. It was celebrated for its breed of horses and cattle, which were exported in large numbers to Jamaica. The people are still engaged in agriculture, but the distance from Nassau, 180 miles, prevents their getting the full benefit of their labour; as any produce they may wish to export has to go that way, and often perishes *en route*. Nothing would be easier than for them to open direct communications with the United States, and under any decent form of Government they would be encouraged to do so; but, here again, this would not suit the book of the Nassau merchant, who cannot endure that any exports should go out of the country except through his agency.

The magistrate here has a salary of only 36*l.* a year, but is himself a considerable landowner, and also acts as agent for a Scotch lady who owns a great part of the island—circumstances which enable him to live in greater comfort than most of his colleagues. He and his two sisters have a pretty house, standing in large grounds, which, considering the means at their command, are very tastefully laid out. This is the only place in the out-islands where we saw an attempt made to lay out a garden in flower-beds with borders round them. Near the house were two beautiful Cape



jessamines in full bloom; and the owner has constructed a long walk through his grounds, terminating with a remarkable tree with seats under it. He keeps cows too, and we carried away a bottle of fresh milk—a prize worth its weight in gold on such a journey as ours.

Watling's and Rum Cay hunt in couples to some extent, for they return one member to the Assembly and have one clergyman between them. Whilst here I visited several generations of a coloured family named "Williams," living in one yard. Each generation occupied a separate tenement, and I was conducted with great ceremony to visit the common ancestor, designated "*de ole Standard.*" I had previously seen a very old lady whom I imagined to be the mother of the yard, but she turned out to be only "*de ole Standard's*" daughter. There was not much to be got out of the old gentleman, who was sitting on a sort of settle at the end of a long, low room. He didn't know his age, which he said was down in "*de plantation books;*" but he told me his youngest child was born long before emancipation. He asked for something to rub in for his rheumatism, and for some sugar; two things rather inconsistent, I presume a doctor would say. The magistrate says he is over a hundred years of age. One of his daughters told me she was married during the "three days," by which term they



speak of the period of apprenticeship from 1834 to 1837, that immediately preceded emancipation, when the slave was obliged to work *three days* for his master, and allowed to work *three days* on his own account.

Longevity seems as much the rule here as at "Cat Island." Here I met Jem Arnett again—the solemn Jem of my first circuit—and was introduced by him to his "grin-ma" and "great grin-ma." They seemed all three equally well and strong, and as they stood side by side looked exactly alike and much about the same age.

We were detained here for an hour by one of our boys, "Isaiah Rolle"—one of those happy people that are to be found in every clime and among every colour, who manage to make themselves universal favourites. He lived a long time at "Watling's," which he had not visited for seven years. The consequence was that he could not tear himself away from his numerous friends, and when at last he did return, came waltzing down to the beach disguised in rum. He danced up to me, and addressing me familiarly with "Well, Boss! and how are you?" before I knew where I was, took me up in his arms and deposited me in the boat. We went on board expecting to find Captain Bill, usually of a surly temperament, furious at the delay; but when he found it was only Isaiah, he mērely smiled, more in sorrow

than in anger, and told him to go to bed for two hours. He said it was impossible to be angry with Isaiah, who always had a joke ready for every occasion. Once they had to ride out a hurricane for three days, expecting to go to the bottom every minute, but Isaiah never left off joking the whole time. Perhaps the secret of his popularity is that spite of his little failings he is a splendid seaman and never shirks work.

We had expected to reach Long Cay or Fortune Island early the next morning, but the fates were against us. Instead of finding ourselves in sight of our destination, when morning broke we were tacking backwards and forwards in front of a place called Long Island. In this way we spent the greater part of the day without seeming to make any way at all, and towards evening we were becalmed for several hours off the same spot. But, as though to compensate us in some measure for our delay, a breeze sprang up during the night, and we made the last part of our trip like the wind. About 5 a.m. I went on deck, and found Long Cay just faintly visible on the dim horizon. I had scarcely gone below and dropped off to sleep again, when I was aroused by a sound resembling an explosion of dynamite, caused by the firing of the *Albury and Malone's* solitary charge of powder out of her solitary gun in honour of our arrival at the home of the



captain and crew, nearly all of whom were Fortune Islanders. A boat was soon alongside, with Mr. Duncombe, the resident magistrate, who carried us off to stay at his house.

Fortune Island, or Long Cay, is nine miles in length, varying in breadth from a mile and a quarter to barely two furlongs. Its area is 819 acres, and the population is rapidly increasing. The two settlements, Douglas Town and Albert Town, are about a quarter of a mile apart, separated by the salt-pond, which is very productive. This island was formerly a *rendezvous* for wreckers. In certain states of the wind vessels are able to anchor off the north side just outside Albert Town, but so close in that there is not room to swing, and they have always to be in readiness to move at a moment's notice, in case it should come on to blow hard from the wrong quarter; in which case they go round to a bay on the south side of the island. We got taken in in this way; for, thinking our vessel would remain close at hand, we went ashore without any luggage, intending to go and fetch it, but before we knew where we were, the wind shifted and off she went to a spot only accessible by a walk of a mile and a half through the bush.

The island is aptly named. Not more than twenty years ago Governor Rawson described it as the poorest of the Bahama Islands. It is to-



day the most flourishing. This is due to the fact that a number of steamers trading between New York, Cuba, Hayti, the West Indies, and the Spanish Main call here for labourers, whom they take with them to load and unload cargo at the different ports at which they stop, and drop again at Fortune Island on the return voyage. This keeps a number of men in constant employment, and causes a great deal of ready money to circulate throughout the island. But besides money there is something else that circulates, and that is news; for the steamers call at the rate of three and four a week, so that there is a constant supply of American papers not more than four days old, with European news up to date. This frequent communion with the outer world has acted like a magician's wand on the settlement and its people. As soon as you land you seem to be transported into a different world from the rest of the Bahamas. Men and women, boys and girls, dogs and cats, stores, houses, and everything else have an air of freshness and "go" about them suggestive of life and movement. In all the other out-islands things—animate and inanimate alike—remind one of the palace of the sleeping beauty before the prince's kiss recalled its inmates to conscious existence.

Fortune Island is also the point of departure for persons going to Jamaica and the rest of the West Indies from Nassau and other parts of the

Bahamas. They come to Long Cay in sailing-vessels, and often have to wait there a week before the Atlas steamer from New York calls to take them on. This also brings some money into the island, for a certain number of travellers pass this way in the course of every year. There is still some trade done in salt at this island, though trifling in comparison with former times. The ponds are raked by men and the salt piled in large heaps beside them. It is then carried in baskets on women's heads to a shed, where it is ground down fine and got ready for shipment. The women get a halfpenny a basket for carrying, and run backwards and forwards between the pond and the shed at a rate of speed I never saw approached anywhere else in the Bahama Islands. In fact the island is decidedly flourishing, and might be still more so if it could break off all connection with Nassau. It is already doing a certain amount of trade with the United States direct.

Fortune Island together with Crooked and Acklin's Islands, form what is called "*The Crooked Island Group*," the whole of which is under the jurisdiction of one magistrate, our host, Mr. Duncombe, the only duly qualified lawyer on the magisterial bench of these out-islands.

Crooked Island is separated from Fortune Island by a small channel through which vessels



drawing not more than seven feet of water can always pass. Its area is 48,600 acres, and its population 650. Great quantities of cotton were raised here towards the close of the last century, but the land gradually wearing out for lack of fallowing and manuring, the planters abandoned its cultivation. A settlement here, called "Pitt's Town," was once the post-office of the Bahamas, and is so marked on the old charts. Hither the mails were brought in men-of-war from England. On Bird Rock, at one end of this island, the Imperial Government has of late years erected a lighthouse, with a fine revolving light. The sea running from Bird Rock to Fortune Island, and between there and Long Island, on the opposite side, is known as Crooked Island Passage.

This passage forms part of the great highway from North America to the Spanish Main, and many other places, amongst them Panama. Whenever the Panama Canal is finished the traffic by this route must reach gigantic proportions, and under an energetic government there might be a brilliant future in store for Fortune Island. The South Bay could easily be made into a good harbour by a judicious outlay of capital, and its importance as a station for docking and repairing vessels might become very great. At the same time it would take the place of Nassau as a centre for the trade of the whole



colony, and the steamers constantly passing backwards and forwards could afford to carry frequent mails at a comparatively low rate.

Acklins Island is the largest of the Crooked Island group, being forty-five miles long, and from one to four miles broad. It lies within a quarter of a mile of soundings, and is separated from Crooked Island by an opening so shallow that it can be waded across at low water. The population is 766, most of whom are engaged in agriculture. Ebony, Braziletto wood and lignum vitæ are to be found on the island, and large quantities of guano have been shipped from there.

We passed a pleasant Sunday with Mr. Duncombe and his family, who soon made us feel quite at home. The magistrate had to read prayers in the church in the morning, as substitute for his brother, who was absent ministering to his flock at Crooked Island. Nearly all the Fortune Islanders are Church people, except a few Baptists, who are shepherded by a black pastor in a little building exactly like a lime-kiln, and much about the size.

In the afternoon I went with Mr. Duncombe to call on Mr. Howard Farrington, the owner of my vessel, the *Albury and Malone*. He is also the agent for all the steamers that call here, and is engaged in various commercial enterprises, by

which he is making a rapid fortune. At his house we met the captain of a French vessel who was spending the day there. As the captain could not speak English, and none of his hosts could speak French, the conversation was flagging until our arrival on the scene helped matters a little.

In the evening we went to visit the curiosity *par excellence* of Fortune Island, Miss ——, a big mulatto man, who labours under the delusion that he is a woman. It is supposed that this extraordinary hallucination dates from a bad fall off a horse on to his head he had many years back, but whatever its origin may be, he has been a confirmed monomaniac for the last thirty-five or forty years. Everybody addresses him and speaks of him as “Miss” ——, and he always dresses in female attire. At the same time he is one of the most active and useful, as well as one of the richest men on the island, an excellent man of business, and owns two stores—which he manages entirely himself—besides a schooner and several small boats. He is well known for his hospitality, his kindly, generous nature, and large-hearted charities, and has given all his real estate to the Church of England, of which he is a devoted member, retaining only a life-interest. In order to show his colours, he flies a large flag with a red cross on a white



ground on Sundays from sunrise to sunset. This being a Sunday evening, we found Miss —— hard at work, playing an American organ and singing hymns. He was dressed in a loose white jacket and a white skirt, and his general appearance was more suggestive of a Chinese than anything else. It is said he formerly dressed in fashionable female costume, and has only of late years abandoned such vanities in favour of the sort of loose drapery in which we found him.

On the table were several letters marked "On her Majesty's service," addressed to "——, Esq." for this remarkable person is a member of the School Committee, the local Board of Health, and local Board of Works.

I had but one appeal to dispose of in the morning, after which we lunched with Miss ——, who declined to sit at table, but waited upon us with the greatest courtesy, keeping off the mosquitoes all the time with a large fan.

After lunch, the wind being fair for Inagua, we prepared to start; but to our extreme disgust, Captain Bill announced he was afraid he should not be able to get the boys together. Called upon for explanations, he informed us most of them were drunk, and had gone to sleep in different parts of the settlement, and he didn't think it would be of much use trying to start before the



following morning. Evangelist Bullard, the pilot, stood by the while, solemn and sad, but when, after a short consultation, it was finally decided to await the morrow's dawn, his face beamed all over with a smile of pleasure, and he walked off with the air of a man whose mind was made up. Two hours later he was sleeping the sleep of bibulous innocence on the floor of the Atlas store. The fact was the boys had been away from home a long time, and as Miss —— observed, "Our boys is sober boys when dey's at work, but when dey comes home dey sprees!"

The captain kept sober, so did Williamson, and old Malcolm remained on board all the time, in company with the pig and cat, to look after the vessel, spite of several kindly offers of relief. But Malcolm is blessed with a wife and thirteen children, all of whom—to say nothing of a son-in-law, and a grandchild—reside in a small one-storied shanty, twenty feet by twelve; and it is said the head of the family occasionally asserts her authority when he comes home. So it has always remained an open question whether his conduct on this occasion was prompted by a strong sense of responsibility, or the dread lest a meeting with his better half should prove too much for his feelings.

Our party at dinner was increased by the return of the Rev. Mr. Duncombe from the

country, as the Fortune Islanders grandiloquently term Crooked Island and Acklins.

The magistrate and myself spent a pleasant evening at Mr. Farrington's, where we had some capital music and recitations, and finished with dancing till 12.30, which is, I am told, quite an early hour for Fortune Island.

Next morning we were up betimes and started for the South Bay, a walk of a mile and a half to two miles through the bush, which was richly clad with tropical wild flowers of every variety of colour. The track was wide, but no attempt had been made to level it, and the walk over rough coral rock all the way was very fatiguing. Near where the boat was lying, we passed close by a gigantic pelican, which would not condescend to take the slightest notice of us, but went on pluming himself in the most unconcerned manner. As I looked at him time and place vanished, and the scene changed. I was transported to the Zoological Gardens, and it was Sunday afternoon.

The wind, which had been so favourable the day before, had now died away altogether, so Mr. Duncombe, the magistrate, and his sister-in-law, came on board to breakfast. After we had put them on shore again, the boys bathed, I suppose, to cool themselves after the excesses of the previous day, and we then rowed slowly about, collecting conchs, and spearing lobsters.



I have already mentioned the conch, but having regard to the title of this book, and the important part played by this most valuable mollusc in the daily life of the Bahamians, I may be pardoned for devoting a few lines to a second and more particular description of it.

The *King Conch* is chiefly prized for its beautiful shell, the colour of which is a light cream profusely variegated with brown, red, and black. The *Queen Conch* has a shell larger in size and smoother in outline than the King Conch. The back of the shell is pure white, and the tip a yellow tint, while the interior is a dark brown. A few years ago an Italian came out to Nassau, and instructed the people in the art of making cameos out of this shell, and some very beautiful specimens of their work were exhibited in the Colonial Exhibition of 1886.

The *Twist Conch* is very rare, and always commands a high price from the American visitors. It is regular in shape and mottled with a variety of colours. But by far the most useful of all is the *Common Conch*. Its shell is from six to twelve inches long, and weighs from one to five pounds.

It is a cheap and substantial article of food, and as a fishing bait it is invaluable. It also contains occasionally a pink pearl which is sometimes of great value. Unfortunately these pearls can only be found quite by accident, for there is



no external indication of their presence. A man may spend his whole life opening conchs and never find one; on the other hand he may find enough to make his fortune in less than twenty-four hours. Persons have made large sums of money by buying these pearls from the fishermen, and reselling them in American and European markets, especially in Paris, where they are in great demand. The pearl is not found in or about the shell, but buried in the flesh of the creature.

We returned on board with a boat-load of conchs and lobsters, but there still being no wind, took to the boat again, and tried our hands at line fishing. We had now plenty of bait, and soon a good quantity of fish were lying at the bottom of the boat. These were all what are called "*Margate*," or "*market fish*," the commonest species in the colony. I never could get to understand exactly what their real name is, and I don't think I have ever seen it spelt. It is more commonly pronounced as though spelt with a "*g*," and I have been told it is a corruption of "*Margaret*." But perchance some of the early settlers came from the Isle of Thanet, and named it after the now celebrated watering-place.

In the midst of our sport a breeze sprang up, light but fair, so we hurried on board and weighed anchor. Shortly after starting we passed the

hull of an old wreck, whereon stately and solemn sat a magnificent sea eagle. For one instant only he turned his head and gave us one glance of unutterable scorn as we sailed close by him, but otherwise remained motionless as a statue.

Towards evening the wind freshened, and we made very fair way up to midnight, but daylight found us battling with a head-wind and an angry sea. We kept on till about 8 a.m., when the sea became so heavy that Captain Bill concluded to run for shelter to a place called Jamaica Bay under the lee of Acklins Island. It rained more or less all day, but as a set-off we were on a splendid fishing-ground, and with a goodly store of bait, and that afternoon we caught several hundredweight, among them a rock-fish weighing over fifty pounds, and a quantity of fish of a deep blue colour, with thick scales that looked exactly as if they were made of China. Still the afternoon was not exhilarating, neither did it contribute to the cheerfulness of the situation to receive a visit from a certain Mr. Ferguson, a black bucolic gentleman who had apparently left the wooded eminence on which he resides, and come on board, simply for the pleasure of informing us that, "De wedder on'y just beginning, boss, guess it last some time! De oder judge, he 'blige lie opposite my house five days lass'



time he roun' dis way, and de wedder not near so bad den."

Spite of this gloomy prognostication the weather next morning was lovely. Once more we weighed anchor and made a start, doing pretty well till we got round Castle Island, where there is a lighthouse, a little beyond which we were becalmed in a glassy sea with a tremendous ground-swell underneath. It was a day of horror, a day to conjure up all the imaginable ghosts of past memories, neglected opportunities, hours misspent, what is, what may be, and what might have been. Overhead the burning, merciless sun, beneath the ocean mocking us with its smooth glassy surface, and deep down the ground-swell, causing the vessel to roll about in a manner that rendered every sort of movement a practical impossibility, whilst the boom banged backwards and forwards with a din that nearly split one's head in two every minute. It was a day to drive a man to drink, or turn his thoughts on suicide. All day long we gazed at the lighthouse a few miles astern painted red and white. When the sun went down and the light was lighted, we were in the same spot, and when at last we went to bed, we were drifting back towards it. During the day two steamers passed us, one going north, the other south. How we envied them their swift and easy locomotion!



But everything must have an end some time or another, and in the night a breeze sprang up, and before 10 a.m. the next day Great Inagua was in sight; but still our bad luck pursued us, and we were doomed to beat about for nearly twenty-four hours before we could get round the north-west point of the island.

The day was, however, a little less trying than the previous one, for we had the land to look at, and the monotony of our existence was varied by catching a dolphin weighing more than 40 lbs. We caught a good many dolphins on this cruise, but this was the finest of all. He struggled and fought for his life with desperate energy, tearing and dashing through the water like a flash of rainbow light. At last we got him near enough to the vessel to spear him, and he was hauled on deck. After the spear was taken out of him he struggled and fought again, and it was not till he had received several wounds, and the deck was streaming with his life's blood, that he at last succumbed. The colouring of the dolphin has been often described, but must be seen to be fully realized. Having seen it, I do not wonder the ancients clothed him with mythical attributes, and made him the incarnation of piscine beauty, strength, and speed. It seems almost a crime to torture and slay so beautiful a creature, but after all, he is himself of a cruel disposition and

shows no quarter to the pretty little flying fish upon which he habitually preys.

Great Inagua (*In-agua*, in the water) is among the largest islands in the Bahamian group. Its length is forty-five miles, its extreme breadth eighteen. In 1847 it contained a population of only 172 inhabitants, which had increased to 1120 in 1871, and fell again in 1881 to 1083, since when the island has been going more and more to the bad every year. The principal trade was in salt and has been completely ruined by the American tariff. Formerly there were several persons working salt who shipped in a good year as many as 1,500,000 bushels, and the tramways by which the salt was brought down to the sea are still in existence, though old and rusty. To-day there is but a single individual working salt at all, and he is making a resolute but not very successful attempt to revive the industry. Perhaps if President Cleveland's views, as expressed in a recent message to Congress, should prevail, there may be some hope for these islands of a revival of trade! In the interior there is a prairie where wild cattle and horses wander in large numbers, and may be caught by any one paying a small tax to the government. There seems no reason why cattle should not be reared here for exportation if any competent person would buy land from the government and take



the trouble to look after it himself. The best chance, however, for the island is to be found in the cultivation of manilla fibre, which grows very well here, and is in great demand for the manufacture of ropes. A Mr. Daniel Sergeant has sent a large number of samples from here to different parts of the world which have been pronounced equal to Yucatan fibre of the best quality. Cocoa-nuts are being cultivated, but it is doubtful as yet whether they are of a quality good enough to export with any chance of success. Flamingoes, a very large species of snipe, and a pretty green parrot with a white head, abound throughout the island.

Little Inagua, eight miles long by five, is about five miles off, and is uninhabited. There is also included in the same magisterial district an island called Mayaguana, twenty-five miles long by six, containing 246 inhabitants!

Although we arrived off Matthew Town, Inagua, the evening before, it was not until Saturday morning, May 31st, that we were able to drop our anchor or land, for it is only under certain conditions of wind that it is possible to do either one or the other. That Friday night was horrible, for we lay-to in a ground-swell, if possible worse than the one we had experienced on the previous Thursday, and, when at last we did get on shore, we felt as if we had been bruised



all over, whilst our heads were splitting from the constant banging about of the boom all night long.

We spent the greater part of the day with the clergyman, the Rev. Mr. De Glanville, and his family. There was no court work for me, but I spent a couple of hours with Mr. Macgregor, talking about the state of the settlement, and of the country generally. Both here and at Long Cay I was no stranger, for I had visited them on my first circuit, and many people came to see me and ask my advice. The aspect of this island is perhaps sadder than that of any other in the Bahamas, for only the other day it seemed on the road to success, and now everything in it savours of desolation. The tramways and canals that carried the salt to the beach are scarcely ever used, and are terribly out of order. Most of the best houses are unoccupied, a great part of the town was burnt down a few years ago, and there has been neither sufficient energy nor capital to rebuild it.

Unfortunately there was a great deal of water out in the interior, so we were unable to visit either the savannah—as the prairie is usually called—or an inland lake celebrated for its flamingoes. Mr. De Glanville told us he had seen an arc measuring two miles completely crowded with them, and that they stood fifty deep. On my first circuit I had had a short drive into the

interior, but on this occasion we had to confine ourselves to the limits of the settlement.

In the course of the afternoon we visited Mrs. Bywater, an old lady between seventy and eighty years of age, the only Englishwoman in the island. She was first married to a marine and afterwards to a regular soldier, with whom she went to Bermuda. Whilst there in 1849, they heard of salt-raking that was beginning at Inagua, and went there, hoping to make a fortune. Like every one else they did well for a time, but trade beginning to fail, her husband found he could do better as a mason, to which trade he had been brought up. He was drowned whilst at work building the light-house at Castle Island. The old lady owns some real property, and has money as well, some of which was in the Nassau Bank when it broke. As soon as she heard of the failure, she got on board the first schooner bound for Nassau, walked into the bank, took a seat and declined to be ejected without her money, which they had to give her to get rid of her. She comes from Devonshire, and still talks with the peculiar accent of her native county strongly marked. She reads every bit of English news she can get hold of, is a vehement Tory, and declares that even at her advanced age she would sell off everything and go all the way to England to see Mr. Gladstone hung!

It is a thousand pities something cannot be done to restore prosperity to this beautiful island.



Planting manilla fibre would do a great deal. Cattle-breeding might do something, but the breeder would have to be his own exporter as well. Some money might be made out of the prairie ponies, which are very pretty, and can be bought for from two to three pounds.

We had here an example of the utter callousness of the Bahamian Government as to everything that concerns the out-islands. We brought a mail-bag from Long Cay that had come from America by the *Atlas* steamer, but the only letter it contained was for Long Cay, and had to go back there.

Formerly the steamers in want of labourers used to call at Inagua, and the mails from the States for that part of the Bahamas were sent there. Now, although all is changed and the traffic gone to Long Cay, the mail-bags still come, sealed for Inagua, but have to go to Long Cay first. Generally the bulk of the letters are for Long Cay, but the postmaster there has to wait till he can find a schooner going to Inagua, and send them on, whilst the postmaster at the latter place has to wait till he can find another schooner to take them back. Often important business letters for Mr. Howard Farrington are delayed two months in this way, after the bag containing them has actually been in his hands. The post-office authorities in the States say they will alter all this as soon as they are



asked to do so by the postmaster at Nassau. The latter has been written to over and over again, but does not take any step in the matter.

We would gladly have stayed a while at Inagua, to have seen something of the interior of the island, but having already been so long on the road it was not to be thought of, so between eight and nine in the evening we bid good-bye to our friends the De Glanvilles, and started once more for our vessel. Our boys had been on shore the whole afternoon, and after our recent experience it was not without misgiving that we went to meet them at the boat. No one had turned a hair, however, except Bullard, who was quite able to attend to business, but showed a tendency to repetition. In order to impress upon us the fact that he was quite sober, he told us at least fifty times during our short row that the course to Ragged Island was N.W. by W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  W., and the distance exactly 140 miles.

We had now reached the farthest point of our circuit, and were once more turning our faces in the direction of Nassau. We had also been promised all through our route that as soon as we turned homewards we should at this season of the year probably have the trade-winds with us all the way. Certainly what wind there was, was with us as far as Ragged Island, but, unfortunately, there was so little of it that it was not of much use.

The next day, Sunday, was beautiful, and we were followed during the greater part of it by sharks or dolphins which came close round the vessel. Two whales were spouting at some distance off and remained in sight for several hours. We succeeded in catching one big shark, the only one I ever saw caught, and I have no wish to repeat the experience. Sailors of all colours seem to think it a sacred duty to torture every shark they catch before they kill him, because he is the enemy of mankind, as though the creature was to blame for following his nature, and the cruelties practised on this one before he died were too revolting for description. I did my best to restrain the boys, but it was of no use. The fellow was not more than nine feet long, but they all agreed he was the fattest shark they had ever seen, and certainly he did look enormous. He had to be hauled on deck with the assistance of a bowline, and his liver measured six feet. The shark's liver produces excellent oil, as good as that of the whale, and a healthy shark ought to give a gallon for every foot he measures. Unfortunately the process of obtaining it takes some time and is a severe trial to the olfactory nerves; and in a confined space one hundred miles or so to the south of the Tropic of Cancer, on the 22nd of May, with a burning sun striking nearly vertically down upon the deck, the commodity would have been



dearly purchased at the price. Besides, for three or four days we had been nearly poisoned by the smell of salt fish, for all the fish we had caught had been carefully pickled and was now hung up on the rigging and every available part of the vessel, I suppose, to dry. So the shark's liver together with his mangled remains were thrown overboard, and no doubt speedily devoured by his kindred friends and acquaintances.

When we got him on deck he had attached to his back two small fish weighing about a quarter of a pound each, called sucking-fish. These curious creatures have a sucker under their chins exactly like the fore part of the sole of an india-rubber overshoe. With this they fasten on to sharks and other big fish, establish themselves there, get their nourishment off their bodies, and ride comfortably through life in this way without having to trouble themselves about anything. Another and larger shark which followed close astern of us for some time, had a sucking-fish riding on his back and another on one of his lateral fins.

We arrived off Ragged Island on the Monday afternoon, but here Bullard was for once at fault and got us into a mess. He is considered one of the best all-round pilots in the Bahamas, but it is next to impossible for any man to know every harbour equally well, and he had not been this



way for many years. The consequence was he took us round to the wrong side, where shoals are abundant, and the only entrance to the harbour extremely difficult to find. It was not long before we were on a bank hard and fast, with night approaching and every appearance of dirty weather coming up with it. Captain Bill, who is of a sorrowful countenance and a gloomy disposition, had just cheerfully remarked that "*if it came on to blow, and it looked as if it would, he guessed she would have her bottom out in half an hour,*" when, to our infinite relief, we saw a small boat with two sails making towards us as fast as she could. She turned out to be the "*Eagle,*" belonging to Mr. George Wilson of Ragged Island, and was soon alongside of us, with Mr. Wilson himself, his son, and the magistrate on board of her. Meantime we had succeeded in getting ourselves once more afloat, and, thanks to Mr. Wilson's able piloting, were soon inside the harbour, which for vessels not drawing more than thirteen feet of water is one of the safest and best in the Bahamas. As soon as we were safely anchored, our visitors, after half an hour's chat, left us for the night.

We had not long finished supper, varied on this occasion by some sea-birds' eggs we bought of two boys who came alongside in a boat, when a violent storm began, which lasted through the greater portion of the night. The rain poured down as

it only can in the tropics, so that we had to go below and have everything battened down to prevent the cabin from being drenched, and when the day broke it found us nearly stifled.

The morning was lovely, and the row across the harbour intensely refreshing after all the horrors of the previous night. We had two miles and a half to cover between the anchorage and the landing-place at Duncán's Town, as the settlement here is called.

The inspector had his school to examine as usual, and I had two cases to decide, the first a dispute about land,—arising as usual out of the criminal negligence of the Bahamian Government—the second a quarrel between husband and wife, promoted by the mother-in-law!

The magistrate and the Wilson family are the only whites on this island, the rest of the population consisting of between three and four hundred coloured people. All the population seem fairly well off, and there is an appearance of comfort about their houses that is altogether exceptional.

The Wilson family have been established here for three generations. Their father and grandfather were considerable slave-owners, and it is the only case I have met with in the Bahamas, where the descendants of a slave-owner live among the descendants of their ancestors' slaves and still exercise a friendly influence over them.



Their father had invested largely in slaves shortly before emancipation. He owned a vessel and had just bought all the hands for her, some of them skilled mechanics worth 900 dollars or nearly 200*l.* a piece, and he always made it a rule, if the slave was married, to buy a whole family to prevent separation. For all this crowd of slaves he had to accept, when emancipation came, a compensation of 60 dollars or 12*l.* a head, for the Government of the day made no distinction in the amount of compensation paid for the field hand whose value was comparatively small, and the skilled mechanic who often fetched ten times as much in the market.

There are two brothers Wilson now residing on the island, who are land-owners, sailors, and salt-rakers all in one.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is the island alluded to in Chapter IV., where the truck system has really proved a blessing to the people, but that is because there is a sort of tribal attachment between employer and employed that causes them to work together for their mutual benefit, and in this way they have succeeded in shipping salt at a profit, whilst everybody else has failed. Thirty-eight thousand bushels had been exported during the year when I was there, at five cents or 2½*d.* a bushel. The cost of raking and putting the salt on board ship averages about four cents a bushel, leaving a profit to the owner on 38,000 bushels of 79*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.* The people here always keep a large number of heaps of salt ready to be shipped at a moment's notice, carefully covered with a substantial palmetto thatch to preserve them from the weather, a practice, Mr. Wilson told me, peculiar to Ragged Island.



After the court adjourned we visited Mr. Walter Wilson's house, the old family homestead at the top of the high hill on the side of which Duncan's Town is situated. Just above his house is a mound surmounted by a flagstaff, erected in memory of two midshipmen and a seaman who were drowned off some rocks hard by, called "The Brothers," in 1834. An inscription on this mound says "They were united by friendship in their lives and in death were not divided."

To-day was the Queen's birthday, and on the flagstaff above our heads waved the Union Jack. The view over the island and harbour from this point is exceedingly pretty, and reminded me very much of Bermuda. The harbour is surrounded on all sides by little cays, and bounded at the north end by a larger cay, called Hog Cay, which completely shuts it in, leaving only two narrow outlets to the east and west. The cays all round are covered with cattle, goats, and sheep belonging to the inhabitants of Duncan's Town, who, when they want meat, have to go and hunt them down as though they were wild animals. Near Mr. Walter Wilson's house is still standing what is called a *solitaire*, where the slaves used to be locked up in solitary confinement. After paying it a visit, moralizing a bit over the past and speculating on the future, we strolled down the hill towards Mr. George Wilson's

house, where we were to keep the Queen's birthday by dining off goat-mutton captured on one of the neighbouring cays by Mr. Walter Wilson, the same morning, as soon as the sun was up. On the way down, we visited one or two of the people's houses, remarkably well furnished, and each having a good kitchen, with what is called there a kitchen-room attached. These, as everywhere in these latitudes, were separate buildings, standing in the yard apart from the house. But such an amount of luxury is almost unknown in the out-islands, where nearly everybody cooks in the open air, and the utmost height to which they aspire is an oven shaped like a beehive, erected on the bare ground.

We were entertained right royally in honour of the day, whilst our boat's crew sat in the verandah, and had their share of everything at the table. Mr. George Wilson is married and has several children. His brother is still a bachelor. After dinner we tried rifle practice at a mark on the other side of the harbour, and then one of the brothers suggested as an appropriate termination to the day's proceedings that we should get the net and go hauling. We had very good sport, taking a quantity of a fish called bone-fish, and nicknamed the Bahama ham, on account of a supposed resemblance in flavour, which personally I could never detect. The Messrs. Wilson came on



board to supper, and remained with us long after dark, as it was impossible for the schooner to get through the narrow opening leading to the ocean before daylight.

Although this island is so flourishing, the House of Assembly has always refused to vote it one single penny for its public works. The Messrs. Wilson's father, who was for many years magistrate here, once asked permission to apply the revenues of the island itself for three years to improve the harbour, in order to facilitate the shipping of salt. Even this modest request was refused by the Assembly, true to its invariable rule of plundering the out-landers and grabbing every sixpence that can be got out of them, to spend in Nassau.

The magistrate at Ragged Island is quite a character. Born at Welshpool, he came up to London when very young, and was apprenticed as a sailor. He afterwards got to Australia, where he was doing well as a stock-driver, when he received a letter from a brother in England, telling him an old lady had died and left him some money, but without mentioning the amount. He at once sold off everything and came home, only to find out that he was entitled to a legacy of 100*l.* and no more. This, he says, ruined him.

He was then for a time "on the coast," as it is called, a polite form of saying a man has been in



the slave trade on the West Coast of Africa. He next appeared as a "bush-whacker," whatever that means, in Florida, and was finally a lighthouse-keeper in the Imperial service for twenty-five years, from which he was compelled to retire on a pension at sixty-five years of age. This he looks upon as a great grievance, though the regular age for retirement is sixty; and he, for some unexplained reason, was allowed to remain five years beyond his time. He was living at Nassau when, about two years ago, Governor Blake offered him this magistracy. As he expressed it, "You see, 'twornt easy to find any one to take it, 'cos the salary's on'y 50*l.*, and you've got to find your boat hire out of that, and that's a pretty good item, that is, when a man's revenue officer as well. Howsoever, I jumped at it, I did. I couldn't abide Nassau. It was too crowded with people for me. I can't abide to be among a lot of people, I can't: a lighthouse is the sort of place I likes, where there's on'y two of you—one off and t'other on!"

Whilst a bush-whacker in Florida he took part in an American filibustering expedition for the relief of the Cuban insurgents during one of the many insurrections in that island. I will endeavour to give his account of the affair in his own words, as nearly as I can recollect them:—

"Well, yer see, there was two hundred and fifty

of us went in a river steamer called the *Caroline*. We wasn't to have no regular pay, we wasn't, but we was to have liberty to take anythink as we could find; and the confiscated Spanish estates was to be divided up among us if we was victorious. Well, we got off Cardenas early in the morning—so early that the governor was in bed; so we got him all right, we did. Then we marched off to the Custom House, where all the money was, and got that *compos mentis*. But, Lor' bless you! they ain't no account at all, them Coobians. They was supposed to be our allies, and all as they had to do was to destroy a few miles of the railway and cut the telegraph-wires. Well, they hadn't got the nerve to do either; and just as we was a-getting things comfortable, a lot of them Spanish curasseers come up by train. Well, them Coobians made no more ado, but they was off. Where they got to, I don't know, but there wasn't none of 'em to be seen nowhere. All as we could do was to skedaddle back to the *Caroline* and hide in them big Spanish doorways and pick a few of the soldiers off as they went by when we got a chance. Howsoever, we got off all right at last, and on'y lost two men. I didn't do so bad. I was on'y there twenty-four hours, but I took partickler care not to lose anythink as I could pick up. In fact, I was so busy that I didn't give myself time to take a glass of anythink to



drink all day!" I asked if he got plenty of dollars? "Dollars," said he, with an air of supreme contempt, "I didn't bother about them; they was too heavy to carry! I took doubloons, that's what I took." A doubloon is worth 3*l.* 17*s.*

To become a magistrate after all is a curious ending to such a career as his; but I am bound to say he makes a very good one, and does ample justice to Governor Blake's choice.

The harbour of Ragged Island was a favourite refuge of the pirate Blackbeard and his gang; for, whilst it was always accessible to the vessels he used, constructed to sail quickly and draw very little water, the heavier cruisers that pursued him could never follow him in. Here, too, is one of the many wells that claims to be "Blackbeard's Well," of which it is said that whoever drinks the water must return to the colony. Hearing this superstition, I took, as my friend the magistrate would say, "*very partickler care*" not to go near it for fear I should taste the water by accident.

Although we left Ragged Island with the first gleam of daylight, and the distance to Long Island, our next stopping place, was only sixty miles, what with head winds and calms we did not reach there till Friday, May 27th. Even then we could not make Clarence Town, the place for which we were bound, on the north side of



the island, but the wind drove us on to the south side; so that we had to land at a spot called Galloway's Landing, and walk two miles and a half to our destination, across one of the usual roads.

It was about 11 a.m. when we landed, and a walk of that length, at that hour of the day, over a road cut in the coral rock, under a tropical May sun, is an experience not likely to be forgotten by the European who tries it for the first time. The road runs through the bush, it is true, but the bush here is not the primæval forest one is apt to associate with that word, but a kind of low scrub, not tall enough to afford the slightest shelter. Still, the walk was undeniably lovely, with flowering orchids on each side of the way, and brilliant humming-birds flying about in all directions. After a mile or so, the bush became thinner, and flourishing fields appeared on each side of the Queen's highway. About half-way to Clarence Town we came to the only building we ever saw in the Bahamas that at all resembled an English farmhouse. The proprietor, Mr. Rahmings, greeted us in a very friendly way, and we were not sorry to get the chance of resting awhile, for we were nearly done for.

A little further on Williamson, the quietest and soberest of our boys, and the only Long Islander, begged us to come and see his "mamma;" and

we were introduced to an old African lady with a determined countenance and very grey wool. She told us she was the relict of a defunct pilot, and seemed very proud of the fact that he was drowned at sea, and also that she had borne him twelve children, only, she observed apologetically, "*Dey wasn't all of 'em boys, boss: some of 'em was gals.*" She pointed out with some importance in her manner a house in course of construction where her son was to reside after his marriage, which was in contemplation; but when the latter observed meekly that he thought he should come home, marry, and settle down after this trip, she replied, tartly, "*Den you'se gwine bring lumber 'nuff finish dat house along wid you, else you'se best stop way.*"

In spite of my two rests, this walk of two miles and a half seemed like forty, and when I got to Clarence Town and sat down in a chair in the resident magistrate's room, I felt as if I could not have gone another yard to save my life.

Mr. O'Connor, the resident magistrate here, a kindly, genial Irishman, has in two years filled similar posts in three different islands, and wherever he has been has made himself universally and deservedly loved by his people.

He had formerly served under Governor Blake in the Irish constabulary when the latter was a sub-inspector.



There was no work this afternoon, as Mr. O'Connor inspires so much confidence that few people care to appeal against him, so I enjoyed a rest at his house, listening to his pleasant Irish humour. He lives quite alone, thinking it inadvisable for a resident justice to associate with his people. In this he is quite right, but the loneliness must be very trying to a man of his social turn. He says he served a long apprenticeship on the west coast of Ireland, and doesn't mind it, especially as he finds ample occupation in studying natural history and playing the violin. He had caught a magnificent luminous beetle the night before, of a species well known in these latitudes.

Each of these curious creatures contains two lamps within the limits of a very diminutive person, one in the head and another underneath the body, and each lamp is like a very tiny, but very brilliant electric light. The Cuban ladies often wear these creatures fastened on to their dresses in some way that holds them fast without destroying life.

Whilst we were examining the beetle we espied close by us in the verandah a little lizard which had just caught a butterfly, and was proceeding to eat it. Either the creature didn't see us, or else didn't object to our presence, for he finished his meal with the utmost complacency. He com-



menced with the extreme end of the butterfly's body, and gradually ate his way forward, the wings fluttering about all the time like a fan. The curious part of the business was that the butterfly was almost as big as the lizard.

Towards sundown we started to walk back to the vessel, the boys laden with pine-apples, for two cargoes had just been shipped off at 1s. 3d. a dozen—fancy that, ye Covent Garden merchants—and so there were plenty knocking about. What's more, they were not of the ordinary quality, but what are known as the sugar loaf, and, as I think, equal to the best hothouse pines. When we arrived at Mr. Rahmings's farm, where we had to pick up a quantity of things purchased in the morning, we were compelled to press two more boys into the service, and looked like a procession coming from market. Finally, Mr. Rahmings insisted on presenting us with a lamb, nearly a full-grown sheep, and we had to hire another hand to lead him. He struggled and fought so desperately that the boy had finally to carry him, and as he sat down every few minutes to rest our progress was the reverse of rapid. However, everything must come to an end at last, and about an hour after sunset we stood on the smooth sandy beach where we had landed in the morning.

Long Island is an extensive island, fifty-seven

miles long, and from one to three and a half broad. Cotton was formerly extensively cultivated here, and from the success of a recent attempt there is some reason to believe its cultivation might be revived, but the land is so entirely in the hands of small capitalists, that there is little chance of anything practical being attempted in this way at present. The inhabitants, numbering 2573, are engaged in agriculture, and also own a good deal of stock, though even here they do not seem to utilize their milk, whilst churning is a lost art altogether. Clarence Town, also called Great Harbour, has a harbour capable of holding vessels drawing thirteen feet of water, but very difficult to get either in or out of. Besides Clarence Town there are three other settlements, South End, Deadman's Cay, and Sims's Cay. The Inspector had schools to visit at every one of these settlements, so we left him to continue his road on horseback, and rejoin us at Sims's Cay, the only other place at which my duty compelled me to call.

As our way hither was round the south-east point of the Island and along the north shore, past Clarence Town, I did my best to persuade Mr. O'Connor to spare himself the long walk back and spend the night on board, fully expecting we should be in a position to drop him at home quite early in the morning. Luckily for him he did



not accept my well-meant invitation, and we parted, promising to hoist the jack half-mast as we sailed by his house next day.

We had a merry row out to the schooner, for the boys had had a good time all the afternoon, and were in one of those extraordinary laughing humours the darkies indulge in sometimes when they are unusually happy. The only person who was not quite happy was the poor lamb who, having been carried on a man's shoulders, or else pulled by the neck for a mile and a half, now lay panting at the bottom of the boat with its four legs tied together.

After a hearty supper we started with a flattering breeze for the point, which was only a few miles distant.

The following morning we were still on the wrong side of the point with a head-wind and every tack only seemed to bring us back to the same place from which we started, or else slightly to leeward of it. The morning passed wearily away, enlivened only by the strange proceedings of the lamb, which had now become thoroughly at home, and was amusing himself by an interchange of civilities with "Jem" the pig. The story of this circuit would indeed be incomplete if I did not mention the last-named individual, whose character afforded us an interesting study. He came from America, and had nothing of the



Bahamian hog in his composition, but was physically and mentally a superior order of animal. In fact he was the very incarnation of porcine intelligence. After I had once scratched his back with a stick he followed me whenever he saw me moving about, and if I stopped for an instant he would lay himself down close to my feet with a grunt that said distinctly, "Do it again, please!" He was devoted to music, and whenever he heard the boys begin to sing he would wake out of his sleep, and even leave his food to come and stand close by them. He never moved till the singing was all over, nor uttered a sound except an occasional gentle grunt of satisfaction. Unfortunately Jem was a thief, but this was the only blot on an otherwise spotless character, and he was a great favourite with the boys.

In the afternoon the wind died away altogether, and we lay dull and motionless on the surface of the water about a mile from the point, which was right in front of us. We were just over a sea-garden, and had been gazing very intently down at the objects on the bottom, when we suddenly became aware that the water, the sides and deck of the vessel, and every object above and below had turned pink. It was not like the sweet rose-light of the summer sunset, nor the healthy bloom on a maiden's cheek, but had rather the sulphurous, unwholesome look of a stage illumined

with red fire, the meretricious colouring of the rouged cheek of the *figurante* seen through a strong glass. At first we fancied it was an optical delusion, due to some strain on our eyes from gazing so long down on to the bottom of the water, but it soon became clear that whatever caused it, this pink colour was in the sky and descended upon us from the sky. I did not know at the time that this phenomenon was one of the commonest warnings of the approach of a violent tropical summer thunderstorm. I only knew the thing had a very unwholesome and most unwelcome look, and I had somehow been haunted by a presentiment of coming evil all day long. It is easy to say these things after the event, but it is true nevertheless in the present case, and as I paced uneasily up and down the deck, I could scarcely resist the impulse to go ashore to a solitary house near the beach. However, the men seemed to think nothing of the red light, and even when the sun went down in a sky so horrible that I never saw its equal, they only assured me that it meant rain. As soon as it was dark, and a light showed from the solitary house on the beach the impulse to land became so strong that I think nothing but the fear of showing the white feather before the blacks could have enabled me to resist it. At this season of the year it lightens regularly every evening after dark, in these latitudes,



but to-night the lightning was more than usually vivid and ubiquitous. I spoke to several of the men about it, but they again assured me it meant nothing but rain. One of them said we might have a little wind, but when I ventured to observe we might have a good deal more than we wanted, I was merely laughed at. We were lying in a dead calm, and everything around was still as death, suggesting, if anything on this earth ever did, the calm that precedes the storm. Again I ventured to ask whether, considering the angry look of the sky when the sun went down, the unusual amount of lightning, and the general aspect of affairs, it might not be wiser to take in some of the schooner's sails, and not let her lie there with every rag of canvas set, and again I was assured there was nothing to fear, it only meant rain. So, as there was nothing else to be done, we went to bed, and to sleep.

Soon after midnight we were awakened by a crash of thunder, followed by a confused din of voices and scurrying of feet over our heads. A tropical tornado had burst upon us in all its fury, and every second the vessel seemed on the point of turning right over. Somehow I managed to get out of my berth and stagger to the cabin stairs. The door had been closed to keep out the water that was flying over the vessel every minute, but I pushed part of it open and looked out into a



darkness that was to be felt. The binnacle lamp just threw its light on the face of Captain Bill, morose and angry, who was muttering to himself, "*Bad luck, nothing but bad luck all the voyage.*" Suddenly a blast struck us right abeam with a noise that sounded like a thousand cymbals clanged together by a crowd of yelling savages; then a crash as the vessel went right over on her side, more crashes, more confusion, a babel of voices, and then she seemed suddenly to right herself. By this time I had got into the cabin again, though how I never knew. As soon as things were quieter I went once more up the cabin stairs, and asked Captain Bill how the vessel's head was, but I could get no answer but, "*Everything is carried away, we are in distress.*"

This did not sound lively, but there was not much to be got out of the captain at any time, and nothing at all when he was in one of his morose humours, so as the storm was now dying away, I went forward to Bullard. He told me the boom was broken in two places, the foresail split into shreds, and the head sails had all come down. As it afterwards turned out, though a great deal of damage had been done, nothing had been carried away at all. The whole accident had happened through the gross negligence of Captain Bill, who ought to have been well aware there was danger ahead and taken in sail. Had he done

so we should probably have ridden through the storm in perfect safety; as it was, Bullard told me afterwards, no nine people were ever nearer eternity without passing into it.

Before 2 a.m. the storm was at an end, and happily Bullard, besides being a pilot and a navigator, was also a sail-maker, and under his supervision the men worked all night. By seven in the morning the foresail was so neatly mended that it was difficult to see where it had been split. The deck was a confused mass of spars and ropes, but it was wonderful how soon the boys cleared away everything. They had no sooner finished the foresail than they set to work on the headsails, and both were in their places again soon after nine o'clock. They then went to work to "fish" the boom, as they call it, in other words to set the broken parts in a case of boards first nailed on and then tightly spliced with stout ropes. Before eleven o'clock everything was in its place, and the decks were swept—washing they hardly needed, for that had been very effectually done during the storm—and the whole vessel, save the poor maimed boom, looked as trim and taut as ever.

How little one sometimes understands the true nature of dangers to which one is unaccustomed! To us the worst part of the night's work had seemed to be the breaking of the boom, and the



splitting up of our sails. In reality these circumstances were our salvation, for had everything held on instead of giving way the vessel could not have righted herself, but must have been capsized by the tremendous force of the short tornado that had struck her broadside on.

Though we were not two miles from land, it was impossible to communicate with our companion, so we decided to leave him to his fate, go straight on to Long Cay, which was but thirty miles off, and consult Mr. Howard Farrington whether he wished his vessel to go any further in its present maimed condition.

It is wonderful how careful men are to shut the stable-door after the horse is stolen. All that day and night the boys were on the look out, standing by ready to lower sail if anything like a black cloud appeared in the distance. They had worked so well that to reward them I promised to give them the lamb to eat, but it was with no small compunction I gave the order for its execution, for it had been thoroughly washed by the storm and looked very pretty. However, I bargained that it should be put to death very early in the morning whilst we were still asleep.

It was not till two o'clock next afternoon, Monday, May 30th, that we anchored once more off Fortune Island, where our arrival caused no small stir, and we were soon under the hospitable roof of



our kind friends the Duncombes, with luggage for two nights, and a hind-quarter of the ill-fated lam b

Mr. Farrington decided that the best course would be to proceed at once to Nassau with the vessel as she was and get her fitted with a new boom, as she was otherwise uninjured.

We stayed two days at Fortune Island to rest. On the Monday evening I had another pleasant party at Mr. Farrington's, and on Tuesday we were invited to a coloured wedding and a ball after it, given by Miss — the uncle (*or aunt?*) of the bridegroom. People of all classes in the Bahamas marry in the evening, and this wedding took place immediately after evensong, which the Rev. Mr. Duncombe reads every day at seven o'clock. As the wedding party approached the chancel the surpliced choir sang "The voice that breathed o'er Eden," and the whole ceremony, which was after the High Church plan, was graceful and impressive. The church was crowded, for though weddings are frequent at Long Cay, they still usually attract all the female and a goodly proportion of the male inhabitants of that city. All the wedding party were *en grand tenue*, and one young lady dressed in blue, sobbed so persistently all through the ceremony that we came to the conclusion she was a jilted sweetheart of the bridegroom, and were much surprised to learn she was only his sister.

Immediately after the wedding was over the party adjourned to Miss ——'s house. The first part of the ceremony consisted in handing cake and wine to the guests, who sat round the room looking like mutes at a funeral. Stronger liquors were provided in a back room for those who felt inclined to partake of them. It took a long time to start the dancing, as everyone was shy of beginning, but when once it did start it soon waxed fast and furious. A dance called the "Marengo," imported from Cuba, seemed to be the favourite, and a great many quadrilles were danced with elaborate figures and a great deal of bowing and scraping. The dancers moved with much grace and brought every muscle of their bodies into play. The music consisted of a fife, a large accordeon, and two tambourines which had to be continually taken out and warmed at a large fire in the yard to keep them going. About midnight a bevy of old ladies in their working-dresses appeared and danced jigs for an hour with all the energy of their first youth. One of them, the bridegroom's mother, was fearfully and wonderfully fat, but she hopped about like a bird. The jigs the darkies dance are ordinary Irish jigs, and they seem to consider them quite as much their national dance as the Irishman does.

About eleven the next morning, June 1st, we bid good-bye to our kind friends the Duncombes,



whose generous hospitality we can never forget, and started for Nassau, where we arrived without adventure in about thirty-six hours, for the wind at last was fair and the weather beautiful.

I had now visited all the principal islands in the Bahamas except Exmua,<sup>2</sup> which I much regret not to have seen as it was an important place in the slave days, and possesses many interesting relics of those times. Here Lord Rolle, the same who at a very advanced age insisted on appearing in person to do homage at our present Gracious Majesty's coronation, held large estates. Long before the emancipation he voluntarily freed all his slaves and gave his lands to them and their heirs for ever. All the beneficiaries of course adopted the name of "Rolle" as a surname, and the consequence is "Rolles" swarm all over the colony, and it is impossible to get a dozen coloured people together for any purpose without finding a "Rolle" or two among them. I had two "Rolles" with me on my first circuit, and one on my second.

Wherever I went in the out-islands I was received with kindness and attention by coloured and white alike, except in one or two places where I voluntarily kept out of the way of the white

<sup>2</sup> I ought to have called there on my road to Nassau, but the events of the night of May 28th prevented it, as the vessel had to be overhauled as soon as possible to see what damage she had sustained.



people for reasons that appear fully in the Appendix. It would be invidious to make distinctions, and I will only say that I shall always remember my visit to them with pleasure, and all the kindness I received with gratitude.

I had many conversations during these circuits with people of all classes about the state of the country. Everywhere I found a universal consensus of opinion that the only possible chance for them is some radical change that will destroy the present form of Government, either by turning the colony into a Crown colony or otherwise. Scarcely a single one of the out-islands is at present represented in the Assembly by local men, and in nearly every case they return Nassau merchants, whose only interest in them is to make as much as they can out of them.<sup>3</sup> Of course they have the suffrage, and the remedy is theoretically in their own hands. This they know and admit freely, but they say that practically they cannot return local men. First, because the people of the out-islands, white and black alike, have been so long ground down under the merciless iron heel of the Nassau merchants—who act as agents

<sup>3</sup> The common formula of the coloured people when speaking on this subject is, "*We want to be governed from England like Jamaica*"—at least, such is my experience. Except from the lips of my friend, Mr. James C. Smith, I do not remember to have heard any allusion to the idea of a West Indian Confederation.

for them in almost every action of their lives, and who, as far as they can, put every difficulty in the way of their getting anything without their assistance, that they have lost all habit of independent action. Organization for mutual defence and support they have not yet been educated up to. Secondly, because few men in the out-islands can afford the expense of a session in Nassau even if elected, and I need hardly add that where the election is by open voting, and most of the electors are in debt to the Nassau merchants, it is unlikely that, except in isolated cases, any one ever will be elected without their full approval and consent.

Of course the ballot would do much for them, but where the bulk of the electors are marksmen, even that would hardly be a complete cure, and cure or no cure, they will never get it under the present régime. Of race prejudice in the out-islands, except at Harbour Island, Eleuthera, and Abaco, I did not see much.

Shortly after our return to Nassau, my official connection with the colony terminated abruptly, for reasons fully gone into in the Appendix to this work.

We remained, however, long enough to witness the celebration of Our Gracious Sovereign's Jubilee. It was a pretty sight.

Morning, noon, and night, the streets were



crowded with a happy, loyal crowd, bent on chanting, in their homely fashion, their "*Ave Imperatrix!*" Processions were the order of the day. Everyone made holiday, and was in holiday attire, and the white dresses of the women and children varied by an admixture of pink, blue, and lilac, suggested the idea of a moving flower-bed, as the people streamed along in the brilliant sunshine.

At night the town was illuminated, almost without an exception, by means of Chinese lanterns of every form and colour, imported in tens of thousands from New York. The deep verandahs were festooned with them, and Government House and grounds seemed for the nonce transported into fairyland. The deep violet of the tropical sky made a fitting background, and the whole scene was one to be long remembered by the wanderer from northern climes.

My story of "The Land of the Pink Pearl" is told.

Throughout the foregoing pages I have alternated between grave and gay, but underlying all I have had the deep-set purpose of bringing to the notice of my countrymen certain startling allegations.

I have alleged that there is an obscure corner of the Empire where, under nominally free and independent institutions, a people are ground



down and trodden on by a narrow Oligarchy who care not whether they live or die, so long as they can plunder them, and where, after half a century of emancipation, something scarcely distinguishable from slavery is still existent. I have alleged that under the British flag, within twenty years, men have been sold into actual slavery to Surinam, that men of colour are denied equal justice before the law when their opponents are white, and have even been punished as misdemeanants for daring to enter the House of God by the door reserved for the white man!

The indictment is a serious one. It is either true or false. If true, have I not made out a case for a Royal Commission? If false, then let that condemnation fall on me which should be meted out with no unsparing hand to those who commit themselves to reckless statements.

Perhaps some persons may object against me that after all the colony is so insignificant and unimportant, that it is unreasonable to expect the Imperial Government to waste time and money on inquiring into its condition as long as it remains undisturbed by any active internal commotion, and cite to me the well-known maxim of my own profession: "*De minimis non curat lex*"? To such I reply, in the language of Mr. Froude,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "The English in the West Indies," p. 173. He is speaking of the island of Dominica.

“ If I am asked the question, What use are ‘ *The Bahamas* ’ to us? I decline to measure it by present or possible future marketable value; I answer simply that it is part of the dominions of the Queen. If we pinch a finger, the smart is felt in the brain. If we neglect a wound in the least important part of our persons, it may poison the system. Unless the blood of an organized body circulates freely through the extremities, the extremities mortify and drop off, and the dropping off of any colony of ours will not be to our honour but our shame. ‘ *The Bahamas* ’ seem but a small thing, but our larger colonies are observing us, and the world is observing us, and what we do or fail to do works beyond the limits of its immediate operation. The mode of management which produces the state of things which I have described cannot possibly be a right one . . . We are obliged to keep these islands, for it seems that no one will relieve us of them; and if they are to remain ours, we are bound so to govern them that our name shall be respected and our sovereignty shall not be a mockery.”





## APPENDIX.

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### HISTORY OF THE LIGHTBOURN CASE.

ALTHOUGH personal grievances are of little interest to the general reader, still, as some who have perused the foregoing pages may care to learn how I fared when I tried to do equal justice between the white and coloured races, I have ventured to tell my story in an appendix.

When I left England I knew next to nothing of the coloured race, and I do not suppose I had exchanged a dozen words with a black man or woman in my life. So far from being prejudiced in their favour, I had a general notion that they were an inferior race, intended by Nature to be kept in subjection by the whites, and for this reason my sympathies were entirely with the Southern States during the War of Secession, and with Governor Eyre at the time of the Jamaica riots.

At the same time, I was sincerely anxious to do them justice, and in order fully to qualify myself to discharge my duties as a magistrate, from the moment I landed, I took every available means to acquaint myself with their true character, and the conditions under which they lived.

It did not surprise me to find that assaults by men upon women were very common among them, knowing how common they are among our own lower classes at home, but I thought they were too leniently dealt with in the Police Court at Nassau.

Speaking on this subject one day with Governor Blake,

I said to him, "I think, sir, I will send a few men to prison without the option of a fine, for assaults upon women." He said, "Do. It is what I did myself in Galway, and I think it would have a good effect."

At the time I had this conversation with the Governor, I was only thinking of assaults among the coloured people. The idea that I might have to apply my rule to a white man did not occur to me at the moment, although I had even then discovered that the white Bahamian code of honour with respect to striking women was totally opposed to the ordinary English and American notions on the subject.

My attention was first drawn to the absence of chivalry among the Bahamian whites in the course of a conversation with a leading white citizen of Nassau. We were speaking of a lady who was accused of uttering a gross and unfounded slander. "I should like," said he, "to strike her as I would strike a common woman who annoyed me in the street!" I asked him if he would not hesitate to strike a common woman for *merely* annoying him in the street? He said, "Certainly not." This was followed within a day or two by the case of Rosa Poictier, already related in chap. iv., p. 111.

Still I had not yet realized—as I subsequently did—that it was not uncommon among the native whites to strike their coloured *female* servants as though they were still slaves.

At the same time, as Governor Blake has since told me that by acting as I did with respect to assaults upon women, I raised the race question, and so put an end to the possibility of my being of any further use in the colony, I think I am fully justified in saying that it was his positive duty to give me some word of warning at the time we had this conversation.

There was some excuse for my not perceiving the



possible trouble that might arise out of my proposed line of conduct, but there was none for him.

I had but just arrived from England, a positive stranger to all the incidents of Bahamian or any other colonial life. He had been for more than two years taking the part of the coloured people against the whites, and was very unpopular with the latter on that account. We had often spoken of this together, and he had stated to me his determination to continue to help the coloured people in every way in spite of all opposition. From the way he spoke of his contempt of public opinion and of his previous conduct in Ireland, I not unnaturally came to the conclusion that I was dealing with a man of very determined character, who would support me in any line of conduct he had himself endorsed.

The result of this conversation with Governor Blake was, that on January 1st, 1887, I announced from the Bench of the Nassau Police Court, that—for a time at any rate—I should send all persons convicted before me of striking women, to prison without the option of a fine, except under very extenuating circumstances.

I believe such a thing as sending anyone to prison without option had been previously unheard of in the colony. In this way a show of doing equal justice was kept up, for white and black alike had the option of a fine. The difference between the two cases was that if the black man was too poor to pay he went to prison, whereas, however poor or disreputable the white man might be, the other whites would find the money rather than let him go to the common gaol with the coloured people. Indeed, graver criminal offences, committed by whites, have been often compromised, until it has become a common saying that "*no white man can go to prison in Nassau.*"

There is another reason for the infliction of fines on every possible occasion, namely, that the colony is always



so poor that the smallest contributions to the public purse are of value, for though the Queen's fines are disposable by the Governor alone, they are always spent exclusively for the public benefit.

Acting on this rule, I sent, during the month of January, three black men to prison without option, for assaults on women.

The last of the three, one Moses Wright, assaulted a white girl,<sup>1</sup> the daughter of a licensed pilot in the harbour of Nassau, on the public highway. I sentenced him to six months' hard labour, and ordered him to find two sureties for six months after that; which was tantamount to a sentence of imprisonment for twelve months.

This decision was much approved by the native whites, and I am told by Mr. James C. Smith, that the Methodist organ, the *Nassau Times*, did me the honour to compliment me upon it, though I never saw the article myself.

Early in February, a delicate-looking black girl, named Susan Hopkins, applied to me for a summons against her master, one James Lightbourn, a white man, for assaulting and beating her, and turning her out of doors without paying her wages.

The case came on in due course, and lasted the greater part of two days, and at the instance of the defendant's counsel I visited the premises, in company with him and the counsel for the prosecution, as a great deal turned upon the exact spot where the assault had been committed.

On behalf of the prosecution I had the evidence of the girl herself corroborated by three respectable and quite disinterested black witnesses, who saw the assault committed. For the defence I had merely the uncorroborated denial, on oath, of the defendant; he being a competent witness under a local Act.

I convicted the defendant, and sentenced him to one

<sup>1</sup> It was a mere common assault.

month's imprisonment, without the option of a fine, but without hard labour, thinking that in his case a simple sentence of imprisonment would satisfy the ends of justice.

His counsel at once gave notice of appeal to the Chief Justice, and I had no resource but to let him out on bail, though it went sorely against the grain, for having tested the coloured witnesses by every means suggested to me by a twenty-one years' experience, I had come to the conclusion that they had spoken the truth, and that the defendant had committed wilful and deliberate perjury.

It is only fair to Governor Blake to say that when I waited on him soon after the trial, he urged upon me the necessity of reticence, and advised me not to speak of the case to anyone, and had I followed this excellent advice I should have avoided all the trouble that subsequently fell upon me.

Unfortunately I did not do so. The case caused considerable excitement. People would talk to me about it wherever I went, and the temptation to discuss it was irresistible.

The blacks, of course, were delighted, and went about crying out that justice had come to them at last from England, whilst on the other hand the native whites were up in arms, and the naïveté or shamelessness, I really don't know which to call it, of some of their remarks was positively startling.

Just as I was leaving the court, a prominent white citizen came running up to me, saying, "*Of course Lightbourn got off?*" "No," said I, "*he didn't. I've sentenced him to a month's imprisonment, but he has appealed, to the Chief Justice and is out on bail.*" "*Will the appeal be to a jury?*" he asked. I replied in the negative. "*What a pity,*" said he, "*if it had been to a jury we could have made it all right.*" I had been previously told, on pretty good authority, that juries were habitually



packed in the colony, but the coolness of this confession fairly took away my breath.

Another individual informed me that "*coloured woman were only women in a limited sense ;*" and another said, "*The Lightbourn case touches us all ! Why, I have twice kicked a coloured girl from the top of the house to the bottom myself !*"

Neither had the white Conch ladies any sympathy for their coloured sisters ! One lady uttered the following exquisitely feminine sentiment : "*Often when I hear the impertinence of these coloured girls, I long to be a man that I might strike one of them !*" Another said, "*How could you have sentenced him to imprisonment ? If you wanted to express disapproval of his conduct, you might have fined him 20l. Nobody would have minded that, and all the town would have subscribed to pay it !*" A third lady rebuked me thus, "*You have put us all in a most painful position. Only the other day my poor uncle beat their maidservant after giving her several warnings. In consequence of your action in the Lightbourn case he has had to pay her 3l. for fear he should be brought before you and sent to prison !*"

On the other hand, an Englishman said to me, "*This is the first case of level justice I have seen in all the years I have been here.*"

The common cry among the native whites was that the coloured servants were almost intolerable as it was, and that if a master was liable to be sent to prison for striking a coloured female servant, things would come to a deadlock altogether ! One white native said to me, "*After all, they are more like the lower animals !*"

Yet at the same time I heard every day—for I took some trouble to inquire into the matter—of cases where servants had remained in the same families ten, twenty, thirty, and even forty years.



My own conviction is that the Bahamian coloured people usually make good and faithful servants, but that everything depends upon the way in which they are treated, and as a rule all native English and Americans speak well of them.

Now it so happened that James Lightbourn belonged to the Wesleyan Methodists, the wealthiest, the best organized, and perhaps, on the whole, the most influential religious body in the Bahama Islands.

I first became aware of this fact in my back office after the case was over, when, in answer to my inquiry, "*who the person in the clerical dress was who went bail for him?*" somebody in the room informed me that he was a Methodist minister named Sumner, and that Lightbourn himself was a member of the Methodist Church.

It is undeniable that in talking over the case I did say on more than one occasion—*probably more often than I myself was aware of*—"that I would not believe a Methodist on his oath."

Of this speech I have never attempted the slightest defence; it was, however, uttered solely in private life, and I was provoked into it by being told that Lightbourn had said "*he hoped God would strike him dead,*" and "*he hoped God would serve him as He did Ananias and Sapphira,*" and other similar formulæ, "*if ever he laid a finger on the girl.*"

The speech was to the last degree improper, especially considering the position which I occupied in the colony. It was, however, a mere careless utterance, made in the heat of argument—for the whites were for ever forcing the subject of the Lightbourn case upon me—and I never for a moment thought of the full effect of what I was saying.

Of course I ought to have done so, but it must be remembered in my favour that I had lived all my life in London and did not fully realize the difference between

the metropolis of the world and a small city of some 12,000 inhabitants, where everything one says and does is canvassed from one end to the other.

I emphatically deny that I ever used the words except in the course of private conversations, or that I was ever thinking of any other class of oath except such expressions as "*So help me God*," &c., used out of court.

But, indeed, nobody in the Bahamas imagines that I ever meant I would not believe a Methodist *witness* on his oath, and the whites have over and over again admitted to me, that the whole of the subsequent proceedings were organized to get rid of me because I had sent a white man to prison for striking a black girl. Unfortunately my injudicious speech supplied them with a handle that they were not slow to make use of.

In the language of the *Herald* reporter who did me the honour to interview me in New York, "*the music soon began*" (see *New York Herald*, July 7th, 1887).

Before leaving England the Colonial Office had promised to make every effort in their power to obtain from the Bahamian House of Assembly a vote for my travelling expenses from England to the colony, and a motion to this effect was shortly coming before that body, so the Methodist organ, the *Nassau Times*, indulged its readers every week with a few lines about me. Sometimes they appeared in the form of an article, sometimes in that of an anonymous letter, but in whatever form they appeared they were always scurrilous and always written with the object of urging the House not to pass my grant.

Except for the pleasure they derived from annoying me, they might as well have saved themselves all trouble in the matter, for the Lightbourn case had quite settled that business already, and so sure was I of this that going down to court on the morning of the trial, I said to a friend who is now in England, "*I hope to goodness I*



*shall be able to acquit the fellow, for if I don't it will cost me 50l."*

Considering that this 50l. was of the last importance to me,—for I had lost all my private means before ever I accepted my Bahamian post—it is certainly funny that the native whites all assumed I had prejudged Lightbourn's case for the mere pleasure of humbling their pride.

One chance alone remained to me of getting my money, and that was if the Governor would make the question of my grant a Government measure, in which case every official in the House would have to vote for it. This assistance I felt I was fairly entitled to, for when I was engaged the Colonial Office had distinctly said to me, "We cannot guarantee your passage money, for it depends on the Bahamian House of Assembly, but we will do all we can to obtain it for you."

Shortly after the Lightbourn case I called on the Governor and pointed this out to him. He, however, declined to assist me. As the Chief Justice had not at that time overruled my decision, neither had the Methodist attack commenced, there could be no reason for this refusal except that Governor Blake was frightened at the result of a line of conduct he had himself endorsed. From that moment I made up my mind he intended to leave me to fight my battle alone.

I need hardly say the House refused to pass my grant, though I have little doubt that had it come before them a week before the Lightbourn case, it would have passed without difficulty, and I find by my diary that the following words were said to me a few days only before I left the colony by the chief collector of customs and harbour-master, one of the principal men in Nassau:—

"My dear Mr. Powles, do you remember the day you were standing by the Custom House and I said to you, 'Don't try to strike out a new line. Walk in the old



paths.' At that time you were surrounded by friends, and if your claim had been 100*l.* instead of 50*l.* you would have got it. You wouldn't do this, and look now where you are."

Early in April a petition was sent in to Governor Blake demanding my removal on the ground that I was unfit to try any case in which a Methodist was either a party or a witness. The petition was signed by three white Methodist ministers and thirty-four office-bearers of the Methodist Church. Of these twelve were related to Lightbourn by blood or marriage, ten more were deeply committed to the truck system, which I had condemned from the bench, and on every other occasion, public or private, that presented itself. Another, the superintendent minister, the Rev. Francis Moon, had attacked the Roman Catholic religion to which I belong, in a letter in the *Nassau Times*, wherein he stated in so many words that no Roman Catholic was fit to hold any office, as he could not be a loyal subject of the Queen; whilst three or four more were in a dependent position and could not disobey their masters. Thus in reality the petition was not signed by above half a dozen persons who were both unbiassed and independent. I pointed this out in my official explanation to the Governor, who informed the Methodists that he had expressed to me his strong disapprobation of the expression I had made use of, but that he could not see that mere words spoken in private life, and *unaccompanied by acts*, justified the holding of an inquiry into the conduct of a public officer.

Things were in this condition when I left Nassau for my second circuit. Everybody supposed the matter was at an end, and when, a few days afterwards, a deputation waited upon the Governor with a largely signed petition, asking him to retain my services within the colony, as I was an "*upright, fearless, and independent magistrate*,

from whom all classes of her Majesty's subjects might expect justice," Governor Blake told them positively that my position was in no sort of danger.<sup>2</sup>

On May 3rd Lightbourn's appeal came on for hearing before the Chief Justice, who reversed my decision on my own notes of the evidence taken before me. By the statute law of the colony he had the right of re-hearing the case, and calling all the witnesses before him, but he declined to do so, and contented himself with the general observation that "*he should not think of believing the evidence of any number of black witnesses against that of a respectable man like Mr. Lightbourn.*" It never seemed to occur to him that the "*respectable man*" was accused of an assault, whereas three out of the four coloured witnesses were not only disinterested but had no previous acquaintance with the girl, who had but recently come from the island of Inagua, 300 miles off. He even went the length of accusing one of the witnesses of perjury, a woman with fourteen years' good character. The whole proceeding was manifestly unfair, for he had refused the opportunity offered him of seeing and hearing the witnesses as I had done, and observing their demeanour, and was therefore not in the same position to judge of the truth or falsehood of their evidence.

This decision took everybody by surprise, for although all the white natives were pretty confident that the penalty I had inflicted would be mitigated, even the most sanguine of them had not ventured to hope that Lightbourn would be entirely acquitted. Indeed, in all their conversations with me they had always assumed, as a matter of course, that Lightbourn had assaulted the girl, though slightly.

<sup>2</sup> This petition was signed by several coloured Wesleyans. Governor Blake was good enough to tell me this "*only made the matter worse.*"



Communication between Nassau and the out-islands is so infrequent and uncertain that it was only at Long Island, on May 27th, that I heard the full particulars of the judgment of the Chief Justice. As to what the Methodists had been doing in my absence, I knew nothing until my return to Nassau on June 2nd.

Although I have done my best to confine this very personal narrative within the narrowest limits, I feel it is already far too long. I will therefore roll several interviews into one, for the sake of brevity, and give the substance of what subsequently passed between Governor Blake and myself in as few words as possible.

During my absence the Methodists had been pouring in petitions and letters upon the Governor's devoted head. There was nothing new about them, except that the charges were now particular instead of general, and whereas the first petition had been signed by thirty-seven persons, the subsequent ones were signed by the three ministers only, viz. :—Francis Moon, who objected to the employment of Roman Catholics, Elijah H. Sumner, the brother-in-law of the man I had sentenced to imprisonment, and Frederick C. Wright, who had married his cousin. There was absolutely not one tittle of evidence to show that any other of the original thirty-seven petitioners was cognizant of or party to any of the subsequent proceedings.

To my astonishment, however, Governor Blake said: "*The Methodists have now brought categorical charges against you; there must be an investigation before the Executive Council.*" An investigation before the Executive Council meant suspension, for the majority consisted either of Methodists or of persons so completely under their thumb that they could not give an independent vote.

I pointed out to him that it was monstrous to order an



investigation on a public officer for mere spoken words, when it was well known that the attack upon him was not *bonâ fide*, but was prompted by spite, because he had sent a white man to prison for striking a black girl, and moreover that against a petition signed by thirty-seven persons, asking for my removal, he had had a petition signed by hundreds asking that I might be retained. He replied that only made the matter worse, for I had "*started the race question, and therefore my usefulness in the colony was at an end.*"

He also told me "*I must be made a political martyr of,*" and advised me, as I was a Catholic, "*to go home and try for an Irish Magistracy.*"

Although I knew that for some time previous he had been trying to find a *modus vivendi* with the native whites, I did not think he would have sacrificed me so completely.

I then told him if the Executive Council suspended me I should appeal to the Colonial Office. "*Yes,*" said he, "*but suppose you win everything, your pay will be stopped in the meantime, and from what you tell me of your circumstances I don't see what you are to do.*"<sup>3</sup>

This certainly was a practical difficulty. I had scarcely any private income left, and what I had was not available for a long time; I had just paid my circuit expenses, leaving myself with very little in hand. I was not so visionary as to imagine I could do myself any good without going home; I had not a friend in Nassau who was in a position to lend me 50*l.*, and in the then state of the mails I could not have written home and received an answer, with everything in my favour, before the middle of August, whilst the slightest hitch might have thrown me over for three or four months.

<sup>3</sup> The only power the Executive Council had over me was to suspend from all my functions and stop my pay. Pay stops as a matter of course on suspension.

It will be difficult for anyone who has always lived in lands where there are telegraphs to understand the position of a man placed as I was, in a country without telegraphic communication, and with only a monthly mail, as is the case in the Bahamas in summer time.

The Governor saw I was in a cleft stick, and having made up his mind to a "*peace at any price*" policy, proposed the following way out of the difficulty. If I applied for three months' sick leave,<sup>4</sup> and signed a resignation, to take effect on the 30th of September following, he would get me three months' half pay, which, added to the pay I was to receive for the current month, would put me sufficiently in funds to enable me to get home, where he said I could try for another appointment!

I made a strong appeal to him to refuse the investigation, and recapitulated all my arguments as to the impropriety of allowing a magistrate to be dismissed for mere spoken words, never acted upon, at the instance of a small body of the friends of a man he had felt it his duty to send to prison, and I reminded him of how he himself had approved of the course that had ultimately led to all the trouble. All my efforts were, however, useless, he kept on repeating that I had "*started the colour question,*" "*must be made a political martyr of,*" "*that he had no alternative,*" &c., &c.

I disliked the idea of resigning, especially as he insisted that my resignation should be formal and precise, but I could see no other way out of the difficulty. Still, if I had known at that time that my resignation would be a final bar to any inquiry into my case, nothing on earth would have induced me to sign it. Many of my friends seem to think I ought to have known this by intuitive perception! I confess I utterly fail to see why, since this was my first experience of official life. Even if a

<sup>4</sup> I was seriously unwell at the time.



suspicion of the kind had crossed my mind, the Governor would have put me completely off the scent, for whilst he was talking to me, he laid his hand on a bundle of papers, saying, "*You see I am sending all the official documents home, so that you will have them there if you desire to do anything at the Colonial Office.*"

Finding it impossible to alter the Governor's determination, I accepted his terms, but at the same time filed a petition to Lord Knutsford (then Sir Henry Holland), recapitulating all the circumstances of the Lightbourn case, my injudicious speech about the Methodists, the circumstances that caused me to resign, and praying for an investigation into the whole case.

As soon as they found I was going there was great excitement among the coloured people, and on the day of Jubilee two addresses, expressing confidence and affection, were presented to me, representing the bulk of the coloured population of New Providence. The day we left I received a perfect ovation.

I received also many marks of sympathy from the whites, including several persons who had objected most strongly to my decision in the Lightbourn case, but who strongly resented the idea of my being turned out for merely trying to do what I thought right.

Not that any one either approved or palliated the speech I made about the Methodists, which I neither approve nor palliate myself, but because every one knew it was not for that speech, but for administering even-handed justice between black and white that I was being run out of the country.

And if a judge or magistrate is liable to be run out of a country at the instance of a small section of the community for words, however foolish, uttered in private conversation, and never acted on, what is to become of the independence of the bench?

That this small section of the community happens to



be the wealthiest and most influential only makes the matter worse.

On my arrival in England I was told at the Colonial Office that my resignation was an absolute bar to any inquiry, and that the matter could not be gone into. I at once pointed out that as my resignation did not take effect till September 30th, and it was then only the beginning of August, I was still Circuit Justice of the Bahamas, and I requested permission to withdraw it that the matter might be fully gone into. This permission was, however, refused.

Shortly afterwards the following petition in my favour, signed by 519 persons, was sent in. The number does not, perhaps, appear large, but any one acquainted with the Bahamas will look upon it as very large indeed. Moreover, I am informed by my friend Mr. James C. Smith, that many of the signatures have been obtained in spite of boycotting and other acts of oppression by a powerful section of the white population.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HER MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.

“The Petition of the undersigned British subjects, inhabitants of the Island of New Providence, humbly sheweth :

“(1) That your petitioners are informed and verily believe that his Worship, Louis Diston Powles, Esq., one of the Stipendiary and Circuit Magistrates; now absent on sick leave, does not intend to return to the colony.

“(2) That his Worship has, during his tenure of office, so fearlessly and impartially discharged his magisterial duties that his memory is affectionately cherished by a large majority of the inhabitants not only of New Providence, but also of the outlying islands of the Bahamian Group.

“(3) That your petitioners believe that his Worship has left this colony chiefly in consequence of a persecution organized against him by persons who do not wish to see justice equally administered towards all classes of the community, irrespective of race or social position.

“(4) That the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Bahama Islands are coloured people, and neither of the two judges, nor of the two Stipendiary and Circuit Magistrates, are coloured men.

“Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray :

“(1) That her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies will use all means consistent with his exalted station to induce his Worship, Louis Diston Powles, Esq., to return to this colony, either to take up his present or some higher post should a vacancy occur.

“(2) That in the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of Stipendiary and Circuit Magistrate, her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies will cause that vacancy to be filled (a) by a member of the English, Scotch, or Irish Bar, or (b) by a properly qualified coloured magistrate.”

Since that I have applied to the Colonial Office for re-employment on various occasions. Whether I shall be ultimately successful or not is a question time alone can answer.

L. D. POWLES.

2, Tanfield Court, Temple,  
March 12th, 1888.





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