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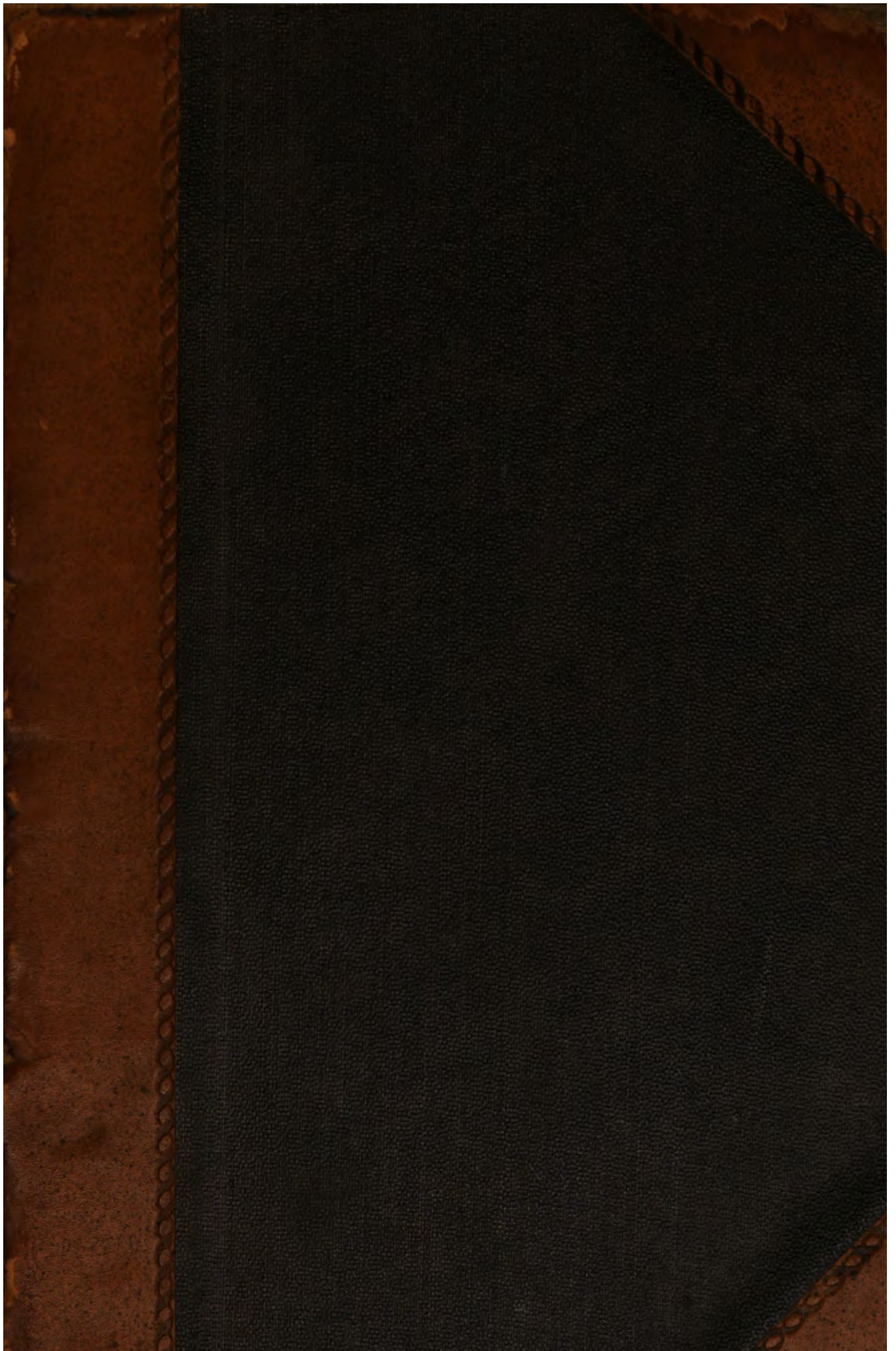
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A RESIDENCE
AT
SIERRA LEONE.

DESCRIBED FROM A JOURNAL KEPT ON THE SPOT, AND FROM
LETTERS WRITTEN TO FRIENDS AT HOME.

BY A LADY.

EDITED
BY THE HON. MRS. NORTON.



LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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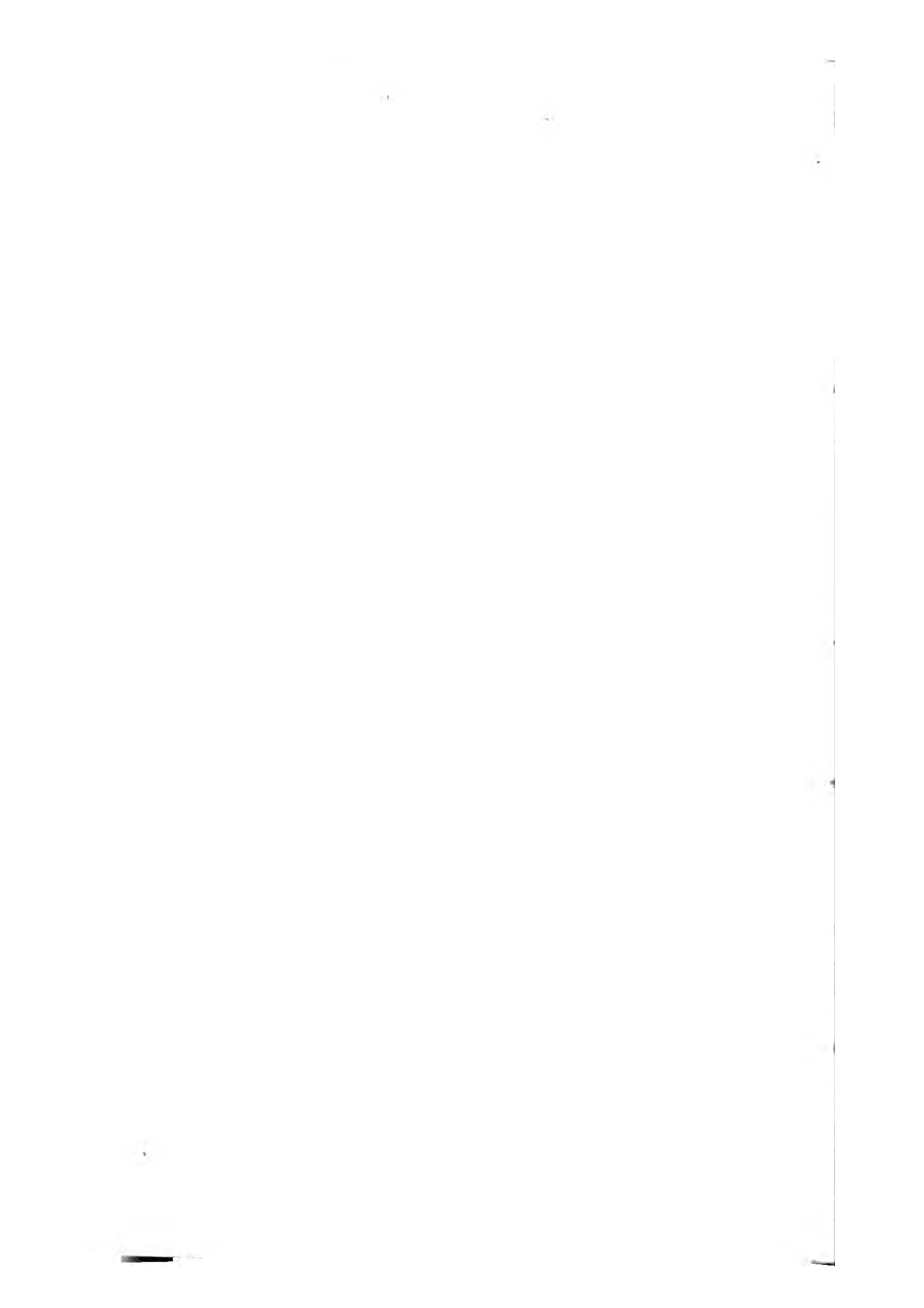
TO

LADY GRAHAM OF NETHERBY,

THE

FOLLOWING PAGES ARE GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

IN offering this little work to the Public, the Author craves indulgence for the trivial matter it contains. It is chiefly compiled from a journal she kept for her own amusement, and a few of her letters to home friends. It might, probably, have been rendered more entertaining by observations and anecdotes connected with the European society of the colony; but it would have been difficult—if not impossible—in a place where the white community is so limited, to have introduced anything of that nature without incurring the imputation of personality.

The writer has also avoided touching much on the slave-trade, although a subject in which she has always felt the deepest interest; and not the least at this moment, when so strong a party seems to advocate a total abandonment of those noble efforts which have, for nearly half a century, so highly distinguished Great Britain amongst the nations of Europe.

But whilst disclaiming all intention of discussing the merits of a great political question, the Author trusts it may not be deemed either out of place, or presumptuous, if she avail herself of this opportunity to add her voice, however feeble, to the testimony of those who declare that, were the squadron withdrawn from the scene of its gallant exertions in the cause of humanity, the West Coast of Africa would become a den of pirates, who would rapidly sweep away all traces of that civilization which has been effected at the sacrifice of so much British blood and treasure.

And here a tribute is due to the Missionaries for their unwearying zeal for the benefit of the colony. To them unquestionably is to be mainly ascribed the state of education and enlightenment attained by the black population of Sierra Leone, which is higher than is generally credited in this country, and has, especially of late years—notwithstanding the continual importations of fresh barbarians—greatly advanced.

To the gifted lady who, perhaps judging too partially of their humble pretensions, kindly edits these pages, the Author now begs to tender her most cordial acknowledgments.

March, 1849.

CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

Voyage out — Tornado — View of Sierra Leone — Black Boatmen — Palms — Banana and Plantain Trees — Beauty of Landing-place — European Residence — Strange Trees and Shrubs — Incessant Noise of Insects — Novel Breakfast — Race-course — Tropical Scenery — Rose-apple — Drive to Freetown — Household Perplexities — Sea-breeze — Harmattan — Fruit and Vegetables — Prices of Provisions . . . Page 1

LETTER II.

Negro Market-people — Devil Offerings — Pleasant Country Drive — Signal Stations — African Sempstress — Petah — Colonial Arrangement of Furniture — Cockroaches — Freetown Noises — Talking Shoes — Travelling Merchants 17

LETTER III.

Removal to a Mountain Abode — Reasons for preferring the Country to Town — African Mode of conveying Luggage, &c. — Difficulty of obtaining Female Servants — Coral and Amber Ornaments — Negro Mothers and Daughters — First Tornadoes of the Season — Roofs of Houses — Palm Cabbage — Sour Sops and Sweet Sops — Pawpaw Trees — Gourd Vessels 30

LETTER IV.

Pureness of the Mountain Air — Birds — Objects in keeping a Journal — Palanquin Travelling — Sierra Leone "Bush" — The House on the Hill — Sunrise — Mahommedan Call to Prayers — Ants in the Store-room — Cocoa-nut Trees — Guavas — Magnificent View — Grass-fields — Mount Oriel — Flowers — Locusts — Red Ants — Coffee Shrubs — Bug-a-bugs — Larder and Cupboard Economy — Talipat and other Palms — Morning Scenes and Sounds — Mango Trees — Bamboos — Bermuda Grass — Lizards and Snakes 37

LETTER V.

Flight of Locusts — Noxious Exhalations — Ride to Mount Oriel — Ruined Cottage — View of Bullom Shore — Solitary Grave — Rough Roads — Dreary Mountain Scenery — Salutations of the Natives — Strange Atmospheric Picture — Flying Ants — Mason Bees — Out-door Improvements — Plants — Specimen of Negro Intellect — Acquirements of Female Domestic — Isles de Los — Sangaree Mountains — Leopard's Island 50

LETTER VI.

Changes in the Weather — Sail in the Offing — Anchorage Localities of different Vessels — The Middle Ground — Anxiety for Home Letters — Ship from England — Country Vegetables — National Dishes — Manufacture of Cayenne Pepper Page 62

LETTER VII.

Narrow Escape in a Tornado — Violence of such Storms — Native Hut destroyed by Lightning — Another Locust Visitation — Crickets — Little Apprentices — The Niger Steamers — Slave Vessels — Damp of the Climate — Swarm of Fat Ants — Rainy Season Vegetation — Beautiful Flowers — Best Method of preserving Health in the Tropics — A Snake in the House 69

LETTER VIII.

Wet Weather — Cassada Rats — Deer — Bamboo Thatch — Country Umbrellas — Rapid Growth of Plants — Walk to the Brook in the Ravine — Excessive Humidity of the Atmosphere — An Unexpected Visit — Monkeys — Travelling Ants — Whimsical Gown-Patterns — Magnetic and Musical Stones 79

LETTER IX.

Discomforts of the Rainy Season — Dense Fogs — Fine Days — Brilliant tinted Foliage — Humming-birds — Palm-birds — Whydah Finch — Rice Buntings — Butterflies — Millepedes — Spiders — Description of a Tornado — Continued heavy Rain — Bush Novelties 86

LETTER X.

Tropic Storms — Worshippers of Lightning — Garden in a Glen — Beautiful wild Fig-tree — Parasitical Vegetation — Bush Ropes — “Knife-grass” — “Chouca-choucas” — Sky-birds — Interest excited by Vessels coming into Harbour — Thoughts in Rhyme 94

LETTER XI.

Effects of the Harmattan — Grasses — Anecdote — Migrations of Europeans — Loss of Friends — Christmas “Bunyahs” — Pincushion Plants — Negro Gifts — White Mists — Dry Season Prospect — Cotton Shrub — Farms — Birds 103

LETTER XII.

Method of watering Garden — European Vegetables in African Soil — Sorrel Beer — Black Cooks — Negro Patois — Sweet Potatoes — Marketing Troubles — Fishing Boats — News of the Niger Expedition — Fanning Rice — Burnt Trunks of gigantic Trees — Malaguetta Pepper and other Plants — Green Locusts — Chameleons — Snails 110

LETTER XIII.

Fires in Freetown — Bush Burnings — African Cows — Goats — Squirrels
— Monkeys — Bush Cats Page 117

LETTER XIV.

Attack of Climate Fever — Black Nurse — Indolence of Settlers — Wild
Country Ride — A Native Farm — Bush Thieves — Anecdote . 121

LETTER XV.

Prevalence of Ill-health in the Household — Attempts at Housebreaking —
Mangoes — Magnificent Moth 128

LETTER XVI.

Change of Climate recommended — Gloom of the Weather during the
Rainy and Tornado Seasons — Difficulty of getting a fresh stock of
Work-box Indispensables — Set about making Little Shoes — Reluctance
of Sempstresses to ascend the Hill 130

LETTER XVII.

Climatorial Discomforts — Bright-coloured Beetles — Portuguese Slaver —
Arrival of the Prince de Joinville — Music on board the French Frigate
— Power of the English Flag — A Spanish Man-of-war — Night-Alarms
— Weary Reign of the Harmattan — New Fruit — Sea-breezes — Wealth
of Spain 134

LETTER XVIII.

Homeward-bound Vessels — Preparations for a Sea Voyage — Ague and
Anxiety — Instances of Kind-heartedness in a Liberated African Woman
— Palm-oil — A Comet 141

LETTER XIX.

Embarkation for England — A Leak — Accommodations — View from the
Ship — A careful Helmsman — Fever on Board — Master and Men —
Scarcity of Provisions — Last Evening on Deck — Daily Discomforts —
Friendly Vessels — Anecdote of a Pirate — The Queen's Birth-day —
Sailor's Gratitude — The Azores — Cold Weather — Heavy Gale — The
English Coast — A Fishing-boat — Row to Hastings — Night Journey to
London 146

LETTER XX.

Return to Sierra Leone — Passengers 173

LETTER XXI.

View of Madeira — Case of African Fever — Arrival at Sierra Leone — Evening Ride — Burying Grounds — Unsettled state of the House — “Cooking” Clothes — Improvements — Flower of Soursop — Fire on Mount Oriel — Burning Trees — Colonial Superstitions — Cocoa-Nuts — The White Man’s Grave Page 176

LETTER XXII.

The Zigzag — Mountain Paths — Village of Leicester — Elephants — A Leopard — Orange Grove — Climate Hinderances to Excursions — Story of the Kobloo War — Mandingo Merchant — Leather Pouches — Marmalade-making — Illness of a Pony — First Vessel from Home since the V—— — “Agouchee” — Water Melon — Storm Curtains . 187

LETTER XXIII.

Ague — The “Rains” — Baobabs — Village Church and Congregation — Melancholy Loss of a Boat — A Morning Walk — Early Market-goers — Gradual Distaste of Europeans for African Vegetables — Dogs — Unfrequency of Communication with England a great privation 194

LETTER XXIV.

Horrors of the Harmattan — Household Revolution — Natti-barra — Mistakes made by domestic Novices — Visit of a Bride — Negro mode of Washing 201

LETTER XXV.

Moonlight — A Tornado — Difficulty of Civilizing a Barbarian — Fanyah — Flower-seeds — Associations with the Names of particular Flowers — Gardenias — A Vision of British Scenery 204

LETTER XXVI.

Slavers — Contested Cases — Equipment Articles — Evasion of the Treaties by Slave Captains — Mixed Commission Courts — H. M. S. Cruisers — Slave Trade — Names of captured Vessels 208

LETTER XXVII.

Expiration of our Treaty with Brazil — Incursion of Travelling Ants — Spiders — Mantis — Bungo Mason-bees — Waterspout — A Lost Child — Ludicrous Mistake — Touraco — “Kill-Fowls” — Equestrian Interruptions — Grey Grizzel — Cape Coast Conveyances — Mango Tree killed by Lightning 216

LETTER XXVIII.

H. M. S. "Eclair" — First Conviction of the Pestilent Nature of the Climate — Impaired Health of even the Acclimatized — A Self-willed Donkey — Phases of the Sierra Leone Landscape — Verdure of our own Hill — New Mode of carrying Pigs — Fanyah's History — Caterpillars — Unwelcome Recollections Page 224

LETTER XXIX.

The Settlers — Mr. Clarkson — Trials of the Infant Colony — Attack by the French — Timmanee rising — The "Widow's Brook" — Influence of a Missionary's Wife — Mrs. Kilham 231

LETTER XXX.

Thieving propensities of newly emancipated Negroes — Reasons for the decay of the Settlers' fortunes — Their animosity towards the Liberated People — Sick-nurses — Jubilee Dinner — Freetown Spring Fashions — Sukey Webb — Visit to the Site of a Settler's Farm Cottage . . . 240

LETTER XXXI.

First hasty Impressions regarding the Natives — Second Considerations — Missionaries — Love of Learning displayed by Liberated Africans — Domestic Servants — Their Fondness for Writing — An "Affectionate Butcher" — Good disposition of a little Kosso Girl — Different Tribes — National Marks — Ornaments 251

LETTER XXXII.

Airs assumed by the Colony-born Children of Liberated Africans — Trading Speculations — State of Agriculture — Sellers of Rice — Jamaica Coco — Vegetable Gridiron — Freetown Market-place — Wooden Dressing Combs — Mats and Baskets — Country-made Furniture — Different kinds of Wood — Mason and Carpenter Work — Negro Domiciles — Superstitions — Aku Devils — Dancing — Gree-grees — Watch-huts — A Grazing Farm — Pilfering Habits of the Blacks — "Never die" — Comparison between Sierra Leone and West Indian Negroes in favour of the former — Usual rate of Servants' Wages — A pertinacious Thief — Glow-worms — A Cricket in the Store-room — Colony-fed Beef and Mutton . . . 260

LETTER XXXIII.

Maroons — Jollofs — Timmanees — Kroomen — Mandingoes — Foulahs — "Cork-Trees" — "White Coral-Tree" — New Bush Path — Thickness of stems of Climbers here — Brown Plum-tree — Cluster of Palm Nuts — Manufacture of Palm Oil — Palm Wine — Uses of the Palm Tree — Beautiful Flowers 275

LETTER XXXIV.

Sudden changes of the Atmosphere — “Ting-bing” — Bats — “Cut-grass” — Young Alligator — Fruit of Bush Plants — Forest Trees — Monkey Locust — Doves — “Pepper Bird” — Christmas and Mocking Birds — Kingfishers, &c. — Palm-Bird’s Nest — Convolvuluses — Acacias — Tamarind Trees — The “Rose Eater” Page 284

LETTER XXXV.

Rainbows — Amaryllis — Ginger — Parting notice of favourite Flowers — Hog Plum — Poverty of Fruits indigenous to Africa, as compared with those of other tropical climates — Water-lemon — Guava jelly — Kolas — Cashew-nut — Cinnamon-tree — Talacuna — Fungus — Orchideous Plants 296

LETTER XXXVI.

Ill Health — Benefit of Tornadoes — A lingering Gaze at African Scenery — Fourah Bay Institution — Snakes — Freaks of the Ting-bing . 302

LETTER XXXVII.

Sight the Irish Coast — A Retrospect — Choosing a Vessel — Farewells — Final Leave of the Hill — Hospitable Friends — Bread-Fruit — Embarkation — Last Look of Sierra Leone — Books — Death of the Ting-bing — Cape de Verde Islands — Negro Steersmen — A motley Crew — Chimpanzee — Monkeys — Baboon — Parrots — Gale off the Western Islands — Fair Wind — Sea Anemones — A Polite Pirate — Comfort of a Filter 306

LETTER XXXVIII.

Bays, Rocks, and Islands — Irish Boatmen — Fish — Crookhaven — Cape Clear — Stags of Castlehaven — Dangerous Position of our Ship off the Old Head of Kinsale — Seven Heads — Courtmacsherry Bay — Clear the Old Head at last — Sight of a White Woman 318

LETTER XXXIX.

Hubbub on entering the Cove — Health Inspectors — Quarantine — Wet Weather — Scenery around — Anxiety to be set at large — Confusion on Deck — An Irish Blunder — Grumblings thereat 325

LETTER XL.

Admitted to Pratique — Sail up the Lee — City of Cork — Irish Cars — Costume of the Lower Classes — Gloomy thoughts banished by remembrance of past Mercies 331

APPENDIX 333

LETTERS FROM SIERRA LEONE.

LETTER I.

Voyage out — Tornado — View of Sierra Leone — Black Boatmen — Palms — Banana and Plantain Trees — Beauty of Landing-place — European Residence — Strange Trees and Shrubs — Incessant Noise of Insects — Novel Breakfast — Race-course — Tropical Scenery — Rose-apple — Drive to Freetown — Household Perplexities — Sea-breeze — Harmattan — Fruit and Vegetables — Prices of Provisions.

Sierra Leone, December 28, 184—.

WE arrived here in safety a week ago, and I think the change from shipboard to shore a delightful one.

Embarking on the 16th ultimo at Gravesend in the H—— (a small merchant-vessel, with cramped accommodations and rough fittings up), that very evening a tremendous shock, which caused everything on board to vibrate, betokened that we were run foul of by one of the river steamers, the bowsprit of which had stove in the boat at the H——'s stern: this untoward accident detained us for two days, though every hour it was promised we should weigh anchor the next. Our progress down the river was woefully tardy. We encountered a succession of gales, and, ere getting out to sea, were several times in great danger. Shut up in our little cabin, though sensible of the violent pitching and tossing of the vessel, I was too ignorant of sea terms to know the extent of our peril; yet on the 22nd (my first Sunday on shipboard) I was struck by the Psalms for that day being so applicable to our situation. We were then riding within sight of the Goodwin Sands with two anchors down, the Captain expecting every minute they would part, and the ship be driven on a lee shore.

I proved a very bad sailor, and was generally confined to my berth, or a cot slung from a beam on deck. The whole voyage, from the day we left the Nore until we reached the balmy lati-

tude of Madeira, appears now like a confused dream; in which the Goodwin Sands—dismasted vessels—a stormy sea—and a rolling ship—form the principal objects, relieved by such trifling mischances as the galley being blown down, the mizen boom carried overboard, and the chain-cable falling into the hold with an alarming noise, to the general astonishment of pigs, sheep, and poultry, who each and all added a voice to the unusual din.

After we passed the Tropic of Cancer the heat became every day more intense, till at last it was almost intolerable to remain below, even for a few minutes; and I was glad to rest in the swinging cot, with the flags of the ship for sun-blinds, watching the flying fish during the day, and in the evening the most gorgeous sunsets—the whole of the western sky reflecting its hues of purple, crimson, violet, and gold upon the water, until the sun seemed to dip into the rainbow-like mirror, when his parting rays were immediately obscured by darkness. In spite of the grandeur and beauty of these sunsets, people exclaim at the absence of twilight; but for my part I rather like the sudden darkness: on shipboard, or in a strange country, it is easy to reconcile oneself to the want of any such melancholy light as the crepuscule of our own dear northern shores. Everything looked bright in those regions. The splendour of the moonlight was enough to tempt the very strictest valetudinarian to brave the proverbially unwholesome night air of the African coast; and, ere going below for the evening, I often lingered to lean over the vessel's side and look at the stream of living light in her wake, when the water through which she moved seemed one moment a scroll of burnished gold, and the next as if glittering over a heap of coloured gems, so rapidly changing are the brilliant hues of those remarkable phosphorescent bodies which, in the warm latitudes of the Atlantic, gleam amid its restless waves.

At daybreak on the 19th of December it was thought that we might reach Sierra Leone the same afternoon, and accordingly we put everything in readiness; but the wind died away until it became a complete calm—the sails flapping round the masts, and the sea appearing like a vast plain of polished steel. The heat of that day was overpowering; the atmosphere *looked*, as well as

felt, oppressive; being so thick and dense that we could not see more than a mile from the vessel, though, had it been at all clear, we should have seen land. Nothing broke the monotony of our view all that long and weary forenoon, except a huge shark, slowly troubling the sleeping surface of the sea. Beyond the upright black fin of its back, no part of its body was visible; but, judging from the motion of the water, the monster could not have been less than sixteen feet long. The sailors hung out baits of salt pork, but it was too cunning to be entrapped by them.

We dined upon deck, and before sunset the welcome cry of "land!" had been sung out from the bows, and soon afterwards we shortened sail and lay to, being now near a sand-bank at the mouth of the river Scarcies. In the evening I heard that a "regular tornado cloud" had been observed; but as these storms are seldom known to take place so late in the year, no heed was taken of the warning, and at midnight directions were given to "make all sail." After the hurrying to and fro usual on such occasions, quiet once more reigned in the ship: but very shortly I was awakened by a loud rattling noise, and the Master's voice raised to a corresponding pitch, ordering "all hands up:" the vessel rocked about with a strange, disagreeable motion which became more violent every minute—the *hurting* sound also increased, till it seemed to burst into one terrific roar, accompanied by incessant and most vivid flashes of lightning. It was the threatened tornado! The crashing of the thunder was not more loud and awful than the fury of that terrible wind, which at times drowned the noise of the trampling and shouting of the men overhead, and the voice of the Captain calling to them through his speaking-trumpet to furl the different sails. I could not help experiencing a dread that the ship might be thrown on her beam-ends and fill. The Channel gales—the rough and heavy swell of the Bay of Biscay—sank into insignificance, compared with this sudden storm, although its rage did not last above half an hour, abating almost as unexpectedly as it had come, until after a very heavy fall of rain succeeded a dead calm. I heard in the morning that the lightning had run along some of the chains in the ship, and that it was only the wind taking us by surprise which rendered us in any danger, as the tornado

had been in reality but a slight one, though so alarming to me.

Next day it was beautifully clear, and on going upon deck I had my first look of the land I was so truly thankful to see. On one side of our ship, Sierra Leone, like an island, forming one chain of mountains gradually sloping upwards from the Cape to the right, but in front seeming as if they sprang perpendicularly from the sea—was pointed out to me; while, in the opposite direction, the only visible tokens of land were tall trees, appearing as if planted in the water. This was the Bullom shore, so called from a word in the language of the country, signifying “low land.”

The H—— lay thus, as it were, at the very mouth of the Sierra Leone river, and apparently at an equal distance from both sides of the coast which forms the entrance. There was no sea-breeze to carry us in: we were not near enough to discern, without the aid of a spy-glass, the houses on the shore; but I could see Freetown like a white spot at the very foot of the hills, and before it the masts of vessels rose like clustered spires. We had also a view of the Bananas—a few small green islands lying to the southward of the long low cape which stretched far out on our right.

The fine outline prospect our position commanded reconciled me to the many long hours the port of our destination lay before us without our making one knot nearer the shore. The irregular summits of the mountains stood out in bold relief against a cloudless sky, and one peak especially struck me from its resemblance to Arthur's Seat, near Edinburgh, but on a grander scale. We remained becalmed all that day—Captain and passengers looking through their glasses, and speculating what particular men-of-war, or what merchant-vessels, their practised eyes discovered to be in harbour—the Captain affirming that a shotted gun had been fired at his ship upon her last entrance into the river, because he had not at once noticed the signal for him to “lay to” from one of her Majesty's cruisers, whose commander wished to hear the last news from England.

About two o'clock the tedium was partly relieved by the arrival of the pilot—a respectable-looking negro, who, as I was much surprised to hear, is also a Methodist preacher. On being

asked how he could follow his layman's calling upon Sunday, he replied, that "to pilot a ship into port was both a work of charity and necessity," or words to that effect; in the sense of which we all cordially agreed. The sun went down upon the glassy water, and we had to content ourselves with another night on board the H—; but the tide was in our favour, and, a slight breeze also springing up, about half-past one in the morning, the rattling of the chain-cable and echoing splash in the water betokened that we had cast anchor at last.

As soon as daylight streamed in at the little window of our cabin, I looked eagerly out and saw fantastically painted buildings glittering in the glorious light of a tropical sun; and beyond, the lofty mountains of Sierra Leone. Through the faint shadowy haze, their verdure appeared more soft and beautiful than that of the foliage near us, which flashed on the eye with a supernatural tint, and formed a striking contrast to the deep cornelian colour of the earth in the paths and banks of the river—the whole landscape conveying the idea of a perpetual summer.

The strapping of portmanteaus, locking of dressing-cases and carpet-bags, having been duly gone through for the third morning, we were soon in readiness to leave the vessel. There are no hotels here. Families arriving are always cordially received into the houses of the English residents, and we decided on proving the strength of Sierra Leone hospitality by going at once to the mansion of Mr. and Mrs. —, which stands a short distance farther up the river than Freetown. Accompanied by two of M——'s colonial friends, who had come on board, we got into a pretty comfortable barge, with white awning and curtains, manned by a crew of seven blacks in duck shirts and trowsers, with cuffs and collars of dark-blue stuff, which gave a smart, uniform-like cast to the simple costume. Another man, an old servant of M——'s, sat in the boat, wearing the jacket and cap of the Colonial Militia, in which he is a sergeant; and I was surprised at the intelligent countenances and respectful demeanour of those reclaimed savages, not one of whom would keep on his broad-brimmed straw hat, but rowed on merrily, sending the boat like an arrow over the smooth blue water.

The first thing which struck me with regard to the scenery was a want of wood: although high and low ground alike ex-

hibited an almost universal clothing of green, none of the trees seemed taller than those of a shrubbery or young plantation at home, except the palms, which, with their lofty and upright trunks and tuft of feathery branches at top, are the most novel and foreign-looking objects of all that arrest a stranger's attention on skirting the river banks. The hills resemble some of those in Scotland, where green herbage, heather, and furze appear in alternate patches. But I am told that what reminds the eye of heath, is long grass withered up by the influence of the dry season; and what seem spots of rich pasture, are little cultivated pieces of ground covered with crops of some luxuriantly-growing vegetable: while it is that rank "bush"—which in all tropical countries overruns the soil, unless kept down by burning and culture—that looks so like our own dark-green gorse, before its golden blossom comes out. Here and there on the hill-sides stand a few gigantic trees, with bleached trunks and wide straggling boughs—the solitary remnants of that dense forest which once covered the "wild sierras" of our African colony. We steered near enough to the bank to distinguish, amidst a wilderness of verdure, the banana and plantain trees, whose branch-like leaves grow from the stem in the same manner as those of the palm, and are each, I should fancy, about four or five feet long and a foot broad. This beautiful leaf is of a light transparent green, and seems very fragile, as, except when newly opened or growing in a sheltered place, most of these I see are broken into a waving fringe. The beach is formed of crumbling particles of black rock, with an occasional patch of the smooth and shining sand. It is broken into innumerable little shaded bays, and in one of these, which, though more rocky than many others we had passed, was thought the best place for landing, the boat was moored. A more romantic-looking spot cannot well be imagined. Fancy a very small and secluded opening into the land—the waves rippling against loose masses of rock covered with white gulls—the steep red bank above bordered to the very water's edge with green boughs—the thatched roofs of one or two native huts peeping out from among the bright foliage, in which the shady leaves of the banana and plantain were most conspicuous—while a long flight of roughly-built stone steps (up which our path lay) marked the former landing-place to a ruined

house, close enough to form a picturesque feature in a place, the soft quiet beauty of which reminded me of the paintings of Poussin and Claude.

On coming out of the boat, I only remember feeling very faint and dizzy, and, after being carried up the steps, walking slowly along a narrow path, where the one living thing visible was an enormous red and blue lizard basking in the sun. A sudden turn in the road brought us close upon a cottage, which we entered, and, passing through a sunny verandah, where sauntered several tall black figures in high-peaked head-dresses of yellow, blue, and white, were ushered into a light and cool apartment, with large windows looking out on the sea, and numerous doors thrown wide open to admit all the air possible. I was thankful to rest here for a short time, and fortunate enough to obtain the use of a sedan (the only one, I believe, in the colony), in which, the boatmen acting as chairmen, I proceeded onward, through a shaded road, crowded with little woolly-haired children, to whom I was evidently as much an object of curiosity as they were to me.

An avenue, bordered by beautiful trees and plants, brought us across a green lawn in front of a large white house, whose exterior of painted wooden boards, and casements of latticed trellis-work, gave an idea of coolness and shade, which was not dispelled on entering its lofty and spacious apartments. The airy piazzas, entirely surrounding the house, are merely constructed of planks on the outside, those on the entrance-floor being lighted and ventilated by *jalousied* windows, those on the upper floor by glass. Large folding-doors, with Venetian-blind panels, lead through the inner wall of solid mason-work that separates these verandahs from the interior rooms, the darkness of which immediately struck me. But this want of light is connected with the shutting out of the fiery sun; and all the floors, with the exception of the drawing-room, being uncovered, the general appearance is that of coolness, the acmé of comfort in a tropical region. Though the furniture was European, this peculiar style of building and laying-out—the number of black servants flitting about in livery of plain white jean—the beautiful flowering shrubs seen from the windows—gave the whole a colouring as if a splendid picture of Eastern scenery and costume had suddenly

started into life. Sierra Leone is associated in our imaginations at home with sickness, sorrow, and death; but widely different were the ideas which the first few hours on its sunny shores raised in my mind; for very soon after landing I felt a great deal better than I had done since leaving England, and, on walking out in the evening, I could not but fancy that its air possesses a sanatory influence, and that to the envy of those dwelling under less glowing skies might be ascribed the invention of all those appalling histories of the deadliness of its climate.

Shortly before sunset we proceeded, at a loitering pace, to the avenue gate, and I was enchanted with the luxuriance of the trees, particularly the rose-apple,* whose thickly growing branches present an impenetrable mass of dark-green leaves, amongst which magnificent white flowers, like silken tassels, form a beautiful and pleasing relief. Innumerable blossoms shone in all directions: one resembling a branch of red coral; another, still more gorgeous, with its festoons of orange and scarlet, reminded me of the feathers of the bird of Paradise; while the pale lilac clusters of a third recalled the image of more northern gardens, and claimed a kindly remembrance of old familiar flowers, although the perfume of orange and lime trees was around us. It was so cool and pleasant that we remained out till after the sun set, and in retracing our steps we startled two birds; the plumage of the one, the "African cock of the woods," was crimson, green, and purple; the other was a small pigeon, with wings so brightly green that they glittered in the dim light under the rose-apple boughs, as it flew to the top of a fine tree that bears a plum of which the wild doves are fond. When darkness set in, the hum of millions of insects arose—and a very unsentimental memory it brought along with it, being exactly like the noise of a large manufactory where spinning-machines are constantly in motion. Another dull, though more distinct sound, like quick strokes on a muffled drum, mingled with the buzzing and chirping: this was the beating of the monotonous tom-tom, which literally never ceased during the night. I was glad when now and then the wild plaintive tunes, chanted by the Timmanee boatmen on

* *Eugenia jambosa*.

the river, reached the ear; first faintly heard, then gradually swelling out in full chorus, till, as the canoe with its rowers floated past, the sound died away, like unearthly music, in the distance.

It is the custom here to drink a cup of tea or coffee very early, and one was brought to me next morning before I was up, by a little black damsel attired in a white frock and sundry gay necklaces. Whilst I was dressing, the doors were all open leading into the piazza, and through the *jalousies* a cool breeze entered laden with the fragrance of many flowers unknown to me; a peep of the river gleamed in the early sun through the rich screen of leaves and blossoms; on the lawn in front several cows were grazing, much less than the kine of our own clover pastures, and mostly dun-coloured; close to their feet walked numerous snow-white cranes, seemingly tame as any barnyard fowls; and many a beautiful bird and bright-winged insect glanced past in the clear soft air, while the gentle rippling of the waves at the foot of the bank blended with a thousand merrier sounds. From listening to these, I was soon summoned to breakfast—in this country a repast not at all in accordance either with the heat of the climate, or the fairy-like prospect out of doors. You sit down to a table set forth with highly seasoned dishes (smoking under covers) of meat, fish, fowl, and vegetables; pickles and sauces are handed round as at dinner, and the wine-decanter stands vis-à-vis to the water-jug; claret and ale are in readiness, being merely cooling in the shade; tea and coffee or chocolate follow, with bread, biscuit, boiled eggs, fruit, and sweetmeats, and (where cows are kept) the white creamy-looking butter made here floats in its crystal pail, and is generally considered a great delicacy.

I remained in the house during the heat of the day; but after dinner we drove round the race-course, a lonely little peninsula lying beneath the wild high mountains, and hemmed in by the river. Here all the *élite* of the colony assemble for air and exercise of an evening; yet, although in one or two of the perhaps half-dozen equipages on the broad circular path sat a delicate-looking European lady, in short-sleeved white muslin pelisse, long gloves, thin scarf, and transparent bonnet; and a few impatient horses were reined in by white riders; it

struck me that the carriage-drive had a very deserted aspect, and that our countrymen and countrywomen appeared pale, languid, and dispirited. Those only who really seemed to enjoy the scene were the Othello-visaged portion of the equestrians, who, with an attempt at a military or naval air, visible in the universal moustache and smart blue cloth jacket, dashed past on their half-wild steeds in all the grandeur of scarlet saddle-cloths and jingling bridles.

As we left the course and entered a road leading to Freetown, that want of forest which strikes the eye on looking at Sierra Leone from the sea, was no longer apparent; each native hut was shaded by the thick foliage of orange and lime trees, banana and plantain, and many others of orchard height, whose names I have yet to learn: while climbing plants of great beauty twined over the rustic fences round the little negro gardens, and here and there a clump of palms threw their dark shadow over the patches of cleared land behind the long row of wattled dwellings which fenced the road. The natives were seated in groups on the ground by the low doorways of their huts: the men smoking, laughing, and talking, the women preparing their evening meal in shining bowls made from the shell of a large gourd, the fruit of the calabash-tree,* or wending their way homewards with heavy burthens on their heads; whilst children gambolled about with noisy play amongst dogs, goats, and sheep; the latter bearing scarcely any resemblance to those of Britain, being much larger, and clothed, instead of wool, in a shaggy coat of short rough hair, in black, brown, and white spots. Most of the goats were graceful, deer-like creatures, and every family seemed to possess several of them.

Sauntering through the grounds next evening, we came upon a garden of pine-apples, and believe me the anana on a plate, or in a hot-house, and when growing in its native soil, are very different things. A brilliant purple blossom, resembling the single bell of a hyacinth, opens from each of the diamond-shaped divisions of the fruit itself, which when young is of the same rich hue, surmounted by a crest of pink *corded* leaves, and protected all round by others much larger and broader,

* *Crescentia cujete*.

with saw-like edges and spiked points. The pine-apple as it ripens loses its beautiful and fresh appearance, the purple changes to pale straw-colour, and the leaves become green. I also saw the rose-apple, which is of a greenish-yellow hue, and about the size of a pigeon's egg. It has neither the pulp nor substance of a plum, but is merely a soft spongy coating about half an inch deep, round one, or sometimes two, large brown and loose seeds that shake like the kernels in a nut. It has a faint smell and taste of roses: hence its name. There is a variety, I am told, in which both blossom and fruit are red.

On the morning of the 24th it rained, which every one seemed to wonder at, "because it is the dry season." On looking out shortly afterwards, everything seemed as dry as before; the earth not a whit darker red than it had been in the evening; not a single pearly drop upon one blade of grass; no appearance of the rain, though it fell heavily as a shower of hail.

We left the pretty country-house of our kind friends next day, having a pleasant drive to Freetown, and you cannot imagine an assemblage of human abodes more varied in appearance than that through which our route lay. On emerging from the wattled and mud-plastered huts, small houses framed of wood betokened an advancement in civilization, that gradually became more apparent in others raised on stone foundations with open piazzas supported by pillars, and surrounded by little gardens full of fruit-trees. Crossing a bridge above a ravine, where a brook went leaping and sparkling over huge black stones, on which stood negro-women employed in washing clothes, we turned off this road into the wide but less thickly populated streets, where most of the dwellings seemed to belong to comparatively wealthy people,—there being only a sprinkling of grass huts, and these almost entirely hidden by green branches, and high houses flaunting in gay coats of red, yellow, slate-coloured, blue, or green paint. One built in a superior style with slated roof and panelled doors particularly attracted my notice from its neglected appearance, and, although only a few half-clothed and poor-looking black people were then lounging in its verandahs, it was originally erected, I am told, by a European merchant, who had all the doors and window-frames sent out from England; his resources did not permit him to finish,

far less to inhabit, the edifice, and there it stands in its ruined grandeur, yearly falling into greater decay, while its owner has "taken to the bush," as the term is, having fled beyond British territory among the native tribes up the river.

All the streets being grown over with grass, except where intersected by footpaths and the mainway, the town presents a very singular aspect, and at first I fancied rather a lonely one; but that idea soon vanishes, as the greenness of the streets is merely an effect of the rapid vegetation in this climate, and we become sensible that, were it not for the grass, the dust would be intolerably disagreeable; while at the same time cows, goats, and sheep, quietly grazing before the houses, prevent the herbage attaining to a height or rankness which might render its close neighbourhood unpleasant or unhealthy. It was near sunset when we stopped in a broad street leading down to the water-side, before a large and lofty building. After ascending two wide flights of wooden steps, we reached the upper story, which usually in Freetown is the part of the house consigned to the family apartments, as being more airy, and from its elevation better calculated to preserve health. This was my home in the new land. Spacious as the piazzas are, and even lofty, to me they had at first an *attic* appearance, caused not only by the roof sloping down till it reaches the top of the outer windows, but by its consisting merely of the planks on which the slates are nailed; so that in the saloon, notwithstanding the number of glazed casements and handsome folding-doors, our modern furniture looked quite out of place; while as daylight faded away,—from the length and breadth of the verandahs, and their floors being all of a dark red native wood, resembling nothing at home except boards venerable from age,—it required no great stretch of imagination to fancy myself traversing the wide and gloomy galleries of some ancient castle.

It was but occasionally during the night that the distant beat of the tom-tom was heard; but the music of fifes and French horns played by the "waits" resounded through the streets: a sound bringing with it a host of old Christmas memories in this foreign country.

9th January, 1841.

Since I came into town, unpacking trunks, giving out ship

washing, and hiring people to sew, have been sources of alternate amusement and annoyance to me; while visitors—from the most exalted colonial functionary to a negro-clerk in jacket of sky-blue camlet and crimson slippers—alike prevented anything like quiet house-arranging for the first week. It was nine days after landing ere we succeeded in obtaining our package of glass from the ship, managing till then with a few wine-glasses and tumblers borrowed. Then all my perplexities in endeavouring to make myself understood by the native servants! Not one single sentence that they utter can I as yet comprehend, and they seem quite as confused at my mode of speech. I hear other people talk to them in such strange phrases, perfectly unintelligible to me, and am told that until I too can talk “country fashion” there is no chance of the household being conducted with regularity or comfort. My directions are constantly mistaken. On asking one of the servants to bring me a breakfast-cup, he first brought a cream-jug, and then, on repeating slowly and distinctly that I wanted a large blue cup, he returned with a dessert-plate; and not till the command, “Go fetch big tea-cup, he live in pantry,” had been issued by lips initiated in the mysteries of African *patois*, did the boy understand and obey accordingly. There is no neuter in negro-grammar, and everything is endowed with animation: for instance, they say of dinner, “he *live* on table.”

The domestics here are all men, and they appear to be very indolent, so that you require eight or nine household servants, where in a similar establishment in England three or four would be found sufficient. I wanted to get a woman-servant; but it seems, when such is required by a European lady, she must be content at first to *teach* a little girl to act in that capacity, and accordingly a tiny damsel, scarcely eight years old, has been brought to me to train up in the art of dusting a toilette-table and fastening hooks-and-eyes; but as yet my Lilliputian waiting-maid requires a far greater share of attendance than she gives.

I have just been interrupted to pay the washerwoman's bill; and no pinafores little urchin at school was ever so confused with the seventh line of the multiplication-table as I have been with dollars, cutmoneys, big coppers, and *lilly* coppers, to say nothing of threepenny and three-halfpenny pieces, which seem the most common and favourite coins here. A cutmoney is literally what

its name imports, being the quarter of a dollar, roughly and not very equally divided. It is equal to 1s. 1*d.*, and, although not now current, is continually quoted.

I do not suffer from the heat as I dreaded ; it is nothing to what it was on shipboard. I rise shortly after five in the morning, an hour at which a gun fired from the garrison announces the approach of day. At six o'clock the sun rises, when all the outer windows—with the exception of those on the side from which the land wind blows—are thrown open. The air is then delightfully cool and pleasant, but by eight the tropic heat begins to be experienced, and for some hours it is very warm and oppressive, until the sea-breeze sets in, scarcely perceptible at first, but increasing until near six in the evening, when it blows pretty strongly. This wind is so soft and balmy, that I often sit before the open windows of the verandah, directly facing the quarter whence it comes, and look out on the strange and dream-like prospect the town presents after sunset ; the confused mass of buildings lying in dark shadow, with no regular rows of lamps, though a thousand lights of different degrees of brightness twinkle through the surrounding foliage like so many stars. No rolling of carriages—no throng of passengers in the streets ; but singing (if we may so designate what has no variety of cadence) seems to come from every house, till, warned by a bugle-note from the barracks far overhead, exactly at eight o'clock, a sudden flash throws a momentary glare over the scenery, and the sullen echo of the evening gun gives notice that it is time to close the windows for the night, during which the wind gradually veers round, and by morning generally blows from the land.

The houses here are all constructed so as to afford as much coolness as possible. In this there are nine large doors in one of the inner rooms, six in another, with two windows opening into a verandah, or piazza as it is usually termed, and, none of these being shut during the day, a free current of air is always admitted ; while a large stove in the principal apartment denotes that at times, even in this country, a fire is deemed necessary.

The harmattan wind is now blowing, and everything in the house is covered with an impalpable red dust ; even our eyes are affected by it. The windows being kept carefully shut towards the point whence it blows, I do not perceive that the heat within

doors is at all lessened by the influence of the harmattan ; but I see the natives do not like it. The women are all wrapped up in plaid shawls, and the men in blanket jackets, whilst our servants go about with handkerchiefs bound round their heads, and complain that it is "cold too much." It is a very dry wind, and comes from over the great desert of Sahara, but is not considered unhealthy, though blowing from the land. I was thinking one day lately how very strange it appeared to a new comer thus carefully excluding the refreshing wind in this sultry climate, let it blow from any quarter, when Dr. — entered the piazza, and, looking approvingly at the closed casements, his first greeting was, "Windows shut to the land side—that is right!" in a most emphatic tone. The swampy Bullom shore, with its mangrove-jungles fraught with unwholesome vapours, being separated from this colony merely by the river, of course, when the wind blows right across, Freetown comes in for its full share of the miasmata.

The harmattan is disagreeable from its extreme dryness and the sand it brings, which causes a thick, dark, reddish haze throughout the whole atmosphere, almost obscuring our view of the opposite shore. Every article of furniture is shrinking and cracking—paper and the boards of books curling up—veneer peeling off—and the strings of the pianoforte breaking. I hear it is much stronger at the Gambia, where it feels like the breath of a hot furnace, causing the panels of doors to shrink and fall out, and glass to become so brittle that it snaps asunder though untouched by any person. It has one good effect, in rendering the water so deliciously cool. In a warm climate good water is a great blessing, and that arising from the springs in the vicinity of Freetown is excellent. We can keep it tolerably cool by means of large porous earthen vessels, which are filled morning and evening. These are called "country pots," and in colour somewhat resemble the common red flower-pots at home, but are of a very coarse, rude manufacture. The high wind has brought several strange-looking insects to the house. I observed one that looked almost like a flying spider ; and to-day caught a beautiful fly of a bright-green hue, which glitters as if powdered over with gold-dust : its wings are transparent, and seem fifty times finer than the finest gauze.

It is almost impossible to picture you all at present wrapped

up in cloaks and furs, and mayhap surrounded by snow, whilst we are planning every contrivance to render the heat of the tropics more endurable, for so glowing a temperature is at best not too comfortable. When we look out on the beautiful, or rather the *striking*, scenery of this place, the eye certainly exults in the imagined contrast between leafless woods and hedges coated over with hoar frost, and the rich orange-trees bending under their load of burnished fruit. It is the thickness of the foliage I admire, for the tree itself is rather stiff-looking.

Fruit forms a great portion of the natives' food, and is cheap and abundant. Eight to a dozen fine large oranges for a penny. Pine-apples at a halfpenny or penny each; a bunch containing five or six bananas at a halfpenny. The latter fruit is shaped somewhat like a cucumber, has a soft yellow rind, a juicy pulp, with small black seeds in the middle, and eats like a very sweet, ripe, mellow pear. The plantain is a larger and coarser sort of banana, and is prepared for food in various ways. The vegetables are really excellent. Yams, which vary from two to four or six pounds in weight, are cooked by boiling. The cassada-root is usually roasted. There is a leaf called "coco," which is prepared like spinach, and is a very good substitute for it. All native productions are cheap, but whatever comes from England is proportionably dear. Beef here is not much larger than English mutton, but is only 4*d.* per lb. African mutton is about the size of the lamb you have at home, usually lean and dry, and 6*d.* or 7*d.* per lb., though a sheep may be bought for two dollars. There is neither veal nor lamb to be had. Geese and ducks are very large: common fowls remarkably small: turkeys scarce, and occasionally 20*s.* or even 30*s.* each. Fish is plentiful, cheap, and good. Bread is high-priced, and so bad that we use English biscuit instead. A wineglass-full of milk costs a penny, and there is no such thing as cream in the country. Butter is brought from America, is excessively salt, and melts into oil on the cask being opened. Bountiful as the climate is, it does not afford one half of the common articles of food which one is accustomed to fancy indispensable at home.

LETTER II.

Negro Market-people — Devil Offerings — Pleasant Country Drive —
— Signal Stations — African Sempstress — Petah — Colonial Arrange-
ment of Furniture — Cock-roaches — Freetown Noises — Talking Shoes
— Travelling Merchants.

February 5, 1841.

ONE forenoon lately we drove round the road which encircles the base of the Barrack-hill, and I was much struck with the aspect of plenty, and, *after a fashion*, comfort, which one part of the way presented. Each side was lined by little booths or stalls, if places may be so described where, for the most part, the merchandise stands upon the ground close to its owners, who were squatted under low tents, thatched with bamboo, or partially covered with a tarpaulin. Others sat beside the shade of ancient silk umbrellas, or were merely screened from the sun by trees; every person being surrounded by oranges in tempting heaps, limes, pine-apples, bunches of bananas and plantains, and the snowy kernel of the cocoa-nut divided into small pieces for sale; *blies* full of parched ground-nuts,* like coffee-berries in appearance, or, with the shell on, rather like almonds, which they slightly resemble in taste; calabashes filled with arrow-root and cassada-starch; with many strange-looking condiments red with palm-oil, and carefully rolled up in large leaves. Others seemed to sell only vegetables—such as yams, cassada, wild tomatoes, *yaboes* or shalots, and different sorts of green leaves which the negroes put into their messes of country-soup. Then upon temporary tables formed of rough boards were set out articles of crockery ware—such as coarse delf plates, basins, and mugs, garnished by Dutch gilt case-bottles of liqueurs, bought at the sales of condemned slave-vessels and their stores. Nor were there wanting stands where pieces of cotton handkerchiefs, the commonest sorts of calico prints, blue and white baft, and red

* *Arachis hypogæa*.

taffeta (not silk, but thin twilled cotton), were displayed; while new baskets of various forms and sizes, calabash bowls, and earthen vessels of country manufacture, were ranged amongst others containing dried fish, balls of foo-foo, poultry, and eggs. The greater number of these native merchants were women, too many of whom were but half-clad; and altogether they seemed to be amongst some of the most uncivilized portion of the people whom I had seen—their uncouth and savage appearance not at all bearing out the impression of comfort created at first sight of the rich productions of nature by which they were surrounded. Some had disposed of their various eatables, and were wending their way homeward up to the mountain villages; others were proceeding along the road carrying on their backs children strapped there by means of a long broad cloth, which the mother held by one hand, while with the other she led a second child, and on her head bore a heavily-laden bly. Beyond the European portion of the town the habitations are almost all low huts overshadowed by trees, with little garden-plots in front. I observed in every one of these, a long upright pole stuck in the ground, with a small red or white flag waving at the head. These tiny banners, which have a most singular appearance flaunting beside every hut, are set up to propitiate the powers of darkness—or, in other words, as offerings to the devil.

Another day we drove round the race-course, and for a short way on the road to Kissy, a village a few miles up the river, and where there is a hospital for invalids. It was scarcely possible to believe, from the wild and romantic nature of the view, that half an hour had brought us from the heart of so populous a place as Freetown. At each side of the road great loose masses of black rock lay scattered about in the tall grass, looking as if they had been flung down from the heights above in some violent convulsion of the earth. On the right hand rose the brow of a mountain, where the scathed trunks of tall trees, with their bare and extended branches, stood like spectres among the tracts of impenetrable bush and withered herbage; while a few green spots, round a low watch-hut (so rudely formed as to be easily mistaken for a heap of dried grass), showed an attempt at cultivation by the clearing of a cassada-farm. To the left, the road, narrow and steep enough to try the nerves of any one else but a

Swiss mountaineer, wound close to the edge of a deep and densely-wooded glen, carrying a noisy stream onwards, of which I could only catch glimpses now and then, through an opening in the "bush," or at a turn of the road. The "bush" immediately on its banks showed a profusion of what I fancied were enormous white flowers, but which are really broad, pale leaves, attached to the blossoms of a plant* common by the side of brooks in this country. From the lofty hills the aspect of the scenery gradually softened down to the calm and silvery river, with the forest and glittering sand-beach of the Bullom shore, where several low green points of land running out into the water grew dim and indistinct in the distance. We passed the site of Granville Town, the first free black settlement at Sierra Leone, and commenced (I think) about 1787, but afterwards wantonly burnt down by the French in an attack on the colony. There was something inexpressibly solitary and deserted in the appearance of this piece of waste ground; and, in truth, had it not been for the groups of people returning from market, it were possible at some parts of the road to have imagined that we were in an uninhabited region, there being neither cattle nor cultivation within sight—not even a fence nor lonely way-side dwelling—no trace of the hand of man beyond the miserable watch-huts far above us on the silent and dreary hills. The sun was just setting as we reached town again. Every morning, as soon as it is possible to see so far, I look eagerly up to the hill, where vessels entering the harbour are signalled, in hopes of seeing displayed a red flag, which denotes that the approaching sail is from the north, for then the hope is still greater that the arrival may be from England. There are two signal-posts: one at the barracks; the other on a hill near Cape Sierra Leone, commanding a very extensive view, especially to the south. When the sail discovered is from that quarter the flag is white; a ship or barque is shown by a ball hoisted above the flag; a brig by one below; a schooner by no ball. We have few arrivals from the south, excepting her Majesty's cruisers, or prizes taken by them for being engaged in the slave-trade; but those from the north are commonly from England, or else returning here from some of the rivers, laden with timber for the British

* *Muscænda glabra*.

market. Shortly after daybreak the numerous cries of Freetown begin. Women and girls are seen flocking towards the market-place, carrying on their heads a sort of round basket, called a "bly," containing fruit and vegetables for sale. Some have bowls heaped over with arrow-root; a greater number are laden with large round balls of dingy white, called "foo-foo," a common food of the natives prepared from cassada, somewhat in the same manner as flour is from potatoes, and which they cook with palm-oil. Here are boys bearing wooden trays covered over with little brown cakes, and crying out, "Who'll buy hot ginger-cake?"—there, girls shouting as loudly, "Agahdee! who'll buy sweet agahdee?" (a sweetened mass of boiled rice or Indian corn, rolled up in a broad green leaf.) Numerous other and still more unintelligible names are shouted out by different people; while men saunter along under the burthen of stone bottles similar to those which hold Seltzer water or ginger-beer, calling, with much the same perverted pronunciation as the London old-clothes men, "Pamh wenh!" meant for palm-wine. I have seen one girl, apparently a sort of travelling pedler, her smart blue gown, yellow shawl, and crimson handkerchief rivalling the plumage of a parrot, while about a dozen strings of as variously-coloured glass beads were fastened round her neck. From several of these hung small looking-glasses in red painted or yellow lacquered frames; to the rest were attached papers of mother-of-pearl buttons; and her basket displayed a tempting assortment of pins, needles, reels of cotton, pieces of tape, and brass thimbles. One hand supported her bly of precious wares, the other held skeins of thread, and more gay necklaces, which she kept dangling backwards and forwards with an air of the utmost satisfaction and triumph.

The dresses of the various classes of natives differ widely in cost and appearance, some being merely enveloped in what they call a "country cloth," a garment as simple as a sheet, and made of numerous strips of a strong fabric woven on the coast, and then sewed firmly together. It is worn thrown over one shoulder and under the other. The usual dress of women is a gown of blue baft, or thin coarse print in a blue and white pattern of stars and stripes like the American flag. The better sort wear pink or lilac dresses of finer calico, and silk shawls.

Upon Sundays they evidently display their best suits. Old women walk out in wide scarfs of bright silk or very gay coloured cotton, and *men's* black hats above the handkerchief headdress: girls in white frocks of chequered muslin, and pale blue beaver hats; others with a profusion of pink ribbon round the common straw, or rather *grass*, hat; and the greater part shading themselves under silk umbrellas. I have not as yet seen any black women wearing shoes, and their gait is exactly that of a goose! All delight in ornaments. Men wear bracelets, rings both on the fingers and in the ears, generally of silver, while amber and coral necklaces are quite common even on those whose garments are the most scanty. Some wild-looking figures come into town from the far villages laden with fagots of wood and bundles of grass for sale, whose garments of country cloth are surmounted by an old frock-coat bought at auction, or perhaps a soldier's cast-off jacket, while their eyes glare out from beneath a red cap or shaggy sort of monkey's-skin wig. The costume of the Mandingoes, or Mahommedan negroes, is by far the most unique and graceful of all I have seen here. It consists of a wide flowing mantle, gathered into a point above the waist in front, and with loose hanging sleeves; very ample trowsers drawn full round the ankle; a high peaked cap of blue cloth embroidered in gaudy colours, or else of plain scarlet or white stuff. These men wear, suspended from their neck, an amulet, or, as they call it here, a "gree-gree," usually formed of a scrap from the Koran, hid in a mass of black paste or sewed up in small leather pouches. They have also rosaries, sometimes of common glass beads, or little balls of polished wood, with, in the middle, two or three larger beads of an opaque yellow stone. The garb that ranks next to this in being well adapted for a hot climate is worn by the Timmanees, who were the original possessors of Sierra Leone. It reminds me of an English waggoner's frock, except in having no other sleeve than what is formed by the drapery itself falling down over the shoulders. The settlers in the colony, and also the slaves that have been emancipated here, who are termed "liberated Africans," assimilate their dress to that of Europeans; the wealthier sort wearing jackets, waistcoats, and trowsers of cloth, white duck, or blue baft (a thin flimsy cotton stuff, much in request amongst the

blacks), with broad-brimmed straw hats tied round with black or coloured ribbon, or round smart cloth caps, while the ordinary apparel of domestic servants consists of a white jacket, check shirt, and duck trowsers.

I have seen a few women with rather more intelligent countenances and better figures than the great mass of the population here. These are the Jollofs, who are easily distinguished both from the settlers and liberated Africans by their height, commanding mien, and peculiar dress; a wide scarf, generally white, being thrown over the head, and allowed to fall in ample folds round the whole figure, something in the style of the Spanish mantilla, or the yashmak of the East. They are natives of the country to the south of the river Senegal, and many of them profess the Roman Catholic religion.

The different tribes in Freetown seem as numerous, and quite as jealous of each other, as the clans of the Highlands. But instead of the variously chequered patterns which, in the tartan plaid or kilt of its wearer, distinguish a Stuart from a Macdonald, a Campbell, or a Gordon, the negro carries his badge of nationality in his face, all of one tribe being marked in the same manner by cuts or tattooing. On notes and messages being brought to the house, when I ask my little waiting-woman "who been bring this?" it surprises me to be answered "one Aku man," "one Kroo boy," as the case may be, or by her saying "one settler girl" or "one Maroon woman" wants to speak to me, though the individuals she thus distinguishes may be personally unknown to her; for, excepting the Jollofs and Mandingoes, all the black people seem alike to me. But it is by their national marks that she can so readily tell one countryman from another. It is only the Kroomen and liberated slaves who have the additional features of tattooed or carved figures upon their faces. The settlers and Maroons are totally different from all the rest of the community of Sierra Leone,—hate each other cordially, and look down with utter contempt upon the liberated Africans.

A young settler woman was recommended to me as a needle-woman, and she volunteered her services by walking, or rather *swinging*, her portly figure unannounced into the drawing-room; and, holding out her hand to be shaken, said, with a movement meant to be a low curtsy, "I am the sewing-girl, marm!"

She was followed at respectful distance by her attendant, and arrayed in a gaudy-patterned gown, with high head-dress, gold earrings, and coral necklace, fanning herself all the while with a handkerchief redolent with musk, so as to display the numerous silver rings which glittered on her large hand. She came to enter upon her duties next morning an hour or two later than had been fixed upon, and, after sitting for a short time in my dressing-room, said "Sun too hot here," and that she would like to go into the front piazza, where she amused herself by looking out of the windows for about ten minutes between each stitch. About two hours earlier than she had agreed to work, she asked leave to "fold up" and go home for that day; to which I at once assented; and seeing that a child of eight years old could have done as much in one hour as this professed "sewing-girl" in what she considered a whole day, I added that I should not require her to come back.

Having given the same work to a black man to do, you cannot imagine how quickly and neatly he got on. But the history of this individual presents a favourable picture of a liberated African rising to respectability and comparative wealth by his own honest industry. Originally rescued from a slave-ship and emancipated here when a boy, he served an apprenticeship where he learnt, amongst other things, the womanly occupations of sewing, washing, and ironing. On becoming free, in a manner, again, he entered M——'s service, where he was taught, although then a grown-up man, writing and arithmetic. That he made any progress in these branches of education at that age is a good proof of diligence and perseverance; and his spare time always given to reading the Bible, his regular attendance at church, and constant sobriety and steadiness, evidence pious principles not always to be found amid even the most influential members of the liberated African community. The country name of this man was "Petah," now civilized into "Peter," and his own people, the Akus, pay him due honour from the circumstance of his being a native chief's son. It is pleasant to reflect that his application has contributed to raise him to a comfortable competence; he now holds a respectable little appointment suited to his abilities, which does not debar him from working occasionally in his capacity of tailor, while

his upright conduct has gained him the confidence not only of his own class, but of many persons of a higher grade, with whom he carries on transactions in trade as a storekeeper and petty farmer.

Some specimens of African workmanship have been sent to us, not common here, but made farther down the coast. One is a footstool of white wood, turned up at the ends, with four feet curiously cut out, and resting on a small pedestal, also carved round the edges. Another is a large round covered basket, shaped like a globe flattened at the poles; it is extremely thick and strong, and is made of grass, dyed yellow, red, and black, woven into dice. The third is a small ornamented calabash, stained crimson, with a pattern neatly and elaborately marked upon it, and at one end a string of roughly-cut gold beads to hang it up by. Our furniture has also been augmented by a country hammock, which is of native hemp, platted firmly, and dyed black. It is tastefully decorated with tassels of black and white. Some prettily-figured mats of split bamboo and woven grass add to the foreign aspect of the apartments, which generally in the dwellings of Europeans here are so little crowded with furniture, that they look bare to the eye of a newly-arrived person, accustomed to rest on carpeted floors, papered and pictured walls, capacious window drapery, with—besides the usual indispensables of chairs and sofas—tables covered with books and *objets de fantaisie*, including, amidst a myriad of ornamental articles, vases and pots of flowers. We have indeed no lack of couches and sofas here,—they form the principal part of the contents both of inner rooms and piazzas. But while one sitting-room boasts of three or four sofas and ottomans, the number of chairs and tables is quite disproportionate, and cabinets and bookcases are rarely seen. Yet it is strange how soon we become reconciled to what at first may have appeared novel and even disagreeable. Already I see that the arrangement just described is perfectly suited to the climate, and leaves scope to walk up and down the spacious rooms with a sensation of coolness and freedom, impossible to feel where every step has to be cautiously threaded through a labyrinth of alternately light and massive pieces of furniture: occasionally a handsome mirror, in gilded frame, occupies one of the spaces

between two of the many doors and windows which take off the bareness of a dead wall ; and large lamps, or silver candlesticks, under India shades, stand on a side-table, but the damp and heat of the atmosphere contrive to render the field of *saloon arranging* a very meagre one at Sierra Leone. Gathered flowers do not remain fresh above a few hours, and those growing in pots encourage mosquitoes. I was delighted the other day to see in a friend's drawing-room some seemingly unfaded English flowers in a crystal vase ; but on examination found they made an artificial bouquet, the red roses being variegated by mildew into those of York and Lancaster, and the pretty sweet peas covered over with creatures like mites.

Sleeping apartments look particularly strange here, owing to the bedsteads standing out considerably from the walls, sometimes even in the very centre of the room ; and their curtains being so different in texture, and style of making up, from the heavy moreen or chintz used in a colder climate. One pretty form of curtain for an iron bedstead without posts or roof is made of a great many widths of leno, sewed up all round, and gathered in a sort of draped coronet—like that on a French bed—to the very top of the ceiling, where the fabric is suspended from a strong hook. The bottom of the curtain is loaded with shot sewed up in tape, and hemmed all round, which, resting heavily on the ground, prevents the entrance of a single mosquito. During the day it is lifted up, and being then doubled is thrown round one side of the bed-frame.

Our drawing-room boasts of a real lath-and-plaster ceiling in the form of a dome ; but few apartments here are finished above, otherwise than by planks and beams painted white. One of the verandahs in every house of large size admits of being partitioned off into dressing-rooms and bath-rooms ; while what is called “ the pantry ” is in fact a sort of servants' room, where they are constantly in waiting. The art of bell-hanging either not being understood or not appreciated in this part of the world, little hand-bells are used, whose sound cannot reach far ; but, excepting those domestics whose business it is to attend up stairs, none ever come into the house, unless, by-the-by, the cook once or twice a-day, to receive his market and other directions—cooks and their assistants, as well as horsemen (or

grooms) and water-carriers, being here *out-of-door* servants. Kitchens are almost always detached buildings, and in some instances mere grass sheds. I have only once had a peep into ours, the sole furniture of which seems to consist of an enormous grate of the rudest construction. The cellar, which is on the ground-floor of the house, I have never ventured to explore, finding quite enough to superintend in the store-room—in this climate a safer repository for cock-roaches than for anything else, despite all due care and precaution. They are very numerous in this house, and so large that I have mistaken them for mice running along the floor. They are very destructive; nibbling the leather off trunks, tracing figures in the same fashion upon boots and shoes, and quite as bad as mice for devouring sugar, candles, biscuit, and anything eatable, whilst their eggs cause a hole when deposited in paper, or fabrics of linen or cotton, as well as in silk and wool,—to which stuffs a sort of creeping moth is also a great enemy here. I hear much of the ravages of ants and other insects; and a lady told me lately that it is no uncommon thing on opening a book to find a scorpion ensconced between the leaves. But, although at first I always dreaded encountering some venomous reptile or other, and in the dusk of evening have sometimes fancied one of the large iron hooks for fastening open the windows to be a centipede, as yet I have seen nothing more alarming than cock-roaches and mosquitoes. I think that with plenty of camphor put into trunks and wardrobe-shelves, and constant dusting out of drawers and corners, one might keep the moths and cock-roaches from doing much mischief, if it be not possible to annihilate them entirely. But, unfortunately, servants here have no idea of sweeping, dusting, and keeping things clean; and it is astonishing suddenly to find how much one's comfort depends upon these trifling menial duties, that seem done mechanically by an English housemaid, yet which neither teaching nor directing will teach an African *houseman* to do otherwise than most superficially. There is a strange medley of noises to be heard in the streets here. Not only have we the various cries of cows, sheep, goats, asses, pigs, and poultry at all hours, but in the morning a gang of convicts proceed to their work in a government yard near our house, and the rattling of their chains,

with their harsh language—compared to which Gaelic or Welsh is soft melody—jar with the stroke of hammers and hatchets, rendering it most unpleasant to remain in the apartments in that direction until four o'clock, when a bell calls the people from their labours, and that end of the house is once more left in quiet. But then in the street, at the other end, the practising of the militia band generally commences, and you might fancy that a barrel-organ, or hurdy-gurdy somewhat out of tune, were playing under your windows, as the sable musicians favour you with nothing except the same hackneyed old airs over and over again. Immediately without the precincts of the court in which our dwelling stands, a poor madwoman literally *lives* under a magnificent orange-tree, and her frenzied exclamations are most distressing to hear, especially if the night be clear and beautiful, as the brighter the moonshine the more outrageous she is. In the evening, too, we have the everlasting *tom-tom*; at times diversified by the ominous stroke of the Mandingo kettle-drum, a hollow booming sound, which, in spite of its sameness, somehow or other contrives always to convey to my mind the idea of dark deeds of savage and treacherous warfare. Then there is the dull inharmonious singing of the natives; words such as

“Yah!—yah!—oh! yah! oh!”

being repeated with little change for hours together. Occasionally we may hear a voice which, though rude and untutored, gives the impression that its owner has also a correct ear, and leads me to suppose that amid the countless different tribes in the colony there are some individuals gifted with greater musical powers than others,—for instance, the Timmanee airs which I have heard are all soft and pleasing in their wildness. But certainly the majority of the population seem to delight in uncouth, noisy, and what we should term ridiculous sounds. Having often heard that the American Indians, and other savages, possess a particular lightness of tread, I was quite disappointed to find that no such desirable grace belonged to the Freetown negro, whose shoeless foot on the uncarpeted floors falls like that of an elephant. This heavy tramp gave way lately in one of our people (a sort of civilized Krooman) to the loudest and harshest creaking of shoes that ever was heard, so that

his footstep on the wooden stairs and long piazzas was as if a hundred of those little dogs and birds made to bark and chirp on the principle of a pair of bellows as toys for children had been set in motion at once; and I was greatly amused to hear that the man had actually tried on about half-a-dozen pairs of shoes—not to consult comfort as to their fit, nor yet to gratify vanity as to their appearance—but to find out which would make the greatest noise in walking, or, in his own words, “which one can talkee good;” as it seems the blacks all think that the loudness of their step adds to their own importance and dignity, and, consequently, disdain to wear shoes that do not creak.

One evening, after hearing my little damsel read her usual portion of lessons, and setting her down to look at a book full of woodcuts, to her infinite delight, I opened the pianoforte, and was trying what effect the voyage and climate had had upon its keys, when I heard the “talking shoes” slowly and deliberately ascending the staircase. Instead of passing on to the pantry (here sacred to the house-servants), the wearer, whose peculiar charge, that of the lower rooms, seldom calls for his presence up-stairs, stopped at the drawing-room door, and after a profound reverence advanced a few paces, bearing in his hand a sort of musical instrument, upon which, without uttering a single word, he began to play with much apparent self-complacency. He continued for some minutes not only beating time with his foot, but marking it also by a succession of measured nods, until I put an end to the performance by asking to look at the rude lyre, which he evidently regarded with great veneration, and with an aspect of most solemn gravity he placed it in my hands as if delivering up a valuable treasure. It was a simple triangle with a few strings stretched across, and gave not an unpleasant though rather monotonous note. I asked several questions respecting the musical instruments of his country, but received no answer that I could at all make out, further than that this little guitar, or rather harp, of which its owner seemed so proud, “made fine noise too much.” But the expression of his tattooed countenance as he glanced at the open pianoforte, though I had not touched it after his unexpected entrance, said as plainly as words could, “Ah, white man may bring grand thing for make music, but black one’s own one grand past him!”

All the doors being usually left open during the day, the ignorant common people are very apt to walk into the house, and would go into every room unannounced, upon the vague pretext of having messages to deliver, or something to ask you for; it is part of this Krooman's duty to prevent such visitors reaching farther than the first landing-place. Native merchants are constantly bringing things to sell: our table-mats of dyed grass are of their manufacture, and I have also got a tidy little work-basket of the same material. Sometimes they bring leopard, monkey, and otter skins, but oftener the live animal itself is ushered into the piazza: a chimpanzee, quite a young one, and very ugly; a mangrove monkey, prettier than the generality of the tribe; bush-cats, brindled grey creatures with long pointed fox-like noses; and beautiful wild doves, with glossy purple and deep blue plumage, and soft bright eyes, have all been severally offered for sale, making quite a little menagerie in themselves.

These country merchants try to impose upon strangers, generally asking double or treble the real value of their goods. A story is told of one of them offering a pair of miserably lean fowls at some most exorbitant price to a European gentleman, who said ironically that the black man asked too little, and surely meant double the sum he named; he, believing "massa" was quite in earnest, refused to part with the fowls except at the higher price, and, after trying various places in town without meeting a purchaser, at last plodded homewards, carrying his lean poultry with him, quite unconscious that the person he had at first applied to had been merely trying to shame him out of so absurd an attempt at cheating.

LETTER III.

Removal to a Mountain Abode — Reasons for preferring the Country to Town — African Mode of conveying Luggage, &c. — Difficulty of obtaining Female Servants — Coral and Amber Ornaments — Negro Mothers and Daughters — First Tornadoes of the Season — Roofs of Houses — Palm Cabbage — Sour Sops and Sweet Sops — Pawpaw Trees — Gourd Vessels.

April 5, 1841.

WE are now preparing for our departure to an abode which, viewed from town, seems built on the very face of the mountains. Their towering summits form a dark and striking background to the white object, whose windows gleaming in the evening sun betoken it to be a house in that wild and solitary situation. Some people tell me I shall find it unpleasantly cold during the rainy season up there, but that seems rather a novel idea in this latitude; others say it will be an unbearably dull residence, but, indeed, I think it will prove to me less so than Freetown itself. Here we have nothing except the usual drive of an afternoon, through the same formal streets, past the same line of huts and gardens, until we reach the Sierra Leone "Hyde Park," otherwise the race-course, where seeing only a few pale faces and languid forms, instead of a cheerful and animated multitude, gives a very desolate impression, despite the natural beauty of the scenery around. There is one peaceful-looking little bay, twin-sister to the one at which we landed, the two together forming the race-course peninsula; but that which I speak of now, is fringed all round with mangroves, green and beautiful to the eye as a margin to the silvery water, but from their well-known habits of accumulating mud and creating miasma not very agreeable to the mind. Here are usually lying one or more broken-up condemned Spanish slave-vessels, from which it has received the dreary name of Destruction Bay, and those dismantled vessels add to the deserted appearance of the place. Then one cannot *explore* when driving quietly along in a car-

riage, and I suppose it would not be deemed quite *comme il faut* in the Sierra Leone capital to spring out to examine every flower or plant that attracts notice. I therefore delight in the prospect of going into the country, besides that this mountain dwelling is in one of the healthiest localities in the colony, being considered above yellow fever range.

Nothing can equal the quiet way in which a removal of residence is conducted here, although in a fashion so different from that to which we are accustomed. There are no such things as carts, waggons, or even hand-barrows in the place, except those which are dragged through the streets by the convict chain-gang : and even though there were such modes of conveyance, they would not avail in removing furniture, &c. to our new dwelling, the road being too steep and narrow to admit of any sort of wheeled vehicle. Every thing that one person is able to carry is borne upon the head. On a *wheelbarrow* being sent out to a gentleman here, notwithstanding the proper way to use it was shown to his labourers, they actually preferred lifting it up, whether empty or laden, and, putting it on their heads, marched on under the burthen quite contentedly ! To protect the head they use little cushions of twisted grass, straw, or leaves, called "cattas." A handkerchief, apron, or any kind of rag is employed when nothing else is at hand ; and I suppose that besides acting as a defence the "catta" enables the bearer to poise his load better. Unwieldy articles, such as casks, are slung upon poles of bamboo, which then are rested on the shoulders of several persons, while very large pieces of furniture are carried simply on the heads or shoulders of as many as are required to bear the weight. I have seen twenty people bending under one long and heavy packing-case ; but, indeed, three or four black men together will scarcely carry as much as a single porter in any town at home. Our servants and work-people come in parties, lift up the trunk or box, which has only to be locked to be ready for them, and walk away at leisure. Tables and chairs need no matting nor covering thrown over them ; they are taken up as carelessly as if merely to be conveyed into the next room.

I know you will laugh with me over some of the minor inconveniences attendant on domestic arrangements in this country.

The little waiting-woman whom I mentioned some time ago, soon became weary of sewing, reading, and learning to be tidy in her habits, which in so mere a child was not at all remarkable. I therefore sent her back to school, and having got another a few years older, found that she had little idea of doing anything except loll at the open windows, talking and laughing to the passers by, or gazing at the reflection of her smooth ebon complexion in the panes of glass when the casement was fastened back on the dark wall. There being no class of persons here corresponding to that which in our own country supplies us with female domestics, the difficulty of getting any sort of woman-servant that can be of the slightest use to a European lady may be easily imagined. The descendants of both settlers and Maroons, undoubtedly the most civilized portion of the black community, show a great disinclination to employ themselves in active work, and apparently consider anything in the shape of a menial capacity as utterly beneath them. I should think this ridiculous kind of pride must owe its origin to their not exactly comprehending the distinction between servitude and slavery; and also because they have no inducement to work, at least for themselves, most of them having been able to obtain the newly emancipated children as apprentices, which poor little things become for a term of years if not exactly slaves, something not much above them, to those who meanwhile leave their own families to the full indulgence of the most idle and slothful habits. Not only the children of settlers and Maroons, but even those of liberated Africans are brought up much in the same manner. "Colony-born children," said an old black nurse to me one day, whilst trying to impress me with a favourable opinion of apprenticeship, "no love for work, all lazy too much; but King-yard child good for work;" advising me in the same phraseology to apply for one of the recently liberated children, and train her up; adding that such were apt to get attached to the family to whom they were apprenticed, and take interest enough in all its concerns to become faithful and willing servants; whilst on those who had parents or friends in the colony no dependence could be placed, as they generally turned out dishonest and unworthy of trust.

This woman was a Maroon, and, unlike what her people are

usually represented in disposition, was both pleasant-tempered and kind-hearted, with a passion for ornaments I never saw equalled. A necklace of large rough pieces of coral, another of smaller beads of the same bright substance, one of oval lumps of amber nearly as large as a hen's egg, and sundry strings of variously-coloured glass beads, appeared by turns round the kerchiefless and wrinkled neck, and were exhibited no doubt as a mark of riches. Not that such decorations prove wealth in this country more than elsewhere, as my washerwoman comes in a chain apparently gold, to beg a few pieces of sugar for a sick child; and one day a poor girl came, asking me to give her needlework to do, wearing a pair of earrings that would have looked well amidst the glittering trinkets of Howell and James. They resembled those of Indian or Chinese workmanship, and had been made somewhere on the coast near the Gambia.

Dinah, the laundress, notwithstanding her predilection for gold chains, is a highly respectable and very intelligent liberated African, living at Regent (a mountain village five or six miles from town), whence she comes every Saturday morning with her attendant damsels, laden with the baskets of clothes, and is at our house so early as six o'clock. Understanding from the same lady who recommended this woman to me that the children in the country districts are much better brought up in every way than those in Freetown, I commissioned Dinah to look out for another servant, and accordingly she brought a nice tidy-looking young person, who, besides having been at school in the mountain villages, had been in the service of a European family before. She was accompanied by her mother, who could speak scarcely a word of English, but seemed, nevertheless, quite pleased at the arrangements made; and as the girl herself worked very neatly, read remarkably well, and had some activity (a rare quality with a negro, I can assure you), I congratulated myself on having at last obtained so efficient a "help." But she had not been three days in the house when Dinah came back with a very lugubrious countenance, followed by Eliza's mother, who, as they both entered my room, immediately commenced a long "palaver," using at the same time strange gesticulations, accompanied by such sentences as these:—"Looka, now, ma amie!" addressing me, "looka, ma piccan! she ma head" (knocking her hand on

her brow as she spoke), "she ma foot, ma good foot" (beating on the floor at these words); then stretching out her long bare arm, and making some rapid movements with the skinny fingers, "she ma hand." The interpretation of all this was that Eliza, when at home, thought, went messages, and worked for her mother, who, having already repented giving up the services of her daughter, was now resolved to have her back.

In great distress at the caprice of her neighbour, Dinah said she knew of another girl, who wished to be taken into a European family, and would come to me at once; therefore next day this second and younger mountain maiden was duly introduced by *her* mother, a tall wild-looking woman, with a baby strapped upon her back, and whose appearance was altogether so romantic that I felt as if about undertaking to train up the child of a wandering gipsy.

The heralds of the "rains" have already made their appearance, our first tornado of the season being on the evening of the 17th ultimo; it was a slight one, but the next night there was another, followed by rain, which not only found its way through the roof of the house, but also through the boarded ceiling of my room, giving the uncomfortable sensation of being on ship-board and having "shipped a sea."

The wood-work in this climate shrinks so in the harmattan, that the first shower almost invariably discovers leaks to exist, even in roofs which are kept in the best repair. The tops of the different sorts of houses are quite remarkable outside for their variety in colour and material. Government offices and the large buildings originally erected by Europeans, and generally inhabited by them, are slated. The next class are covered in with shingles, small flat pieces of hard wood, either made from a particular sort of tree that grows here, or obtained from America. These, when tarred all over, at a distance can scarcely be distinguished from slates; but when left exposed to the weather, shrivel and shrink, and turn up at the edges like so many scallop-shells, giving to the roof a very irregular and whimsical appearance. The small frame-houses are either shingled or simply boarded, whilst the lower order of buildings are thatched with grass, bamboo, or various leaves gathered in the bush.

I have lately seen the palm-cabbage, which I think one of the strangest and best eatables that Africa affords. It is nothing less than the heart of a tree, the stem having to be cut down ere it is possible to obtain the delicacy itself. This is a large odd-looking substance, and at first I imagined the donor had sent us a piece of fat white *veal* (about as great a rarity in this place), when a closer examination showed it to be a vegetable, presenting a mass of young folded leaves so closely wedged together, that until boiled they were hardly discernible. It exactly resembles, when raw, fresh green peas, and in that state is often used as a salad or pickle; but when boiled has a far more delicate flavour than a common cabbage. I have also to tell you of the "sour-sop,"* a large unshapely fruit, green on the outside, and all covered over with short blunt points. Inside is a white pulp, in appearance somewhat like cotton steeped in liquid, very acid, with a strong flavour of black currants, and comprising numerous little divisions, in each of which is a single long-shaped brown seed. There is another species, called "sweet-sop,"† much smaller than the other, and prettier looking, but of a more insipid taste. It is not unlike a broad fir-cone in form, but the rind is purple, or in some varieties greenish, and seems coated with crystallized sugar.


One of the commonest trees of the negro gardens is the paw-paw: it is of rapid growth, and has a very slight spongy trunk, ringed like that of the palm. The fruit, which when ripe is of a bright yellow, or rather orange-colour, and about three times as large as a swan's egg, is attached by short footstalks to the stem itself, round which it clusters very thickly. Europeans eat it with black pepper and salt, but I do not think it at all good, and fancy it has a poisonous taste. Indeed, previously to being placed on table, incisions are made in the rind to allow the escape of a glutinous and milky liquid, which is considered unwholesome.

The leaf of the pawpaw-tree is an ingredient in the soap made by the natives here, and which is sold in round brown balls in the market-place. There are few things I see carried past by the black people prettier than the shining gourd vessels. Some of

* *Anona senegalensis*.

† *Anona squamosa*.

them are of a bright polished yellow ; others are stained red, and carved in grotesque figures, and they are of various sizes ; some being quite small, serve as drinking-cups ; others, again, are nearly a yard in diameter, and are used to carry water in, or (instead of baskets) arrowroot, cassada, starch, fruit, &c. They are all very light and hard. Some are shaped like a round flask with a longish neck, and do duty as bottles : so you see this country is bountiful to the natives, even in supplying them with vegetable bottles and bowls !



LETTER IV.

Pureness of the Mountain Air — Birds — Objects in keeping a Journal — Palanquin Travelling — Sierra Leone "Bush" — The House on the Hill — Sunrise — Mahomedan Call to Prayers — Ants in the Store-room — Cocoa-nut Trees — Guavas — Magnificent View — Grass-fields — Mount Oriel — Flowers — Locusts — Red Ants — Coffee Shrubs — Bug-a-bugs — Larder and Cupboard Economy — Talipat and other Palms — Morning Scenes and Sounds — Mango Trees — Bamboos — Bermuda Grass — Lizards and Snakes.

April 27, 1841.

WE came up to our new and very solitary habitation about three weeks ago, and as yet I like it infinitely better than Freetown; it is so much cooler and more pleasant every way, despite the steepness and difficulty of the ascent. The house is not so large as the one we had in town, but this is rendered of less consequence by the surrounding atmosphere being much purer than that in Freetown.

Birds of every colour are for ever flitting past, and though their notes want variety, they are far from being unmusical. The humming-birds, scarcely larger than humble-bees, with plumage of green, blue, and purple, haunt the graceful boughs of a tamarind tree close to my room windows, and flutter round the scented yellow blossoms of a wild acacia that grows near the house. Their song is lively and quick, and they dart about in the sunshine with a merry rapid motion. One large gracefully formed bird, of a sober brown hue, with black crested head, is always to be seen amongst the orange-trees. Its note begins at daybreak, and is very cheerful.

Another chants in a plaintive strain the name "Theodore! Theodore!" from morning till night; whilst the cry of one that is continually heard, but never seen, is so like that of a turkey, as to cause me often to fancy that the tame turkeys which were brought us from the Gambia lately have wandered into the "bush."

We so easily become habituated to what we see every day, that I have begun to note down at once, *journal-wise*, whatever I think would interest you to learn about this country, lest when a ship suddenly appears ready to sail, the detail of little home matters that are apt to engross most of our thoughts, may leave no time to spare for descriptions of outward objects, whose aspect may already have become familiar to myself.

Extract from Journal.

April 8th.—We left Freetown yesterday afternoon. M—— on horseback, but baby and I in a large and comfortable palanquin, the sliding doors of which were kept as open as possible, so that whilst we received the benefits of the sea-breeze I had also a view of both sides of the road. We soon lost sight of stone and lime buildings with shingled or slated roofs, for huts thatched with grass or bamboo; almost all having piazzas in front, upheld by rough wooden posts, and open except within a few feet of the ground, where they were either boarded up or wattled and plastered over with red mud, as the other sides of the dwelling might be; the spaces left for windows seeming to answer the purpose of chimneys as well. The inmates were seated on mats spread out in their small enclosed courts, and seemed busily engaged at their suppers, which apparently consisted generally of fruit and fish. As our path became steeper, the huts gradually became more scattered, till we left them, their spreading trees, and waving little flags far behind, and began to ascend the mountain by a rude and narrow way traced amid isolated black rocks, and overhung by the thick branches of that luxuriant “bush,” which seems low and insignificant when viewed from a distance, because its denseness prevents its height being seen; though most of its trees might vie with those of twenty or thirty years’ growth at home. Many of these boughs were clothed with leaves, glossy and bright as laurel, but four or five times larger than a common laurel-leaf; while climbing plants, bending down under the weight of their magnificent tufts of red, lilac, or white flowers, seemed wreathed round every individual stem. It was strange to see those beautiful blossoms, which would be prized as rare specimens in England, hidden and choked up by tall grass and heaps of withered leaves. Pine-apples grow

amongst the bush here, as weeds do in hedges ; their long spiked points met my eye in every direction, and numerous were the tempting clusters of shining berries of various colours and shapes that loaded the boughs skirting the path, always steep, in some places even dangerously so ; till we passed the side of the hill, which, cleared and planted with coffee, rises like a wall on one hand, while a false step on the other would at once precipitate you to the bottom. At length a small patch of table-ground betokened that we had reached the summit.

At a cantering sort of pace the bearers bore the palanquin along under the shade of some fine orange-trees, and set it down in the open ground piazza of a building, whose winding outside staircase, projecting eaves, and strange sloping roof, reminded me, on a large scale, of the imitation Swiss cottages you see at watering-places or in the suburbs of large towns in our own country, whose inhabitants (dear people !) always seem to imagine the style of architecture of other lands to be better than that of their own. On entering a small low parlour, with arched windows and door in substantial stone walls, it appeared that our dwelling rose phoenix-like from the ashes of another, literally standing within the ancient foundation of what had once been a structure nearly twice as large as the present.

The orange-trees, under which we had passed, were rich in fruit, but it was too late to commence the novelty of gathering it from the branches myself, as we had scarcely time to make a few requisite arrangements and drink a cup of tea, ere it became dark. It was strange to see, from the front windows of our mountain residence, the widely scattered lights of Freetown so far down beneath ; while the barking of dogs, the singing and laughing of the natives, and the beat of drums, were mellowed into comparative softness as they rose out of the valley below and blended with the floating notes of the evening bugle from the barrack hill. At the back of the house all was gloom and solitude. I could see only a dim dark outline of hills and trees. No sound came from that quarter except the jarring screech of the night-hawk ; no light gave sign of human habitation ; though a continued blaze of fire in several places on the distant mountain sides showed that the burning of "bush" before the "rains" was not yet completed.

In town we had no gradual dawn, but this morning, on throwing open the jalousied shutters of the windows looking to the east, it was quite enlivening to see the daylight stealthily breaking over a hill higher than this one, and separated from it by a deep ravine, which, with the low ground, was yet lying in misty shadow. I was struck by hearing a shrill wild cry repeated several times, and seeming to come from the plain beneath. This was the Mahomedan call to prayers; and the farm labourers, who had been sitting in groups under the orange-trees, now prostrated themselves before the rising sun; for notwithstanding there are here so many Christian missionaries, constant and zealous in their labours amid the people, the false religion of Mahomet numbers amongst its proselytes no inconsiderable portion of the liberated African population. But there was no time for moralizing. One servant had to be despatched to market, and the others set to assist in arranging the furniture, &c.; while the little girl, in great delight at being once more among the mountains, whenever her young charge slept, darted out to pluck fresh limes, which she ate as you would an apple, only dipping them first in salt! The workpeople, ten or a dozen in number, were employed in improving the approach to the house; but, although under charge of a *head man*, a grim-looking figure of above six feet in height, with close-fitting scarlet cap *à la Mandingo*, they seemed every one more idle than another, and kept up so constant and loud a conversation in their barbarous dialect, attended with so many oratorical attitudes, as to give the idea that they were engaged in some grave dispute.

M—— went to town early, and feeling somewhat solitary, thus hemmed in by hills and ravines, not even a native hut being within any reasonable distance, I locked the hall door, which, as it is of glass, enabled me to see before opening it who wanted admittance. But I discovered that the store-room was more exposed to assailants from within doors, meat, bread, sugar, and fruit being alike overspread with ants of two kinds. One species is dark brown, very small, and rather slow in its movements; the other black and agile: both are harmless, but promise to be a source of some annoyance, as they have to-day triumphed over my most ingenious methods to prevent their attacks upon the milk-jug or sugar-basin. Our town residence

was quite free from such little pests as these insects. Once or twice only I noticed there a few minute red ants, which from their creeping pace I fancied were blind, but they never seemed to eat anything. The smallest kind here, is the most audacious; even cold water is not exempt from its invasions; for, observing a large dark ball on the surface of a glass of water, I perceived it to be a mass of ants, while a band marching in single file up the side of the glass added fresh numbers to the floating and struggling heap. The other species appears to confine itself mostly to sugar, and when a noise is made in its vicinity, makes a nimble retreat. Between attending to various domestic matters of the same novel character, and looking at the extensive and beautiful view, the day has passed quickly.

The cottage is built on a ridge so narrow, that the ground slopes at both ends with precipitous abruptness. The brow of the hill is within a few paces of the front parapet; up this bold and nearly perpendicular acclivity is cut a narrow and perilous path, sometimes preferred, on account of its being so much shorter than the main one, which winds up one side of this curiously-shaped mountain, and comes in at the back of the house. There, only, the ground is level for about a hundred yards, ascending then into another hill, covered with "bush," and crowned by a few lofty old trees. In the evening we proceeded along the level path, which is shaded by orange-trees, and by one fine cocoa-nut-tree, whose feathery branches sweep the ground, as it has not yet attained a great height, though in full bearing. This is the first time I have seen the nut growing; and the flower, somewhat resembling a tall full bunch of ripe ears of wheat, with both young and old nut in their polished green cases all hanging at once from the same tree, has a peculiarly rich effect.

The flower and young fruit, which is but a miniature of the full-sized one, are protected by a coarse gauzy canoe-shaped covering, which falls off as the nut ripens; and I think the natives must have derived their ideas of weaving cloth from the appearance of this fibrous substance, which is exactly like a strong but thin stuff.

The next tree which attracted my attention was the guava.*

* *Psidium pyrifera*.

It is very plentiful here, has a coarse-looking leaf, and straggling way of growing; its boughs, with their smooth dun-coloured bark, stretching themselves out, like so many lean and idle arms. Its blossom alone is pretty, resembling that of the medlar.

April 9th—Ushered in another fine fresh morning. I feel the air here quite bracing after that of Freetown, and the water, especially in the morning, is delicious from its extreme coolness; but a draught still more refreshing is obtained from the cocoa-nut. Cocoa-nut milk is best when transparent as spring-water, which it always is, while the kernel is yet a snow-white jelly: as this hardens, the fluid becomes white, lusciously sweet, and of course diminishes in quantity. When the nut is gathered just about sunrise, this milk is so very cool as to be esteemed quite a luxury. To-day the view has appeared still more beautiful and magnificent than it did yesterday. From the front windows Freetown looks as if marked out upon a map on a gigantic scale; and although there is sameness and formality in the long straight streets, crossing each other at equal distances, yet the irregularity of the different buildings, embowered as they all are in trees—the ships constantly in the harbour—the Bullom shore with its shining sand beach and perpetual verdure—the broad blue sea stretching out till bounded by the horizon—form a relief to what might otherwise be considered tame and wanting in variety. Between us and part of Freetown, the barrack-hill, with its crowning range of lofty buildings and smooth esplanade, rises up in grassy simplicity. Upon the esplanade stands what was once a martello tower, originally one of the defences of the colony, and from which the locality of the barracks is generally designated “Tower Hill.” We are now so much above even this high hill, which while in town I used to class amongst the mountains, that we can see over its head, as it were, several others of the broad regular streets leading down to the harbour; at the west side of which (forming in this panoramic view a strikingly different object from the bold eminence of the barrack-hill) stretches out a wide flat peninsula, rich in all sorts of “bush,” and called King Tom’s Point. Indeed from Cape Sierra Leone upwards, the coast is beautifully diversified by little green promontories, shady bays, and lake-looking creeks; for by the peculiar rise and fall of the ground, one of these,

when the tide is full, appears like a sheltered inland lake, and the rivers on the Bullom shore in several places do the same.

But the most remarkable feature of all is the mixture of cultivation and wildness. To the left we overlook one or two farms belonging to Europeans, and laid out in the neatest possible style, with their nicely-cut lime hedges, vineyards, gardens, and pleasure-grounds: while close to these bright, clean, and oasis-looking spots, on one side rise the great lone hills, and to the other lie wide bleak plains destitute of tree or bush, and called "grass-fields," although in reality they are but low flat rocks thinly coated with bad poisonous grass, which no cattle will eat.

The grass-thatched huts of the suburbs and *tributary* villages of Freetown, spread as they are over the plains, form in themselves another very striking feature in the prospect, looking like a multitude of hayricks disposed in formal lines amidst a green plantation. The hill on our right rises up very abruptly, shutting out the view of both river and opposite shore. It is much higher and still more difficult of access than this; although were a plank (could we find one long enough) flung across from our windows to the corresponding height on the other side, I think I could run across in five minutes. I call the hill "Mount Oriel," though it is commonly known by the name of some one of the individuals who have resided in the now uninhabited house, that still amidst a few old fruit-trees upon the flat summit stands in well-defined outline against the sky.

The view from the back of the house is of the same mountainous description, while the road to Regent and other villages ascends out of the deep hollow to our left, and gradually winds upwards, until hid by the hill next above this one. Beyond it again we see the bleak top of Leicester Mountain, as well as that of the Sugar-Loaf, another *real* mountain, and the identical peak that struck me by its lion-like shape on looking at Sierra Leone from the sea. It is not merely the highest, but the only hill in the colony that rears up its lofty head in all the frowning and solitary grandeur of dense dark forest.

I have really been very idle to-day, doing nothing except wandering from one window to another to gaze on the beautiful prospect of both land and sea which lies spread out before me. In the evening we took another short walk, and it seemed

strange to see those trees and plants, descriptions of which I have long ago read with wonder and interest, actually growing before my eyes! not pining in a hothouse, but blossoming under their own native sky; whilst besides those whose names are familiar, some of which I have seen in conservatories, there are here many others totally different from any I ever read or heard of.

One tree, of by no means insignificant height, with dark green and curiously-veined leaves, is loaded at present with a fruit called "monkey apple;" "monkey *plum*" would be a more correct appellation, as it resembles a nectarine more than an apple, being about the same size and of a bright yellow, streaked on one side with crimson. It is surprising how the orange and lime-trees near the house have attained to so great a height, and continue to flourish as they do, on a soil apparently composed of black ferruginous rock, great crags of which overhang the brow of the hill, lie scattered about in all directions, or raise themselves up like rough-hewn pedestals for the statue of some spirit of the mountains. The place appears to have been much neglected, for except that the top, and part of the steep sides of the hill, have been cleared and planted with coffee, there are no recent marks of cultivation. The luxuriant monthly rose, a solitary and rather dwarfish fig-tree in front of the house, with a low hedge of a large yellow-flowering cactus all round the top of the parapet-wall, some plants of the purple trumpet-shaped marvel of Peru,* or "four o'clock flower" as we call it, and the brilliant-hued Indian shot,† form the only visible attempt at artificial adornment. Yet we do not want for flowers—they perk up their gay bright faces on all sides; some, pretty lowly things, others, large handsome blossoms, more properly flowering shrubs. Garlands of a beautiful pale lilac convolvulus twine over the loose masses of rock, and festoon their crevices from top to bottom, or climb up the long grass, giving a lively bloom to its brown and parched stalks. The sensitive plant, with its delicate pink blossom and shrinking leaf, grows in great abundance; and one flower, not unlike the common dog-rose, runs along the ground in the same manner and almost as luxuriantly as the water-lily does over the surface of a pond.

* *Mirabilis jalapa*?

† *Canna indica*.

What we stand most in need of in the way of improvements are paths, that we may walk without having to thread our way through tall grass and brushwood, at the risk of startling a snake at every step. As it was, we disturbed nothing more alarming than locusts, numbers of which were leaping about upon the leaves and amongst the grass. This particular species is elegantly marked in green, black, and yellow, with greenish transparent wings. Many of the trees as well as the bush are infested too with large red ants, that make their nests of the leaves. Clusters of these glued-up leaves, covered over with their industrious tenants, hang from every branch, disfiguring the unfortunate tree more than can be described. The waspish nature of the insects themselves deters me from making a minute examination of their houses, which seem to be very ingeniously constructed. When one of the nests receives a sharp thrust from a walking-stick, the ants sally forth in great wrath, and some march determinedly up to the top of the aggressing cane, evincing their soldier-like disposition by sundry sharp bites on the hand which conducted the attack. The bite is not venomous, nor so painful as the sting of a bee, yet it is severe enough; and woe to the adventurous climber who ascends an orange-tree inhabited by these ants, for in an instant he is assailed by them in myriads! They are evidently injurious to vegetable life, as whatever tree or bush is loaded by their nests is sure to look sickly and pining. Much of the coffee appears thus, although some of it, especially near the house, is particularly luxuriant and beautiful. It is kept low like a shrub, but if permitted, will attain a considerable height: it has a knotted and gnarled trunk, rough white bark, and, when the tree is healthy, a bay-like leaf of a rich dark green.

I noticed on several of these white stems traces of what I am told are termites, or, as the country people here call them, "bug-a-bugs;" and on others the fresh earth-covered ways, like veins on the surface of the trunk, tempted me to make an opening in one to observe the insects within, and what a commotion it excited amongst them. Instead of running away, they stop short, those who were on before turning boldly back to see what is the matter, and then, as if by some freemasonry amongst themselves, they instantly begin to repair the roof of their gallery

with an order and regularity quite astonishing. They are round, fat, pearl-coloured little creatures, and either cannot see or have invisible eyes, very different in appearance from the red ant, with its angular body and two great, staring, vicious-looking eyes.

10th.—I find, to my cordial satisfaction, that there is a way of keeping ants from sugar and sweet things, by placing the prohibited article upon a plate of lime-juice, all acids being carefully eschewed by the *formicæ* in general. Sperm-oil, also, these insects shun.

Our sunset ramble was longer than usual this evening, and I felt as if I had met two old friends on coming suddenly on a quantity of ferns and another plant, or rather "bush," that is exactly like a *nettle*, except in being stingless! I looked down upon the gracefully branching foliage of the first—a stalk of which being neatly cut across showed the representation of the royal oak within—and then on the despised, familiar leaves of its coarser companion, and a vision passed before me of glad home-woods and dingles with their ferny brakes, and old grey ruins, whose roofless chambers were choked up by tall thick nettles. I looked up, and there stood the desert palms, tossing their long leaves in the fresh soft breeze that swept across the western ocean; and was amused to think that even a *momentary* charm could be thrown round so ill-favoured a weed as a nettle!

There are several young date and other palms dispersed over the rocky summit of the hill; but the most remarkable of all is a talipat. Its leaf is exactly like an enormous fan, the folds of which, separating at about four feet from the centre, taper into spiked points of perhaps four feet also in length. From these broad and singular-looking leaves, which are stiff and hard as thin wooden boards, hang long fine fibres, used as thread by the women of the interior.

The thickness of trunk which marks the palm when young, would in any other tree be deemed out of all proportion to its height; but the regal crest which surmounts its massive stem, renders this tree perfectly symmetrical, even when not above ten or twelve feet high, whilst the *chevaux-de-frise*, formed by the old leaves, is not only curious, but ornamental. The comparison may seem a very ignoble one, yet I know not how to convey a more familiar idea of most of our young palms indi-

vidually, than by desiring you to fancy a giant wheat-sheaf, slightly spread out at the base to enable it to stand upright on the ground.

We passed one or two large bare mounds of earth, that look remarkable in a place which, save where it is solid rock, is one field of rank vegetation. These, it seems, were formerly colonies of the "bug-a-bugs," and are constructed of mould prepared by the insect citizens, so as to be entirely free from seeds or roots; and years may pass on, and still these deserted heaps remain, resembling the little potato-bins round some humble cottage at home—except where a few stray seeds, sown by the wind, spring up in a coating of lowly flowers or plants of a more aspiring height. On coming to one coffee-tree with part of its stem completely hid under an earthen case, which bespoke the industry of the tiny insects within, the noise of our approach gave rise to what was, I suppose, a sort of warning to the busy community, being a sound something between a loud hissing and the ticking of a watch, which was distinctly repeated several times. On its ceasing, M—— struck the ground with his walking-cane, and immediately the hissing began again, the earth under the path being evidently full of these insects: one or two covered ways leading to the coffee-tree seeming to be only entered from below ground. The "bug-a-bugs," troublesome as they prove when they get into the wood-work of a house, without doubt are beneficial to trees in clearing away any dead bark or branches; and in a climate like this must be useful in assisting to remove decayed vegetation.

12th.—In the morning, the coolness of the bracing mountain air enables me to occupy myself in household matters, which, however, do not debar me from observing the glad, bright, busy aspect of everything out of doors. A band of labourers are clearing and making walks; and often as I pass by the open windows do I wonder at their progress, not as yet comprehending how M—— manages to direct the operations of people who can scarcely speak, far less understand, a word of English. One or two go out to cut grass for the horses—theyself half hid by the tall bunches which grow up so luxuriantly on the farm. A third is seen at a distance, emerging from the ravine, poising on his head a bucket of the clearest water, on

whose surface, to prevent splashing, float a few leafy twigs, or a piece of wood shaped like a St. Andrew's cross, which answers the same purpose ; and if it should strike one side of the bucket, warns the bearer to preserve a more equal balance. The goats are quietly browsing amongst the coffee, and the kids skipping and bounding from one huge stone to another. Birds and butterflies of the gayest hues sport amid the orange and lime branches ; lizards glide about with a sly yet rapid motion, or lie basking in the sun on the parapet wall. From the bush comes many a strange wild note, that tells of the more timid birds it shelters in its tangled shades ; while louder, though more distant, from the winding mountain-path beyond, the laugh and shout of human voices reach the ear ; and even without the aid of a glass I can count the groups of figures descending to market with their laden baskets of fruit and vegetables.

The afternoon is another pleasant period of the day, and that in which I have the best opportunity of examining out-of-door objects. I noticed this morning that a shower of rain had caused many of the coffee-shrubs to send forth their white stellated blossoms, and the house was filled with the heavy perfume, resembling that of an English bean-field, which the sea-breeze wafted in at the open windows. But on going out in the evening, I found the trees despoiled of their transitory glory, the petals of the flowers lying like snow-drifts beneath. There are several mango-trees on the grounds, but none are in blossom this season. I think this the most beautiful fruit-tree I have yet seen in the colony. Its bark is rather rough, and of a very light brown shade. The leaf is nearly a foot long, and grows so richly as quite to hide the form of the smaller branches, so that at a distance you see nothing except a beautifully rounded mass of foliage, supported by a straight and well-proportioned stem.

One very distinguished looking object among the many strange and interesting which surround our new abode, is a clump of bamboos. These tall tapering canes, fringed with twigs bearing a narrow, pointed, willow-like leaf, are constantly in motion. Even when scarcely a breath of wind stirs abroad, we hear a creaking and rustling sound amidst these stately and gracefully-bending reeds, which can be compared to nothing else than a colossal plume of ostrich feathers fit to deck a still

more enormous helmet than the enchanted one of the Castle of Otranto. The ground beneath the bamboos is perfectly clear, like what it is in a plantation of old Scottish firs; and an open space being made in the centre, with an entrance at one side, they form a natural arbour, which at all times affords a pleasant shade from the sun.

The insect chorus, which commences at sunset, seemed louder than usual to-night, and I peeped into several crannies of the dilapidated remnant of the old house to try and discover a cricket that sang out so shrilly from its covert that it sounded like the note of a good-sized bird. But I saw nothing except a stray grasshopper or two jumping among the remarkably pretty grass with which the ground adjoining the house is partially overgrown. It has a small delicate-looking blade, and is called "Bermuda grass," but instead of growing up like other grasses, spreads out much in the same manner as strawberry plants do, forming a sort of thick matted work, that although, as at present, somewhat dry and withered up, still feels soft and springy under the foot like a Persian carpet; while here and there over the parapet wall one of the long wiry stalks streams forth in the wind, or clings closely to the old mossy stones, as if trying to clasp their cracks and crevices together with its strong climbing fibres. This old wall is a favourite retreat for lizards, of which there seem to be several kinds, though I have only as yet observed two particularly. Those of one species are called "cundoos," and are of different sizes, with heavy awkward gaits and clumsy bodies, but brightly coloured in purple, yellow, red, and blue. They are voted very harmless, whilst a smaller and prettier kind, of an unvarying grey, and with a snake-like head, bead-like eyes, long tapering tail, and very rapid movements, is said by the blacks to bite venomously as a snake—of several of which reptiles I have had occasional glimpses since coming up here. One that M—— shot close to the house was exactly like the thong of a whip, and of the same grey shade as the little lizards. Another larger one, that some of the servants killed, was banded black and lead-colour. I have got one or two snake-skins that were found in the bush; they are fine and brittle like paper, and are marked in a regular network-like pattern.

LETTER V.

Flight of Locusts — Noxious Exhalations — Ride to Mount Oriel — Ruined Cottage — View of Bullom Shore — Solitary Grave — Rough Roads — Dreary Mountain Scenery — Salutations of the Natives — Strange Atmospheric Picture — Flying Ants — Mason Bees — Out-door Improvements — Plants — Specimen of Negro Intellect — Acquirements of Female Domestic — Isles de Los — Sangaree Mountains — Leopard's Island.

Extracts from Journal.

May 1st.—This forenoon, which was exceedingly hot, my attention was roused by a simultaneous shout from our servants and farm-labourers, while from the low ground a similar cry arose, accompanied by what sounded like the beating of native drums. On looking out, I saw apparently a thick cloud of dust coming down the hills and moving rapidly towards the town. It was a flight of locusts; not the green and black ones, which are yet too plentiful in our "bush," but the real migratory locusts. I was not surprised at the looks of dismay with which this sudden appearance was greeted by our people, one of whom exclaimed in a truly pathetic tone—"Ah! day make hungry too much in dis country! hungry too much!" whilst he and his fellow-servants created the utmost possible din, jingling the lids of saucepans and kettles, beating upon large tin jars, and shouting to prevent, if possible, these destructive insects from settling on the grass or orange-trees near the house; thousands of them fell as if exhausted, and were speedily pounced upon by the fowls.

These locusts are very large, with substantial bodies, and four broad extended wings; their colour is a sort of yellowish brown; they are not half such disgusting-looking things as the other locusts, although certainly I should not suppose them to be, as a young black lad declared, with much emphasis, "good, good, fried in palm-oil!" They made a shrill whirring noise as they

flew along, but where they came from we could not guess. I noticed in several places beneath, the living clouds suddenly disappearing, and then as suddenly rising to renew their flight, until I lost sight of them altogether: some must have winged their way across the river, as I saw many of the dust-coloured masses hovering above the water.

And now it is evening, and we have just had a heavy tornado. When the rain somewhat moderated, I went to the piazza windows, and, heedless of the strong land wind, watched for a long time the grand and beautiful appearance of the sea, illumined with purple and blue-looking lightning. The peals of thunder at first shook the very house; but it has now rolled to a distance, and the coolness of the air after the storm is perfectly delightful.

At first when the rain comes down, the smell from the earth is excessively unpleasant, and, as I should suppose, unwholesome: like that arising from stagnant water and decayed vegetable matter. Though every window is shut as close as possible, this detestable smell penetrates even into the inner rooms; so that once or twice at night, when there has been no wind, I have been aware of there being a light shower, by the strong earthy odour which accompanied it. To-night the violence of the wind has wafted away all traces of this noxious exhalation, and indeed I feel quite strengthened by the beneficial influence of the tornado. The heat in this climate induces a feeling of lassitude, even when there has been no exertion; and I do not think it is possible for any one in healthy, happy England, to understand how easily one becomes fatigued here with the very slightest bodily effort.

3rd.—Yesterday evening, in the course of a very lovely ride which we took to Mount Oriel, a strange scene presented itself.

Amid old orange-trees dying from neglect, a tall remnant of a lime-hedge, choked up by wild acacias, guavas, and clambering bush plants—with the burnt stumps, withered and leafless branches of other trees, appeared a detached gable-ended building with rent and broken walls; and beyond it a pavilion-roofed cottage, in a state far more dreary looking than a complete ruin, owing, I suppose, to all the outside work of the house being of wood. The boarded sides of its low piazza were clean and

bleached by exposure to the weather, while through the open spaces, where doors and casements had formerly been, the white-washed walls seemed fresh and out of character with the moss which carpeted the flagged floor of the verandah. But clean and solid as the woodwork appeared, most of its planks and posts were mere honey-combed cases, having been destroyed by bug-a-bugs, so that the tap of a finger broke through the shell of paint, that caused the building all the time to look so deceitfully solid.

From under a broken flag at the threshold of one of the inner apartments, a young pine-apple shot forth its pointed purple leaves; while lizards darting up and down on the walls, and spiders weaving their webs between the decaying rafters, seemed to dispute the territory with a few bats, which fled from their hiding places on our approach. Across what had once been the principal entrance, a beautiful China-rose is grown up to the roof, and some flowers of the Marvel of Peru, mingling with rank grass and unsightly weeds, had just opened their eyes to the afternoon sun. Clusters of the scarlet and orange "Pride of Barbadoes,"* and the African lilac, looked bright amid all the loneliness of this deserted habitation, and with one or two bunches of a sort of climbing lily, whose long bright crimson petals streamed to the wind, bore evidence that there had once been a time when both care and taste were expended on the place, although now a clump of bamboos and several mango-trees in full leaf are the only things evincing no traces of neglect and decay.

A broad platform covered with high grass intervenes between the house and the overhanging brow of the mountain, and along this piece of table-land we proceeded—the view to the right delighting me by its tranquil yet magnificent beauty. There lay the wide Sierra Leone river, studded with green and lovely islands, and dividing its waters into two or three different branches, which stretch into an interminable tract of wooded and apparently fertile country; while immediately beneath us the race-course (on which we could distinguish one solitary park phaëton and about three equestrians), the many little bays on our own side of the estuary, several villa-like mansions, with their

* *Ponciana pulcherrima*.

cultivated grounds, formed a pleasing contrast to the vast continent beyond, where, as far as the eye could reach, nothing was to be seen except forest and jungle, among which partial glimpses of creek and river shone like so many embowered lakes.

The chain of hills extending up the river shut out any nearer view of the branch that flows round, as it were, by their back, and forms this side of the peninsula ; but above their lower slopes we could still see far into the interior, where a curiously-shaped range of mountains rises like some immense tumulus. Riding a few paces downwards on the left, I came upon an object which from my windows had seemed to be an old gate off its hinges, standing against a stone near the foot of a great plum-tree, but which I now discovered to be a wooden paling surrounding a single tomb, formed by a built-up mass of stones roughly plastered over. It is that of the gentleman who last lived in the now deserted house, and who shortly before his death desired that his remains should be interred in that wild spot—probably chosen by him from being more suitable for the resting-place of a member of the Church of Rome, and the subject of a foreign realm, than either of the two burial-grounds which form features in our everyday view. The black people regard this tomb with some superstition, from the fact that, notwithstanding the numerous times the bush and grass in its vicinity have been set on fire, the wooden paling round it has still remained unscathed by the flames. The sight of this solitary grave, and the desolate aspect of what had once been a cheerful dwelling among its orchard and gardens, brought some rather gloomy thoughts into my mind ; and the sun sinking into the glittering sea, warning us how late it was, we left the melancholy-looking place to its solemn stillness, and commenced our ride homeward.

4th.—The new walks, so far as they go, afford comfortable rambles, while some of the old tracks on the farm—including that coming up in front of the parapet—have been given up as the strangest breakneck inventions ever devised by man's ingenuity. I ventured yesterday upon one rougher than the stony bed of a river, and for steepness resembling an old-fashioned flight of steps more than anything else. You may think this borders on exaggeration, but indeed you never saw such rocky gullies as they dignify by the name of *roads* in this country, to

add to the danger of which the horses here are in general very badly broken in, and appear ignorant of all paces but a lazy walk or a furious gallop.

The road to Regent merits more praise. Nothing can obviate its precipitous nature, but, being the Queen's highway, bands of workpeople, under the superintendence of a constable, are at certain seasons put on to keep it in repair, and it is therefore a very tolerable path—always excepting one or two places, of which you can have a pretty correct idea by imagining upon the ridge of a hill, or the channel of a stream, some dozens of huge barrels laid endwise across in rows, and then spread over with sand firmly trodden down.

To-day we ascended this road of "ups" and "downs." A few flowers bloom among the grass by the wayside, and there is no lack of verdure, any one leaf of which, taken individually, would be a source of interest to me from its novelty. One tree, its own branches almost destitute of foliage, was wreathed round by the stems of climbing plants, that, hanging dangling down like real *ropes*, had quite as whimsical an appearance; but there is scarcely another living tree on either side of the road, although naked trunks, charred and broken at the bottom, rear up their skeleton forms in many places, or lie hacked by axes amongst the grass and brushwood—the sole vegetation, to which repeated burnings have reduced the hills that, but ten or a dozen years ago, were dark with the shade of magnificent trees. Not a hut, not even a patch of cassada-ground, appeared near; but the presence of several wild-looking cows and frightened sheep betokened that, though "all unseen and all unheard," there were other human beings besides ourselves among the mountains. Indeed a few minutes longer would have brought us in sight of some of the villages, but darkness sets in so suddenly in this country that we found there was no time left to prolong the ride. So taking another look of the scenery, which presented a picture of dreary grandeur it is difficult for words to pourtray—the seal of silence and solitude stamped upon its every lineament, from the bareness of the completely cleared hills in one direction, and the riotous growth of the low underwood in another—we turned back again. The bird's-eye view was very fine, and I looked wistfully over the deep-blue waters in hopes of espying a ship in the north; but

no such welcome object gleamed on the horizon, although, creeping close in-shore from the south, a low black-hulled schooner, with sails of the purest white, suddenly appeared beyond Wilberforce Hill, and sweeping boldly within the dangerous Carpenter Rock (which lies between Signal Hill and the Cape, and at high-water is marked but by the curling breakers), glided round the shelving promontory like a graceful seabird; but whilst I expressed my admiration of this beautiful little yacht-like craft, M——, more skilled than myself in the rig of a vessel, told me she was nothing else than a slaver.

The Cape itself appears low and level from the height at which we were this evening. It is not visible from our windows here, being screened by a higher headland called Mount Pleasant. We met several country people returning from Freetown; and I was much amused by the invariable salutation of "How do, maamie?" which was addressed to me alike by old men, women, and little children. Yet I was struck by the extreme quietness of every thing around, so different from a *home* excursion, even in the most unfrequented rural district; and although where one of the lonely mountain-sides showed perhaps two or three spots of a fresher green and somewhat uniform shape, I tried to fancy them tiny patches of turnips or potatoes reclaimed from "among the heather," there was nothing to correspond with the idea. On coming within view of our own house again, the smiling plain below still open to our gaze, the house so strange and solitary, perched on the very pinnacle of that oddly-shaped hill, so unlike the social dwellings which shelter our fellow-creatures in the Sierra Leone capital, I felt more than usual what a complete out-of-the-world place our present habitation is, eight hundred feet above the level of the sea.

7th.—The weather presented a most remarkable appearance this morning. A lead-coloured mist hid the top of the Sugar-Loaf mountain entirely from view, and gathered dark and gloomy on the range of hills to our left. This mass of black rain-clouds moved onwards, gradually obscuring the horizon: sea and sky seemed to meet, and the whole firmament became overcast. Still the storm did not reach the town, but apparently expended its fury on the water, though a shower fell partially in one of the streets. But while this dense, wet fog brooded above

sea and land, as if it would swallow them both, throwing a ghastly shadow over every object, the sun's rays contrived to penetrate through an unseen opening, and caused part of one of the creeks, and a patch or two of the river out near the Cape, to glitter with a cold glassy aspect—not the bright fervid look usually given by sunshine, but a most uncelestial gleam; the black hovering mist, with these white spots on the water, forming altogether a more extraordinary atmospheric picture than it is possible to describe.

After I had wondered at this appearance for a short time, the rain came like a deluge, falling over the long eaves of the house in actual sheets of water, but did not continue violent above twenty minutes: a small drizzling rain followed, and then it entirely cleared away, leaving everything looking more fresh and green; the sun broke out with meridian splendour, and, as suddenly as the locusts did, appeared some millions of transparent-winged insects, buzzing round the tops of the orange-trees. Then what a chirping and chattering amongst all the birds on the hill, as they fluttered in the branches and wheeled in the air, darting upon and destroying myriads of these insects, some of which were large black ants with a most disagreeable odour, so powerful, that although in the inner rooms, I could instantly detect when one flew into the piazza! I often see on the fresh earth of the walks individuals of this species, but in an unwinged state, many of them more than an inch long. The blacks say these ants have rather a venomous sting, but as their peculiarly disgusting scent is increased tenfold should they unfortunately chance to be trodden upon, I am inclined to think it is also a means of defence.

Nor are they the only winged creatures that take a fancy to our sunny piazza. I do not know how many mason-wasps have built their mortared cells against its planked roof. There are numerous kinds of these wasps. One is a warlike creature fully two inches long, with a very hard head and strong hooked proboscis. It is rather richly clothed in yellow and black, and has a double sting. Another has its head and trunk separated from the rest of its body by a ligament no thicker than a horse-hair, and is rather a handsome insect, with its long slender waist, primrose-coloured legs barred with black, and dark-blue

shining wings. A very large one of the latter sort makes its nest of the same substance as the common British wasp, but differently constructed, a cluster of perhaps ten to twenty hexagonal cells being attached to a stalk made by the insect, and hung from under a broad leaf, or it may be fastened to a roof or against a wall, as are the curious earthen houses of the other bees.

10th.—The improvements in the way of road-making get on very well, considering it is but for an hour or two before breakfast that M—— has leisure to look after the workpeople. Already, by dint of clearing and weeding, the place has assumed a different appearance from what it had when we first came up. Although wild and solitary in the extreme, still it is a sort of tidy wildness and cheerful solitude. Tall, ugly brush-weeds no longer disfigure the velvety plats of Bermuda grass; and all other grasses (of which there are many sorts) are discouraged from approaching the house. Any very pretty flower, however lowly in aspect or unknown in name, is carefully left in whatever situation it chooses to adorn; or, if a great favourite, carefully transplanted to bloom under the windows, where one very delicate and beautiful little specimen, brought from places where it abounds on the farm, is planted round a huge country basket, over which twines, with much grace, the small feathery leaf of soft pea-green. Beyond the front parapet, on the very brow of the hill, growing among great blocks of stone, is a date-tree, planted long ago, though still of humble stature; the leaves of which are of a bluish-green, and narrower, stiffer, and less dense than those of the oil-palms. Next to it appears, as if springing from the ground, a bunch of lance-like leaves, with a highly polished surface, and of a beautiful green: these belong to a young dragon's-blood tree,* the stem of which is as yet hid. There are a great many of these trees in the colony: they are commonly planted in rows at either side of an avenue, and present a strange aspect with their tall, slender shafts, and crowns of stiff-looking leaves, that grow from the trunk like the boughs of a palm, except in branching out into two or three tufts, which the palms never do. The fruit, which rather resembles in shape and appearance cherries of a bright orange red,

* *Dracæna* — ?

hangs in thick clusters, and when ripe greatly sets off the dark glossy foliage.

I observed to-day, growing on one side of the path here, a tall spreading plant, with broad palish green leaves of a soft texture, each divided into seven sharp segments; and bearing little round bunches of three-celled nuts, covered over with blunt prickles. This is the Palma Christi,* and its leaves are used by the blacks as an excellent soothing application for bruises.

14th.—I have been greatly amused to-day to discover that I am not the only individual who keeps a sort of journal up here. I found upon the broad window-sill of the dining-parlour, which sundry marks showed some one had been using as a writing-table, a small stitched book lying open at a page headed—

“ Wednesday, April 7th, 1841.—Come up to hill.
April 8th, „ Bought a pig;”

whilst the opposite page was written over in pencil, with what I concluded, from the glance I threw over the manuscript, to be the directions for laying the cloth, and the proper mode of placing dishes upon table at breakfast and dinner, which I gave to one of our pantry-servants on his first coming. The diction was really most laughable; the handwriting, on the contrary, very good. Yet with all the apparent *intellect* evinced by making this memorandum, I almost invariably find my fork placed at the right side of my plate, and knife at the left; the cloth, instead of being put on straight, every day actually laid *bias* upon the table, while all dishes are set angularly before us.

I am now very fortunate in having *two* female domestics—the good, clever nurse-maid, who was spirited away from me before, to be her mother’s “foot, hand, and head,” having been brought back again by the old woman herself. But they are very different indeed from people of the same pretensions at home, which is not wonderful, since those who do not think it beneath them to go out to service, have never, except when at school, seen any less savage mode of life than that which prevails within the mud walls of their parents’ grass-thatched huts.

One of my handmaidens having obtained leave to visit her friends up in the mountains, returned with the humble message

* Ricinus Africanus.

that "her mother was to be married again in a month, and said that I *must* make her a cap to wear on her head, and a lace tippet like my own for her neck, to be worn on the grand occasion!"

This woman is not singular in her penchant for European fashions, for the old Maroon nurse one day begged in the most earnest manner that I would *make* a dress for her the *very same* shape as one of my own! The request proceeding from pure ignorance, I did not like to mortify the good woman; so replied, that although I could really not spare time to *make* her a dress, I would try and cut one out for her, provided she brought me the materials. But whether the rhetoric of some of her more enlightened sisters of the sable race rendered her ashamed of having asked such a thing, or whether she was hurt by my refusal, I cannot tell, never having seen her since.

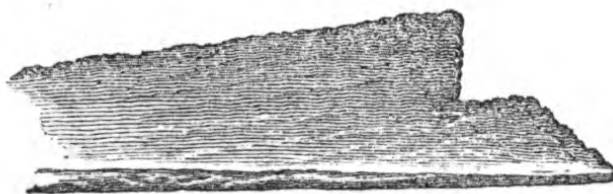
Certainly great pains must be taken by the teachers at the different schools, for these girls read very well, pronouncing the most difficult English words with perfect fluency. Yet it is astonishing to me that they understand so little the meaning of even the simplest sentence. I try to make them comprehend what they read, by explaining its sense in the broken language used by themselves; but though the youngest seems as if she would in time learn to exercise her mental faculties, the other appears to think that it is quite enough to be able to read, and shows no desire to be more learned than the famous pig which knew its letters.

The old-fashioned acquirement of *darning* seems never to have been heard of here—at least I have not yet seen any negro woman who possesses it; but all the girls who have been at school can mark very nicely, and pique themselves highly upon it. On inquiring what a young person who offered herself as an assistant to the others *could* do, in hopes of finding one instance in which I might not have to go through the tiresome routine of teaching the most trifling and common-place household employment, I was told that she could "mark," in a grave, proud tone, that fully proved the importance in which the attainment was held; and nothing else was added to the list of her qualifications. A cherished piece of finery with them is an apron all done over in sampler stitch, with verses of hymns and texts from the Bible,

bordered with many a strange hieroglyphic and device meant to represent birds and beasts, houses and trees. Even their printed cotton shawls, and common gowns of coarse baft, have as an ornament upon them the name of the owner elaborately worked at full length.

16th.—We had a strong land wind last night ; and I was quite astonished this morning by the brilliant clearness of the atmosphere. The many headlands on the opposite shore—forming the entrance into some of the rivers, and stretching far towards the north—were entirely divested of the shadowy haze which had softened their outline during the dry season ; and their white beach, and red bank above with its green trees, shone so vividly distinct, that were such a landscape represented to the life in a picture, its colouring would be deemed unnatural. Beyond the most distant point—which looks like a long, high wall, curbing the ocean—I could see Tamara, one of the Isles de Los. It rises abruptly from the water, and reminds me of Palma, of which we had a glimpse in passing the Canaries. These islands are seventy miles off. Formerly we had a garrison there ; but the situation was found to be more unhealthy than even this place, and now they have no European residents. The name is corrupted from the Portuguese, *Ilhas dos Idolos*—Islands of the Idols—given to them long ago on account of the paganism of their inhabitants.

But they were not the only variety in our view this morning. The usually flat-looking Bullom shore displayed a magnificent background of mountains—those of Sangaree. They run up from the sea into the interior in a range of separate hills, broken into steep rugged cliffs ; then after a space ascend in a continuous slope, and at the highest point abruptly terminate in this remarkable shape—



With the glass I could distinguish that they are covered with forest, and the bluff precipice seems to have a black rocky face.

This lofty mountain-chain and the distant island at first appeared of the darkest and richest violet hue, far surpassing the deep azure of the water from which the latter rose, and even that of the heavens, though more brightly blue than I ever saw before in this climate. But as the forenoon waned on, the outline became fainter and fainter, until it blended with the floating masses of clouds which gradually rose up, and, as it were, expunged both island and mountains from the sky; so that on riding over to Mount Oriel in the evening, the view was not more extended than it had been before.

We have always one green and rocky islet in sight, lying out from one of the nearest points on the opposite shore, to which it is joined by a sand beach at low tides. It is called Leopard's Island, but I know not whether any animals of that name have ever been found there, any more than lions amongst these hills.

The natives say that a demon lives on this pretty little isle, and nothing will induce them to pass a night there. It seems that a party were once driven from their canoes to take shelter during a storm either under a large tree or in a cave, on the dread spot. The tree or rock, as it was, fell during the night, dragging a portion of land with it, and burying the poor blacks beneath; and of course so unfortunate an occurrence has rooted the superstition regarding Leopard's Island more deeply in the minds of these ignorant people.



LETTER VI.

Changes in the Weather — Sail in the Offing — Anchorage Localities of different Vessels — The Middle Ground — Anxiety for Home Letters — Ship from England — Country Vegetables — National Dishes — Manufacture of Cayenne Pepper.

June 1.

I SEND you a few pages from my little diary, by which you will see that the weather, since the date of my last letter, has changed very much, so that often of an evening the rain prevents my going out to ride or walk. We have tornadoes almost every night. Upon the days preceding these storms it is always hotter than at other times, and with little or no sea-breeze. Some idea may be formed of the intense power of the sun when I tell you that the oiled floor-cloth was spread out on the grass at the back of the house the short time it was being measured and cut to fit the different apartments, and next morning I could plainly trace where it had been, the grass underneath appearing completely burnt up, as if a blight had passed over the spot; from which state, in spite of much heavy rain, it only now shows symptoms of recovery, after an interval of nearly a fortnight. These great heats and then sudden chills, with the daily increasing damp and wet, indicate the approach of the "rains." On the 23rd of May a fire was lit for the first time in the stove upstairs: there is another in the parlour below, and, by keeping them constantly burning, we hope to preserve a drier and more equal temperature.

We had a tremendously heavy tornado on the evening of the 26th, and next morning, to my great delight, I discovered a sail in the offing—in the north, too! There having been no arrival from England for nearly two months, you can imagine with what eager anxiety I looked forward to the receipt of home letters; but a dead calm following the tornado, every time that I went to look at the interesting object, standing out like a speck on the horizon, it seemed to be exactly in the same place.

Vessels, after discharging their cargoes here, usually return to England with timber, to procure which they go up the Sierra Leone river, or away for the same purpose to some of those northward, as the Scarcies or the Mellacourie. When, therefore, they heave in sight *very* far to the north, they turn out always to be laden ships returning from the rivers, and commonly anchor out at the Cape or off King Tom's Point; or, it may be, come in on the left of the harbour, the same place where prizes go, and hence called "Prize Ground." But when the vessel is from *home*, she sails up the capacious haven, and anchors in Susan's Bay—a small cove formed on one side by a tiny promontory, on which stand a few guns within a green enclosure bearing the sounding title of Fort Falconbridge, or, more familiarly, "The East Battery."

The powder-magazine being situated a little above Susan's Bay, the anchorage on that side we term "Powder-Ground," and merchantmen from England have almost always gunpowder on board. In the barque by which we came out, the apartment under which it was stowed extended under our cabin—a comfortable reflection of an evening when I have seen the ship's steward dive into this dark hole with a tallow-candle and inch-long wick flaring in his hand.

Well! although the vessel made no progress, my hopes were very great, remembering how many hours we had been becalmed at the mouth of the estuary; so I patiently awaited the morning, having no doubt but that a favourable breeze would meanwhile spring up, and that by sunrise we should see her snugly anchored off the powder-magazine. Before daylight I was trying to distinguish the hulls and masts of the different vessels in the harbour, but to my excessive disappointment there was nothing new; it was wet and foggy, no trace of the approaching sail visible, although the red flag at both signal-staffs denoted that it was still in sight from these look-out stations. Once only I got a peep of what, in the thick state of the atmosphere, might have been taken for a bewildered crow hovering in the mist between sea and sky, had it not been that the stationary black object was in the identical spot where the anxiously-watched ship had last been seen. Late in the day I heard that the hopes of all eager expectants in Freetown had vanished, and that the signal was

universally supposed to be "a deep ship from the rivers," except when the more fanciful declared it could be no other than the Flying Dutchman venturing upon a northern cruise. A kind little note, however, from one of my own countrywomen showed that there was still some one to encourage my idea of its being an English ship; and a fierce tornado coming on, I welcomed the wind, thinking it would waft the unconscionably provoking craft a little farther south—for vessels, unless of a very light draught, and even then only at high water, cannot come straight in, as a dangerous bar, called the "Middle Ground," extends across the mouth of the river. At low water it is often dry, although at other times the foaming breakers on the shoal warn the inexperienced mariner to avoid it by going south as far as the Cape ere attempting to come in. The ebb-tide setting south, and the flood-tide north, retard, therefore, or facilitate the approach of vessels.

In the morning, which was beautifully clear after the tornado, I found that between tide and landwind the sail had got a little farther to the southward; and, a slight sea-breeze setting in, she now made some progress. Oh! dear people at home! you little know the sensation of watching a vessel coming into port when one is in a strange and distant land—the exciting, feverish anticipation of receiving the "good news from a far country," so truly and touchingly designated as being even "as cold water to the thirsty soul."

Reading, writing, working, were all out of the question; I jumped up every half-minute to see if the ship were any nearer. She looked so heavy, and progressed so slowly, that I was at last reluctantly convinced it was very foolish to expect her to be from England, and went out as usual for an evening walk. It was so delightfully cool that on returning, instead of going upstairs, I remained on the parapet feeding one of the goats with oranges, which it ate greedily, only seeming to prefer the rind to the pulp! The long looked-at vessel, which I had some time before perceived to be a large brig, was now off King Tom's, and I expected to see her come to an anchor, when the sun's very last ray shed such a bright momentary gleam on her side, that I saw it was her copper sheathing which had flashed in the dying light; and the sight raised up all my hopes again.

She was light! that was evident; and then out fluttered the union-jack in the freshening evening breeze, and the clumsy merchant-brig, which had for three days appeared like a log on the waves, now seemed girt by all the grace and beauty in the world, as with swelling canvas she sailed proudly past all the other vessels, and just ere darkness rendered objects indistinct, furl'd her sails and dropped anchor in Susan's Bay.

I knew now that she was from England; and although eight o'clock is our usual hour for shutting doors and windows for the night, I waited, expecting every minute to feast my eyes upon at least one letter with something more than one's mere name on the address, and the bareness of the white envelope relieved by sundry magical stamps. But then I remembered how unreasonable it was to suppose that any person would come up with letters to this lonely place at so late an hour, and that it behoved me to exercise the grace of patience until next day. However, between ten and eleven o'clock a loud shouting and knocking aroused the household, and the hall-door was opened to a trusty Kroo messenger, who, although one of a tribe who would visit any of its members in their own country with death who could "savey whiteman's book," seemed to comprehend something of our feelings at receiving letters, as I overheard him exclaim with evident glee, "Ah, massa! here de right book come at last!" Everything, whether a brown paper parcel, a newspaper, an official despatch, a private letter or note, is here denominated a "book;" and this man understands quite well that newspapers are never so gladly received amongst "books from England" as letters, of which we had a goodly share by this most welcome opportunity.

It does not seem, however, to have brought out many things which were wanted, as I hear there is neither ale nor cheese to be bought in the colony. The locust visitation has raised the price of all country vegetables; still they are wonderfully cheap. Since coming up here, I have seen several of these productions growing near enough to me to allow of my examining them. One tall plant called "okra,"* which appears to me to be a sort of mallow, has a handsome flower somewhat like that of the single yellow hollyhock, and seed-pod resembling that of our

* *Hibiscus esculentus*.

common garden iris. These pods, which with the pea-like seeds inside are of a gelatinous nature, form, when gathered quite young, an excellent thickening for soup. The natives use the leaf of the okra in the same way, as well as countless different sorts of leaves that grow wild, many of which have a highly bitter flavour. Among those they eat, a plant is common on this hill, in flower, leaf, and manner of growing exactly resembling our purple foxglove, except in the leaves being smoother. Another, that has a small fragrant leaf, not unlike that of lemon-balm, and bears a pale green commonplace little flower, flourishes plentifully close to the kitchen, seeming to be carefully cherished even by the servants, and is called the "fever plant," from being used medicinally in fevers. The smell of its leaf is very grateful and refreshing.

A good crop of cassada* has, when growing, a very luxuriant appearance, although there is nothing striking in its little star-shaped flower, which is of a greenish-white hue and grows in bunches. The bush itself rises to eight or ten feet, but when allowed to get so high, the roots become coarse and fibrous; and indeed, if suffered to remain in the ground, become in process of time hard, like wood. Still, if in good soil, even when old, it is very suitable food for cattle; but it is after having been about six months planted that the root is best to use, and then only when freshly taken out of the earth, when a milky juice exudes from it that speedily dries up on exposure to the air or sun.

The plantain has been termed the Negro's "staff of life," but with those of Sierra Leone it is certainly this sweet manioc, which possesses neither a bitter nor poisonous principle like that of America, being equally safe when eaten raw, in which state I have myself tasted the young root, and thought it not very unlike a chestnut. The black children are very fond of it raw: it is easily cultivated by slips being cut off and planted; and the stem or "stick," as the natives call it, takes root and flourishes after having been merely thrown aside on the ground.

Every country has its national dish, and "ground-nut soup," a rich white compound of boiled fowl and the almond-like kernel of the ground-nut, is one of the grand dishes of this part of the

* *Jatropha* —?

world. "Kous-kous," a mess of millet, or some such grain, with pork or salted fish chopped up into it, is another; and there is also "palaver sauce," the basis of which is a highly flavoured herb. But these are used by the wealthier class of people, as the chiefs of the interior, and not by the mass of the population here, who are upon the whole a frugal and abstemious race so far as regards eating and drinking. I am inclined to think that "foo-foo," a preparation of cassada, is the decided national dish of the liberated Africans.

The manioc roots, somewhat resembling parsnips in appearance, are taken up after they have attained to a considerable size; as, although preferred when very young for roasting or boiling, it is when rather old that they are used to make this favourite article of food. They are then pared and washed, and left to soak for a day or two, next rubbed upon a coarse grater into a sort of pulp, which is put into a "bly," and stones placed on it to press out the moisture. This is then worked up with the hand into balls about the size of ostrich eggs, each sold at the moderate rate of "one small copper," and the process of cooking converts them into a tough, grey substance, twice as bulky as before, and not at all inviting in aspect, but which the liberated Africans nevertheless seem highly to relish, with its accompanying "soup," generally a mixture of fish or beef, with a little palm-oil, a few ground-nuts, or "green-leaf," as they term all native olitory plants. One of my handmaidens telling me she was tired of eating meat cooked in European fashion of roast, broil, or stew, and "no been savey to eat soup same as live on our table;" at the same time begging I would have "foo-foo and green-leaf" bought for her especial use, has made me acquainted with the appearance of this barbarous-looking mess in its cooked state. The refuse of the cassada left from grating is exposed to the sun to dry, afterwards pounded in a large wooden mortar, and the thrifty foo-foo manufacturer keeps this coarser food for his own use; as, although he believes it wholesome enough when fresh made, it is of a dark colour, and too full of "sticks," or hard pieces of root, to sell in the market; neither can he obtain purchasers when the manioc has not been steeped, as it then becomes sour very soon.

The yam* when growing requires a support, and reminds me

* *Dioscorea* —?

of the hop, though its foliage has none of the luxuriance of that useful and beautiful climber. There are several varieties. The best are white and mealy, but some are yellow and watery, with a slightly bitter taste. Tomatoes, differing in nothing from those we have in Britain, except that the berries are small and round, grow wild; a rich harvest of glowing scarlet capsicums loads many a dark-green shrub in the "bush;" and with the wild tomato, and sundry other *native* pot-herbs, springs up round your detached kitchen and stables whether you choose or not. With every meal the negroes use these chillies, which are certainly, even to my taste, much better in their fresh and juicy state than when made into "Cayenne pepper," which spice is simply prepared here. The "peppers," when quite red and ripe, are gathered and dried in the sun or harmattan wind, and then beat in a mortar. Some of the mountain villages make it for sale, but it is generally pounded so coarsely as to require sifting before using it for culinary purposes.

LETTER VII.

Narrow Escape in a Tornado — Violence of such Storms — Native Hut destroyed by Lightning — Another Locust Visitation — Crickets — Little Apprentices — The Niger Steamers — Slave Vessels — Damp of the Climate — Swarm of Fat Ants — Rainy Season Vegetation — Beautiful Flowers — Best Method of preserving Health in the Tropics — A Snake in the House.

July 6.

SINCE last writing to you, the smooth routine of my mountain life has been interrupted by several mischances, the first being a narrow escape from serious injury, or even death, in a tornado; the bare remembrance of which leads me to think the unhealthiness of the climate, and all the lesser discomforts attendant on living in so *outlandish* and uncivilised a place as Sierra Leone, nothing in comparison to the horror of these tropic storms, that now make me tremble, though at first I used to watch their progress with admiration. But I shall give you as distinct an account as possible of the cause of this miserable sensation of alarm.

About ten o'clock on the night of the 4th of June, I was awoken by the sound of an approaching tornado; and the air becoming very chilly, as usual in these tempests, I got up for an additional coverlet; after placing the lamp in a corner quite sheltered from the wind, I had scarcely returned and taken baby on my arm, wrapping him up warmly, ere I was startled by a strange loud noise, that at once brought M—— to see what was the matter. He had hardly got to one of the windows between which my bedstead stands, and where we thought an outside shutter had burst open, when, with a sudden and reverberating crash, a mass of falling bricks rattled about my ears, the head of the bed came violently to the ground, and the tester was forced down over the mattress, leaving me in utter darkness. There was the rolling of thunder and the yet more awful sound of a mighty wind; and in that moment of terror a thousand thoughts

rushed into my mind—of hurricanes, earthquakes, and lightning-struck houses. I could not tell what had happened, but although free from bodily hurt, believed that the whole house was tumbling down, and that the hour of death was come to us all. I could raise neither the infant nor myself, being literally jammed amidst broken fragments of masonry and plaster. Although it takes long to describe, this all occurred in the shortest space of time—the heavy gust of wind not lasting three minutes; while in one instant M—— had torn the curtain through, and then, almost choked by the lime and mortar which showered upon me, I was enabled, by the flickering light of the lamp, to see baby, whom I drew out as I best could and held firmly, M—— extricating me at the same time, and then hurrying us from the room. There was vivid lightning, and the rain beat against the window-panes as if it would have dashed them to atoms; but although the continued howling of the storm-wind caused me to shudder, I never before felt so intensely the full truth of that sublime expression of the Psalmist, as rendered in our Prayer Book version, “God is the Lord by whom we escape death.” We could hardly believe it possible that baby had sustained no injury whatever, beyond having his little face thickly besprinkled with the suffocating and blinding lime-dust; while not until I had put him to rights, and washed the particles of mortar from my own mouth and eyes, did I become aware that my forehead was painful and swollen. Except that trifling bruise, and another upon my hand, I also was unhurt; although that either of our lives was saved appears almost miraculous.

The accident happened thus. Instead of being solidly built of stone, the ends of the house upstairs are what is called “brick-nogged.” Outside are boards folded over each other, and nailed to wooden posts within, the wide spaces between these supports being filled up by a very thin wall of brick simply plastered and painted. The wind contriving to enter through some crevices of the boarding, and having no mode of egress, had first bulged out, and then forced down all the brickwork between the windows until within about three feet from the floor—a space of nearly ten feet in height and five in breadth. The only human means by which it is probable we escaped were, that the strong mahogany headboard being bent down over the bolster acted as

a sort of shield—nay, even the flimsy lino curtain and the tightly-stretched cotton canopy must have broken the force of the bricks as they fell; yet there were masses cemented together found in the very spot where the baby had been lying but the moment before I took him on my arm, that must have crushed his weak frame to death had they fallen upon him. It was altogether a deliverance to call forth the most solemn feelings of deep thankfulness!

Before daylight next morning the *ruin* had begun to be cleared away, and although nearly a cart-load of bricks and rubbish had to be removed, by the afternoon all was secure again, a tarpaulin being first nailed across upon the wooden supports, and then boards over that. Getting a four-post bedstead repaired in this country was no such simple matter; while the curtains were of course reduced to shreds in some places, and in others completely destroyed with lime, and the rain which had beat in through the boards remained in a sea on the floor-cloth until mopped up. However, the bed is set up once more in its original place, and the room appears as it did before. Yet in spite of knowing that all is perfectly safe; much safer than it was before the accident happened, as the whole of the outer boarding has been examined, and many a nail driven in where it lacked, through the carelessness or roguery of African carpenters; and although I am sensible that it is not only foolish, but very wrong, to experience such extreme terror on the approach of a storm, when, were it merely in the recent case of our preservation, the power of the Ruler of the storm has been made so manifest; in spite of all (owing partly, perhaps, to the weakness of body consequent on a sharp attack of fever a few days afterwards, though not *the* fever, I am told) I become so frightened that I never can sleep during a tornado, but almost expect that every gust will blow the house fairly off its stone foundation, and send it toppling into the deep hollow beyond.

We have, it is true, had only two since—only two, but such tornadoes! On the night of the 28th, the tremendous fury of the wind alone was terrific; yet it was nothing to the awful violence of the thunder-storm which followed, or rather accompanied it. Crash succeeded crash, as if a thousand heavy pieces of artillery had exploded together upon the hill; and it seemed to my appalled fancy that every successive thunderbolt sent down

its stream of forked lightning upon the blocks of ironstone which surround the house. For more than two hours the elements raged in this manner, every apartment being illuminated by the constant flashes of fire; considerably past midnight, one peal louder than the rest, and the continued shrieking of human voices, called us to the windows; looking out, we saw upon the low ground near the foot of the hill a native hut in flames, the lurid light of which showed several dusky figures hurrying towards the spot. Next morning we heard that, besides the Commissariat—one of the largest buildings in Freetown—having been struck by lightning, a thunderbolt had also fallen on this hut (in which was a quantity of gunpowder), and killed two unfortunate people. The grief or horror of their friends found vent in wild unearthly lamentations, and—combined with the shouting of some and howling of others, occasioned by a great flight of locusts that moved in a dark and ominous cloud over the colony—was beyond expression calculated to impress the mind of a stranger. The peculiar stillness of the atmosphere after the storm caused every sound to ascend with unwonted distinctness; and as I listened to the wailing of the mourners, and witnessed the almost frantic energy with which a naturally indolent and apathetic people strove to drive away, and prevent from settling on their small herb-plats, the winged band of enemies that seemed every moment to increase in density, I felt, even amidst all the glory of tropic sunlight and everlasting verdure, a sort of indefinable dread connected with the climate, which, but a few weeks before, I should have despised in any one else, and now condemned in myself. It was but short-lived, for my attention was soon directed into another channel; a branch of the main army of locusts passing over the hill, rendering it imperative on our servants and labourers to exert themselves to scare the invaders, which was effectually done by the help of sundry ingeniously-devised noises, including the same duets and quartettes upon tin found beneficial on a former occasion. On the night of the 30th, there was a tornado, in which the vehemence of the wind set all the bells in the house ringing (for here we have managed to have them at least half hung), while the boarding at my head seemed to creak and

groan like a ship in a heavy gale ; but we had not much thunder and lightning.

On the first burst of a tornado, all the crickets, grasshoppers, and other such insects become silent ; but whenever it is over, their chirping and humming commence again. Many people dislike the incessant note of the cicada ; but for my part I should not object to have a few pet crickets to keep up their familiar chorus during the sway of that terrible wind, which seems to awe even the inferior animals. Yet I must admit that the noise of even one is so shrill and grating, that in the midst of a storm the loud hum of a solitary cricket which had hid itself somewhere in the front piazza, sounded unnatural when all its out-of-door companions had ceased, and rather added to the *désagrémens* of a minor hurricane than diminished them ; especially as for some time I could not make out what the extraordinary noise was.

But troubles of a different nature have lately conspired to take up much of my attention. Discovering that first one and then another of my abigails (accomplished in marking) were rapidly carrying off great part of the contents of my wardrobe, I was, of course, obliged to dismiss them both ; and being really tired of the evil habits possessed by each and all of the "colony-born" girls who had volunteered to learn "white-woman fashion," have actually taken a liberated slave-child as an *apprentice* ! I never saw an indenture before ; but where I suppose is commonly mentioned the trade or occupation to learn which the individual is bound, here it is "covenanted, promised, and agreed," that the said apprentice is to be taught and instructed "in the English language, the principles of the Christian religion, and useful personal domestic services."

A friend of ours went to the mountain schools and chose this little girl for me ; and also a boy, who came at the same time, as an apprentice to the craft of waiting at table. He speaks English very well, and when asked if he would like to remain here and "work for white-man?" his merry black eyes twinkled with delight, the broad row of glittering teeth became visible in an animated laugh, and he replied, with a shuffle of the foot (the usual accompaniment of a negro obeisance), "I like." The constable who brought

them hither then asked the girl a similar question in her own language. She replied to the same import with her companion, but was evidently rather frightened, her grave and gashed Aku features appearing as if they could not smile—until she saw baby, and then, before I knew what she was about, she snatched him and began to hug him with the utmost glee. I find her intelligent, quiet, and active; but she cannot speak above two or three words of even the strange sort of broken English used by the natives at Sierra Leone. When she wishes to get some needlework, which she wisely seems to consider a sort of civilized amusement, she comes up, imitating the act of sewing with her little black fingers, that do not, however, as yet know much about holding a needle. In many other instances she talks by gestures; but I daily give her a lesson in more intelligible language by pointing out each article of furniture, &c., and naming it distinctly, until she slowly pronounces “chair, table, window,” or “door,” after me. This household change, trifling as it seems, has added to my responsibilities, and encroaches greatly upon my time, as, in duty bound, I try to teach my “apprentice” not only her letters, but their meaning, and find it almost impossible to make myself understood. She looks about nine years old, and although—as far as reading goes—she knows nothing more than her alphabet, can yet repeat the Prayer-book catechism by rote, and one or two hymns—utterly ignorant all the while of the import of a single word!

The three steamers for the Niger Expedition have given the harbour somewhat of a *home* look these some days past. The general opinion is that they have come out at a very unhealthy season, and that much sickness may be expected amongst their officers and crews: but I believe the reason of this time having been chosen is, that now the rivers are full, owing to the “rains,” and thus better calculated for the passage of vessels of even so light a draught as these are.

Two Brazilians, equipped for carrying slaves, also came in lately: the crew of one of them, the most beautiful little brigantine I ever beheld, made a stout resistance, in which two of the capturing cruiser’s men were killed, and three wounded, besides the officer, who was dangerously so.

We have had almost constantly for the last month, wet stormy

weather, and so cold that I find a thickly-lined silk dress and warm cape, made for winter's wear at home, quite comfortable, even here within nine degrees of the line. Is it not strange that the land-wind, which is considered so unhealthy, is nevertheless a *dry* wind, while the delightful sea-breeze, to whose bland influence we willingly throw open all the windows, is, on the contrary, moist? One day that we had a very strong land-wind, I took advantage of it to have a general airing of such articles of clothing as are liable to be injured by damp, even although kept in leather trunks lined with tin. I found everything of silk mildewed, though I had inspected them but a few weeks before. Black especially is spotted all over with stains like those of iron-mould, while no dress, bonnet, handkerchief, or ribbon has escaped, except when of a pink colour, which seems to stand the climate better than any other. White muslin is certainly the only fabric suited to such a country; yet if your dress come in contact with the red dust of the footpath, the washerwoman sends it back to you covered with indelible stains of ironmould, that fully testify the brightness of the soil to arise from the iron contained in it. Fine thin printed muslins may be worn, but the colours fade so rapidly that they only look well for a short time.

I mentioned in my last the swarms of insects which come out in the sunshine after heavy rain. On the 16th of June appeared a different species from any I had previously seen, and in such myriads that they reminded me of a thick fall of large flakes of snow. They actually darkened the windows, showering in vast numbers through the shingles and boarded roof to the floor of the piazzas. It was indeed an *inundation* of fat ant-like creatures, black on the upper part of their body and grey underneath, with four clear gauzy wings, which seemed, however, too weak to bear the weight of the insect, for most of those that came into the house had lost their wings, which appendages, having apparently done their duty by sending the creature itself abroad, were now wafted into heaps on the ground. They were evidently bug-a-bugs in another stage of existence, for although much larger, somewhat differently formed, and with two visible eyes, there was too great a resemblance to the original to be mistaken.

Really these insects swarmed so in the house that I involuntarily thought of the plagues of Egypt. As I sat at work in the

verandah they dropped upon my head and neck by the dozen, so that I was at last obliged to retreat into an inner room, whilst with hearth-brushes and dustpans the servants set to sweep away the living masses on the floor. We were glad to shut the windows, preferring the oppressive heat to encountering the additional hordes of our unwelcome visitants that poured in through the open casements. Very commonly of an evening now another flying ant makes its appearance: it is a small red insect, and though not coming in such numbers as its fat predecessor, teases us sufficiently by tumbling upon the books or newspapers we may be reading, falling upon the lamp-shades and getting burnt, or into our teacups and getting drowned. On making the early cup of tea, for which I have everything set ready over night, I sometimes find the sugar-basin completely covered over (notwithstanding its acid *moat*) with very large brown ants, that have evidently exerted their wits in vain to find a means of lifting up the lid. They are an out-of-door species, each seeming at least half an inch in length, and with long spider-like legs; but they are very timid, and apparently quite harmless, scampering off whenever the light of the lamp falls on them, and vanishing so rapidly that I cannot tell where they go or how they come. One certainly could dispense with such household inmates; but I have once or twice found some of the vicious red ants of the coffee-bushes drowned in a glass of sherbet which had been left on a table all night. I have also several times seen a few of them marching along the floor of my little store-room (part of which I am obliged to appropriate as a sort of larder), and am told that *meat* attracts them. I understand a rather strange method of destroying them is sometimes adopted in the colony: it is to hang a piece of uncooked beef on the bough of a tree infested by these ants, and as soon as it is alive with them, to sweep them down into pails of water set below.

One or two dahlias have lately added their familiar faces to the many flowers of unknown name that grow around the house; and one extremely wet morning there suddenly appeared in the centre of the parapet a few pointed pale green leaves, evidently belonging to some higher order of plant than the "bush," which the rains cause to flourish amongst the Bermuda grass in defiance of the utmost diligence in weeding. Upon a duly careful examination

the mysterious leaves were pronounced to be those of a magnificent bulb, brought many years before from some place "up the river," as a fine specimen of the floral treasures of Africa; but after watching the progress of the stately stalk with impatient interest, I was prevented by illness from seeing it in its splendour. One bud, however, was placed in a vase of water in my room, where it gradually opened its delicate folds until it became quite full-blown: it proved to be a truly beautiful white lily, now, I rather think, introduced into most of our home hothouses. We have here another variety of the same *Amaryllis*, also very handsome, with six petals of light streaky scarlet, a shade of green on the outside near the base adding still more to its rich appearance.

M—— brought me in lately the branch of a shrub he found growing in some nearly inaccessible part of the "bush," and which is delightful, from its glossy light green leaves having a grateful scent, resembling that of new-mown hay, or, when gathered and dried, woodruffe,—that dear wild flower of *home*, whose very name, like those of the violet and primrose, is fraught with glad fond memories of shady dells and lonely woodpaths; bringing to the wanderer in foreign climes a whole host of visioned landscapes, where the purple heath, the golden broom and furze, in their gorgeous though uncultivated beauty, blend with all the humble and fragrant flowers that are alike prized as being his country's *own*, whether cherished in the garden of the cottager or blooming in pleasure-grounds. The black people bind the leaf of the shrub I have mentioned round the forehead during fever: they use the leaf of the country-fig in the same manner for a common headache. I am sorry to find that you see so many alarming paragraphs in the newspapers about the deadliness of this climate: that it is not at all suited to European constitutions it would be worse than folly to deny; still, owing to the cutting down of trees, the clearing of "bush," with more general cultivation, the colony is much more healthy than it used to be. One great method of preserving health is to banish all anxiety on the subject; therefore at the same time that I scrupulously obey every injunction to avoid all over fatigue, exposure to the sun, land-wind, damp and draughts, I can truly say I do not fear for myself. The discomforts of the climate, by their

very novelty, add to my amusement as well as occupation; household duties affording here pretty constant employment even for the *mind*; whilst with no more experienced nursemaid than my little apprentice, you may be sure that baby is seldom out of my sight; indeed I never go out to ride or walk without him. Imagine our horror the other day at a large snake being discovered in the piazza quite close to the spot where he had been but a few minutes before, lying asleep on his cool grass mat, for which, during the heat of the day, his cot is now discarded. How the reptile got there it is difficult to understand, unless it had ascended by a guava-tree growing under one of the windows, and which, of course, has been since cut down. The colour of this snake was the most beautiful bright green I ever saw, except in an emerald.



LETTER VIII.

Wet Weather—Cassada Rats—Deer—Bamboo Thatch—Country Umbrellas—Rapid Growth of Plants—Walk to the Brook in the Ravine—Excessive Humidity of the Atmosphere—An unexpected Visit—Monkeys—Travelling Ants—Whimsical Gown-Patterns—Magnetic and Musical Stones.

Extract from Journal.

July 12th.—Three wet days in succession, with scarcely a breath of wind to vary the sound of the ever-dropping rain. Unable to go out. One of the people caught a “ground-pig” or “cassada rat,” so called from its eating the manioc-roots. It is a formidable-looking grey animal, about four times as large as the common black water-rat of Britain, which it perfectly resembles in shape. It is said that once upon a time, a commissariat officer here, in despair at the annual havoc committed in the Government stores by a colony of these animals, actually transmitted with his accounts to the Treasury a stuffed cassada rat, with a piece of paper marked “Voucher No. 3” significantly pinned upon it.

Even the more civilized among the liberated Africans esteem the ground-pig as very good food; and our domestic servants constantly lay snares or make traps for it and other “bush-meat,” such as squirrels, monkeys, deer, and the philantomba—a beautiful little creature of the antelope kind—one of which was lately caught in this manner, and, to our just indignation, killed and devoured without compunction. A deer and fawn were observed to-day bounding across one of the walks; and I often trace their foot-prints on the paths leading to the brook, where, on the fine moonlight nights, they evidently go to drink. I have seen the skin of a deer M—— formerly shot on this hill. It is of a buff-brown, prettily barred and spotted with white. A gentleman here had a tame one of the same kind, the natural marks on its side forming the letters I. H., which happened to be the initials of its owner’s name.

We have now got the staircase all nicely sheltered with a *portable* thatch made from a sort of bamboo, though not the same as that growing on the farm. It is formed of leaves like those of the water-flag, doubled over a narrow bar of wood, varying in length to suit whatever may be required. The leaves are sewed together by ribbon-like strips, or rather splinters, of themselves. The pieces of this basket-work fabric are then fastened by means of country-rope upon a frame of split bamboo, and lap over each other in the style termed by carpenters "feather-edged." These light moveable walls, which effectually keep out the heaviest rain, are made to let up and down after the fashion of a portcullis, according to the quarter whence the wind blows. If from the sea, we keep them fastened up to prevent the rain beating in at the hall-door. If from the land, we let them down, lest a sudden puff should whisk them away altogether, with perhaps the zinc roof of the staircase and landing-place as company; but generally, unless in a tornado, they have merely to be lowered at night.

The leaves of the palm and cocoa-nut trees are used, in the same way as these bamboos, to make country umbrellas—ingenious contrivances which cause the persons they shelter to look exactly like so many walking mushrooms of giant stature, being in fact mere flattish baskets inverted, and supported by the head. The laundress brings home her burthen of clothes quite dry on the wettest day by the aid of her umbrella, which acts as a cover to her "bly," and at the same time extends a kindly screen to her shoulders, turning off every drop of rain as completely as the "best patent waterproof" could. Of a wet morning the mountain road presents a universal forest of these thatched canopies, as, though cotton umbrellas are common enough among the blacks, the others are much more easily carried, and therefore preferred by the market-people.

19th.—Found, on walking out this afternoon, that one of the young canes has gained a foot in height since yesterday! They start out of the ground as straight as an arrow, and resemble an artichoke running to seed. Each joint is wrapt round with a sort of hard leaf, coated over with a brown silky-looking substance very irritating to the fingers. As the green and polished reed shoots upwards, this protective covering shrivels up, and its

roughness wears off, leaving a smooth shining husk of a pale straw colour. Numbers of these woody shells lie strewed beneath the bamboos; and I think neat little circular boxes might be made from them, something like those of the American birch-bark.

20th.—Walked down this afternoon to that part of the brook which lies almost immediately under my room-windows. An opening in the “bush” admits to a romantic path, cut ledge-wise in the rocky irregular side of the ravine, and which numerous springs, trickling from under the high stony bank to our right, render at present scarcely better than a shallow running stream, while it is so canopied and shut in by spreading branches, that the sky is visible only through their interlacing foliage. Several wild fig-trees grow almost in the stream; but their crimson-streaked fruit, so tempting in appearance, and sprouting so curiously out from the bare trunk, was as usual full of small black ants, quite as destructive to vegetable life as the red species, plenty of whose nests hung in the branches at no great distance from where we stood; but excepting several giant dragon-flies—some brown and blue, others of a bright metallic green tint—with a few large and very sombre-hued moths, I perceived nothing new of insect life in this secluded spot; and watched in vain for birds, none being either seen or heard; indeed it was impossible to hear aught save—

“ The merry waters falling
With sweet music in their sound.”

21st.—Another flight of locusts to-day; and the bush alive with monkeys springing from one tree to another—skipping up and down the trunks and shaking the branches.

24th.—A very strange-looking little animal was brought in this morning; it is shaped like a mouse, but with a rabbit’s tail; has the most delicate, velvety, dark-brown fur it is possible to imagine, and soft bright eyes. I have tried to feed it with various things, but it will eat nothing. Until four o’clock to-day it was fine and sunny. It is now nine in the evening, and rains violently, with great black clouds hanging over both high and low ground.

28th.—Rain, with heavy squalls from the sea.

29th.—Still as wet as yesterday, with a thick fog obscuring our view of everything except the eaves of the house. The wind from the sea nearly as fierce as a tornado.

30th.—A day like the two preceding. The damp is excessive; the ink sinks into the best and thickest Bath post, as if it were blotting-paper; and my leather writing-case, with the boards of most of our books on the drawing-room table, have become ornamented since last night with a greenish-blue *bloom* of actual mould! It is very chilly also, despite bright fires burning in both stoves, with the wood of the bungo-tree for fuel, which diffuses a most agreeable perfume throughout the house. Little bush-rat died.

31st.—Showery in the morning; brightened for some hours, then came on a heavy gale from the sea. *Saw* the rain, like a moving wall, half an hour ere I heard it pattering amongst the bushes on the sea-side of the house, and heard it at least three full minutes before it reached the roof and boarded walls—

“Blown all aslant, a driving dashing rain;”

it caused me to stand still in amazement, listening to the noise it made, which was indeed like the roar of a cataract.

Shortly before this squall came on, I observed a black figure—oddly dressed, in a compound of European and country garments—walk quickly up the steps, and attempt opening the hall-door, to the great alarm of baby's little nurse, who sat in the entrance within. Having got quite accustomed to this isolated situation, I never feel lonely, although left much to myself during the forenoon. But some how or other to-day, a sort of panic seized me at so extraordinary an apparition, and ringing the bell hurriedly, I inquired how it was that a stranger had been allowed to pass the pantry-door unnoticed; desiring that the person, if he wished to see M——, should wait below until he returned from town.

I now feel quite out of humour with myself at this ungracious reception of my unknown visitor, to whom it seems M—— had formerly granted permission to make a farm on our ground; and the poor man had come to say that he was about to embark for Badagry, his “own country,” and had brought a farewell offering. This was a large basketful of the rich green ears of the

young Indian corn—the first fruits of his crop; and he was very much disappointed that “Missis” had not spoken to him, especially as the present was chiefly intended for her and the “piccaninny” (*Anglicè*, baby). Evidently quite incredulous on being told (as an extenuation of what appeared so rude in the conduct of his benefactor’s “ma-amie”*) that she could not as yet very well speak, or even understand “blackman’s English”—neither good things from my cupboard, nor a more substantial gift from M——’s purse, could entirely appease the wounded pride of this simple-minded emigrant; which has really vexed me, being touched by an instance of gratitude so entirely disinterested, as the man going away for ever from this place could expect to receive no further favours from M——.

August 11th.—In spite of the rain, which day by day bursts like waterspouts over the colony, we contrive almost every evening to take a ramble, of perhaps ten minutes’ duration, along the pretty walks on the hill, which dry up as if by witchcraft.

I stood a long time this afternoon watching the monkeys as they skipped about from one branch to another among the tall trees at one side of the road leading to the Rose-Apple Glen, and counted six of different sorts, none of them appearing in the least afraid of us. Suddenly we came upon an ant railway—a low walled gallery of sand, the centre occupied by a mass of travelling black ants, that, at a short distance, looked like a narrow running stream of pitch—stretching right across our path. I unwittingly stood still to examine them, but in an instant their sharp teeth had pierced through my very shoes, so that I was glad to make a rapid retreat.

If in the dry season I marvelled at the dense vegetable growth in this country, I may marvel still more at the appearance it presents now; for where before there were brown withered-up grass and underwood, through the interstices of which one could see a few feet into the bush, now the trees, shrubs, grass, and weeds together at each side of some of the walks form quite an

* In “How do ma-amie?” the word is used as a title of respect, equivalent to “madam.” But “How your ma-amie to-day?” to a servant would signify “How is your mistress?” to a little child, its *mother*; and to a husband, his *wife*.

“Da-a-ie,” in the same manner, signifies “sir,” “master,” “father,” or “husband.”

impervious wall of matted verdure. At present the wild vine * is most to be distinguished for the luxuriance of its wreathing foliage.

A species of indigo grows abundantly both on this hill and Mount Oriel. The black washerwomen gather these leaves and prepare them for tingeing linen, which they do to an extent that is very ugly. A favourite pattern upon their own dresses is formed by large, shapeless, blue patches dispersed irregularly over a white surface. This is made by tying a little indigo into as many places as they choose of the cloth, and then boiling it, after which it is opened out and displays the singularly *elegant* design above described. I have seen a faded calico gown rendered quite fashionable in this way. Some of my own white muslin dresses are nearly as grotesque, being bordered round with spots of iron-mould that it is impossible to remove, although I have tried the effect of lime-juice and exposure to the sun—such sun as we have at this season. From the red appearance of the soil I should suppose that there is iron-ore in some places. There is loadstone in many of the pieces of rock in front of the house, although one whose power we tested attracted nothing heavier than large needles. The bare rocky ascent at one particular spot on Mount Oriel looks as if it had been exposed to fire at some remote period, having a crumbling red and black surface that could never be the results of mere bush-burnings: I have observed that several other rocky situations have the same appearance, which leads me to think that the mountains here are of volcanic origin; indeed, their peculiar formation—all peaks and chasms—bears out the supposition.

We have a few large flat stones, carelessly piled one above another under the orange-trees, which, when struck in a particular way by a smaller stone, give forth distinct musical sounds. One rings out a treble note, another a deep tenor, and so on, according to their different tones, which seem to vary with the size and thickness of the stone that is struck, and the degree of force with which it is touched.

In your last letter you ask many questions, which I can only answer very briefly. I cannot tell exactly how many Europeans there are in the colony, but am pretty sure they do not

* *Vitis cæsia*.

altogether amount to a hundred. They are made up of civil and military officers, merchants, and missionaries ; while occasionally the presence of a man-of-war in the harbour gives a pleasant addition to the colonial society. There are no public amusements, except annual races. Dancing parties cannot well be got up, where there is seldom even *one* unmarried lady in the whole place ; but there are dinner parties as at home ; and a solitary friend quietly drops in, now and then, to breakfast, or to spend the evening.



LETTER IX.

Discomforts of the Rainy Season — Dense Fogs — Fine Days — Brilliant tinted Foliage — Humming-birds — Palm-birds — Whydah Finch — Rice Buntings — Butterflies — Millepedes — Spiders — Description of a Tornado — Continued heavy Rain — Bush Novelties.

August 21.

THE most unpleasant thing about the wet season is the impossibility of getting out *every* day to take proper exercise. Sometimes it looks so radiantly clear and sunny, you feel assured there is opportunity for at least a short quick walk, and set out accordingly. But after proceeding a few steps, you are perhaps intent upon examining a flower, or watching some bird or butterfly, feeling the sun so intensely hot, that you do not dream of rain; when a sudden sound like hailstones falling, causes you to look towards the quarter whence it proceeds, and there moves on a shower of water, so rapidly, that though you do run back with railway speed (no very comfortable pace in this climate), still, generally speaking, your dress is so thoroughly wetted as to render an immediate change imperatively necessary. If wishing to ride, it is still worse. No sooner is your horse saddled than all the clouds seem to congregate upon the hill tops, and at once disperse themselves in a deluge, of which but ten minutes before there was not the slightest appearance throughout the whole sky! Then the mornings are sometimes so cold that you feel chilly though in a winter dress,—at the same time that a blazing fire is on in the house, and every window shut; while by-and-bye the breeze dies away, dull dark clouds hang in all directions, and though the sun only shines partially, the sultriness of the atmosphere continues most oppressive for several hours; then a violent gale may come on from the sea, accompanied by heavy rain, and you feel ready to shiver, with the thermometer at 76°. It must be these sudden heats and chills that render the climate so trying.

I do not dislike the incessant rain so much as the dense damp

fogs of Sierra Leone; not from the miasma they are said to bring, but from their unpleasantness. They often rise out of the ravines at either side of us, and from the plain, over which they brood for hours, looking from this height like masses of solid lead. But commonly the land-wind in the morning sends these vapours drifting over Mount Oriel; thence they pass along the hills behind and the low ground in front (dividing, as it were, to avoid our house); whirling about like the smoke of some great conflagration, and banking up in grey and heavy volumes, until they completely obscure our view of every place beyond the brow of our own hill. Occasionally they favour us with a nearer approach; then we keep all the windows shut, to exclude as much as possible the air, which is raw, damp, and chilly beyond expression, when the fog is actually on the house. It is this shutting out of air and prospect together that renders these "smokes," as they are termed by the blacks, so extremely disagreeable to me; the temperature within doors being then (notwithstanding the many crannies in the boarding of the piazzas, and air-holes left by African carpenters and masons under the eaves, and through which the damp can easily penetrate) more unbearably oppressive than I ever experienced it when the full glare of the sun was on the house. When these most extraordinary mists go out to sea, we may almost always look for rain; but if, after they have hung about for some time, giving us a peep now and then of the barrack buildings (like a huge bird-cage suspended by invisible means in the air), a glimpse of the church steeple, and one or two of the tall masts of the vessels in the harbour, the vapour rises and rolls up towards the hills again, we may expect it to turn out fine and sunny, although in the depth of the rainy season.

And a fine day in the "rains" is always so much more lovely and bright than the finest day of the dry season; not because coming so seldom, and contrasted with the many dull gloomy days, but really on account of its own intrinsic beauty. There is no haze in the atmosphere,—the distant horizon—hills—shore—all seem brought near by a magic glass; the sea lies stretched out with the gleam of a sapphire, and, except for the floating here and there of one of those pure white, fleecy clouds, called in the emphatic language of Germany "Heaven's lambs," the

sky realizes all the beautiful imagery wherein poets are apt to embody their ideas of the firmament's spacious and shining vault.

The sky then is *indeed* blue, the sun bright, and the earth green! Yet the woods do not present a uniform hue which would tire from its sameness. Not only do you behold every shade of green, but many of the trees put forth leaves, at first of a delicate crimson, which look like magnificent tufts of flowers, and thus give to the bush a richly variegated aspect. I have seen one young tree showing in its upper branches very nearly the hues of the rainbow,—faint red, deepening into orange and scarlet on one shoot, contrasting vividly with the pale primrose and pea-green of another, while on a third, lower down, the colours gradually blending, tinged the same leaves at once with shades of the brightest purple and darkest olive—the whole glancing in the sun like jewels.

Still, while I look on these gorgeous boughs, and mark the wisdom and benevolence of the Power who decks the face of the world, in whatever land our lot may be cast, with objects to excite our interest and wonder, do not suppose that I could for one moment *prefer* the glowing colours of African foliage to those tints of British autumn, which in their chastened and changing beauty convey, even to the most thoughtless mind, a solemn though silent lesson of the fading nature of all earthly glory.

Ever since the "rains" set in, the birds seem to have become tamer. Besides the dark-crested brown one and the brilliant humming-birds, we have, fluttering amongst the orange branches of a morning, the "palm-bird" (so called from building its nest in palm-trees), a lovely creature with bright orange and black plumage, and another scarcely less elegant in form, which reminds me of the greenfinch and canary, having a light saffron-coloured head and breast, with wings and tail of yellowish-brown, beautifully glossed with green. Yet more striking in aspect than any of these is the graceful little whydah-finch, or, as it is familiarly called here from its jetty plumage, the "widow-bird." Its head and neck are far more shining and smooth than the richest velvet, and its tail-feathers, which are above twice the length of its body, seem as much as its wings to waft the bird through the air. To see this mournful-looking

beauty floating from spray to spray, or lightly perching on a stalk of grass with a motion as stately as it is ethereal, you would imagine her to be the most dignified, gentle, and sweet-tempered dame in all the feathered creation, instead of which she is one of the most quarrelsome, noisy, and self-sufficient; pecks, scolds, and pursues her equals, and flies in the face of birds three times as large as herself. Nor must I forget the little rice-buntings, pretty in spite of their rotundity of figure, and clothed in sober suit of iron-grey, almost black, with white cravats round their necks. They are lowly, social, loveable little birds, flying in flocks of from twenty to thirty, and seem fonder of hopping humbly about in the Bermuda grass, than of contrasting their quaker garb with their gaudier-attired fellows in the orange and lime-trees. I have heard that in the dry season my unassuming favourites put on a scarlet costume, but cannot tell whether it be the case or not.

I wish it were in my power to send you a description of the splendid butterflies I see every sunny day; but like all of their tribe, they never remain still long enough for me to examine them distinctly, merely settling upon a leaf and flower a single moment, or enamelling the grass with their gorgeous hues. A very common one looks as if cut out of black satin, and embroidered with purple silk. Another is black with white spots; and a third, broader across its wings than a humming-bird, is also of a rich blue-black, with a belt of bright green stretching from the tip of one wing to another. There are also many lesser ones all of one colour, such as pale blue, yellow, or lilac, that look like flower-blossoms flitting through the air. I particularly observe a small white butterfly in the bush here, that seems as if it were carrying off a few threads of a silk fringe that had got entangled with it. But I found on a narrower examination this appearance to be caused by the hinder wings of the insect being lengthened out into flexile tapering points, which give a still lighter air to its graceful body.

Altogether, I must candidly confess that the view, the weather, the flowers, birds, and the butterflies render me somewhat idle at times. But we have other and less agreeable insects, although I have only twice seen a scorpion since coming to this country, and, within doors, centipedes nearly as seldom. Millepedes,

very ugly and large, abound on the walks, and infest the trees. They have many feet like the centipede, but instead of being flat like it, are round, and of a dark shining brown, annularly marked with red. Some of them are fully seven inches long, and as thick as a young snake, but they are not poisonous. We are very little annoyed by mosquitos, though this is the season they are usually most troublesome and numerous; but I suppose the hill is too stormy a place for them to exist upon it. Spiders seem more industrious in this country than anywhere else, and are really serviceable in catching flying ants, and all such winged pests; therefore in the open piazzas down stairs I do not object to a solitary gossamer web being occasionally left undisturbed, especially as some of the out-of-door spiders are so beautifully and curiously marked. The *one* at present domesticated below has a large oval body, that looks exactly like an ivory ball, covered over with great, black, Hebrew characters. The house-spiders are of different sorts; some are small, round, jumping creatures; others so large that a crown-piece could not cover them, and flat as scorpions. They are very numerous and troublesome, making nests everywhere, and on everything. You see, fastened perhaps against a shelf in the store-room, or like a label on a bottle, what appears to be a circular patch of white paper, but turns out to be a tough opaque substance, more like calico than paper in texture, and on tearing it off, some dozen of eggs or as many young spiders are discovered within.

Every drawer and wardrobe shelf has to be emptied and dusted out oftener than one would deem at all necessary in England. Heavy pieces of furniture against the walls have to be moved very often to prevent an accumulation of these spiders, with cock-roaches and moths; the species of the latter we have here being of all other insects the most difficult to extirpate. The most careful sweeping and dusting cannot prevent these caterpillars in their brownish-grey angular cases from continually creeping along the walls, hanging suspended from the bottom of chests of drawers, tables, chairs, &c., as if they hid in every place to which they think you cannot reach.

This letter goes by the very Brazilian brigantine whose master and crew, like pirates as they are, fired upon the man-of-war's boats. Slave-vessels and their cargoes, after being condemned

here, are sold at auction. By the provisions of our treaty with Spain her ships are cut up, so as to render it impossible for them to return again into the slave-trade ; but those of Brazil are sold entire, and all such craft being built for fast sailing, I am always glad when one of the British merchants of the colony buys and sends home one of these beautiful little vessels, feeling assured that my letters will reach you so much sooner than when sent by a dull-sailing "timber-ship."

Extract from Journal.

August 27th.—Last night we had a slight tornado, the first of the season ; and although foggy this morning, it cleared up fine and sunny, sea and sky alike having that peculiarly vivid blue observable in this country only during the "rains," and then merely at times. About five o'clock P.M. it threatened a tornado by the great fleecy clouds rising above Mount Oriel ; their curled outlines forming many a Hogarth-like portrait against the sky. At six, the sun, divested of all his rays, seemed to sink sullenly into the sea, appearing like a gigantic moon, only redder, and more fierce-looking. All this time there was scarcely a breath of wind, and that from the land. After the sun set, the north-east became of a gloomy lurid hue, diversified only by the piled-up masses of threatening clouds, which every instant assumed more fantastic shapes as they rolled down the river, and were lost in the pitchy darkness over the Bullom shore. The thunder sounded nearer and nearer, as the storm passed down to the point at Leopard's Island ; and then the sea was lit up one moment by flashes of intensely bright lightning, and the next shrouded in an ominous gloom. We had left two windows open in the front piazza, and at a few minutes before seven I felt the sudden chill which precedes a tornado, and heard the rushing of the wind, although it had not even reached the town, the outline of which I could yet trace, with its lights just beginning to enliven the dusk of evening, whilst the water for some distance out in the harbour seemed black as ink from the reflection of the heavy clouds above. The chirping and humming of insects ceased all at once, as the storm came sweeping on from the sea, and at seven o'clock exactly, it was upon the hill ; the wind coming in heavy gusts and passing away with a wild wailing sound, like

the howl of some baffled power of evil; while the peals of thunder, fearfully loud, with scarcely a moment between them—with the lightning flashing amid the surrounding darkness, most forcibly illustrated the words of the Psalmist, “The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook.”

And then with a force as if it alone, of all the elements, were capable of curbing that mighty wind, on came the rain, dashing upon the shingled roof like a shower of stones, and forming a drift so thick, that notwithstanding the brightness of the lightning it was impossible to see anything from the windows, save the leafy tops of the orange-trees close to the house, quivering and struggling in the blast, and the long feathery branches of the cocoa-nut tree bending before its fury.

At half-past seven, the monotonous, but to me most cheering music of the crickets announced that the tornado was over, although the thunder and lightning continued for some time, accompanied by torrents of rain; while the land-wind even now differs in nothing from the hurricane gusts, except in blowing more steadily. The curtain drapery, table-covers, &c. in the inner apartments, still wave to and fro, as if all the piazza windows were open, and the atmosphere has become so cool and pleasant, it is difficult to remember that exposure to this wind is fraught with danger to Europeans. But, wrapped in a shawl, I have watched the storm as it went round by the Cape, and died into silence and gloom far out at sea; thankful that so violent a tornado has passed over us without my experiencing, to any great degree, that annoying nervous sensation which, ever since the memorable night of the 4th of June, I have felt even on the very slightest puff of land-wind.

28th.—Lovely sunny day, but oppressively warm. The tornadoes of the two preceding evenings betoken the breaking off of the “rains.”

29th.—My prognostications and hopes of fine weather doomed to be disappointed, for after a treacherously beautiful morning, came on heavy rain which continued all day.

30th.—Heavy gales from the sea without five minutes' intermission. The humidity of the atmosphere exceeds anything I have yet seen. The rain has swollen all the brooks into the

magnitude of rivers. Frothy torrents gleam on the distant mountain-sides in places where I never saw the semblance of moisture before. One or two of the "grass-fields" are partially under water; and where the different streams empty themselves into the harbour, the waves, owing to the quantity of red soil that has been washed down, are for a considerable space outwards all

"Crested with tawny foam
Like the mane of a chesnut steed."

September 1st.—Once more fine enough to admit of walking out. I observed many novelties in our ramble. One branch stretching out from the wilderness-like maze hedging the path on the ravine-side was laden with bright red pods much the shape of long thick pendants for the ears, each pod containing a single bean of a dark brown colour, encased in a yellow cup streaked with scarlet. I saw several other shrubs with very curious fruit, being hard nuts with a rough cloth-like surface. One, with this outer coating of a greenish yellow, is called by the natives "broke back," because, according to them, whoever eats the kernel will never afterwards be able to walk upright, as it possesses the miraculous property of breaking the back!

Many trees have the bark of their branches almost hid by small berries, of various colours, growing on bough and twig so close and thick, that you can have some idea of their appearance by supposing how twigs would look, covered over with some adhesive matter, and then dipped into a heap of glass beads. One handsome plant with a thorny stem, straight branches, and leaf a little like that of the laburnum, has a small, shining, crimson berry, growing like strings of red currants—only not so transparent. I particularly noticed another from its deep orange clusters, reminding me of those of the mountain-ash. This tree is about the size of a laurustinus or lilac, and has a light green leaf. From its being the first to attract the locusts, it is sometimes called by the blacks here "locust-tree," though not in the least resembling those splendid tree acacias which commonly bear that name.

LETTER X.

Tropic Storms — Worshippers of Lightning — Garden in a Glen — Beautiful wild Fig-tree — Parasitical Vegetation — Bush Ropes — “ Knife-grass ” — “ Chouca-choucas ” — Sky-birds — Interest excited by Vessels coming into Harbour — Thoughts in Rhyme.

October 30.

THIS is the land of storms. With three exceptions, those that ushered in the wet season were nothing to what they now are. We have had a gradual abatement in rains and fogs, but for the last two months have had a tornado almost every night. This hurricane wind generally comes on at first from the land, but beats round and round the house, causing me often to imagine it blows from every point of the compass at once. Sometimes wind, rain, thunder, and lightning continue together for upwards of two hours; then again, we have the storm-wind and rain with little or no thunder and lightning. The heaviest tornadoes are those where the wind blows for perhaps half an hour before any rain falls, or when accompanied by only a small rain. One day, after a strong sea-breeze with a clouded sun, we may have a fierce tornado; the next day there may be a dead calm, with a fiery-hot sun, and yet as fierce a tornado at night again; after which, at one time follows a calm, at another a violent land-wind.

One peculiarity is observable regarding these storms; they most commonly occur between sunset and sunrise, and, as far as I can judge, always at low-water.

On the 26th of September we had two within twelve hours. It was a dull, dark, cold, rainy morning after a thunder-storm, and as I sat absorbed in reading a newly-arrived English letter, M—— observed that a tornado was coming; on looking up, I beheld the river and opposite shore black as ink. There was scarcely time to close the jalousied window-shutters of the eastern room, ere a blast came on with terrific violence; the branches of the palm-trees were swung round in all directions,

and even the stubborn orange-trees shook as if being uprooted. The wind did not last above seven minutes, when it was beat down by heavy rain, the sound of which was most welcome to me. A second edition of the morning's thunder-storm then rolled over the house and went out to sea, the land-wind continuing to blow for some hours. The afternoon was fine, clear, and sunny, but now and then we heard the echoed rumbling, which betokened the elements at war among the mountains. Although the sun in setting gave to every cloud hues of purple, crimson, and orange, in their very darkest and richest dyes, yet the heavens had a wild, unsettled appearance; while long narrow iron-grey clouds lay like bars of iron stretched over the river, the Bullom shore, and the sea towards Leopard's Island,—from which, immediately the sun sank below the horizon, the most vivid lightning flashed forth.

After it became dark, I watched the sky above Mount Oriel, where each flash showed distinctly as at noon-day the ruined house and its neglected trees; and if you imagine a far view of ranges of snow-coloured hills, seen by the reflected flickering light of volumes of flame—you have an idea of the *distant* aspect of a coming tornado. Such was the appearance of the clouds in that quarter until about eight o'clock, when the scene completely changed; the black fog, rising over the other hill like an immense body of *soot* set in motion by the wind, seemed for a moment as if about to fall avalanche-like upon ours; and then rushing furiously down the river, the pent-up wrath of the storm burst in one fierce gust, not lasting above three minutes before it was somewhat moderated by rain, which, with the thunder and lightning, gradually passed on, leaving a very strong land-wind that blew all night.

The word "tornado" in Portuguese literally means "returned," but is also used to signify the time in which the sun goes back from the tropic of Cancer. "Torneado" is the Spanish for "thunder;" but I cannot tell from which language we have adopted it into ours; I *think* from the former, as the spelling is the same.

You will conclude that I think of nothing save tornadoes. But, indeed, though confessing that these sublime natural phenomena are the beneficial agents of a wise and merciful Providence

—fitted for the country in which they take place—and, by purifying the atmosphere, rendering the fever-pestilence of this coast less prevalent, and less fatal in its effects; still, my philosophy does not carry me far enough to enable me to witness them without a feeling of awe, and an admiring remembrance of our own blessed climate, where there is no occasion for storm and tempest to occur to the same tremendous extent.

The former building on this hill was twice struck by lightning, the second time being partly burnt down ere assistance came from town. The marks of fresh plastering in one of our rooms show the rent made in the wall, when this present house was struck also. Yet notwithstanding the frequency and violence of thunder-storms here, incidents of any one being killed by accidents from lightning are very rare. Many of the liberated Africans worship lightning. During a tornado these deluded people beat tom-toms, and make such horrid yelling noises, that I could believe a herd of wild beasts were prancing through the suburbs of Freetown in full cry. The two persons killed during the night of the 28th of June were, I have been since told, engaged in these heathen customs at the time of their awfully sudden death, which is looked upon by the superstitious of the blacks professing Christianity as a terrible warning to the rest.

An Aku man came one day to offer himself as groom; and on our referring for some information respecting his character to an upper servant, who happened to be of the same tribe, he shook his head, and said very gravely, “Dat man no do for horseman, massa; no, no, can’t do at all.”

As the candidate had some credentials of having before served in a similar capacity, and to his employer’s satisfaction, M—— made further inquiries, and at last elicited from our awe-struck domestic, not that his countryman was incompetent to perform the duties of groom, but that his disqualifications arose solely from the fact that “he worship de tunder!”

November 6th.—One necessarily leads rather a hermit life in such a situation as this. A walk of but half an hour’s duration is the utmost I can possibly take without feeling over fatigued; the intense heat of the sun renders riding by no means a pleasant exercise, except in the morning or afternoon. The mountain roads are too steep to admit of driving. I dislike the confine-

ment, as well as the jolting motion, of a palanquin; therefore you will perceive that my excursions seldom extend very far, and allow of but little variety. Almost every evening I walk down to the garden made some time ago in the glen at the waterfall, where the neatly laid-out beds, in which the familiar leaves of cresses, parsley, peas, with other *home* herbs and vegetables, have just begun to show, form a pleasing contrast to the wilds on either side.

One morning, whilst M—— was overlooking the farm-people clearing the path by the side of the brook near the garden, on coming to a very fine fig-tree that grows there, one of them exclaimed, quite enthusiastically, “Ah, massa! dey plant plenty dem in my country for somebody to sit under!” and appeared quite delighted at the sight of the tree. Even had M—— not told me it was just what I would like to see, I would have wished to visit the wonderful vegetable production capable of calling forth admiration from a negro—all of that race, so far as my observation extends, however they delight in the artificial adornment of gay clothing and glass beads, seeming to take a positive pleasure in hacking, hewing, destroying, and burning the stateliest trees of the mountains; and will not permit a mere *flowering* plant to remain in their ground, looking with compassionate contempt on the simplicity of Europeans in cultivating flowers, disdaining themselves the most fragrant and beautiful blossoms, solely because, according to their theory, “him no no use—*somebody can't eat um.*”

In the cool of the evening I rode down to the garden, so that I might not be too tired for the *real* bush ramble which was to follow; and leaving horse and horseman to wait our return, accompanied M—— along a freshly-opened path to the right, and which was strewed with leaves and boughs of the bush that had been cut down to permit entrance. We walked on, carefully picking our steps through the stumps of young trees, with the brook on one hand, into which several plantains and bananas dipped their broad leaves, whilst the other side, dark with trees, climbing plants, and long tangled grass, formed too impenetrable a front to tempt my exploring its recesses farther, infested as the bush there is by red ants; and only that day a large green snake had been killed in one of the banana-trees.

But I was amply repaid for the exertion of scrambling through the intricate path. This peculiar species of wild fig is, indeed, a noble tree. Its trunk rises like a fluted column, whilst its roots send themselves several yards over an immense stone that slopes down into the middle of the stream, in whose restless waters they disappear; and the lofty branches, with their light-green leaves stretching far overhead, forming a delicious canopy from the scorching sun, do indeed most completely convey the idea of repose and peace, contained in the Scripture expression of "sitting under one's own fig-tree." The boughs are wide and spreading, but not too densely foliaged, for through their interstices a chequered light is admitted, whose dim softness greatly relieves the gloomy shade of that end of the green arched avenue leading to the spot. With this striking ornament of the wilderness a natural curiosity is connected, as apparently out of its trunk another tree shoots up, tall, straight, vigorous, and leafy, although the lower part of its stem is enclosed within the body of the fig-tree, which is not in the slightest way disfigured by this strange adherent, although the colours of the bark and leaves, with their shape and texture, are quite different. I am now inclined to think that the apparent parasite in the centre has been a young tree encased whilst growing up, by the fig twining round it; as I have more lately seen other and far loftier trees, round which many climbing stems had wreathed themselves in tortuous meshes, tracing in their turnings and windings the most elaborate network-like patterns on a truly gigantic scale; and, no doubt, had they done this before the trunk from which they derived support had attained its full growth, in time they must have formed a wooden case for it by uniting all together, as those of the fig-tree have evidently done.

M—— tells me of a tree, which he saw at the Gambia, with a smooth bark and common sort of leaf, but its uppermost boughs surmounted by the nodding crest of a palm, thus presenting a most extraordinary appearance, looking as if out of a hollow tree the palms had sprung up; when, in reality, its ringed trunk had been at first completely encircled by the twining stems of a climber that had, as they increased in age, grown all into one mass of wood under an unbroken crust of bark, and thrown out healthy and spreading branches of their own. Another evening

we went to the fig-tree by a still rougher path, where I particularly noticed, from their being in such abundance, the pliant and twisting stems of these plants used as *rope* by the natives in fastening the posts of their huts, and sold regularly in the market of Freetown. Tough and flexible as any hempen cordage, some of these bush-ropes are small as whipcord, others thick as cables. They mostly run up amongst the boughs of trees, and hang down in the form of vine-tendrils, but many of them in time become trees of a very fair size themselves.

“ Knife-grass ” is a formidable opponent to bush-explorers in general. It mounts up amongst the highest branches, to fall downwards again in long ravelled masses; crossing and re-crossing; and, though neither a climber nor creeper, holding on with the tenacity of a burdock, forming in some places at the sides of this path a barrier as thick and impervious as any thatch. Unlike other grasses, its root is bulbous; its stalk three-sided like a prism, each edge being serrated, as are those of the long, narrow, spear-pointed blade, and also the under surface of the fibre running up its centre, with which I have actually made a deep dent in soft wood, by using (as an experiment of its power) one of the blades as a saw! This grass, if but accidentally touched by the finger, immediately draws blood, and the jagged, uneven nature of the wound renders it less trifling than one would suppose, therefore I by no means wonder at the fear in which the labourers stand of coming in contact with the “ knife-grass.” All plants of a briery nature are called “ chouca-choucas ” by the blacks, and one most delicately foliaged acacia that runs along the ground is especially dreaded by them, from its long spines like needles. This species has a very pretty and fragrant white blossom.

Of the novelties which have attracted my attention since the cessation of the “ rains,” a bird, seen for the first time about ten days ago, deserves particular notice. Sitting quietly alone one forenoon, M—— as usual in town—baby asleep—and his little attendant taking her daily bath at the brook, after the fashion of the natives,—I suddenly heard the most clear and melodious notes sounding high up in the air, and looking out, saw darting in the sunshine, with movements as strikingly new to me as their song, a flock of birds with two curious long

tail-feathers, in colour something between green and blue, and tawny wings dashed with gold. Sometimes they soared up on expanded wing until nearly out of sight, and then floating downwards gently as flowers bending to the wind, would rapidly wheel round, till almost touching the earth, and then up and away again! now balancing themselves with a motionless buoyancy, then rising and sinking by turns, until I could not but think they kept time to their own music.

The notes of their song are few, but quick, thrilling, and joyous. The lark, of all our British birds (warmly as I would also accord my meed of praise to the clear whistle of the black-bird and the warbling of the thrush), can alone embody in sound the feeling of *gladness* so forcibly as does this blithe denizen of a baneful climate. It may be that the general absence of melody amongst the feathered tribes here causes me to prize the notes of this one bird so highly. But whilst listening to the gay, glad song of these bright-winged creatures, and watching their dancing evolutions, I should think it impossible for a single desponding thought to cross one's mind; for, excepting the lively carol of a healthy, happy child—or, perhaps, the murmuring voice of the blessed sea-breeze at sultry noon-day—there are *here* few sounds in nature more heartily cheerful than the clear, silvery, ringing chorus of these beautiful “sky-birds” of Sierra Leone.

24th.—The weather has been so warm for the last fortnight, that we dispense with a fire, except for three hours in the morning and as many at night. We have had no tornadoes now since the night of the 10th, but then a very heavy one. It was followed by a dry hurricane-wind that lasted several hours, during which the flag-staff at the barracks was blown down, much to my chagrin, as I see no signs of its being replaced; and there has been for the last six days a sort of haze in the atmosphere, attended by harmattan wind, and which wholly obscures my view of the other at Signal Hill. Whenever I hear the deep booming sound that tells of a sail in the offing, I look eagerly out to see what flag is hoisted, and then search through the haze for the vessel itself—having now become rather practised in the art of guessing from appearance *whence* and *what* she is likely to turn out; an idle occupation, but nevertheless one in which I take a kind of childish delight, my thirst for home news

continuing as unquenchable as ever, as the little rhyming enclosure in this will testify.

TO A LIGHT BARQUE FROM ENGLAND.

October 27th.

The echo of the signal-gun! the banner red streams forth!
 For on the wave a snow-white sail gleams brightly in the north.
 Blow strongly now, thou ocean-breeze, and waft her to the strand;
 Mayhap she brings us tidings good from Britain's honour'd land.
 What art thou, rover of the deep, that hither bend'st thy way?
 In what far sheltering haven didst thou last at anchor lay?
 Art thou a cruiser of our Queen's? well manned by seamen bold,
 To check the slaver's course dost thou a Royal warrant hold?
 Or dost thou come, a captur'd prize, in hands humane and brave,
 To that grave court whose high decree sets free the pining slave?
 But *I* care not a gay "St. George," nor pennant broad to see,
 A merchant-barque with news from home far welcomer would be.
 Flow swiftly back, thou ebbing tide! Thou slumbering wind, awake!
 I wish not *now* the deep to view like some calm inland lake.
 O wherefore dost thou lag, sea-breeze? befriend the good ship still!
 Beat back the wild tornado-clouds fast gathering o'er yon hill;
 Again to lone Sahara's plains drive thou the storm-wind back,
 That nought may cause that vessel proud to change her landward track.

Our hearts with hope are fraught, white sail! while gazing upon thee,
 That shortly we, of friends remote, both sign and seal may see—
 That soon of British Church and State all tidings we may hear,
 With each event which bears upon our country's welfare dear.
 Oh! bring'st thou any letters penn'd beside my father's hearth—
 Where words are sometimes blotted through the children's noisy mirth?
 Do still my youthful brothers there our childhood's jokes revive?
 Or in the cold world's wildering maze have they gone forth to strive?
 While sadness o'er my father's heart asserts its weary power,
 So few *now* claim his blessing at the wonted "good-night" hour;
 At which still time the youngest's prayer, lisped at her mother's knee,
 The infant orisons recall of those beyond the sea—
 For whom so many anxious tears that mother's eyes have wept,
 Since fond they watch'd the cradle where her first-born sweetly slept!

* * * * *

Aye near me are the dearest ties for which this earth hath name,
 Yet each of ye, my parted ones! affection's thoughts still claim;
 And one there is, who dwelleth lone by grey yet kingly towers,
 Whose image with the memory blends of my most radiant hours.
 Dost thou some letter kind from *her*, O gallant vessel, bring,
 Fraught with the recollections old to which I love to cling?

Remembrance still those purple hills—that winding stream brings back,
Even still I seem with that true friend to tread some woodland track,
While mingleth with her accents low that deep and thrilling tone
Whose music to mine ear hath since so sweet familiar grown!
—Back to thine inmost cells, fond thoughts! I dare no longer dream.
And lo! upon the waters wide shines out a sunny gleam!
Away hath rolled the storm-cloud dark—the sea-breeze proves its might,
And safely in the deep blue bay that barque shall ride ere night.
The tide hath long since turned which strove to bear her further south,
And bravely past the jealous shoal that guards the harbour's mouth.
The white foam dashing from her bows, before the wind she goes,
As if she knew her voyage now was near its prosperous close.
Those upright masts, that hull's stout build, no foreign craft denote,
Right proudly at her gaff I see the flag of England float!
Oh! ever may that ensign bright all alien colours brave,
And Britain reign triumphant still, the empress of the wave!

I welcome thee to port, fair ship! but I shall hail thee more,
If kindly scrolls from kindred mine thou bring'st in goodly store;
And afterward, whene'er thy sails unfurl to meet the breeze,
For thee a happy clime I'll wish, fair winds, and friendly seas!



LETTER XI.

Effects of the Harmattan — Grasses— Anecdote — Migrations of Europeans — Loss of Friends — Christmas “Bunyahs” — Pincushion Plants — Negro Gifts — White Mists — Dry Season Prospect — Cotton Shrub — Farms — Birds.

December 14th.

A MILD kind of harmattan has been blowing for the last fortnight, which still causes the paper on which I write to curl up at the edges, as if it were held to the fire, and our most strongly-bound books to open their leaves of themselves. The grass looks dry and withered; and although there is a constant succession of leaves on the trees, yet at present they fall in multitudes, and the orange-boughs especially have a bare and scorched appearance. We rode over to Mount Oriel a few evenings ago, where, though some of its inner walls have fallen down, the ruined house still stands, despite the many heavy storms that have swept through its broken casements. The Guinea grass on the flat ground in front met far over our heads, even when on horseback. M—— measured one stalk, which was fully seventeen feet in height, and about the thickness of a common walking-cane. It seems to average about fifteen feet, but often is as high as twenty, and, being in flower just now, looks like a particularly rich and stately crop of some sort of grain. Horses are very fond of this grass, and when, as at this season, in lieu of its fine succulent blade—a little like that of green wheat, only much broader—the groom gathers its tops and gives them to the horses, they become as frisky as if it were as much corn. Another grass, of lesser stature, with a bluish tinge, downy stalks and blades, springs up in thick separate tufts, and is called “cow-grass,” from its being a favourite with these animals, but horses will not feed on it. I also observed that evening, amongst the stones near the brow of the other hill, some patches of a delicate kind of low, thin, wiry grass, that reminded me of flax growing. Its trembling crests of seeds appeared, on close examination, as if

formed of silken threads, fine as the finest hair, with at the top of each a green knob, about the size of a pin's head, yet so light as scarcely to bend its fragile support. I was not a little astonished to learn that this grass is the poisonous sort which has given the name of mere "grass-fields" to these low rocky plains, where it is almost the only appearance of vegetable life.

Once upon a time an English gentleman here, fancying perhaps, like myself, that such a pretty grass could not but be a most innocent sort of herbage for cattle, would listen to no remonstrances from his black servants, but insisted on their making it into hay for his horses. This was accordingly done; and whether it were the cause or not, of course I cannot tell, but all the horses that were forced to eat this new-fashioned hay certainly died whilst undergoing the experiment—a catastrophe at which their owner was so indignant that he resolved to patronize no such unreasonable quadrupeds in future; and forthwith promoted four handsome asses to the honour of drawing his equipage.

30th.—Another feverish attack prevented me sending this letter by a ship which sailed on the 23rd with a great many passengers. People are continually going home from Sierra Leone for the recovery of their health, or with no intention of returning; and new people coming out, to leave shortly again for the same causes, so that there is no *fixed* or permanent society. But more melancholy changes have thinned my extremely limited circle of acquaintances. Of the very few European ladies resident here when I arrived, three have since died, and amongst these my kind and lamented friend Mrs. ———.

We had actually a tornado so late as the 16th. It was in the morning, and followed by heavy rain and distant thunder, whilst the whole day continued dull and gloomy.

On Christmas-day, which was particularly cold and chilly for the dry season, there was also loud thunder amongst the hills. The musical performances of the "waits," the night preceding, were heard distinctly up here; and the beating of tom-toms was louder even than usual, accompanied by the incessant firing off of overcharged muskets. The ships were all gaily adorned with flags, and they kept the harbour in a continued atmosphere of smoke, quite misleading me at first by the report of their small

guns, that sounded like a succession of signals from the far hill. Hosts of people besieged the house for Christmas-boxes, or "bunyah," as they call such presents; and each receiving something—from a duck shirt or trowsers, a bright scarf or handkerchief, a book, or an old pair of boots, down to a few cocoa-nuts, as suited the pretensions or merits of the applicant, with, *of course*, the usual "glass-grog," all went off again in high glee.

One trustworthy old Timmanee man declined the rum, having taken a pledge against drinking spirits, but accepted a glass of wine instead. This step in civilization has been effected at the instance of a Missionary, who has devoted himself to the study of the languages spoken by the different tribes in this part of Africa, with the intention of travelling in the interior, and has, I believe, written a Timmanee grammar.

On giving the little apprentices their usual lesson, I inquired of the boy, who has been three years at school in the colony—if he knew why people went to church on Christmas-day—in short, what was the meaning of this festival?—asking the question in the most approved country fashion of speaking. He immediately replied, with a peculiarly sage expression of countenance, and in a tone of some complacency at the consciousness of his own learning, "Yes, I savey him good—him mean day for get someting;" and, evidently whatever he *had* been taught with regard to the holiday, it remained associated in his mind with the idea alone of "getting someting."

Upon the whole, both of these negro children have made some progress since they came; but whilst the boy is remarkably quick at getting his lessons, at least by rote—and the girl very backward in learning hers, however anxious and willing to "savey book,"—she is by far the more helpful, industrious, active, and attentive of the two.

A bunch of an extraordinary kind of "bush" was brought to me a short time ago. It consisted of thick pods, each nearly flat underneath, but rounded on the upper surface, where was a cleft like that on a plum. Three of these, joined together much in the same manner as I have seen hazel-nuts, but sometimes only two, hung at the end of the long flexible stalks, and looked exactly like whimsically-shaped pincushions made of scarlet velvet. I kept the leafless twig in the house until next day, in-

tending to send you a little sketch of its appearance, but before morning several of the pods had opened at the cleft, from which sprouted a single black bean. The pulpy substance surrounding this seed is full of an acid juice, and the natives use it to polish their teeth.

Our people have a strange way of proving their regards for your little nephew. An old servant brought in one day a land-crab, which he wished to deprive of some of its claws, and then, after fastening a string to those remaining, give it to the baby as a plaything! One of the farm-labourers thought he would not be behind in his offering, and sent up a young humming-bird, begging it might have a string tied to one of its feet, and made to flutter for the amusement of the child. Both of these generously-disposed barbarians were much astonished at receiving in return a lesson on the subject of cruelty to animals. They must be in the habit of indulging their own children in such refined pastimes, as shortly afterwards another man brought an enormous cricket, quite as large as a full-grown mouse, and suspending the poor insect by a piece of fine country rope, seemed quite proud of presenting so grand and noisy a toy to the white piccaninny; and witnessed its being set at liberty with a stare of indignation and surprise.

Since the dry season set in, I think this situation more delightful than ever, and really must say, that in spite of its unhealthy character and the privation incident to its position, I like Sierra Leone extremely. The heat, no doubt, is very great, but then house and dress are alike adapted to the climate, so that it is quite endurable. I felt it much more this time last year, when living in town. I think the hill a great deal more cheerful, too, as a residence, than Freetown; for here I can run out and in as I feel inclined, and amuse myself by looking at plants, flowers, birds, lizards, and insects: whilst in the streets there was nothing to be seen but the same groups of market-people day after day plodding along, with now and then a solitary European figure.

Extracts from Journal.

January 13th, 1842.—The harmattan is accompanied by a thick reddish haze, through which the sun on setting looks like a globe of fire every evening, as shorn of all his rays he sinks

gloomily behind the western horizon. Leopard's Island has been for a long time invisible, and instead of the bold, clear outline presented by the opposite shore during the rainy season, it now appears indistinct as land looming from a great distance at sea. Sometimes of a morning a white mist steals down the river, and floats about in light isolated wreaths above the water, until forming, if I may be allowed the expression, several *tiers* of curl-clouds; beyond which, by some illusion of perspective, the Bulom shore seems like part of another world, far up in the sky. These snowy vapours detach themselves again from the dense body, and skim away out to the ocean, gradually mingling with those in the higher regions of the air; and are altogether much more agreeable to look at than the grim black fog of a tornado, or the murky "smokes" that used to settle on the adjoining hills, almost daily, before the final cessation of the "rains." Now and then we have a day with some strong puffs of sea-breeze, but still every object is shrouded in a dim soft haze.

20th.—This weary harmattan withers up all vegetation. The roads look like dry frosty roads, except in being excessively dusty; and indeed the country has altogether the aspect that our own presents in time of frost, only here the trees are still clothed with leaves, whose verdure, however, is both dimmed and faded.

Throughout all our extensive views—beyond our own wooded knolls and glens, and the green fringes of the numerous brooks—I see only two refreshing spots to rest the eye upon, the dry-season gardens attached to the country residences of two colonial gentlemen. There a silvery stream, shaded with bowery fruit-trees, winds its way through plots of dark-coloured earth dotted over with green vegetables; contrasting strongly with the unweeded and riotous luxuriance of the garden-patches round the innumerable grass-thatched huts in the vicinity. These neat and pretty villas, with their white painted exteriors, relieved by bright green window-shoots, with an occasional *picking out* of yellow, and surrounded by a rich profusion of the rarest and most ornamental exotic plants and trees, are always here called "farms," though all the crops cultivated in their adjoining grounds may be but a few rows of the round-topped, formal coffee-bush; or the cotton-shrub, with its saffron-coloured,

cistus-like flower, and green seed-pod sheltering its downy riches.

A solitary cotton-plant flourishes amongst the choked-up trees on Mount Oriel. Previously to becoming ripe and brown, the husk is hard and green. I foolishly cut open one of them lately with a penknife, and found that the watery fibrous substance within—and which is dry cotton when the pod opens—stained my fingers with an ugly burnt-umber sort of shade, that the continued bathing of them in lime-juice, after I had in vain tried plain water, would scarcely remove.

I find the old house on our sister hill is not the only ruined habitation in our view. On the slope of one of the hills of the Wilberforce range, and quite in a lonely locality, stand four roofless whitened walls in the midst of a thick grove of orange and shaddock trees, and through the glass I can see that these are all that is left of what apparently was formerly a country-seat, like the two I have just mentioned as looking so neat and nice in their pretty garden-grounds. There is something melancholy in house and land together in this climate falling into decay and desolation on the death or departure of their owner.

Like the others, our mountain residence is also denominated a “farm,” though there is nothing farm-like about it. A place less adapted for agricultural purposes can hardly exist; as the coffee, ever since we came up here, has been entirely left to itself, only a few of the bushes, which owing to their situation by the sides of the walks had obtained a sort of *random* pruning or rather lopping, have borne this season, and of that, by far the greater part has been left to the birds. When, therefore, I speak of farm-men or labourers, you must understand these are merely people whose sole employment is cutting wood for fuel, carrying water, weeding the garden, keeping the walks, &c. near the house free of bush, or, as at this time of the year, cutting down the long grass that had sprung up during the “rains,” on the comparatively cleared spots on the hill; rank vegetable matter growing close to one’s abode being considered highly injurious to health in this country, besides the risk it is exposed to, when dry and parched by the influence of the harmattan, of being set on fire, which will not spread amongst the ever-green

and leafy coffee-trees, so long as the surface of the earth underneath them is kept clear. They are thus a sort of safeguard to the house itself.

21st.—I observed this morning, stealthily hopping about behind a young lime-hedge near the house, a bird with brownish-red wings and tail, and slate-coloured head and breast, but remarkable from its eye being in the centre of a long and arched white mark that gives it a peculiarly odd *espiègle* expression. It is about the size of a thrush, and rather clumsily formed. We call it the "Spectacle-bird," and I have watched it for a long time, and think it appears a most unsocial and greedily-disposed creature, for as soon as it seizes upon something to eat, it hurries off the precious morsel, to devour it at leisure in a corner.

Those gay warblers to which I have given the name of "sky-birds" from their graceful movements while on the wing, reminding me of the soaring flight of the lark, have also the same kind of almond-shaped outline round their eyes. There is another bird in shape and hue, with the exception of some black and white feathers, not unlike the "spectacle-bird." It is as large as a magpie, and never ventures near the house, although its shrill distinct cry of "Hoot-hoot! hoot-hoot!" which has obtained for it the title, amongst Europeans here, of the "Scotchman," is continually heard resounding in the "bush."

29th.—A few days of constant sea-breeze have cleared the atmosphere so much, that this morning Leopard's Island was once more displayed to my watchful gaze; while in the afternoon the view from the adjoining hill of Tagrin Point, the islands of Bunce and Tasso, with several others shining out in the calm light of a declining sun, appeared lovely beyond comparison, after having been so long veiled by a harmattan fog. I felt quite invigorated by a brisk canter across the level ground on the summit, the sea-breeze, too, being so soft and refreshing after such an uninterrupted reign of the harsh land-wind; while the sight of a merchant-vessel coming in under full sail, with the union-jack flying from her mast-head, added to the interest and cheerfulness of the scene by the anticipations it raised of receiving home letters.

LETTER XII.

Method of watering Garden — European Vegetables in African Soil — Sorrel Beer — Black Cooks — Negro Patois — Sweet Potatoes — Marketing Troubles — Fishing Boats — News of the Niger Expedition — Fanning Rice — Burnt Trunks of gigantic Trees — Malaguetta Pepper and other Plants — Green Locusts — Chameleons — Snails.

THE garden has not suffered much from the hot dry weather, as, independent of the daily service of watering-pots, it obtains a constant supply of water from a higher part of the brook, conveyed through very thick bamboos, which, although split, answer the purpose of leaden pipes most admirably. Each vegetable plat is raised, and the divisions between them, where water-cresses flourish nicely, are kept like running streams by means of this bamboo aqueduct, whose contents are turned off and on as occasion requires.

Parsley, thyme, sweet marjoram, mint, and sage thrive down here. We have also French beans and salad in abundance. But out of all the other seeds sown, we have only as yet been able to obtain a few meagre heads of celery, one small dish of green peas, two turnips hardly bigger than potato apples, and about half a dozen stringy, taper roots, which from their leaf and colour alone are entitled to the name of carrots. However, we have some most luxuriant tomatoes; and both cauliflowers and Brussels sprouts having come up, though they have not flourished, we hope for better things next season.

Among several native productions which have been left in the garden by the labourers, when weeding and cleaning, is a species of mallow,* the leaf of which is used as a *soup* vegetable by the blacks. The flower is yellow, and very small; but from the calyxes and capsules, which are of a fleshy nature, and (when the seed is ripe) become of a deep red hue, a very pleasant acid drink is prepared. It is of a beautiful transparent

* *Hibiscus Sabdariffa*.

pink, and on being poured out sparkles like champagne. Ginger and sugar are added in making, and it is much used as a refreshing beverage in fevers. What I have seen was sent us by a friend, but it is likewise to be bought in the market under the name of "sorrel beer."

The negroes seem to think that a vegetable is eatable only when made into soup. The broad heart-shaped leaf which we dress like spinach, they serve up to themselves swimming in the water where it was boiled, and which they eat with it. There are two kinds of this plant, one being more palatable than the other, and it they distinguish by the name of "English coco," though I am sure none of it has ever yet appeared in England. Not long after coming to this country, we happened to get some green peas, which I gave out to the cook to have plainly boiled for dinner. Fancy my surprise, when dinner-time came, to find the anticipated dish metamorphosed into a very thin soup-maigre and sent up in a tureen. We were much amused at the man's mistake, and I found it rather difficult to make him comprehend that we did not like *soup* made without meat or stock of any kind. He was a new-comer, and having evidently not understood my directions, thought it better to follow his own approved fashion, than condescend to say "no been savey what missis say."

I remember my wise reflections on hearing a European lady talk "country fashion" to a black servant one day very shortly after my arrival, and my mental resolve that *I* would never profane my mother tongue by adopting so extraordinary a mode of speech; nay, I was even so uncharitable in my ignorance as to think it slightly bordered on affectation, patronizing and using this most inelegant and unintelligible language; and was quite as ridiculous as if an Englishwoman were to deem it incumbent upon her, when visiting Scotland or Ireland, to learn to speak in the broad dialect and harsh accent of either of those countries. But necessity has gradually taught me to think very differently, and I now give my household orders with perfect fluency, in a patois that would certainly puzzle both a linguist and grammarian.

But to return to the vegetable kingdom. To the Freetown market we are indebted for yams, country spinach, okras, and shalots; with any sort of fruit excepting oranges, which our own

trees yield us most munificently. Guavas too and pine-apples we have in abundance, but the blacks appropriate the former, and the monkeys the latter to their own use. A man who has got leave to plant a large piece of ground near the brook, at the Rose-apple Glen, supplies us, at his own prices, with nice freshly-dug cassada (a favourite vegetable of mine, though despised by most Europeans), and sweet potatoes,* roots but very little approximating in appearance, and still less in taste, to those from which they are named, being more the shape of large pears, buff-coloured, and when broken in their raw state, giving out a glutinous milk-white juice. Boiled, they are as sweet as common potatoes would be if mashed up with sugar. The plant itself trails along the ground, and a patch of it in bloom quite embellishes the usually flowerless negro-gardens.

Partly from a fear that their own domiciles may be robbed during the night, and partly because they consider this situation so very lonely, some of our servants manifest great reluctance to remain, save in the daytime. We therefore divide them into two sets, which are allowed to go to town by turns every second evening at six o'clock, a more convenient time to give directions for market than at five o'clock in the morning. But this indulgence does not bring the market-man up a minute earlier next day. "Please, ma'am, no beef been *live* in market until *so* late;" "Bread no go oven till past seven o'clock;" "Too soon for catch fruit dis morning," are every-day excuses, rendering it fortunate that we have not to depend for breakfast upon anything to be brought up then. Indeed, we very seldom patronize the Sierra Leone bakers at all, as their bread is especially bad, and commonly flavoured with some outlandish herb or other; while the leaven used instead of yeast, is almost always sour. The home-made bread I have seen here, I thought no better than that to be bought. The climate renders it impossible to superintend anything of the kind oneself, unless it be now and then, perhaps, such trifles as cake and pastry; and even these you generally receive from the oven burnt or otherwise spoiled. Excellent hard biscuit is, however, brought to the colony by American traders, and we also have it sent out from England. The market is well supplied with fish—mackerel (which, though

* *Convolvulus Batatas*.

larger and coarser than that caught on the English coast, is yet very good); soles, mullet, snapper, not unlike in its bright colours and shape a very gigantic gold-fish, and barra-couta, a grand looking and richly tasted fish, those I have seen being larger than most salmon. In the West Indies, where it is also common, the barra-couta is said to be poisonous at particular seasons, but I have never heard of its being considered so at any time here. Enormous oysters are found on the Carpenter Rock, and I am told that the twisted stems and branches of the mangroves in the creeks and rivers are thickly crusted over with a much more delicate oyster. Most of those I have seen were in clusters of two or three together, the shells having thus quite a different appearance from ours. The river also abounds in cray-fish, shrimps, and many others boasting of such names as "old wives," "jumping-fish," and "gropers," but of these I cannot speak from observation; while sometimes the cook brings up a very nice sort of flat-fish whose name I do not know. The remora is plentiful, and is actually eaten by the negroes, who also cure great quantities of a tiny fish, appropriately called minnows.

I sometimes count so many as thirty fishing-boats coming in at once of an afternoon, their white sails looking like wings expanded in the sea-breeze, and altogether conveying the idea of a fleet of colossal butterflies skimming on the surface of the waves.

From time to time we have had deplorable accounts of the Niger Expedition. Besides the many who have fallen victims to the climate, one gentleman has been, it is supposed, treacherously murdered by the natives. He had gone down the river for change of air, on account of his health; and in returning met with a large canoe, in which he was induced to embark; the people by whom it was manned agreeing to take him to Brass Town, but since that hour he has neither been heard of nor seen.

18th.—I have been attending to some domestic matters of a novel character to-day. As a very great quantity of rice is consumed in the household, we have laid in a large stock, which, previously to being stowed away, required to be nicely sifted. As the huge bags were brought up in the morning, they were emptied in heaps upon clean grass-mats spread out under the orange-trees. The servants, provided with round bamboo fan-

ners, then set to work as if winnowing grain ; their tall swarthy figures, in their chequered robes, enveloped in clouds of white dust—the sight of cocoa and other palms, with bright birds flitting among their branches—the hordes of gay-coloured lizards that kept boldly helping themselves from the edge of each heap, quite reminding me of an Oriental picture.

The country at present looks very bare and parched-up, besides being in many places black from “bush-burnings”—a most untidy way of clearing land. Here is none of that neatness which marks cultivation in our own country. The blackened stumps of trees are left standing amongst the maize, ginger, and sugar-cane ; and the large boughs, that have not been consumed by fire, being allowed to remain where they fell, give a still more slovenly look to the cleared patches of farm-ground. The trunk of an immense tree, to which the natives have repeatedly set fire, lies prostrate in a part of our bush I managed to reach one day. It is quite hollow, and would make an excellent shelter from rain—nay, a negro family might almost contrive to live in it, as, in spite of being hacked, hewn, and burnt outside, it is still considerably above five feet in diameter. Still, in spite of such curiosities, and all the tropic exuberance of “bush,” I should think a broad belt of dark brown furrows, straight and regularly defined, to the utter exclusion of all graceful curves ; or a single wheat-field, though ever so limited, with but a hawthorn-hedge round it, quite a relief to look at, amidst the wild and neglected aspect of even the *cultivation* of this place.

I have often noticed growing close out from the roots of trees, clusters of crimson pods, evidently the seeds of a plant whose reed-like branches, a yard or two in length, bending across the pathway, show themselves to be clothed with opposite alternate leaves, much in the same manner as a palm-bough. Observing that these pods were always gathered by our attendants, I had some brought to me, and found they contained rows upon rows of small black seeds closely packed in a fibrous pulp with an agreeable, acid, black currant sort of taste, and an aromatic smell. This plant is a kind of Malaguetta pepper,* and these seeds are the famous “grains of paradise.”

A low bushy shrub, that in its small bright glossy leaves

* *Amomum* — ?

reminds me of both the myrtle and box, greatly adorns the craggy face of our hill. Its flowers, taken alone, are unpretending little pea-blossoms of white and lilac mixed; but though growing singly, are placed so close to each other on the spray as to have quite an ornamental appearance. These produce very pretty berries of the brightest orange-colour, and divided into three compartments, each of which contains one flat seed wrapped in a downy coat. They are about the size of small cherries, and have rather a sweet taste; and are esteemed by the blacks as very good to eat.

But there are less charming natural objects abroad just now. On riding over to Mount Oriel the sound of the locusts skipping about amongst the cassada is like that of the pattering of rain upon leaves. These insects, when full-grown, have small green upper wings, heads handsomely variegated in bars and chequers of red, green, black, and yellow, that remind one of mosaic-work, shoulder-plates of greenish yellow, great eyes like spots of red sealing-wax, and two long feelers. One gigantic species we call the "Monarch locust" is altogether green, with the exception of the yellow armour across its shoulders, but its under wings are of light scarlet, shading into green at the tips, and regularly spotted with black. The wings of the young insect are not visible, and its dorsal shield is black and yellow striped. They have four short fore-legs, and two hinder ones, the latter being well armed with spines up to the first joint.

Since the dry season set in I sometimes observe chameleons slowly moving along the orange-tree branches, quickening their pace on perceiving they are looked at, and hiding amongst the foliage, where it is scarcely possible to distinguish them from the leaves themselves. The usual colour of the chameleon is a vivid green, which, according to the hue of the object on which the animal is placed, changes to light or dark, yellowish or olive, occasionally intermixed with nearly black spots. Its skin is elastic, and the creature has the singular power of puffing itself out, or contracting its body until it is quite flat. You would fancy it lived upon air, did you not perceive its food to be small flies and such insects, which it entraps by means of stretching out its long tongue. Unlike the bold-faced nimble little lizards, the chameleons (which are of various sizes) are shy, frightened things,

particularly slow and solemn in their movements; while the strangeness of their appearance is heightened by the peculiar form of the eye, which, set as it were in the centre of a convex circle which turns with the pupil, can look up and down, backwards, forwards, or sideways, the head at the same time remaining quite stationary. The black people are afraid of this species of the lizard tribe, and fancy it can put out your eye by spitting into it. My little Aku handmaiden cannot conceal her alarm and disgust on seeing me take a chameleon into my hand.

M—— had a tame one at a house where he formerly lived, and where there was a great fixed bath that used to attract hordes of mosquitoes, against which the chameleon waged deadly war, and thus made itself more useful than “pets” commonly are.

I saw a giant *snail* the other day: it was black, and really seemed to me to be very nearly a quarter of a yard in length, and proportionably thick. The shell of this sort of snail is pointed, instead of being rounded at the end, and many of them are above four inches in circumference.

A few days ago I noticed, growing at the side of the road along which we were riding, a branch of what I fancied, from its apricot appearance, must be a fine sort of tropic fruit, and bid one of the horsemen break it off and bring it to me, which he did, assuring us at the same time it was a deadly poison. Though at a distance it seemed to have quite a peachy bloom, I found on a nearer view that its bright yellow rind was covered with spines. Inside it contained a pulp more tempting to look at than most of the bush fruits, and as full of small seeds as a gooseberry.

And such productions, with their gorgeous colours, strange forms, and altogether unfamiliar aspect, insignificant as they may appear in themselves, yet greatly contribute to the *whole* that here reminds a European eye it gazes on the vegetation of the torrid zone. Except roses, and wood-sorrel (which grows richly at the base of our old tamarind-tree), there are no familiar flowers and plants of any sort here. I saw lately a slight-stemmed tall weed, with a flower exactly like groundsel, only it was pink instead of yellow; and you may be sure I hailed it as an old friend, and my thoughts winged back to the days that we used to gather our pinafores full of groundsel for our tame rabbits.

LETTER XIII.

Fires in Freetown — Bush Burnings — African Cows — Goats — Squirrels
— Monkeys — Bush Cats.

March 16.

THERE has been a great fire in the outskirts of Freetown lately. Happily, no lives were lost, but it is said that 1500*l.* worth of property was destroyed ; and when you remember, the buildings burnt were either mere wooden frames, or mud and wicker-work huts, the furniture, too, but of a very rude description, you can imagine how very many poor families have suffered. The fire, which broke out in the night, is said to have originated in the dwelling of a man whose employment is that of curing fish, which, when salted and dried, forms a favourite article of food amongst the blacks here. A party of soldiers were sent to the spot immediately on the alarm being given, but some of the sufferers complain that they lost as much, by the property they contrived to save being stolen in the alarm and confusion, as they did by the fire itself.

A few days afterwards there was another fire, in a street bordering one of these arid-looking grass-fields. With the glass I could see the whole scene distinctly. There was a strong sea-breeze, which caused the flames to rush with inconceivable rapidity, one hut after another blazing up like a heap of flax, and vanishing before the eyes. Some persons tore the thatch from the roofs of these fragile structures, the combustible nature of which, added to the extreme dryness of everything, and the want of engines to convey water, render a fire at this season in Freetown a most serious event indeed. Others of the people, again, ran for fresh green boughs, breaking down the branches of even their few fruit-trees, and with these beat the roofs and wattled walls of their huts. Women hastily conveyed their country tables and chairs, with baskets, calabash vessels, and articles of clothing into the street. I could even hear, rising above the hurried ringing of the fire-bell, the screams of children, the vociferations

of the crowd, and the barking and yelping of dozens of the half-starved dogs which infest the town and its suburbs. One or two European gentlemen had galloped to the place, and evidently by their orders some of the huts were pulled completely down, thus leaving a wide gap, by which means the progress of the flames was at last stayed.

Considering the risk to which houses are exposed by the burning of bush in their vicinity, it is quite astonishing to me that fires occur so seldom here as they do. In clearing for purposes of cultivation, the natives cut down the young trees, and, with the exception of those taken for fences or huts, leave them lying on the ground, until perfectly dry, when they are set on fire, their ashes serving as manure. But the blacks also very often set fire to the standing underwood and tall thick grass, for the purpose of scaring away snakes, or oftener to seize upon the game the flames dislodge from its hiding-place, and I have little patience with such wholesale burnings. Flocks of doves, and other feathered favourites of mine, are to be seen slowly flying about with drooping wings in the smoke of these fires, while countless numbers of hawks hover above on the watch for the poor half-stupified and bewildered birds. Then the brown and scorched track left by the fierce element is particularly unsightly amongst the surrounding verdure; and it is provoking to know that trees, which might in time have become valuable for their fruit or other properties, are recklessly destroyed in the general conflagration, as the natives take no heed about the matter. Palms and young timber share the same fate as the most ignoble bush, and no farther away than Mount Oriel a multitude of blackened stems are all that is left of a large plantation of guava-trees that have been burnt, with many others of an equally useful nature and far more ornamental aspect.

It is only at night that I can contemplate a "bush" fire with any satisfactory feelings, and then it forms quite a characteristic feature in the darkened landscape. One evening I could have fancied that a stately building had suddenly started into existence on one of the hills towards Wilberforce,* twelve large stationary lights, that in their regularity of disposal resembled as many illuminated windows, marking where some decayed stumps, or

* A village on a hill near the Signal Station.

dry thickets, continued to burn after the grass, in which they stood, had been reduced to ashes.

We have now had a month of delightful sea-breezy weather, varied, however, upon the nights of the 27th ult. and 1st inst. by *dry* tornadoes, with beautifully vivid lightning out at sea, but I heard no thunder. It is three months to-day since a drop of rain fell here, and the country looks very brown and bare, both from the effects of drought and the constant "bush burnings." The ugly green locusts, too, continue to skip about, so that we have little chance of any *green* herb or blade, until heavy rain has drowned these unwelcome annual visitants.

I have been attempting to set up a dairy, M—— having bought two cows lately; but one of them seems to have no milk to give, and the other, a very prettily-spotted creature, is so cross, that there is no getting any of our people to milk her. It strikes me too, that they rather think it beneath a black man's dignity to handle a milk-pail. The calf trots about with its mother, and has several times taken it into its head to run away, followed, of course, by the old cow, the cowherd scampering after them, and one black supernumerary after another bringing up the rear, until *all* the servants and workpeople are half-way down the hill. Then the unreasonable quadruped, on being caught, rebels most strenuously, and having once succeeded in dragging the person courageous enough to keep hold of the rope attached to her horns, into the heart of the bush on a steep part of the hill-side, whoever performs the exploit of seizing her thinks himself as bold as if he had taken a lion alive. Tired of a cow-hunt every day, she has been tied up under the trees with a rope long enough to give her enough of liberty to graze quietly; but her constant bellowing is so wild and unpleasant, that I shall be quite content in future with my tame and gentle goats, the milk of which, too, is so much richer than that yielded by the cows of this country. Besides these and our horses, some poultry, and a tame *cat*, form all our domestic live stock, though we have more of a different denomination on the "farm." Bush-cats prowl about of a morning, and often succeed in destroying our chickens, while not only have we beautiful little green squirrels, but several different kinds of monkeys in the "bush." Our hill is indeed a complete preserve for monkeys, which are be-

coming scarce elsewhere in the vicinity, owing to the ruthless clearing and burning of every thing in the shape of wood. I often watch them from the windows springing from tree to tree, climbing up and down the trunks, and shaking the branches, while one seems always to be set quietly by itself to watch, and if disturbed by any person approaching, immediately gives notice to the others by a single hoarse bark, or rather guttural sort of quack, repeated several times. Some monkey-skins brought here for sale were of a deep glossy black with a flowing mane covering the upper part of the shoulders, and I believe the animal from which these are obtained is found higher up in the mountains here. The Mangrove monkey has a pretty fur of greenish grey, except on the neck and breast, which are paler, and its hands and feet, as well as its face, are of a dark purple slate-colour, almost black. I have seen several tame ones of this species, but do not think it is a denizen of our "bush."

One bush-cat we have here is called "atta" by the blacks. It has a brown fur with a tinge of green in it, a long tapering nose, sharp ferret-like eyes, and ears like those of a rat. It has a very long tail, and is a slenderly made creature like a weasel, possessing also the same propensities. The other bush-cat is much larger, and is of a reddish yellow colour.

LETTER XIV.

Attack of Climate Fever — Black Nurse — Indolence of Settlers — Wild Country Ride — A Native Farm — Bush Thieves — Anecdote.

May 9.

UPON the very day that my last letter to you was ended, I was seized with country fever, which confined me to bed for twenty days, and I had scarcely gained strength enough to move from one room to another, when my little boy was taken ill of ague, from which most enfeebling malady he has suffered severely, poor child! But as he is now recovering, and I, although still weak and unfit for much exertion, have, at last, safely got over the *seasoning* fever, you have no reason to feel uneasy on our account.

There is something inexpressibly solemn and affecting connected with illness in a country so uncivilized and remote as this. Instead of the numerous members of a family, or benevolently-disposed friends—who, in one's own land, hasten to join in each anxious vigil by a sick bed, to lessen the cares of the sorrowing, as well as soothe the anguish of the sufferer—there is in most cases here no person save the hired nurse to tend you. In a few others, only one sympathizing heart to bear all the agony of apprehension, only one friend to undergo all the fatigue of watching; while the trouble of mind and weariness of body, everywhere, and in every station of life, in *some* degree inseparable from the abode of sickness, is increased tenfold in a place where at times gold can avail as little as affection in procuring the most trifling and common-place comfort. Instead of the many old and tried domestics of a home household, who feel a kind of pride, besides an interest, in ministering to your every want, so far as their humble abilities permit; there is here but the mercenary attendance of persons of another race, whose habits and manners are as strangely dissimilar to what you have been accustomed, as is their personal appearance; and who

cannot be expected to care whether you live or die; to whom, indeed, you are nothing, except in how far you can remunerate their services.

Then there are the savage noises during both night and day: the incessant beating of tom-toms and Mandingo kettle-drums, the firing of muskets, the shouting and singing of the black population, mingled with the yelping, howling, and squealing of a horde of half-starved dogs and pigs; all which convey but too truly to your mind the remembrance that your *home* is indeed on a foreign shore.

Even my nurse was surprised at the distinctness with which these wild sounds ascended to our dwelling, and launched out rather bitterly against the idle and evil-disposed of the liberated Africans, to whom alone (though I believe both Maroons and settlers themselves have their share in it) she ascribed this never-ceasing tumult.

How the din of native drums, and the discordant nightly clamour of human voices, to which in hours of health I had only given an amused thought, grated upon my ear, and seemed to pierce into my very brain, during the sleepless nights of tropic fever!

And I have now no doubt that such disturbances have, in more instances than one, contributed to render fatal the climatorial attack, that with quiet and rest, in all human probability, might have been subdued. There was a pleasant lulling sound in the monotonous hum of the crickets and other insects, that I wished in vain might drown the louder and more unwelcome noises of drums and dogs, and dismal singing of the natives.

But if *I* regarded these midnight sounds as an annoyance when so far removed from their immediate vicinity, to what must the sufferers in town be subjected? I am indeed convinced that the mortality of this place arises not solely from the unhealthiness of the climate, but from the privations consequent upon its situation, and the discomforts to which refined and civilized persons are exposed, by the customs of its ignorant, coarse, and barbarous inhabitants.

You must not, however, allow my grumbling to render you uneasy about us. If the vision of Death on the pale horse is more frequent in this country,—here, as elsewhere, he strikes

only at God's bidding,—in whose hands we are. And you may be the less anxious, when you remember that we live in the healthiest situation in all the colony. Had I had so very violent an attack of fever in town, I doubt, humanly speaking, there would have been little chance of my life. But here the air is comparatively purer, and the atmosphere several degrees cooler than down in the plain below.

The nurse who attended me, and who, as she moved about in her high-peaked head-dress, by the shaded light of the apartment seemed the very personification of one of the witches in *Macbeth*, was pre-eminently superior in intelligence and manner to any of the sable-complexioned community I have yet seen. She was a Settler, had, like the rest of them, a little money, and was a most unwearied, though not unwearying talker, giving me occasionally outlines of histories that seemed to possess incident for either tragedy or novel. Sometimes she spoke, and spoke well, on religious subjects; and now and then she ventured upon an admonition, that amused me:—"Now, marm, if you do not take care, you will get a *delapse*, and den no noting at all vill save you."

She evidently thought that in coming to such an out-of-the-way situation as this, where she could have few to gossip with, and none to look at except the work-people and servants, she had performed a most heroic and meritorious action; and when I requested her to remain a few days longer, most pathetically advanced as a reason why so great a sacrifice was impossible, that really being always accustomed in her own house to sleep on a feather-bed, her bones ached with a fortnight's lodging on a mattress. The idea of a feather-bed in this climate was certainly a very novel one to me. There was a flying shower of rain one day which quite alarmed her, for a cause I give to you as showing something of the character of the Settlers in general. She said that if she herself were absent from her home during the first tornado of the dry season, every thing in the house would be destroyed, as the roof leaked; and although she had several grown-up daughters, they were too indolent not only to dry up the water, but even to set a basin to catch it as it fell. She added that all the work of her little ménage devolved upon herself and her liberated African apprentice.

In my observations upon the serious evil she did her children by permitting them to indulge in such slothful habits, she seemed to acquiesce; but all she said proved most truly, that to the unconquerable repugnance of the younger Settlers to engage in any employment apparently menial, or that requires the slightest exertion, and to the pride or weak good nature of the older people who encourage this feeling, may be traced their degeneracy in every respect from what they originally were as a body. Why the roof of her house should have been in so insufficient a state when one of her sons professes to be a carpenter, I did not inquire, after the very displeasing account she gave of the rest of her family.

One of the first times I was able to go out after my illness, we rode along the brow of the hill behind Mount Oriel, looking down on one hand to the gorge through which our brook flows, and beyond that again to the wood-crowned hill above our own. Amidst the wild and bleak aspect of these mountains, with their few cleared spots planted with cassada, huge skeletons of trees standing erect, and many others lying half burned and still smouldering away on the scorched and blackened ground, I was agreeably surprised by the sight of a large hut, wattled and mud-plastered, with a few humble outbuildings of the same description peeping up from the glen, being situated on the verge of the water, and surrounded by a more extensive and better kept native farm than I have yet seen. Pigs, goats, and sheep too were there, whose cries, with those of several kinds of poultry echoing among the silence and solitude that reigned around, actually conveyed an idea of rural civilized life, and gave me quite a favourable opinion of their owner. He is a liberated African, to whom M—— gave permission to plant part of our ground in that direction, on condition it was to be cleared otherwise than by burning, and provided the man did not cut down the few living forest-trees that still remain in our "bush;" although at liberty to take as much fuel as he likes from the seemingly inexhaustible supply in the shape of dead though not decayed trees, which stand pointing with their leafless branches to the spoliation around, or lie prostrate among the underwood. The industrious occupant of the Glen farm, as I call this (for Africa) tidy homestead, now and then brings us some

token of his good-will, such as a basket of cassada, a few roots of coco, or a great quantity of firewood, which he doubtless considers as a sort of acknowledgment to the lord of the manor.

He is very useful in keeping off trespassers from our wild pleasure-grounds near his dwelling. Ever since coming up here we have been subject to the depredations of a peculiar class of vagabonds, known in the colony by the name of "bush thieves," who are sometimes newly emancipated slaves, run away before their short term of service at Government work is completed; but more commonly liberated long ago and comfortably settled down on their allotted pieces of ground, but who find it much more agreeable to steal than to work. These people come into the bush and cut down whole loads of the straightest young trees to sell in the market for posts to huts, wattles, &c., set fire to the base of any ancient forest-tree that still stands, and after a tornado has in due time sent the stately trunk crashing to the earth, the thief watches his opportunity, and comes sometimes by moonlight, but oftener during the day, and from this fallen piece of timber continues to provide himself with logs, which he generally carries off whole, but occasionally remains to split into faggots for sale.

They also think nothing of setting fire to the young trees on another person's property, and planting the spot thus cleared with country vegetables of some sort or other; making at the same time tracks through the bush, where they prowl about looking for anything to steal, and laying snares for deer and monkeys.

I have no sympathy with such plunderers, because they destroy a great deal more than what they even carry off. The entire wide range of hills here still abound in timber for fuel, and the Sugar-loaf Mountain, were there no other place nearer, is covered with green wood fit for every imaginable purpose: therefore I cannot see why all the "bush thieves" in the vicinity should, out of laziness to walk a little farther (for of time they do not appear to know the value, or they would not as they do spend so much of it in dancing and idleness), always commit their depredations on our limited shelter for men and monkeys. Our plan has always been to bring the aggressor up to the house, and find out, if possible, by inquiry into his circumstances,

whether he be trespassing through ignorance or design, whether he be stealing for himself, or is merely an apprentice (as is often the case) sent out on the same mission by a hard negro task-master. Of course we wage no war against any really poor people who may come with their "blys" to pick up dry sticks; but when carpenters, soldiers, and barrack labourers, as well as the less respectable sort of bush thieves, do not scruple to obtain supplies of wood from our doomed "bush," such a system requires to be kept in check. Accordingly all who cannot give a satisfactory account of their proceedings are either marched back to their employers, as the case may be—dismissed with a friendly warning or admonition—or, if the inroad made be very flagrant, and the culprit have offered battle to those sent to seize him—handed over to the police office.

The Mandingo portion of these vagabonds are the worst, and they have more than once drawn their long knives, and threatened the first person who attempted to hinder them from prowling about at their pleasure and taking what wood they wanted. But in general, as soon as our servants or work-people come within sight, the thief takes to his heels, leaving both wood and weapon for felling it behind him. The instrument they use is a clumsy axe fixed in a rude wooden handle, instead of having, like an English hatchet, the handle fixed into it. "Axe" is one of the words it is impossible to teach the blacks to pronounce properly; they say "akkis," and in the same way call a *box* a "bokkis." In chopping wood they also use a huge unwieldy iron tool termed here a "cutlass," and which is not unlike a hedging-bill of the roughest and coarsest manufacture. On being brought up and accused of "bush-trespassing," their excuse is commonly, "Please, massa, me no been savey dat wood I been cut belong for *you*!" To which the usual reply is "Well! but you savey good he no belong for you yourself! What for then you go cut some tother man's trees?" To this unanswerable query, a humble apology and many a reiterated vow of never again offending in like manner is made, and the culprit set at liberty; but perhaps the very next "bush thief" that may be caught hacking and hewing in the depths of the ravine is the identical individual who, having been so profuse in his promises and excuses, was let off so easily a couple of days before!

One day at an hour when all the work-people were within view, the stealthy sound of wood-chopping indicated the employment of an unauthorized hand, and a careful attention soon directed the eye to a place where a man was committing sad havoc among the bush, cutting down, and piling into bundles, some of the very finest young trees. An Aku servant being despatched to summon the intruder, M—— with spyglass in hand watched the scene, and was rather surprised to see his domestic shake hands with the stranger, hold a long and evidently friendly *palaver* with him, assisting him at the same time to make off with his burthen of fine straight sticks. On returning to the house, he gravely informed his master that “ dat teef been strong too much,” and had run away before he himself reached the spot. M—— at once asked how he could tell so great an untruth, and then stated to him all that had taken place in the “ bush.” Quite unaware of how “ massa ” had become possessed of the real facts of the case, the man was utterly confounded and alarmed, attributing the extraordinary circumstance to a knowledge of magic ; and in the most abject manner possible entreated for pardon, on the plea that “ dat teef,” being an Aku, was a countryman of his.

LETTER XV.

Prevalence of Ill-health in the Household — Attempts at Housebreaking —
Mangoes — Magnificent Moth.

June 5.

I REGRET I cannot send you very cheering accounts as to health; we each and all suffer much from the effects of climate. A home trip is recommended for my little boy and myself, but I greatly shrink from it.

* * * * *

July.—Illness still prevails amongst us, and I grieve to say M—— is the chief sufferer now. This is the season of ague and every complaint incident to a tropical climate. Dismal fogs brood over the hills, and there are many days that one cannot obtain even five fair minutes to snatch a little out-of-door exercise.

I have nothing new to tell you, except that one stormy night an attempt was made to break into the house, by cutting two panes out of the hall door. I had for some time heard a stealthy sound, as of some one gently turning the handle, but at last was roused by the crash of glass. An immediate search was instituted, but excepting the weapon which had been used, no trace of the thief could be found. He had evidently hoped, after getting in his hand at the broken pane, to unlock the door and to obtain an easy entrance. But he would have been frustrated there, as besides the lock, we have the door further secured by a padlock, and I take both keys into my own custody every night. We have now discarded the glass door for a more substantial wooden one. Government House was broken into about the same time by means of a ladder of split bamboo and country rope which the negroes can construct in a few minutes; but they could not, after entering by a window, penetrate further than the verandah, and all their booty was a mail bag of despatches.

Thieves here commonly choose tornado nights for their opera-

tions, as they fancy that the increased coolness of the air causes every person to sleep more soundly than at any other time. Since that housebreaking endeavour on our quiet hill, I confess I do not feel quite so courageous as before, and indeed would be rather frightened, when M—— is in town, notwithstanding the broad daylight and host of servants, were it not for the companionship of a loaded gun in a snug corner of the piazza; and once, when a band of wild-looking Mandingo hunters with their dogs (having evidently first watched M—— fairly off) thought proper to make a right of way almost beneath the very windows, I desired one of our people to go to them with a threatening message, although my warlike demonstrations are simply made, with no other weapon than a very heavy spy-glass, that, at a distance, no doubt looks like a musket.

Our mango-trees have borne plentifully this season. Their pendulous clusters of pale blossoms, though less rich in appearance, remind me of those of the Spanish chestnut-tree. The fruit varies in size upon different trees, but is usually about twice as large as a magnum-bonum plum, of a somewhat oblong shape, not unlike that of a kidney potato—has a firm leathery rind, green when young, but of a beautiful yellow when quite ripe. It consists of a juicy pulp with a slightly turpentine flavour, surrounding a large stone, which you have no doubt seen in those in a pickled state. Hanging in bunches of three, eight, ten, and twelve, upon a single twig, this fruit looks particularly luxuriant and beautiful. At first I did not at all like it, but now think the mango one of the finest of our tropical productions.

A magnificent moth, measuring fully six and a half inches across the wings, has just been brought in. It is all of a rich dark-brown colour, with the exception, upon each of the hinder wings, which are also barred with white, of a large eye-like spot, with a brown centre surrounded first by a circle of black, then of crimson, and lastly a white one. But the peculiarity of this fine insect is that when lying flat with its head towards you, it exactly represents the face of a cat; the head of the moth being like the cat's nose, and the spots the eyes, even partaking of the same sly grimalkin expression.

LETTER XVI.

Change of Climate recommended — Gloom of the Weather during the Rainy and Tornado Seasons — Difficulty of getting a fresh stock of Work-box Indispensables — Set about making Little Shoes — Reluctance of Sempstresses to ascend the Hill.

October 12.

AT last all my terror and anxiety consequent upon M——'s long-continued and severe indisposition are abated, and there is a prospect of our all living to follow the repeated urgent recommendations of our medical adviser, to return to Europe, so soon as the public duty (which has been doubly arduous ever since poor Mr. ——'s death) admits of M——'s quitting his post in this most insidiously destructive climate. O what an effect the state of one's own mind has upon every external object! Last year even the "rains" had their positive charms; the novelty, the rapid change on the face of the country, with the insects, birds, and flowers, formed a source of constant interest and amusement to me; whilst of the present I have actually noticed only that which was unpleasant or disagreeable. Yet I think it has, independently of my fancy, been more wet and stormy this season than it was the last; for although my thoughts have been too much pre-occupied by anxieties to allow of my writing anything that deserved the name of a letter, I kept a journal of the mere weather, an abstract from which will give you some idea of what it has been for four months past.

By the 12th of June the rains appeared to be fairly set in, and the country looked green and beautiful. On the two succeeding nights were heavy tornadoes, in one of which several tall forest-trees in different places were rooted up by the violence of the storm. During the remaining fortnight of that month we had thunderstorms, rain, and fog, with a few glimpses of sunshine, admitting of an occasional short walk or ride.

The first day of July, that bright summer month of home, dawned cold, wet, and gloomy. Heavy showers succeeded each

other throughout the second, on the evening of which the shock of an earthquake was said to have been heard by some of our friends in Freetown. The third and fourth were finer, but from then until the 31st we had only seven tolerably fair days; the rest being without exception foggy, rainy, windy, squally, chilly, and damp beyond expression, with, on the 8th, one terrific thunderstorm; and at another time, for four and twenty hours together, the sound of thunder never ceased.

August was ushered in by cold wet mists, and downright rain. From the 1st until the 14th only one fine day intervened. Then we had heavy gales from the sea, and constant rains till the end of the month, with the exception of two days which were merely showery.

The first four days of September were wet, without much wind; but on the night of the 4th came on a tremendous squall from the sea, during which several small schooners and boats in the harbour were lost. Our front piazza was flooded with rain, that drove in under the eaves and between the window-frames. Next evening we had a tornado, which rendered the 6th a fine clear day. Heavy showers, and some stray sunshine, brought us to the 14th—a most fearfully wild and dismal day of wind, fog, and torrents of rain; in spite of all which, M—— was obliged to go to town, and being as yet too weak to sit on horseback, was carried down in his hammock. The 15th was almost equally dark and dreary. Then we had a respite of six showery days, followed by two of incessant heavy rain, and blasts from the south-west approaching to hurricanes. The concluding week of September was rather fine, the thermometer varying from 74° to 86°.

You may wonder at this exactness as to the weather, to the exclusion of everything else; but, indeed, my experience of it chiefly arose out of my eager watchings from the windows, for the approach of Dr. — upon his daily visit to M——, and also for a five minutes' cessation of the drifting rain, that poor little R—— might get out to have a breath of fresh air even in the under front piazza, which, however, is not screened from the heavy beat of the storm when it blows from the sea.

The first days of this month were extremely wet and windy; but since the 6th they have been oppressively sultry,

with a great deal of thunder and lightning, and *threatenings* of tornadoes that seem always to divide, as it were, far up the river—one-half rolling down the Bullom shore, the other apparently going round by the back of the mountains towards Wilberforce, leaving us free from all their accompaniments save rain, although the atmosphere derives the usual benefit of increased coolness. So you may perceive from this detail, that setting aside all other circumstances, the state of the weather alone this season has not been calculated to inspire one with very cheerful ideas.

Since my stock of sundry trifling things—such as tape, ribbon, thread, needles and pins, which I fancied on coming out to be inexhaustible—has been gradually wearing lower and lower, I have become more aware of some of the inconveniences attached to domestic economy in a settlement of this description. The damp of the climate is such that nothing saves needles from rusting, except they be kept in a phial of oil, or rubbed over with some sort of grease that does not attract ants. Still a few needles must always be in one's work-basket, and these my little apprentice, in learning to sew, used to break by the dozen; so that I lately found it necessary to apply to a Freetown shop for an augmentation of so precious an item of my paraphernalia. All my commissions have, of course, to be executed at second-hand; therefore, it is possible that even the most intelligent of my negro messengers may make strange blunders. Be that as it may, the answer brought to me was, that nothing excepting papers containing *ten thousand* needles each were to be had! On further inquiry, it appeared that the market was the proper place to which to send for such things, unless wishing to purchase wholesale; and there, to be sure, were got as many as I required, at the rate of two or three "copper" a-piece, according to their size.

My stock of child's shoes having also come to an end, I sent to every shop or store in town, where, in conjunction with cheese, tea and sugar, gun and curry-powder, saddles and bridles, saucepans and gridirons, ale and brandy, such things were likely to be sold; but none were then to be had, although the next English ship was expected to bring out a supply. Meanwhile, one vessel after another arriving unprovided with the object of my wants, I contrived to make some perfectly comfortable, if

not very elegant, shoes for tiny feet, of flannel with pasteboard soles—improved upon as the weather became more cold and damp, and my hand more expert at the craft of St. Crispin, by a pair made of cloth, nicely bound with ribbon, and soles formed of the soft upper part of a pair of my own, and with which R—trots about now very steadily. Before an “assortment” arrived (which it did at last), I had begun to feel not a little vain of my novel acquirement, different as it was from embroidering fancy slippers in Berlin wool.

I would at the first have begged you to send me a fresh wardrobe for your little nephew, as well as a second outfit for my work-box ; but we have long hoped to be on our way to England before an answer to any of my late letters could reach the colony.

The difficulty of getting a person competent to assist in even the plainest sort of needle-work is very great. All the black people appear to think themselves as much out of the world upon the top of this breezy hill, as if they were buried alive ; for no reason I can divine, unless it be because they cannot personally distinguish every individual in the busy streets of the capital, it being at the *formidable* distance of half an hour’s ride ! Even in the dry season scarcely any bribe will induce a professed needlewoman to come up except for a single day, or rather a few hours of a forenoon, and then not unless attended by some one considered as an inferior.

LETTER XVII.

Climatorial Discomforts — Bright-coloured Beetles — Portuguese Slaver — Arrival of the Prince de Joinville — Music on board the French Frigate — Power of the English Flag — A Spanish Man-of-war — Night Alarms — Weary Reign of the Harmattan — New Fruit — Sea-breezes — Wealth of Spain.

January.

THE weather is painfully hot just now, despite the harmattan: the consequence is, that when out in the open air we are at one moment overpowered by the strength of the sun, and the next quite chilly and uncomfortable from the wind. It is the dry season, so long eagerly looked forward to as the restorer of health to all exiles on these shores; but we are amongst those who have been disappointed in such hopes—so that were it not for the prospect of so soon leaving Sierra Leone, it would be scarcely endurable at present.

Yet every thing has a bright as well as a dark side, and every place has some counterpoise to its disadvantages. Indeed, when I reflect on the very many who have sunk under the effects of this climate since we came out, and on all the illness through which I myself, and those who are dear to me, have meanwhile been safely brought, I am sensible how little allied to discontent my feelings ought to be, however solemn such remembrances may render them at times.

To go back to the last date I wrote aught save a mere bulletin. The remainder of October and all November were marked by heavy tornadoes almost every night; in one of which some of our trees, including one near the house laden with beautiful oranges, were blown down. Both of these months were more unbearably sultry than I ever felt here before; there was so often, for the greater part of a day (and that even up on this cool spot), a total lull of both sea and land breeze. Especially before many of the tornadoes, every leaf was so rigidly motionless that the trees seemed as if they were cut out in

marble ; while the very birds, aware of the approaching storm, having fled to their coverts, the calm was thus rendered still more death-like. Then the contrast of the sudden roar of the wind and the rolling of the thunder, with the comfort of the cool refreshed feeling that succeeds to the languor and faintness occasioned by the previous oppressive heat ! a comfort which reconciles every person to a tornado. Amongst other signs of these storms, one is the manner in which cattle eat—goats and horses cropping up the grass more greedily than at any other time.

A greater number of radiantly-coloured insects, mostly of the beetle shape, if not all of that tribe, appeared abroad than I had observed at the same season last year. One day a long slender-winged insect, that looked as if wrought in silver and coated over with a thin plate of transparent green glass, flew in at the open window of the piazza, and really was more beautiful than a polished gem. They greatly help to brighten the air, shrouded as it now is in a dull harmattan haze. Here a beetle, in violet mantle banded with scarlet, hums past ; there darts a crimson dragon-fly ; while a host of butterflies, white and golden spotted, black and purple, green and blue, in short, shining in all the prismatic colours, with moths in robes no less rich in material though more sombre in shade, mingle with yellow honey-laden bees, glittering little emerald-like flies, and myriads of other happy winged things, in enlivening the walks among the coffee-bushes. One large magnificent creature, that I never see except when it pursues its rapid flight in the air—and therefore cannot tell whether it be a beetle or not, is of a brilliant glossy golden-green hue, and makes a not unmusical whirring sound as it flies along. I rather wage war against one very common and coarser species, which thinks proper to live upon my roses on the parapet ; I have often counted four of these plant-suckers firmly fixed upon a single bud. They have large, round, beetle-like bodies, with very hard upper wings of a dull black bordered with bright yellow.

A Portuguese prize came in one day in November. It was a most gracefully symmetrical vessel, and laden with slaves. With the glass I could see the miserable beings huddled so closely together on deck. There were neither second deck

laid nor mats—merely loose grass strewed over the water-casks for the poor unfortunate creatures to sleep on. A feeling of patriotic pride always mingles with my pity on seeing a slaver brought in, to think that—thanks to Britain above all the other kingdoms on the face of the globe—how soon these, our so unjustifiably oppressed fellow-mortals, will be blessed with a happier freedom than they ever knew in their heathen homes of the far interior, and the younger portion, at least, with a knowledge of religion, to which they could never have attained on the bigoted shores of Brazil or Cuba.

The name of this vessel showed the callous, hardened disposition of her owners in regard to the unhallowed traffic, literally signifying in English “What does it matter?”

We had storm and tempest in December, diversified by cool sea-breezes of a morning and red-hot suns afterwards. On the 31st there was enough of thunder, lightning, land-wind, and rain to have served for a day in June here. Rain, cold and dull fogs hanging over the town and low ground—with slight harmattan and a settled haze—introduced January, on the 5th of which, the Prince de Joinville’s frigate, *La Belle Poule*, in “walking the coast,” came into harbour, and the customary compliments to the flags of the two nations were augmented by a royal salute as the Prince stepped on shore. I was then able to take a short walk every evening, and the delightful music of the band on board the frigate, wafted up to our lonely hill by the balmy sea-breeze, was a treat none can appreciate whose ears, like mine, have not been daily as well as nightly doomed to hear the horrid and everlasting tom-toms, and other equally inharmonious noises, of Freetown and its suburbs, for more than two years past. The stated bugle-calls from the garrison, which I used to hail as a relief to the din of African drums, sounded quite discordant after these few days of real, spirit-stirring, military music.

M—— tells me the Prince is a fine frank sailor, and good-looking withal; he conversed very affably on various subjects, and altogether the interview left a pleasing impression. To my unnautical eyes our own old frigate the “*Madagascar*” is, though not so large, quite as grand looking an object in the water as the Prince’s ship, but I confess the English flag casts a “glamour” over all the vessels it floats above; and better judges than

I pronounce the French cruiser the handsomer craft of the two.

“ The Bell-pull, Prince of Jointveal master ” (as a facetious friend gravely informed me was the orthography of the entry of the frigate’s arrival on the shipping list of the only literary gazette of the colony), left after a sojourn of three days ; when quite as singular a phenomenon as a Royal visitor appeared in the harbour, in the shape of a smart armed brig, with the Spanish ensign flying ; and which of course was taken for a slaver, until up went the union-jack to the *main*, and her guns flashing forth at the same instant, announced her to be a cruiser of her Most Catholic Majesty’s, Queen Isabella of Spain !

But as if the good people of Sierra Leone had not had enough of echoed artillery for one week,

“ At twelve o’clock at night,
When the moon shone bright,”

on the 19th, we were roused by first one gun and then another, until I counted full twenty-one. Various were the conjectures that floated through my bewildered brain, and I have no doubt that of others too, at this unexpected cannonade. At first I actually thought that the strange cruiser might be possibly a pirate-slaver in disguise, and was now about to storm the citadel, and wreak vengeance on the heads of all and sundry concerned in putting down the slave-trade, and I inwardly congratulated myself that our eyrie was so far out of reach. But all my wild imaginations were put to flight upon hearing next morning that a new set of colours having been presented the day before to the gallant —— regiment, an after (dinner) thought suggested the burying of the old, if not with “ candle, book, and bell,” at least with full military honours, at the witching hour of midnight.

Our nights were fated to be disturbed at that time, as more than once, the horses stamping in the stable, the goats crying, and poultry screaming, betokened some unusual commotion below, which on inquiry was found to be caused by an incursion of travelling ants. The stable swarmed with them, and even the low piazzas, whither the poor horses were conducted for security, were not exempted from their intrusion. They swarmed up from their subterranean dominions in such myriads, that blowing them up with gunpowder, and strewing hot wood-ashes upon

their trail, were the only possible means of turning their line of march. As they came during the night, I did not myself see more than one daring party of stragglers, that deliberately ascended the staircase, a few evenings ago, and took possession of the landing-place, whence they were with much trouble turned back by boiling water being poured over the advance-guard. From the service they afford in destroying other insects, these ants are not generally to be regarded as pests, yet I can very well dispense with their visits.

The harmattan this season is stronger than it was the last, and much more disagreeable. It renders the skin hot and dry, lips parched and chapped as in the severest frost of a northern climate, and I feel quite ill from its effects. The paper on which I write curls up like a scroll, the shingles and boards continually make noises as if so many squibs and crackers were being fired off. The dark reddish haze not only completely obscures our view of distant objects, but for five days past even King Tom's Point and the vessels in the harbour have not been visible, while the trees and grass have a drooping, lifeless appearance. The water, to be sure, tastes as if it were iced, yet that luxury does not to me compensate for the uncomfortable sensations given by this gloomy, withering wind.

29th.—A slight sea-breeze sprang up this afternoon, which I hailed as a blessing to the land.

To-day Dr. — sent us a basket full of shaddocks (grown on his own farm) and Cape Verd oranges. The former rich-looking golden-coloured fruit, you have, no doubt, often seen. These oranges are, I think, the same as those of Malta. They are of a pale crimson hue; have a beautiful, smooth, thin rind, nearly as deep red as the pulp, but do not much differ in size or taste from common ones. We had lately some colony-grown mandarin oranges, which are small and delicate-looking, and exactly shaped like the shell of the Echinus. It destroys the flavour of this fruit to cut it with even a silver knife, but it peels quite readily with the fingers.

Our friends have of late taken a generous fit in the fruit-giving way. Besides the above, I have received some of the first produce of a sugar-apple* plant raised from seed sent from the

* *Anona glabra*.

West Indies. It is of an irregular shape and size;—those I have seen were rather conical, and in their rough brown exterior reminded me more of a large French roll than anything else. It is full of long-shaped, shining, dark seeds, buried in a luscious mass, and is an apple that would certainly be prized in England. Nor must I omit in my list the avocado,* or alligator pear (why either this or the before-mentioned fruit should be called apple or pear, I cannot explain). It is about the size of a goose's egg, has a plum-like skin, deep mottled red when perfectly ripe, before which it is dark green; inside is a fatty sort of greenish-yellow substance, which on being spread on bread with a little salt, forms an excellent substitute for sweet, fresh, English butter. A cavity in the centre contains the seed, a large white kernel enclosed in a brown husk. The leaf rather resembles that of the laurel, but is of a more vivid and darker green. It is a substantial and palatable fruit, though not very elegant in appearance.

The only fruit of this country to which I have never become reconciled is the pawpaw. I think the tree, too, one of the stiffest we have. But my prejudice does not extend to its pale primrose-coloured blossoms, which are singularly fragrant, and quite as great favourites with the humming-birds as with me. The beautiful "sky-birds," or "blue-birds," as we sometimes call them, again made their appearance towards the end of October, and their joyous cries are often heard, at present, when the thick haze prevents them being seen.

February 10th.—The weather has improved. We have had delightful sea-breezes for two days past, and this morning a heavy shower of rain, which has cleared the atmosphere. Leopard's Island is again visible, and the horizon beautifully defined.

The captain of the Spanish man-of-war, bedecked with one or more of the countless orders of his nation, breakfasted with us lately. He gave me an interesting account of grafting lime-trees, so as to produce scarlet fruit. But I was extremely amused by his description of the wealth of his country, which, I rather suspect, corresponded more to what it could boast of in the days of Cortes than in the present. Spoken in broken English the following speech was rather ludicrous:—"Suppose you are

* *Laurus Persea.*

travelling in Spain, and go into a house, and ask for a draught of water, vy, no such thing is to be got! all *vine*, de best of *vine*! And when de new vine is ready for de cask, before de oder be done, we just throw it out, though quite good and sweet, to make room for de new. Den when we want to build house, to mix what you call de mortar, we do mix it all with vine; vine is so very plentiful. Oh, Spain is de fine rich country!”

Poor Dinah, the laundress, died of consumption a few weeks ago, and her husband has just sent us an epistle notifying his intention of marrying again, and requesting an advance of money on the occasion.



LETTER XVIII.

Homeward-bound Vessels — Preparations for a Sea Voyage — Ague and Anxiety — Instances of Kind-heartedness in a Liberated African Woman — Palm-oil — A Comet.

March.

OUR preparations for leaving being now completed (even to the installation of Petah and his family, by whom the house is to be taken charge of in our absence), we merely wait for an eligible opportunity for a passage home.

Vessels of the class commonly trading between England and this coast are barques or brigs, seldom less than 200 or more than 300 tons burthen. Sometimes they bring out cargoes of coals, salt, or government stores, but more frequently arrive in ballast, or with only a small consignment of goods to some of the principal colonial merchants, and timber forms almost invariably the return lading.

Brigantines and schooners do now and then come out and take back palm-oil, while occasionally a stray barque returns with a cargo of ground-nuts. But never having been built for the conveyance of passengers, the accommodations of these vessels are rude and limited to a degree you can scarcely comprehend. Those on the passage that may possess superior accommodations are, with few exceptions, old worn-out craft.

All about to sail at the time we wish to go are at present in the rivers, being, unfortunately for our comfort, timber-laden ships. Some that M—— lately looked at, after their return to port, loaded, were fitted up with nothing more than a couple of sleeping berths on deck, no bigger than dog-kennels. Others had a few berths round a small close cabin below, one or two of which were filled with spare sails. Another had her best stern cabin stowed full of camwood. A third had ginger disposed of in a similar manner. One fine large ship, with really good airy cabins, had had the bulkheads between them knocked down to admit of taking some more logs of timber, only a day before the

master heard there was a chance of passengers. It seems that, except the consignees or masters are sure of as many passengers as will pay the difference, their cabins are always encroached upon in this way. To secure a comfortable passage one should make arrangements with the captain immediately on a ship's arriving from England, or at least previously to her departure for the rivers; yet even then her time of sojourn there is so uncertain, that several others may be ready first, and when your ship does appear, the sickness of her captain and crew may cause another delay, by no means favourable to your plans. One of our latest arrivals brought out passengers, and is comfortably enough fitted up, with an obliging chief officer and good steward, but she has not yet discharged her cargo, and cannot be ready for probably two months after we ought to be away. But what greatly amuses me is, that however willing to take any gentlemen-passengers for whom room can be found, some of these merchant seamen demur outright to a lady, a child, and a female servant forming part of their shipment, fancying, I presume, that such passengers will, as a matter of course, give a greater amount of trouble than any other. It reminds me of the advertisements of "Furnished apartments to let for single gentlemen," ladies and children being at a discount at most London lodgings.

13th.—The preparations on leaving England are widely different from those necessary on quitting this country, which I can compare to nothing except those one would naturally make on going to live on a desert island for a period which at least would be eight weeks, but far more likely twelve, or even fourteen; one half of that time to be intensely hot, the other cold to an extreme. Where everything, save fresh water, has to be provided by ourselves, you may be sure it needs no trifling exercise of one's *housekeeping* faculties to think of all that is actually required, all that *may* be wanted, and to contrive substitutes for whatever cannot be obtained here. I have little trouble myself about these matters, however. European women cannot in this country look after things in the same manner they do at home. How easy it is to enter a shop in a great town and give orders for everything you require! Here you must first see that it is possible to have your orders, such as getting stores, live stock, &c., executed, and then look after their execution yourself.

I have been otherwise very well assisted in minor matters (down to getting a ship stock of white frocks and pinafores made for your little nephew) through the obliging agency of a lady better accustomed to the black sempstresses than myself. A similar outfit for his attendant, now a great stout girl, and in high glee at the thoughts of seeing "white man's country," has been duly prepared by the help of Petah's wife, an intelligent liberated African, and who has the gentlest disposition and best heart of any negro woman I ever saw, as the following anecdote will partly prove:—Since she came up here, poor little R—— has had some fearfully severe attacks of ague, so that for many nights I could snatch but a few minutes' rest, and that upon a mat on the floor beside him. Nor was his the only chamber of sickness in the house, and I went from one room to another with a heavy heart. Although this woman had her own child, a fine lively little fellow, to attend to, she was constantly tendering her services to me, and after having often begged me to try the experiment of giving country medicines to my boy, at last appeared to think that my unwillingness to follow her advice arose from an inability to procure such treasures. Next day I heard her "piccanniny" fretting sadly, and on sending down to inquire what was the matter, was informed the child cried because his mother had gone away early in the morning, and was long of returning to him. The day passed on, her husband came up from his daily employment in town, but still no tidings of Mary. In passing an open window shortly before sunset, I observed, slowly approaching the house by a path at the back, a figure so covered up with the green boughs it carried, that until it moved nearer I did not recognise it to be Mary. She it was, however, and without stopping to speak to any of her own people in the piazza below, she came at once up stairs, and, looking round with such a complacent, good-humoured expression, in spite of the dusty garments, and marks of "chouca-choucas" on her bare arms and feet, informed me she had brought some medicines that would soon make the "piccan" quite strong and well again. Then unfolding her apron she displayed a great many yellowish-brown roots, like those of gentian, and, opening her handkerchief, showed a hoard of several long pepper-pods with a highly aromatic smell and hot pungent taste. These, she said, should with

the roots be bruised and boiled in a quantity of water, in which, after it was carefully strained, the child should be bathed. The leaves of the different branches, with which she was laden, were likewise to be boiled and strained, and the liquid then given as a medicine, whilst their bark was also to be used in the same way.

Here had the poor creature gone without saying a word of her intention to any one, and, unaided by either hoe or cutlass, wandered through the intricate bush during the whole of that hot, dusty day, searching for those herbs that she deemed infallible in the cure of all infant ailments. It was an action springing alone from her own good feelings; the simplicity and earnestness of her manner evinced its perfect disinterestedness; and I could not but promise that all should be done according to her directions, provided the doctor thought it would be of benefit. But I need hardly say that he advised me to put no faith in all the carefully gathered roots, peppers, leaves, and bark; and I had to manage between hurting the poor woman's feelings, and wasting the things she had been at such pains to procure, by telling her they were no doubt very efficacious remedies for native children, but that, as our physician did not approve of them in R——'s case, she should have them all to herself, with as many thanks as if they had been applied as she wished.

She seemed vexed, but only because her faith in the virtues of the country medicines was so strong that she thought it a piece of great injustice towards the "piccan" not to give him the benefit of them. Yet her little kindly attentions did not cease here: on hearing that he would scarcely eat anything since his illness, another day she went out into the bush, and, having gathered a few handfuls of palm-nuts, made from them about half a teacupful of rich, fresh, crimson oil, which she sent up to me to see if we could tempt the little languid child to eat it with his plain boiled rice. A small jar of bright, amber-coloured wild honey, and some beautifully white arrowroot of her own manufacture, were also offered for his acceptance, while more than once she begged me to try one or two of the strange eatables sold in the market under such names as Cabona and Abra, and which, from their appearance, struck me as being pretty fair specimens of native culinary art. For the first time

in my life I *did* taste some kind of viand flavoured with palm-oil—a perfectly wholesome condiment, yet one to which I should certainly never become familiarized, though I have heard of Europeans actually liking it as an ingredient in some dishes.

The colony has lately been favoured by a sight of one of the most magnificent of all the heavenly luminaries. The shutters of an apartment looking towards the west having been left unclosed until long after sunset on the evening of the 4th, I noticed a long, broad, bright streak of silvery light, like something between *part* of a lunar rainbow and what I supposed a comet to be. The moon was brilliant as usual, the stars shone in their wonted clearness, and the galaxy in all the radiance peculiar in this climate to its soft pure light; but nothing could equal the splendour of this glittering body, that, extending as it were over land and sea alike, gave the idea of a snow-white pennant, with the sun shining full upon it, suddenly flung across the dark, spangled surface of the western sky. By the third evening of its appearance, its train having waned in brightness, I distinctly saw the star-like centre or nucleus, which threw even the planet Venus into shade. The comet rises soon after the sun sets, remaining visible several hours; but some cloudy evenings it was not seen, and has now faded into dimness in its departing track. The blacks in general were at first in the greatest consternation at this nightly visitor, thinking it portended awful things for Freetown, at which we need not wonder when we read that Halley's comet, in 1456, alarmed the Pope so much that, taking it in connexion with the great spread of Mahommedanism in the world, he actually adjured the astonishing phenomenon, as if he believed it to be a malignant spirit.



LETTER XIX.

Embarkation for England — A Leak — Accommodations — View from the Ship — A careful Helmsman — Fever on Board — Master and Men — Scarcity of Provisions — Last Evening on Deck — Daily Discomforts — Friendly Vessels — Anecdote of a Pirate — The Queen's Birth-day — Sailor's Gratitude — The Azores — Cold Weather — Heavy Gale — The English Coast — A Fishing-boat — Row to Hastings — Night Journey to London.

London, June 19th, 1843.

By the help of a very meagre log I must try to convey to you some idea of our life during the eleven weeks and three days of our sojourn on board "a timber-ship."

On the 20th of March the brig X—— arrived from the rivers, with plenty of room in her cabins, and M—— immediately secured our passage.

Although I did not see half of what was sent on board until after I went there, yet the biscuit, rice, flour, and other stores seemed, from their abundance, as if we were laying in a stock for a year's consumption. We had to provide our own plates and dishes, cups, glasses, with cooking utensils as well; however, by Saturday evening all was ready, from farina and corn for the live-stock to bunches of bananas for your little nephew.

My heart was full of thankful joy when I could say at last, "To-morrow we actually leave Sierra Leone." Ah, how often had I stood in despair in the darkened sick-room, and trembled to think we might not *all* live to embark for our native country!

March 27th.—At half-past one yesterday we left home. The sun was painfully hot, which obliged me to keep the sliding-doors of the palanquin open, to the danger of R——'s falling out, as the novelty of his situation made him quite restless. His little attendant trotted alongside, occasionally gathering a very bright flower for her young charge, and as he sometimes caught a glimpse of his papa and the horse, matters went on as smoothly as possible in the vehicle, which the steepness of the descent

caused to jolt about rather uncomfortably. As we reached the foot of the hill, we received many a greeting of "Ah! look, white piccaninny! how do ma-amie? how do piccan?" from the mothers of the little ebony children, who, in their turn, starting from their seats among the shady plots of cassada and okra in front of their huts, stood gazing in expressive wonder at the apparition of my poor R——'s pale face.

We met with few people after leaving the mountain-road, and on entering the capital the streets were deserted, their inhabitants, as it was Sunday, being at meeting. Several Kroomen, Timmannee canoe-people, and a very few white sailors from the different merchant-vessels, were loitering about on the wharf, and I was impressed by the stillness that reigned around, so different from a similar scene at an English seaport.

The air felt much more cool and pleasant than on shore, as we rowed to the X——, which lay the farthest out of all the vessels in the harbour. The decks were crowded with hen-coops, casks, and boxes. Goats and sheep trotted about at their ease, whilst a large savage-looking monkey climbed up and down the rigging, ran along the bulwarks, and skipped from place to place, making very free with our bunches of bananas and plantains which hung from one of the yards. I remained on deck with R——, our people meantime carrying down what luggage we had brought with us, and assisting, under M——'s directions, in putting things a little to rights below. The voices of the sailors, remarkable only in loudness and harshness, joining in full chorus at every pull they gave to a rope, raised a noise that was almost deafening at first. But my attention was soon roused by the sound of the working of the pumps, and I watched the operation with some interest, never having seen it before, thinking all the while in my ignorance, as they splashed the deck all over, what a comfort it was that there was no disagreeable smell of bilge-water, but that that which came up was as clean and fresh-looking as the waves themselves.

In the evening, after the bustle of spying out that everything was on board, and arranging our berths, was fairly over, R—— asleep, and poor Sarah sitting on her mat, saying that her "eyes run all about," I was startled by hearing an altercation on deck, and on looking up to the open hatchway, or rather skylight, close to

which M—— stood talking to an officer from a government transport that was anchored near us, I perceived a sailor with face by no means of a prepossessing expression (and almost as red as the hair that stuck like porcupine's quills off his forehead), bared arms, and broad clenched hands, engaged in a loud and angry dispute. He spoke so violently that I could only make out that he, and some of the rest of the men, refused to go to sea, because the vessel leaked to an alarming degree, and was also short of hands.

It seemed, a blue shirt had been hoisted to the gaff, a signal from a merchant-vessel to a man-of-war, that the seamen of the former want an officer to come on board and inquire into their grievances.

On hearing the complaint of the man, who, it appeared, was second mate, and after a discussion with the master, who agreed that the vessel was not sufficiently manned in her present state, M—— wrote to the owner demanding two additional hands. In a short time the boatmen returned with a note from Mr. Z——, to the effect that he thought the X—— had her full complement, and therefore he would send no more men. This was anything but pleasant. We consulted as to whether we would remain in the vessel, or give up all thoughts of returning to England before the rains. The only difference in the risks appeared to be that the one was more immediate than the other; that of hazarding ourselves in a leaky ship with an insufficient and discontented crew, to standing the chance of another wet season with our impaired state of health, to say nothing of the inconvenience that would result from our change of plans. Some friends of ours, two seasons before, when their vessel put back in a leaky condition, a fortnight after she had left Sierra Leone, gave up all idea of sailing by her, and did not quit the colony until nearly a year after.

We were shown the ship's register, which proved her age to be but three years; and were also positively assured, both by master and owner, that she had leaked from a few months subsequently, owing to having been clumsily repaired after an accident to her keel. Convinced therefore that, with two additional men, the leak would be of little consequence, another note was written to Mr. Z——, telling him that if he did not forthwith engage and send on board the men asked for, we would leave the vessel, and take

steps to recover the passage-money. Some of our friends recommended us to call a survey upon the brig, and others advised us not to think of going by her. I did not feel at all alarmed after M—— explained the matter to me, but only wished to get fairly under weigh. The boat bearing the last message could scarcely have reached the wharf, when “tornado” was sung out through the ship, and a heavy one it was, but we rode it out well.

Early this morning we found that the last application had been successful, for two new hands have been sent on board, which seems to have restored good humour to the rest of the crew. I am glad it is settled, but we have had to deal with not the most straightforward man in the world, in the person of the X——’s owner. But every one in the colony knows Mr. Z——.

Certainly the dullest time on board ship is in harbour, and I cannot understand what has delayed us all this long day. Mr. Q—— came off in the forenoon to bid us good bye, and rather approves of our accommodations, which are no doubt good so far as room goes. We have a main cabin with nice large hatchway, a state-room at each side also lighted, and a pantry sacred to Sarah’s use. We boast of only a couple of chairs, but two trunks placed lengthways, and covered with a broad mattress, compose our extempore sofa. We sent a little country table on board, which, hid by a coarse scarlet cloth, looks quite grand; whilst such unusual sitting-room ornaments as casks of biscuit, rice, ale, and wine, in bottle of course, are by no means disagreeable objects, where one has the prospect of a long voyage.

It has been oppressively hot all day, so that I have been unable to go on deck until the afternoon, when the fine cool breeze and view from the ship has compensated for the preceding discomfort. The town, with its houses painted all colours, peeping out from their orange-trees; the grassy streets with their beaten pathways, and groups of people in every costume; the green hill on which the barracks stand; the fort with surrounding masses of black rock,—altogether present a very different aspect to what my eye has been so long accustomed. But it is the bold mountains beyond that give a grandeur and sublimity to the view, as it is the broad blue water which relieves the prospect of everlasting verdure, on gazing down on the sleeping valley, from our pin-nacled dwelling, that looks so quiet and lonely, with its home

aspect, far, far above us, and seems more *out-of-the-world* now than it ever did to me before. Higher yet lies the ruined cottage on the other wild and solitary hill; and as the light and shade rest on the irregular heights and deep ravines of Sierra Leone, the whole landscape is mellowed into softness, that contrasts strangely with the sights and sounds on board the good brig X——. I do not know how it is, but the vessel strikes me as having a most forlorn and confused appearance, while her crew seem to be a very unruly and mismanaged set. Our own boatmen are now ranged in the waist of the ship, bidding their respectful adieus to us all, and it is expected we shall soon be off. There are several Kroomen assisting at the pumps and anchor, but they are to leave with the pilot.

28th.—A heavy tornado again last night, which might have blown us out of sight of land ere this, had we only been off. Moved out this morning with a brisk land-breeze, which soon died away. Sea-breeze set in with the tide. Both being against us, dropped anchor and lay off the Cape for several hours, the monotony of which was relieved by a kind visit from Dr. F——, who evidently does not envy us our vessel. When the pilot and Kroomen went off, some of the sailors got leave to go ashore also; and, meanwhile, we had the mortification of seeing the V—— and the G—— sweep past us with all their sails set. Dark ere the boat from shore returned, and we have once more weighed anchor, as I hear the loud “cheery, men—cheerily oh!” resounding through the ship.

29th.—The Mountains of the Lions are still in sight, which I take as the presage of a slow voyage. The heat during the day is suffocating, while the evening air feels chilly.

30th.—That blue mountain mass of bold outline follows in our wake! There it is this evening, scarcely less distinct than yesterday! Although by no means fond of the vessel being pitched about by the wind, I would actually hail a good tornado that would waft us far away from the pestilent shore, that seems resolved to haunt us by its shadowy presence. Early this morning the sullen roar of a gun on the waters startled me, and shortly after we were visited by a boat from H. M. brigantine S——.

April 1st.—Fairly out of sight of land at last. Beautifully fine, with a slight breeze. Numerous birds flying about.

2nd.—Nearly a calm ; sailing through shoals of dolphins. In trying to catch them the sailors have hooked a young shark instead, and hoisted the hideous-looking creature on deck.

3rd.—Spoke the barque “Adeline” of Newcastle, twenty-eight days out from that dear land which, alas ! we cannot expect to reach for much more than twice twenty-eight days !

There are no entries in this important log for some days, and I can fancy you smiling at the idleness of noting down such trifles, but their very nothingness may give you some idea of the monotony of sea-life on board such a vessel as ours.

We were the only passengers, with the exception of the owner’s son, a little mischievous boy, who was continually sowing strife between the master and sailors, playing tricks upon the monkey, and behaving impertinently to the crew, of whom there were twelve men.

The first mate was old and superannuated. He had formerly seen better days, having been captain of more than one East Indiaman that, unfortunately for him, had all been wrecked. Though said to be a great deal too fond of brandy and such like cordials, he seemed to be one of the most careful and properly conducted people on board. Especially untidy-looking during the rest of the week, Sunday invariably saw this “ancient mariner” in his best attire with a large-typed prayer-book in his hand ; whilst his slippered and shuffling footstep, which never ceased pacing the deck during the hours of his nightly watch, proved that he at least knew his duty better than some of the others, who too often left the ship to the guidance of the steersman alone. Once, about midnight, and with a fair wind that had for some days kept the vessel steadily upon one tack, she began to roll in so extraordinary a manner that it roused the master, who discovered, on going up, the deck deserted, the wheel lashed, and the carpenter, whose duty it was to have been there, fast asleep on a hencoop !

The master was very unfit for the post he held, being tyrannical, unfeeling, and cowardly. Two of the crew were sick when we sailed, yet he never showed the least concern about them, taking no heed as to whether they had medicines or suitable food. One of them, in particular, was very ill, having had country fever, followed by a relapse ; and M—— prescribed for

the poor man, ordered him to be removed from his close berth to a more airy part of the ship, and took care that he had proper things to eat, such as sago, arrow-root, gruel, &c. He seemed to be convalescent, when one day's very severe illness amongst ourselves prevented M—— going on deck. The steward, however, promised all obedience to our orders, and affirmed that poor Jackson had everything he required. Imagine how shocked I was next day to hear a commotion above, and M——'s voice asking "how the men could leave their comrade to die before their eyes." Sarah at the same time rushing down the companion, placed R—— hastily on my lap, and said her master had sent her for limes and a sponge to bathe the hands and face of the poor man, who could not move nor utter aught save low moans. In a few minutes M—— came himself to prepare some brandy and hot water for the apparently dying man, who it seemed had been left to lie on the deck, exposed alike to the burning sun and occasional chill air from the water, unable to articulate, and still less able to stretch out his hand to the mess-tins of dun-coloured sago that had been permitted to turn sour and hard by his side. Evidently his comrades had thought all chance of his life was over, or such apathy could not have been shown. Fortunately, M——'s indignant appeal to their feelings was successful; and I was thankful to hear about an hour afterwards that Jackson had revived, and another of the sailors was reading his Bible beside him.

There was something frightful in the idea of a fellow-creature perishing amongst us through downright carelessness, and yet Captain P—— actually never went that afternoon to ask after the man or look at him, but contented himself by telling the steward to see that the cook made whatever *we* thought necessary for the invalid, who from that day M—— took under his own especial care. But you may be sure that we formed no good opinion of the unfeeling master, who seemed to think it beneath his dignity to take any interest in the welfare of his men. He was not properly a "master mariner" (the rightful title, I believe, of a merchant captain), but on the death from fever of the X——'s original master, had been appointed to take the vessel home. Our captain (by courtesy) and the second mate (the same wild-looking sailor whose appearance had so alarmed me

the evening of our embarkation) had once been shipmates together, and this former familiarity seemed to have caused, on the part of the mate, a total want of respect for the authority of his present superior, and continual loud disputes between them did not add to the comforts of our passage. But, indeed, not one of the crew looked up to Captain P——; and stories of his having been fined fifty pounds for assaulting a black man in the West Indies, and of his brother having been imprisoned for causing through cruelty the death of four Spanish sailors, used to be noised throughout the vessel, rendering things still worse. The carpenter was one of the oddities on board. Being often engaged in repairing the pumps, and working with his tools near the place where I sat propped up in a skeleton of a Canadian manufactured arm-chair, R—— always made interest to obtain a quantity of scraps of wood, and with a little wooden mallet used to hammer away in great glee on the lee-side of the ship with Sarah beside him. On such occasions “Chips” often would lay down his saw and hatchet, and taking a pinch of snuff, push his broad blue Scotch bonnet off his weather-beaten forehead, and give utterance, in a very strong northern dialect, to a few remarks as to the great difference in his opinion between Europeans and Africans.

“Aweel! according to my thocht, they’re little better thae black folk than monkeys. Gif that lassie was in a show noo, I’se warrant it wadna be lang ere a hunder pund was made o’ her. She be’t to learn some bits o’ tricks first, though—weel! just to see how mickle the bairn maks o’ her!”

But the carpenter was one of the laziest and most unruly of all the crew. He hated being at the helm, and took great delight in boasting that upon one occasion on board a vessel, when it was his first turn at the wheel, he steered the ship several points out of her course, peering at the same time eagerly into the binnacle; and on the captain’s inquiring whether he was short-sighted or not, replied, “Yes,” and that he could not see the compass, whereupon the master immediately called another sailor, and gave orders that the “new hand” should on no account be sent to the helm again.

One of the two men who had been sent on board the day after we embarked, was an Irishman, named Andrew, who worshipped

O'Connell and prayed for repeal ; but nevertheless attended zealously to his duty. He was considerably above six feet in height, and in his red woollen blouse, leather belt with a knife hanging from it, and rather conical-shaped felt-hat, looked less like a seaman than a brigand. His companion was one of the most efficient sailors in the vessel, quiet, orderly, and active. He had once worked his passage home from the East Indies in a man-of-war, where he probably had acquired his fine sailor-like deportment. " Old George," as he was called, and Andrew his comrade, had each saved a little money, and it was only the desire to get home that had led them to enter the X—— as seamen. Then there was " Young George," who used to read the Bible to Jackson, and who was overheard one Sunday evening talking of his family, and expressing his satisfaction at being able to assist his old mother from his wages. He was a fresh-looking lad, evidently from the country, very different in appearance and manners from the cook and the boy who attended on the live-stock, two youths one could never see without thinking of London pick-pockets. Jackson and the other sick sailor had both served in American vessels. They were very quiet and civil, but the first was by far the better seaman of the two. The steward and cabin-boy brought up the rear of the hands on board the X——. The former was useless as a steward, and seemed to me to be crazy ; the latter was a good steady boy, and steered the ship better than any man on board. It may seem rather incredible, but very soon we came to know quite well *who* was at the helm. A good steerer made so great a difference to our comfort, if that word be at all applicable in this instance, but I only speak by comparison.

On the 10th of April we got the trade-winds, and the evening after, as I sat below under the open skylight, near which, on deck, the steward and mate were engaged in weighing out to the cook the unwieldy lumps of salt pork and beef for the next day's consumption, I perceived nearly all the sailors were congregating on the quarter-deck, while loud voices were engaged in angry remonstrance with the captain, as to the quantity and quality of their provisions. Foremost stood Andrew, in oratorical attitude, setting forth, in the richest of Irish brogues, that " it was very hard that they had not a dhrop of tay or coffee, let

alone rum or spirrits of any kind," whilst the captain assured him it was all very well to grumble, but that the cabin small stores were exhausted as well as those for the men. "Och sure, but it's wondrous aisy for you to be talking,—when you have your wine and your ale, and your white biscuit, and the sugar and the *tay* quite comfortable-like, down in the cabin there; but if you had to *ate* rice for your breakfast, and rice for your dinner, and rice for your supper, and that coarse red rice too, only fit for *bastes*, ye would know what it was maybe, and had the hard work to do besides."

More than one other voice mentioned the cabin in such threatening tones, as if all the tea, and the rum, and the biscuit of which they felt the deprivation were unjustly withheld from them and stowed there, that the idea gradually crept over me that I should feel less surprise than terror if the whole ship's crew, with the tall Connaught-man at their head, were to make a sally down the companion and assert "the right of search" in our cabin, as well as in that of the captain. The latter worthy personage meanwhile continued to pace the quarter-deck, and smoke his pipe with the apathy of a Dutchman, only occasionally muttering as he opened his mouth to puff out the smoke, "It's little you'd find in the cabin, though you should go to look."

Even the grave and orderly "Old George" came forward to vote for a redress of their grievances, saying that he had served in many a ship, and been to all the quarters of the globe; and that had they been out for six months, he would be the last man to complain; but to think that they had now been but one fortnight at sea, and all the bread finished, he did not know how they were to be at the end of another fortnight; and that though it was all very well to have nothing except water to drink in fine warm weather, by-and-bye, when we got into colder latitudes, and might meet with squalls, it would be hard for them to have neither tea nor coffee, nor yet 'grog.'"

Was not this a pleasant prospect? But on discussing matters quietly among ourselves, my fears were allayed by learning that, if we met with no ship to supply the men, the captain would no doubt put into some port or other for provisions, as after that evening he allowed the small remaining store of biscuit to be portioned out to the crew. Still many and long were the grumblings as to

the want of tea and coffee, and the very sparing quantity of meat that was weighed out. As this operation was always performed just over our cabin, we were usually favoured by hearing the dispute as to its being "beef-day" or "pork-day," the latter of which they would have preferred coming always, instead of alternately.

After a day of noise, murmuring, and discomfort, I used to hail the calm silent evening with a refreshed mind. I remember well that the beauty of that of the 14th was enough to make me forget all minor miseries, for at least one half-hour. M—— and I sat on deck after the night-watch had been set, and all was still and quiet on board, and there was the magnificent full moon, seeming to sail along as fast as we,—one moment shining clear and high above our heads; the next, veiled under a thin fleece of snowy clouds; and at another, completely hid behind a black and threatening mass, which reminded me of that dense shroud the burst of a tornado alone can dispel. The wind was fresh and fair, and the vessel, lying over on one side until her deck formed a steep slope, cut her way steadily, if not swiftly, through the curling waves—which as the variable clouds flitted over the moon, or left her in all her splendour, alternately presented a face as sullen and dark as molten lead, or as clear and beautiful as frosted silver. That faint and shadowy light lent a character of grace and grandeur to the vessel, which no one could dream of during the day, for however the poetic terms of tapering masts and swelling sails may convey picturesque images—none such attached themselves in any shape to the craft in which we had left the pestilent shores of Africa. Although better than mere pleasurable emotions at the loveliness of an evening could not but be often raised by the remembrance of our continued safety, yet perhaps, as the heavy-laden ship pursued her solitary course that passing hour, the heart might be lifted up in more fervent adoration to Him who is "the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea."

That was the last time I was on deck until the day we landed in England. My log tells me that on the 16th, which was Easter Sunday, a request from M—— was replied to by the captain that he had no objection to our giving the crew an allowance of spirits upon Sundays. I have before mentioned that our first

mate, in spite of his venerable aspect and quiet deportment, was reported to have rather a too friendly feeling towards stimulating beverages. It might have been but the whisper of malice: on board the X—— we had no opportunity of proving either its truth or falsity. But certainly the expression of that old man's countenance as the weekly goblet was handed round, exactly resembled that of a child who watches with keen and smiling interest the distribution of a packet of bon-bons, in which he is to share.

We were glad also, at this time, to spare sundry little stores for the use of the master's cabin, as it was very unpleasant over-hearing, which we could not avoid doing, the reiterated complaints of mates and steward, about their having been sent to sea with only as much tea, coffee, sugar, pepper, and mustard as could last for one fortnight.

Gradually, however, we began to find that we might have abundance of provisions, yet be very little the better of any of them, save hard biscuit and preserves, from the inability or unwillingness of those who acted as cooks on board. It was never quite certain to which of the two ill-looking lads the honour of working in the galley properly belonged. He who originally held the office had been ignobly dismissed for being lazy and dirty, and the task of feeding the live-stock and scrubbing the decks was assigned to him instead.

The qualities which had caused his degradation from the higher post told sadly upon the poor goats, pigs, and sheep, and still worse upon the fowls, who died and disappeared; until, to save their lives, as an Irishman would say, we were obliged to eat them. Several of the other sailors would willingly have made time to look after our live-stock, but Captain P—— rudely refused to allow a better hand to feed them. It was needless to expostulate with a person who, finding that the daily comforts of his superiors were greatly in his power, determined to take advantage of the circumstance in an unworthy manner, yet it required a philosophic degree of forbearance to pass over many instances of this bad spirit. We had long ceased to require further attendance from the ship-steward, than bringing breakfast and dinner to our cabin door; and now, with the prospect of a long voyage before us, it was absolutely necessary that Sarah should be spared to attend to the poor animals on deck.

We had generally to wait an hour or more before our scorched fowl, half-boiled yam, and pulpy rice appeared, and then the excuse was that the captain's dinner had taken up all the fire, and all the cooking utensils, which we ourselves had sent on board; therefore, it was very fair that passengers, who did not eat at the same table, should exercise the grace of patience as they best could. You may laugh at my recollecting such petty troubles and vulgar cares, far more at so elaborate a detail; but nearly three months' experience has convinced me that if the every-day comforts of life excite little thankfulness, it is only because we are too much accustomed to receive and possess them more as our right than as the gifts of a generous Providence. Let us be deprived of the most trivial of these mercies, for such they certainly are, and then we become sensible of how greatly our human frame depends upon things so very unimportant in themselves.

I had often heard stories of the disgraceful neglect and aggravating behaviour of more than one master of homeward-bound Sierra Leone traders to their passengers, and was then uncharitable and conceited enough to believe that it must have been all the fault of the passengers themselves, in being unaccommodating, overbearing, finical, or troublesome, and that *we* should meet with nothing of the kind. My opinion was fated to be changed.

The sun was dreadfully hot about this time, but even when the first mate was thoughtful enough to desire the awning to be spread, the captain ordered it to be furled instantly; and once that some of the men had brought an old sail and spread it over the hatchway through which the broiling sun was shining full into our cabin, their superior officer actually found fault with the poor fellows, although he was ashamed to bid them take it away again. The want of the awning confined poor R—— below the fore part of the day, but with his salt-water bath in the morning, and run on deck in the afternoon, the little fellow's health improved wonderfully. Indeed he was not like the same child that had embarked only three weeks previously, and this was more than a counterbalance to all other evils.

As far as lay in our power, we tried to conciliate the mighty little man, the secret of whose growing dislike to ourselves, we

discovered to be partly jealousy of the respect and attention shown to us by the subordinate officers and crew, and partly offended pride because he did not "mess" with us, as the sea term is. Fair warning had been given me by our friends on shore, that when captain and passengers had separate establishments in this way, the former invariably made things as uncomfortable as was in his power. On first coming on board, therefore, we had invited him, and indeed always intended that he should form one of our party at meals, but he himself refused, alleging that the mates and boy would think themselves neglected if he left them. Now, however willing we were to accommodate ourselves to circumstances, the society at table of these three additional "hands," one of whom was less refined in manner than some of the men before the mast, was what we did not think it at all incumbent upon us to endure; nor did the idea seem ever to have suggested itself to them. One instance of the master's animosity towards us was so excessively ludicrous, that I think it must make you laugh, as it certainly made us.

Of course in that hot latitude, though we "killed our own mutton," we could not eat it all, and we were glad to give part to both captain and crew, by the latter of whom fresh meat would otherwise never have been tasted. One day the second mate, who always performed the part of butcher on board, had given orders himself as to the particular cooking of a dish of fresh pork, which was no sooner served up in the perfection of ship-culinary art, than the captain commanded it to be taken at once off his table, declaring he would not accept of anything from us. The tempting viands accordingly retreated up the companion, followed no doubt by the longing eyes of all save the lord paramount of the feast. But the great gruff mate sprang up after the steward, and declaring that he at least would not be balked of a good dinner when he could get it, seized the dish and sat down on a log of deck-timber to enjoy his meal, with all the appetite of a hungry man.

Oh! how these days dragged on, under a burning sun, in a ship that with a fair wind never made more than three knots an hour: with a disobliging, illiterate, and obstinate man for captain, quarrelsome officers, and grumbling crew! But, indeed, the latter had some cause for discontent. The want of provisions

began now to be subject of serious discussion amongst the people, and, except in trifling instances now and then, it was out of our power to supply them.

Vessels leaving Sierra Leone for Britain go to the south-west to catch the trade winds, and it was three weeks after the time of our quitting port ere we found ourselves in the latitude of the colony again ! At the least, we had therefore a prospect of being eight weeks longer at sea, and having to put into some place for provisions, would render it still later before we could hope to reach England.

Upon the 1st of May we were all but becalmed, and the sailors were fortunate enough to catch several dolphins and bonetos. One pleasing trait in these people was that the first fine fish they hooked was always sent down to our cabin, with a hope that it might be liked by *me*. The captain had then been ailing for some days, during which he had not appeared on deck ; but next morning, being worse, and in great alarm about himself, M—— offered to go and see him, and, without waiting for an answer, went to his cabin, prescribed for him, and sent every requisite from our medicine-chest. For nearly a week Captain P—— was very ill, but it had the beneficial effect of rendering him ashamed of conducting himself towards his passengers as he had done, and things were restored to a more pleasant state.

On the night of the 2nd there was very heavy weather, and we were disturbed by water flowing down the companion way, while the deck leaked so that we had to hold umbrellas over our heads. We heard next day that a huge sea had pooped the vessel and washed over the deck, and that, had the steersman not suddenly brought the ship round, another such sea must have sent her down by the stern. Truly we are little aware of the many special providences of God towards us !

We were now past the tropic, and the weather became colder, with occasional rain and squalls. Upon the morning of the 8th we found ourselves in company with two ships, and the captain took M——'s advice to try and get provisions from them, and thus avoid the necessity of touching at the Azores. One was bound from Liverpool to Bahia, and our ship's boat went off to her, and succeeded in obtaining cabin stores, such as tea, sugar, &c. There were the usual signals, and shouting through speaking-

trumpets, and then the other came alongside the X——, and the captain paid us a visit. He was a goodhumoured-looking Dutchman, with frank and friendly manners, now returning to Rotterdam from a voyage to Java, and his ship, "Les Deux Maries," was freighted, amongst other things, with numerous monkeys, cockatoos, parroquets, and sparrows. He spent the day on board the X——, talked of his family, told stories of pirates and sea-life, ordered numerous bags of bread from his vessel to ours, and tried to make up an acquaintance with R——, who was very shy, notwithstanding the many sincere regrets that all "de good gingerbread" which he had taken out with him from Rotterdam was unluckily finished, or he should have had much pleasure in begging R——'s acceptance of some. On hearing that the child's mamma was below and in bad health, the worthy Dutchman said that his ship carried a skilful physician, whose advice was at our service; but, knowing that a firm footing on land would be my only remedy, this offer was gratefully declined. "Les Deux Maries" was a large ship, carried six guns, and had, according to her captain's description, splendid accommodation for passengers. I believe we might have transhipped ourselves to her, had we liked, and thus got a much quicker passage home. The Rotterdam captain told a story of having, some years before, whilst in another ship, neither so well manned nor armed as his present, fallen in with a suspicious-looking brigantine, who, after asking the latitude and longitude, and the usual questions of "Whence from?" and "Whither bound?" all of which were duly answered, added,—

"What's your cargo?"

"What's that to you?" was the courteous answer the Dutchman sent from his speaking-trumpet to the craft, whose real character he more than suspected. Nothing foiled, the brigantine hailed again—"How many men have you?"

"What's that to you?" was the response, as gruffly as before.

The strange sail then sheered off to a more respectful distance, but early next morning, having altered her appearance a little, bore down again upon the merchant vessel, and repeated the very same questions, receiving also the same answers as he had previously. All doubt as to the brigantine's being a pirate had vanished on board the Dutchman, but he hoped by his presence

of mind to induce a belief that he was both armed and manned strongly enough to keep his own ground. A third time the manœuvre was repeated in the dusk of the evening, after which the stranger tacked and made fairly off, evidently convinced that he would gain nothing by attacking a vessel that had shown so little fear; while in the first port the Dutchman made, somewhere in the West Indies, he learned that this very brigantine which had spoken to him thrice within so short a period, was a pirate with a crew of fifty men, and carrying several guns, as she had entered the harbour a prize but a few days previous to his arrival.

It was evening ere the ships separated, that bearing the flag of Holland attended by the good wishes of all on board our own.

The people were now liberally supplied with bread, which, though hard, brown, and coarse, was heartily approved of by them all, after living so long upon red rice, the carpenter declaring the Dutch biscuit to be "maist as gude as ait-cake."

Matters now went on more smoothly. The grumbling and squabbling gave place to mirth and good-humour, and often whilst sitting in our cabin at night, it was pleasing to hear the rude voices of the men "forward" joining in some well-known sailor's song or old-fashioned ballad.

As the weather became colder and more damp, poor Jackson was attacked by violent fits of ague, and once more, laudanum, quinine, and brandy were in requisition. But nothing else would he accept of, different from the fare of his messmates, except a cup of tea, which was sent him morning and evening, with the accompaniment of a "white biscuit," which he might take or not as he liked.

Dolphins and bonetos were still caught, and one day a pilot-fish that had followed the vessel for a long time was hoisted in triumph upon deck. I used always to fancy that its name was derived from the fish being longitudinally striped blue and white like the pilot-flags, and was horrified to find it was so called from being always the forerunner of a shark.

On the Queen's birth-day my loyalty displayed itself by hunting out from among our stores all the necessary ingredients for a huge plum-pudding for the crew, who drank her Majesty's health with great good-will, and sent one of the men aft in the

evening to make a speech to M—— and thank him for their good dinner. But it was not merely by speaking that the men showed, rough as they were, that they possessed the feeling of gratitude. The carpenter had in the first place constructed out of one of our hen-coops a swinging cot for our cabin, for which the master himself actually contributed canvas! Others at their spare hours had made some pretty mats of Manilla cordage, which they would have been hurt had we refused to accept. Jackson begged us for two empty and nicely-shaped bottles from our medicine-chest, that he might cover them with netted cord, which, with no other assistance than a large needle, he did very neatly in pretty patterns; whilst the captain further gave orders that a more comfortable chair, with clean canvas-protected ropes to hold by, should be prepared to favour R——'s and my descent from the vessel.

Her Majesty's birth-day brought us a fair wind, which continued for a whole week!—a wonderful event in the annals of our X—— voyage. On the 27th the island of St. Michael's was in sight, and next day Terceira, another of the Azores. It was bitterly cold here, and my hands were fully occupied in making little warm gloves and socks for R—— out of scraps of flannel, as no such things were to be had in the colony when we left. Sarah felt the cold sadly, and all the warm clothing I had provided seemed not enough for her African sensations. I had, therefore, to devise means of giving her more such habiliments, and you would have smiled at the *outré* costume I contrived for her by the help of old flannel jackets, thick-lined dressing-gowns, and blanket shawls. She, at least, imagined herself a model of European fashion.

Heavy squalls at night, calms and foul winds by day, brought us to the 7th of June, when, about opposite Ushant, we encountered a tremendous gale of wind. The vessel rolled about most fearfully. One moment a sea washed over the deck, and drenched every article in our cabin, throwing them violently to the lee-side; while, as she righted again, it required some strength to keep even our own footing. M——'s ingenuity had before caused more than one formidable leak to fall into conduits formed by the *troughs* taken out of the hen-coops, and fastened where they could receive the water, and let it run into a basin set below,

instead of upon our mattresses. But now that the salt-water poured down from every seam into our berths, M—— nailed upon the planked roofs and sides all the African mats we had brought with us, and then made a canopy of tarpaulins and Macintosh cloaks under the skylight in our main-cabin, but which were yet insufficient to prevent us getting a share of each succeeding "sea" we shipped. The skylight itself was closed and covered with a canvas "cap;" but still the liquid enemy contrived to dash in, until poor Sarah was actually crying, not from alarm, but from sheer vexation. I sat with R—— on my lap for many a weary hour that day, as even when asleep there was not a dry corner in which to lay him down. But when awake it was almost impossible to get him to remain quiet, as, like all children, he did not mind the violent rocking to and fro of the vessel, always contriving to balance himself though I could not, and only remarking with his merry voice in country language, as a chair or cask broke from its lashings and rolled along the floor, "ship run all about."

I overheard the men on deck remonstrating with the captain for keeping on too much sail, and going right before the wind; but naturally he concluded himself the best judge of what ought to be done, though of the many vessels now in sight some were scudding under bare poles, and others had merely one or two sails set; whilst we carried lower studding-sails until they were blown from the yards.

That was a sleepless night. As the shock of each giant wave struck the vessel, I could not help experiencing the shivering dread of her sinking at once; and then, as she recovered herself, to be again thrown almost on her beam-ends, there was the sure conviction that He "who bringeth the winds out of his hid treasures" was her guide, for human fancy could not understand how she escaped destruction. Amongst the alarming sounds of the wind, the sea, and the shouting of men's voices, we constantly heard the breaking of plates and glasses in our little pantry, and the knocking about of everything in the cabin, however firmly secured it had been; and these last sounds were by far the most distressing to poor Sarah, who would have thought nothing of the storm, had it only let the cups and platters alone.

At length the morning light breaking through the bulls' eyes

raised our hearts and hopes to see the promise of another day. But still, although the sun shone, and there was no rain, the same heavy seas continued to strike us, drenching everything below, despite of all contrivances. Then the cargo of timber shifted, and as the ends of the logs kept knocking against the bulkhead that separated them from our cabin, I dreaded that they would burst through, and even be the means of sending the vessel down. One of the sailors who got jammed between two huge logs, narrowly escaped with some bruises, and this new danger called many into the hold, who could not well be spared from their duty on deck. The leak, which had been so long kept under, began to gain once more on us, and the constant working of the pumps added to the men's fatiguing labours. The captain now begged us to supply them with "grog," and I felt so glad we had taken on board what I had considered at first a very unnecessary and useless addition to our stock of drinkables, namely, a case of the best brandy and gin. Andrew had had his foot dreadfully crushed a short time before this, by the fall of a heavy iron, and Jackson was still very weak and unfit for active exertion, so the benefit of the two additional men was now fully felt and acknowledged, the master himself thanking M—— for having insisted on their being sent. That night was calmer, and we rose with grateful hearts and refreshed frames, to make some preparations for leaving the vessel, as the storm, although it had not caused us to go faster than seven knots an hour, had yet helped us on so far that we hourly expected to see land. On the 10th we sighted the Start, with a fair wind; next day the Isle of Wight, and on the 12th Beachy Head. R—— and Sarah were in ecstasies at once more seeing "bush," and I equally rejoiced not only to be able to pack, but to see the necessity of doing so with expedition.

How gaily the ship-linen was stowed into one box, and with what high spirits another set aside ticketed "for landing," whilst large trunks and sea-chests were roped with marvellous activity! Still, although so near the "long-sought, long-looked-for" land, we were by no means free from exposure to danger, and owing to light winds, tides, and carelessness, were very nearly aground off Dieppe, the last place our ship had cause to be near.

We rose at four o'clock on the morning of the 14th, and learnt

that we were becalmed in a fog off Hastings. The X—— was at anchor in the midst of a fishery, and had by some means or other broken the nets. It was therefore not unlikely that some boat might speak us; and we—having serious thoughts, if such an opportunity presented, to take advantage of it to leave the vessel, and thus avoid the slow passage she would inevitably make up the Thames—proceeded to complete our disembarking arrangements. At seven o'clock a fishing-boat was alongside, and after M—— had spoken to the men, who said they would lose considerably by the damage done to their nets, and were glad to earn a little money unexpectedly, we decided to go ashore with them, and agreed to be ready not later than nine o'clock, as then the tide would be in our favour for reaching Hastings. You will believe I was too happy to eat breakfast, and too much engaged to boot, for there were all the busy little *last* things to be done, to the packing away of spoons and forks. A despatch-box was put to the ignoble use of having, amongst other sundries, biscuits and raisins stowed in it for R—— and Sarah, during the pull to land; my work-bag was filled with an additional warm spencer and travelling-cap for the little head that now looked so gay in its broad-brimmed African grass hat of “three copper” value.

We had heard that barely as many pieces of pork and beef as would serve for three days' consumption remained in the harness casks, therefore it was with double good-will that the remainder of our rice, flour, biscuit, and other stores was handed over to the steward, and the men told that the remaining pigs were theirs. I was sorry to leave our two pretty milch-goats, one of the latter was such a lovely black and white spotted creature, with eyes and feet like a gazelle's, polished black horns, and long white beard like floss silk; but the two individuals to whom the animals were given, would, I had no doubt, treat them kindly.

At nine we were ready, the luggage left on board being stowed into one of the berths, and what we were to take tossed into our new conveyance, with nearly a boat-load of cloaks, shawls, and pea-jackets. It was with feelings, I hope, of deep thankfulness, that I once more found myself with the sky overhead, but my two months' imprisonment below had rendered my eyes so weak, I could scarcely bear the light. The anchor had

just been weighed again, and all the sailors were clustered on the side of the ship where the boat waited for us; and how yellow and sickly their faces seemed, compared with the ruddy though weather-beaten countenances of the three fishermen, into whose rude but strong-built craft R—— and I were first lowered! We soon found ourselves all seated in one compartment of the little sloop, the rope was cast adrift, and the oars splashing in the water, bore us some paces from the X——, when we perceived the whole crew, still with heads uncovered, standing on the quarter-deck; while three hearty English cheers, timed by the little captain himself, bore testimony to the kindly feeling of all on board as we left them.

It is inherent in human nature to take an interest in a place where—let the lodging have been ever so humble—we have spent some part of our life; and after we had silently acknowledged the honest parting greeting of those who for nearly three months had shared the same risks with ourselves, we watched the brig as she floated lazily onwards with the tide, until the haze completely hid her from our view.

There was just enough of a breeze to render a sail a slight assistance to the rowers, and to overpower me with the keen freshness of the air, so that I was glad to lie down on the rough bench, and fall sound asleep, R—— happily following my example.

The exhaustion was quite gone on awaking—whilst the wind and tide were so favourable, that the men laid aside their oars, and busied themselves with the fish they had caught.

The boat was divided into three compartments—that next us being filled with gravel and sand, with a *well* in the midst, where one man washed the fish, the other pouring bucket after bucket of salt-water over them. In the bow was a little covered cabin, where occasionally one went in and returned with a tankard of ale.

The men seemed to be father and sons, all with a very intelligent and thoroughly *good* expression of countenance. Their dress was rustic and picturesque;—short red and blue woollen frocks, black “south-westerns,” and gigantic leather “overalls,” recalling to imagination the seven-leagued boots of our nursery chronicles. The fishermen said these enormous boots cost a

great sum of money at first, but were invaluable, being strong and quite water-proof. The old father spoke of the great damage the X—— had done in breaking his nets, and said he had seen many a vessel from a far country, but never one with her sides and bottom so overgrown with sea-weed, and covered with barnacles. These had been the means of entangling the nets. The men had picked off several, which he wished to take home to show as a curiosity. As we rowed quietly on, suddenly a well-remembered sound arrested our attention with the power of magic, whilst the good old man, who seemed to participate in our feelings, smilingly exclaimed—"Ye hear them: the birds,—the birds singing on shore: we are quite near, though we cannot see them for the mist."

The clear, sweet carol of the lark and thrush rose up in such a gush of melody, and brought so many memories on its breath, that I could have exclaimed with Izaak Walton, "Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in heaven, when thou permittest such to bad men on earth!" On looking at our watches, we were surprised to find that we had been more than three hours in the boat; the time had passed so very quickly; yet after we had heard the dear home-sound of the birds singing, it seemed very long ere we saw the shore.

At last through the cloudy grey atmosphere we caught a glimpse of a beautiful sandy beach; and then a wall of low white cliffs appearing every moment more distinct, and relieved at irregular distances by many a patch of green grass or climbing shrub that grew on the face of the rocks. As we approached they gradually assumed a higher and bolder aspect, resembling, in their fantastic mould, magnificent pillars, arches, and Gothic windows, till we could actually have affirmed the one moment that a marble palace lay before us, and the next, that a dilapidated castle, or venerable abbey, frowned above the quiet little bays which indent the coast. Then came the view of green pasture-fields, with sleek, contented-looking cattle grazing; whilst the blue curling smoke amongst trees gave token of some "cottage home of England" hidden in its warm sheltered nook.

How beautiful everything appeared! The mist had rolled away, and the summer sun, shining out brightly, discovered at a short distance the pretty and romantic-looking little town of

Hastings, with many a vessel at anchor before its crowded street, from the slow and heavy sand-barge to the graceful yacht and privileged pennant-bearer in her Majesty's service. The men begged us to sit quiet in the boat whilst they hauled it up on the beach, which, with the assistance of some of their fraternity, was dexterously accomplished; and as one of the near bystanders, evidently a friend of our fishermen, stepped forward to proffer his assistance as I was lifted from the boat, his hearty "Welcome once more to English ground, madam!" sounded quite musical.

A crowd of nursery-maids with their young charges, washer-women watching their clothes bleaching on the sands, school-boys, and laughing little girls gathering shells and pebbles, added to the motley character of the group of seafaring people who stood still to witness the novel spectacle of our landing. They looked at us in silent wonder, especially at Sarah, who seemed more alive to the consciousness of walking for the first time in boots than to the gaze of the multitude. But no marvel that a general stare was directed towards us, for the capacious front of her bonnet, and the narrow high crown of mine, bespoke a fashion now obsolete even amongst the laundresses of the busy watering-place; whilst my veteran chequered cloak must have seemed gipsy-like in its ample folds, to eyes daily accustomed to admire the graceful cardinal and bewitching mantelet of later adoption.

But through the gaping and laughing crowd we threaded our way with due *nonchalance*, and, allowing the custom-house officer to take charge of our boxes, followed a very civil self-elected guide to a neat and comfortable hotel; where the pretty rosy-cheeked damsel, who offered to carry R—— upstairs, stood in utter amazement to see the child clasp his little black maid tightly round her neck, and refuse to accept of any other assistance.

When the good old fisherman came to receive his due, I was surprised to learn that we had rowed fourteen miles. Our luggage was not passed without all, excepting the privileged tin box of papers, first undergoing a more inquisitive than necessary search. I wonder if we were taken for smugglers of French lace and gloves!

After various inquiries and consultations we decided to start

by the night-mail for London, securing all the inside places. Meanwhile, writing home-letters, reading the newspapers, dining, and drinking tea, passed the time quickly, the intervals being employed in looking out of the windows, one of which was immediately opposite an ancient church, seemingly built of flints: the other overlooked the bustling street; and the interest excited by each passer-by, from the lady equestrian to the ragged urchin trundling his hoop along the pavement, can only be understood by those who have been, like ourselves, the residents of a strange country as uncivilized as Africa.

At ten we left Hastings. It was a beautiful moonlit night, which invested every thing, to the very sign-posts and turnpike gates, with a fairy-like radiance. R—— soon fell asleep in my lap, and Sarah's bewilderment at the flying house, so different from the low open phaetons of Sierra Leone, was soon absorbed by sleep also.

There had been several slight showers of rain, just enough to make every leaf and blade of grass appear in the grey of the morning as if glittering over with diamonds. Part of our route lay through fine wooded scenery; and the novelty of the rapid travelling at that hour, the thankful delight of being safe on land only one week after the terrible night of the 7th; with a thousand home-emotions, conspired to throw a charm over every solitary kitchen-garden and wayside cottage; while each quiet country labourer plodding along to farm-yard or field, every early dairy woman amongst her pretty and patient cows, seemed objects worthy of the pencil of Edwin Landseer. Then as we drew nearer to London, the road became more and more alive. Butchers' carts, and waggons laden with cabbages, turnips, and all sorts of seasonable vegetables, decked with bright nosegays of dear English flowers, appeared as never market-gardeners' and butchers' carts appeared before. Omnibuses, stage-coaches, donkey-carts, horse and foot passengers, dairymen, cattle and dogs, multiplied at every step, and the great dray-horses looked quite colossal in my eyes, after being so long accustomed to the slenderly formed steeds of Sierra Leone; whilst the rows of suburban brick-built houses, with the sounding names of "Bellevue Cottages" or "Elm-Row Villas," stuck up on a board at a corner, wore a more lively and country

air than I am sure they had done since their foundation. A golden halo seemed to rest even on the muddy Thames as we drove across London Bridge, exactly as the various clocks pealed forth the hour of six. But, ah! to me the broad waters of that noble river,—with its forest of masts which have bent to the gales of every climate, and towered above the decks on which our brave seamen have kept lonely watch alike in the arctic and tropic seas, whilst their good ships were proudly bearing on the riches of every country under the sun to the one sea-girt isle that boasts the dominion of the ocean,—have ever been waters endowed with some mystic influence over my thoughts, which causes all around to look bright and sunny; and that neither from their vastness, nor yet for their beauty, but simply from their being connected with pleasant and happy associations.

But leaving the royal Thames to its own undisputed majesty, we passed through the streets until we reached Charing-Cross. It was seven o'clock ere we were once more comfortably domiciled; as, after quitting the coach, we had to drive to no less than three different hotels before finding one with spare accommodations at that early hour of the morning. You will readily understand that as the sleepy-looking waiters severally answered our inquiries, we felt *that* to be the most wearisome half-hour which had passed by since four o'clock of the morning before, when for the last time we left our berths on board the good brig X——, which good brig, by-the-bye, was a week longer ere she arrived at the port of London, and lost one of her anchors in coming up the river.

* * * * *

I had often, and long before that day of excitement, heard it remarked by older and more experienced travellers than myself, that it is only on approaching your own country from a *first* absence abroad that you feel a joyous and impatient eagerness to land. I used always to express my disbelief of this creed, and fancied that every succeeding return from a sojourn in foreign climes, especially if fraught with danger by storm and pestilence, would bring a stronger degree of thankful feeling and unclouded hope. But I now join in the opinion, that amongst those days in human life whose peculiar brightness can shine

but once, must rank that on which an individual first sets foot in his native country after a residence in a strange and distant land; for, oh! how soon may the glad memory of a first safe return be blended with that of a first heavy sorrow! You may bound on shore in the full anticipation of a happy greeting from those who are at that hour on their dying bed, and whose prayer to live long enough *only* to see your face once more, their Heavenly Father hath not seen fit to grant! Your eyes may rest again on your childhood's haunts, they may look with more interest than ever on the well-remembered flowers of your home-gardens, while the gentle hand that planted those very flowers to welcome the travel-worn brother or sister back again, is mouldering away in the cold and silent grave!

I saw once more my country's clover leas
 All sparkling with the pearls of summer showers,—
 I mark'd the drowsy murmur of the bees
 That humm'd amidst her old familiar flowers,
 And heard the low soft rustle of the breeze
 That gently moved among her garden bowers.
 Long-yearn'd-for sights and sounds were mingled there,—
 In one calm smile were wrapt both earth and sky,
 Healthful and pure we knew the sweet warm air
 That with its blossom'd breath went fitting by,
 And yet o'er all the landscape fresh and fair
 A shadow deep, and solemn, seem'd to lie!
 For midst those left before—all now were *not*—
 One form was absent from the household band,
 Even hers—of whom we deem'd the earthly lot
 Was cast afar on some bright southern strand—
 Alas! one darkly lone and narrow spot
 Had bound her evermore within her native land!

LETTER XX.

Return to Sierra Leone — Passengers.

On board the barque V—, off the Nore,
January 16th, 1844.

MY DEAR C.—Here we are under weigh again to return to Sierra Leone. We came down by a steamer to Gravesend on Saturday, and as we stopped at the pier, a cry of “Any one here for the V—?”—directed our attention to a waterman, who said he had been looking out for us some days; so we embarked in his boat and pulled to our vessel, which lay far down; I think we had to row at least two miles. On nearing the V—, and making fast the boat, M— of course asked if there was a “whip.” “Carpenter, have you a whip forward there?” was passed down the ship. “Whip! no: anything heavy to come up?” “Only a lady; that’s all, sir!” replied one of our watermen, whereupon the Captain came forward, and begged I would endeavour to ascend by the swinging and perpendicular rope-ladder, which I managed to do. Our state-room is large and airy, light and convenient. We have put down our carpet, which looks quite grand; but it is bitterly cold on board, except in the main cabin, which is heated by a comfortable stove. Besides ourselves, there are two English, three German passengers, and one little African boy, returning to his native country after having completed his education! My thoughts linger in the land we are once more quitting for the African shore. * * * *

At Sea, January, 1844.

Far from our parted treasures borne—
Whatever may betide,
No longer now each night and morn
Shall find me by their side!
Ere gladly I return once more,
My cherished babes! to thee,
My foot must press another shore
Beyond the broad blue sea.

There is no lot without alloy,
For back thy sire must hie
Where thy far birth-place stands, my boy !
Beneath the tropic sky :
The lime-flower there its perfume sheds,
And clear sweet waters flow ;
And palm-trees bend their graceful heads
To all the winds that blow.

There mid the orange boughs, the breeze
Its fitful music makes ;
Now murmuring like the hum of bees
Among the flow'ry brakes ;
Or moaning like the surge of seas
When the wild storm-voice wakes :

While butterflies on jewell'd wing
Skim through the amber air,
Bright birds are ever fluttering
Mid shining foliage there ;
For ever seems the garb of spring
That glowing clime to wear.

But now, sweet child ! depriv'd of thee,
Lone shall that land appear ;
For still thy buoyant infant glee
Was wont my home to cheer,
And throw a sunny gleam of joy
O'er all the weary day,
The while thy father's grave employ
Had summon'd him away.

When fierce and mighty o'er our hill
The dark tornadoes rush'd,
Within thy mother's arms thou still
Wert safe and warmly hush'd ;
But now no more her anxious voice,
When dreams have made thee weep,
Shall with old cradle-songs rejoice
And lull thee back to sleep.

But though no longer on her breast,
Nor on thy father's knee,
Thy welcome place of happy rest,
My little son ! must be.
Our Father from his throne above
Will hear us when we pray,
And shield thee with his wings of love,
Though we be far away !

Our ship her solitary path
Pursues along the deep,
And He who quell'd the tempest's wrath
Hath bid the storm-wind sleep;—
The rippling of the waters lone
Is all the sound I hear—
Yet hour by hour thy prattling tone
Seems whispering in mine ear.

And still before my yearning sight
Thou comest glad as when
We last beheld thy warm delight
To see us both again :—
Ah ! little recked'st thou, whilst they smil'd
And kiss'd thy rosy cheek,
Thy parents' hearts were full, dear child,
Of thoughts too sad to speak !

And oh ! though all unwatch'd by me,
Young daughter of my hope,
With all the ills of infancy
Thy fragile frame must cope.
The God who gave thee, opening flower !
Will guard thee night and day,
And bear thee through each perilous hour
That yet may cloud thy way.

When parting fears across me stole,
How placid was thy smile !—
Unconscious that thy mother's soul
Was wrung with grief the while ;
But thou shalt guide thy tiny feet
Across their guileless track,
And lisp in childhood's accents sweet
Ere she again comes back !

Meanwhile with hearts of fervent trust
Before Heaven's throne we bend,
And to His care all-wise and just
Our absent babes commend.
For His blest sake who felt on earth
What little children feel,
And died, like man of mortal birth,
For man's immortal weal !



LETTER XXI.

View of Madeira — Case of African Fever — Arrival at Sierra Leone — Evening Ride — Burying Grounds — Unsettled state of the House — “Cooking” Clothes — Improvements — Flower of Sour-sop — Fire on Mount Oriel — Burning Trees — Colonial Superstitions — Cocoa-Nuts — The White Man’s Grave.

Sierra Leone, March 30th, 1844.

A PASSAGE of twenty-seven days from Gravesend, but only twenty-one from the Downs, has brought us out once more to this most unhealthy quarter of the globe. That day fortnight from our embarkation we sailed near enough to Madeira to discern a lighthouse, a village, and several small white buildings, which, I was told, were monasteries, on the bold rugged sides of the barren-looking rock, which indeed, from the point at which we viewed it, gave little sign of being the fertile island it really is.

We had a slight squall one night whilst sailing between the Cape de Verdes and the land, and next morning found that the ropes and canvas of the vessel were covered with the minute red sand the wind had brought from the Sahara.

One forenoon, when about ninety miles north of Sierra Leone, the ship seemed as if surrounded by shoals, the sea having exactly the same earthy tinge it has on the Goodwin Sands. In those latitudes this peculiar appearance is said to portend a calm, and I should suppose is caused by animalcula, as, on passing through this coloured water, it looked thick and slimy. The different currents there also presented an extraordinary aspect, and quite new to me, as I had seen nothing of the kind in my two previous voyages. A broad sheet of comparatively smooth water stretched out for miles in one direction; while beyond, the foaming waves of the sea were hemmed in, appearing like another and more turbulent stream; bounded again at a short distance by a third distinct portion, whose surface, as it rose and

heaved, yet did not break into wreaths of froth. The ship was thus at one moment pursuing her course through crested billows, and the next borne with a strange rocking motion over the sullen swell of a strong counter-current. Imagine a vast expanse of water, extending as far as the eye can reach, formed of alternate rows of sluggish canals and brawling rivers, and you will perfectly understand the appearance that struck me as being so remarkable.

The day before we landed it was a dead calm, with a scorching sun and thick close atmosphere, and to us proved the longest and dreariest of the passage—my poor brother R—— suffering from severe illness, which, as soon as Dr. F—— came on board next morning, after our ship dropped anchor in the harbour, he pronounced to be the dreaded coast-fever. This alarming cause of anxiety, combined with the turmoil of the first few weeks on shore—a turmoil, be it understood, peculiar only to a climate and situation like this—drove everything else out of my thoughts for a time; and now M—— and I have each come as safely through a sort of second “seasoning,” to which, I am told, most Europeans are subjected on their return to this country, however they might previously have become acclimated.

We found everything looking exactly as it had done when we left the colony ten months before. The wide grass-grown streets had the same deserted air they always present to a new-comer; and, as I walked from the landing-place to a house in town, appeared as unfamiliar to me as if I had never gazed down upon them from my cloud-capp'd eyrie, with much of the vague wonder at their motley groups that a stranger might be supposed to feel regarding London itself, during a sojourn of two years in the cupola of St. Paul's, were that celebrated pile some hundreds of feet higher than it is.

It was late ere we mounted our horses, and left Freetown for our own residence; and the great lone hills, over which the shadows of evening were rapidly falling, looked as if they would fain repulse, by their frowning and desolate aspect, all wanderers from another land, who thus dared to invade these dreary solitudes. But upon turning on to the mountain road, the darkness of night had shrouded every surrounding object; and the howling and moaning of the wind through the branches of the palms and

masses of waving bush added to the melancholy of our silent and weary ride. Even the very air, alive with the shrill sound of myriads of insects, seemed to laugh in exultation at its own deadly influence: and while I remembered with gratitude that my children were safe under the genial skies of our native country, I did not forget those parents whose young son was now undergoing the climate's sure ordeal, to rally in God's good time, or add another to the countless numbers whose early graves crowd the burying-grounds of Sierra Leone.

And here let me quote a remark of the settler-nurse who attended R——. On looking at the view from our windows, after saying it was all very fine, suddenly some new object seemed to arrest her attention, and her whole features brightening into animation, she exclaimed, pointing to the cemetery at the foot of our hill, "Ah! you can see funeral when one go!—how nice! And 't other burying-ground, too—how very nice and beautiful!"

Now, though there are, in more loveable lands than this, many and many a green and shaded churchyard, whose tranquil stillness and beautifully secluded situation might well give rise to the passing wish that some one of these might be our own last resting-place—the spots appropriated to such a purpose in Freetown have something more forlorn about them than I can either account for or describe. They are, in the first place—as is usual in all warm climates—very properly, situations chosen at a distance from church and street alike. The original one—a square enclosure, upon a rising ground at this end of the long formal avenues of houses leading down to the harbour—is marked by its gravestones being more widely scattered, and also of a more venerable appearance than those of the other; but with the exception of one or two trees at a solitary corner, its old grey walls surround but a bare and shadeless spot; although it is kept in tolerable order by the Nova Scotians, almost the only persons who reserve to themselves a right of interment there; and who, in their strong and sacred regard to this burial-place of their own people, evince feelings that, however condemned as prejudices, I cannot help liking, from their general accordance with those of both patrician and peasant of Britain. The larger and more recently-formed cemetery lies between our hill and that on

which the Barracks stand, and from this point of view has a strikingly wild and neglected appearance, although many of its freshly-plastered and white-washed tombs have something revoltingly bright and glaring about them, thickly clustered together as they are in one quarter, and half hid by tall grass and low dense bush; the remaining portion of the ground being a complete jungle of matted underwood. It is first enclosed by a mouldering stone-wall, and then neatly enough fenced by a lime-hedge, which enlarges it by taking in four angular corners; and encompassed beyond that again by the wattled huts of the Liberated Africans. But (except a locust-tree of moderate size, whose feathery branches, with their pendent crimson blossoms, droop over one or two of the graves) it contains not even shrubs capable of giving it a picturesque effect—or, what is of far more consequence in a climate where exposure to heat or wet proves so often fatal, of affording a screen from either sun or rain to those in attendance at the rites of sepulture. Monuments have been erected to the memory of public individuals who have perished in the colony, as well as testimonials presented to those spared to leave its fatal coast; but as the most graceful way of showing our esteem for the dead is by associating his remembrance with some essential benefit conferred on the living, I have sometimes wondered that a plain edifice—a mere roof, supported by light pillars, has never been raised as one of these monuments—to shelter alike from the glare of tropic noon and the fury of tropic storm—the clergyman who reads and the assembly who listen, on a foreign and deadly shore, to the touchingly sublime and consolatory burial-service of the church of our country and fathers.*

The interior of the house looked strange the evening we arrived, yet everything was exactly as we had put it on going away; several of poor little R——'s country toys were found where he had left them. Until some of our chests that had been left for security with a friend in town could be got up and opened, we had to borrow some horrid *tin* knives and forks

* The white residents are so few that a small building might be sufficient, as, for the use of the natives, whose funerals are always very extensive, it would be comparatively unnecessary—the same degree of exposure not affecting them injuriously.

from Petah. For a considerable period after landing we were far from being *settled*. The front piazza—resembling more the hold of a ship than any place else—was full of packages, chests of drawers, and trunks—one apartment being completely emptied of all superfluous furniture, to give more air to our convalescent fever-patient. In the midst of this confusion dire, in walked Mr. X— one afternoon, and in laudable compassion for the “bush” state of my *salon*, sat down on a deal box in preference to a chair, joining in our laugh at the strange drawing-room ornaments of hammers, pincers, and other unpacking tools that were scattered about. And such was the apartment in which I received all visitors for a time. Many of our quondam black servants and dependants came up with their “good mornings” to little R—, and seemed quite disappointed that he has not returned to *his* native country with us.

All manner of care had been taken of the house by its temporary inmates; but I was speedily reminded of the difficulty encountered in preserving anything here, by finding a large cushion that was sent out to be *sunned* brought back in a very short space of time with part of its covering completely eaten through by bug-a-bugs, who at the same time had left traces of their earthen galleries over the whole of its surface. Cockroaches and ants seem to have multiplied during our absence; but Sarah proves, by the active manner in which she sets herself to the operations of sweeping, dusting, and scrubbing, that she has profited by the example of tidy English servants.

It is quite edifying to see her newly-acquired importance; and, indeed, I find her a valuable treasure, compared with the rest of her countrypeople in our domestic establishment. Not but that her zeal to show off the many things she has learnt in “white man’s country” is sometimes carried to a ludicrous excess. One day I saw her busily engaged under the shade of the orange-trees, having in one hand a large wooden spoon, with which she kept stirring and shaking up the mysterious-looking contents of a huge saucepan held in the other. On beckoning her from the window, and inquiring what she was about, she came running up-stairs, and with a countenance beaming with self-satisfaction gravely informed me that she had just been “cooking her pinafores!” and was about to spread them out

to dry, having observed the manner in which washerwomen "cooked" and bleached clothes in England; and, uncovering the saucepan at the same time, showed me her once bright blue gingham pinafores, now scarcely distinguishable from those of brown holland, with which they were indiscriminately mingled in boiling soap-suds!

Servants are rather scarce in the colony just now, owing to the great demand for free emigrants in the West Indies. We have fortunately got back several of those who were with us before; and besides the unusual circumstance of a young Liberated African damsel, whose apprenticeship in a negro family is just out, offering herself as a handmaiden; one of those identical little girls whose idleness and dulness used to annoy me so much when I *first* attempted to make house and nurse maids of this country's sable daughters, appeared up here a few days after our arrival, in the shape of a tall portly figure, with kerchiefed head, shining silver rings, and coral necklace, saying she wished to come back again in the capacity of needlewoman.

Since coming out this time I am glad to find bread is wonderfully improved in quality to what it was before. We can get really very good rolls from at least one baker—a Spanish or Portuguese negro who has set up in business here. *Apropos* of improvements, I formerly saw several numbers of a newspaper conducted entirely by the people (who are all black or coloured) of the settlement of Monrovia, which publication, although bearing the sounding title of 'Africa's Luminary,' contained at that time little besides articles of original composition, suited only to a very low intellectual standard, or quite ridiculous from their inflated style. But a recent number of the same newspaper, now published under the more appropriate name of the 'Liberia Herald,' has actually in its columns, amongst some other very well-chosen extracts, that admirable essay upon Secrecy written by Lord ——'s secretary, the appreciation of which, in my opinion, speaks much for the advancement in mental taste of the Liberians.

We have had damp hazy weather, with strong sea-breezes, ever since our arrival, varied latterly by an occasional heavy shower. It is at times, however, very hot indeed, the thermometer being 88° in the shade, though at others so low as 74°.

The mango-trees are laden with young fruit—the rose-apple covered with its splendid blossoms; and I have just observed for the *first* time that of the sour-sop, more like an ornament stiffly cut out in wood than a flower. Three sepals—in thickness and general appearance resembling the rind of a lemon—open like the outer husk of the beech-nut, and show three scarcely finer petals, that form a cup about the size of a walnut, enclosing a single round and hard green button.'

The ruined house still stands on Mount Oriel, although it seems there was one terrific tornado in June last, during which the church-spire was struck by lightning, and all the colony thrown into a state of consternation by the almost unparalleled violence of the thunder-storm.

This is the season of *bush-burnings*; and though you might suppose that I was now accustomed to the sight, it is one which still attracts me to the windows. There is something—especially if it be in the evening—so inconceivably wild and romantic in the appearance of fires all over the face of the country so far as the eye can reach, from the dull and sullen glares that redden the atmosphere at irregular distances throughout the whole extent of the Bullom shore to the blazing beacons on the far range of hills towards Wilberforce and the signal station. But these in our immediate vicinity have a still more striking aspect. The sight of Mount Oriel and the hill above it, on fire the other day, recalled to my mind some of Cooper's animated and faithful descriptions. The Guinea grass, like that of the prairies, burns with tremendous rapidity, roaring and crackling with a noise that can be heard at a distance of several miles. As I stood at the open *end* window of the piazza late at night, and looked across the ravine guarded by the young and vigorous "bush" beyond; which, though scorched on the outskirts, had yet repelled the flames from penetrating far into its fresh green depths, these silent and untenanted mountain-sides were covered with thousands of glimmering lights, that rivalled in numbers and brightness those of Freetown and its busy environs; so that out of the burning remnants of venerable trees and stumps that look so dreary and ugly by day, imagination created the cheerfully lit-up casements of a city that sat queen-like on her proud and lofty hills.

Another evening that the "bush" on the eminence above us

had been set on fire, suddenly (although by what means I cannot explain, unless the strong sea-breeze had wafted a brand there) flames ascended out of the top of a tall and time-worn tree as from a chimney, and it continued to burn for days, sending its scintillating showers in all directions—myriads of sparks, with the aspect of sky-rockets, being thrown up in the air, falling, I am sure, half a mile from the tree itself, to the extreme danger of the tarred shingles composing the roof of this house. During the broad light of day, sometimes, nothing save a light-grey smoke is seen issuing from a smouldering tree, but at night a “fiery-tressed star” appears, gleaming low and redly in the darkened sky, and which has more than once startled me, until remembering that one of these lofty and hollow relics of the forest stood in that direction, and was thus slowly and surely consuming away.

But one afternoon the smoke and flame together seemed leading down into the very choicest of our “bush,” from a part of the farm that a man had been permitted to clear and plant, and all our people were despatched to attempt putting it out. I was glad to be able to accompany M——, by means of a new and delightful path that he has had cut through a mass of dark shady trees; and then, clambering up the steep front of the hill, we came upon the scene.

The ground was one heap of hot ashes, amongst which numerous stumps, each several feet high, were burning like so many stoves, whilst the prostrate trunks of several trees of magnificent dimensions were being devoured in the same manner by the swift flames. It was not, however, to save these that any effort was made, but to cut off the fire so as to prevent it rushing into the undulating sea of foliage through which we had just passed; and that being full of dried leaves, decayed branches, and withered grass, must have been, although not totally destroyed, at least disfigured, and also rendered useless as a shelter to this walk, which is ever cool and pleasant at the hottest hour of the day.

Green boughs and ashes were therefore put in instant requisition—the few pailfuls of water were soon spent—but a heap of exhausted embers thrown upon a burning stump had a wonderful effect in smothering its fire, while leafy branches in the hands of some of the people who did not fear the heat partially arrested

the progress of the flames, though it was quite impossible to extinguish them. It was, however, mainly owing to the wind, which had been blowing almost a gale, gradually lulling, that before it grew quite dark all apprehension of danger was removed.

Meanwhile I had wandered onwards amongst the loose and thickly-scattered stones, stumps, and huge branches, occasionally coming upon a patch of burning brushwood, or startling still more by the sound of my footsteps the few melancholy birds that hovered around the place, where many of their nests and half-fledged broods had no doubt shared the fate of the shrubs and grass that sheltered them. Thick and tangled "bush," out of which rose a few high and hoary trees overshadowing the spot where I stood, bounded the view on one side. On the other Mount Oriel, black from its recent burning, was softened by the tranquil river, against whose glassy surface, instead of the sky, the ruined house and trees now seemed to rest; and further still stretched the indistinct outline of a wide range of opposite coast. The higher hill above the "Mount," divided by another deep yawning fissure, with its thread-like stream and fringe of verdure, from the third and yet more lofty and bleak-looking hill, completed the picture in that direction; while in front I saw the bare rounded top of Leicester Mountain, relieved in its turn by the pyramidal crest of the darkly-wooded and more distant Sugar-Loaf.

There was something dreary in the prospect: broad tracts of apparently not unfertile land, where the few attempts at culture showed themselves alone in the surrounding desolation by fire and hatchet; within sight was no domestic animal, nor yet human being, save the party engaged at the burning trees; while besides the ruined house and our own—upon both of which, on turning round, I looked far, far down—I could distinguish no habitation of any kind, except a great conical ant-heap that rivalled in size most of the watch-huts I had ever seen. But on ascending still higher, and taking another retrospective glance, Freetown itself, the vessels in the harbour, and the horizon of waters beyond, became visible over the roof of our house and the tops of our loftiest trees—presenting in its quiet valley-like features a more incongruous aspect, compared with the immediate scenery around, than it is possible to describe: indeed our own

cottage and grounds, which are certainly lonely, wild, and rustic enough, looked quite cheerful, cultivated, and artificial, from the position where I stood, and which I had never reached before, owing to the absence of a suitable path.

I never saw a cocoa-nut tree so richly laden as the young one at the back of the house has been this season: there were one hundred nuts gathered off it a few days ago, and there still remain several bunches not quite ripe.

A friend who possesses a pretty farm happened to call lately, and, seeing a basket-full of the beautiful cocoa-nuts, wished to have them to plant. Meaning to plant several ourselves, I suppose we did not feel so generously disposed as usual, and mentioned our intention of having a cocoa-nut nursery on our own farm. Mr. — then asked me if I had never heard that when a white person plants a cocoa-nut at Sierra Leone he dies shortly afterwards; and seemed surprised I did not know of the superstition. We all laughed a great deal, and insisted that this was merely said to ensure his getting all the cocoa-nuts to himself. But in spite of our raillery on the subject—since it is really a Sierra Leone “freet,” as they say in Scotland—I confess this conversation rather damped my zeal for planting cocoa-nuts; not because it could in any way have an influence over our living or dying, but simply because were we to die soon afterwards the event would assuredly be attributed to the planting of the cocoa-nuts! Another standard superstition among the Europeans here is that if one, who may even as yet have escaped so well that all imagine him to be climate-proof, set about building a house in the colony, he will never live to inhabit it. I presume this arises from there having been scarcely an instance, so far as I can learn, of a white man ever living to take up his abode in the dwelling he had erected here; at least if any one has done so, it was but for a very limited period. So setting all superstitious ideas aside as arrant nonsense, this is nothing but a simple proof that the climate is a very fatal one.

We brought out, amongst other books, that on this colony entitled ‘The White Man’s Grave.’ It is remarkably well written; and I recommend it to you, as giving a great deal of information about the place. Its chief fault is that it makes everything too *couleur de rose*—denying even the extreme insa-

lubrity of the climate. I believe its author was here only for a few weeks; and no one until after a longer residence can admit that this lovely land is the unhealthy spot it really is. Within late years it has no doubt become less destructive to Europeans; but still I have myself watched the funerals of too many fever-victims out of the narrow circle of white residents, to allow that, humanly speaking, the chances for life are here in people's favour the same as in England: on the contrary, I quite coincide with Chamier when he writes—"It is needless to say one word about the climate of the coast of Africa; we have been taught to regard it as the worst under the sun, and certainly I, for one, am not going to gainsay it." *

* See 'Life of a Sailor.'



LETTER XXII.

The Zigzag — Mountain Paths — Village of Leicester — Elephants —
A Leopard — Orange Grove — Climate Hinderances to Excursions —
Story of the Kobloo War — Mandingo Merchant — Leather Pouches
— Marmalade-making — Illness of a Pony — First Vessel from Home
since the V — — “Agouchee” — Water Melon — Storm Curtains.

April 30th.

THE delightful path through the bush, that led me to the burning scene of which I wrote to you, has been carried up the face of that steep hill, by a line whose innumerable turnings, necessary to render the ascent at all practicable, resemble nothing more nearly than the figure traced by a stream of forked lightning. This tortuous route, which enables us to give the name of the “Zigzag” to one of the many hills in the neighbourhood, passes under a group of real forest-trees—not like *your* beautiful, leafy sycamore, elm, and beech; nor yet like *our* stately pullam cotton, locust, and bungo trees; but trees with weather-beaten trunks, fearfully high, gaunt, and bare, ere a single branch shoots out, and clothed with foliage, that, whilst it flings a sombre shadow on a distant part of the hill side, affords no more shade to any one beneath than a parasol would do if you chose to carry it overhead on a tall pole. Then there is no semblance of life about these centenarian trunks, except what is lent them by the little grey lizards, and the red and blue cundoos, as they dart up and down the bleached bark; or perhaps we catch a passing glimpse of a bird we know to be a woodpecker by the loud and monotonous sound that is made by its broad bill as it scales up out of sight to the boughs above. Down in the hollow from this path there is certainly one very beautiful tree, with gracefully-drooping branches and light-green leaves, and not with such an awe-inspiring height as the forest patriarchs I have just told you of. It is commonly called the shingle-tree, from its wood being used to make shingles here, and has really a very picturesque appearance, having dense yet lightly-disposed foliage.

My first trial of our alpine road was upon a pony, newly imported from the Gambia, and which had never been shod until coming here, the sandy surface of that part of the coast generally rendering shoes unnecessary. Yet equally unaccustomed to any such protective auxiliaries to its untaught paces as to hilly tracks, or the accompaniment of a sweeping riding-dress, my steed went very nicely along. Except in a couple or so of cassada-farms reclaimed from the wilderness, with a more than ordinarily snug and neat mud domicile in their centre, I observed no change in the bleak and bare aspect of the near scenery from what it appeared to me three years ago; until, winding up a continued steep acclivity, the path at last proceeds across a level surface, where, through a wide opening in the hills to our left as we ascend, the view is varied by a beautiful glimpse of the river, one or two of its peaceful-looking islands, and some of the jutting-out points of the opposite shore. Then in front we come in sight of Gloucester village, a scattered assemblage of huts which appear to border the road for upwards of a mile as it undulates over the hills. Leicester lies towards the right, up at the very foot of the mountain so named, and, turning into a broad and beaten track, fenced by low copsewood and tall grass, we soon entered the little village. The path, crossed here by a brook, or rather watercourse, runs in some places over the bare rock, and is edged by structures in the usual style of negro-architecture: square cabins of basket-work covered over with red mud, thatched with grass or bamboo, and placed within small enclosures, laid out with yams, ginger, or coco, and formed by rude fences of sticks hid by luxuriant tomatoes, capsicums, and other edible plants, shaded in their turn by the formal pawpaw and graceful banana and plantain trees. Here and there appear a few frame cottages raised on foundations of rough masonry, and adorned by the wild cucumber climbing over the thatch; and about the centre of the street stands a neat white church, that serves also as school-house. I at first used to fancy that, independently of its wild and solitary situation, this village looked woefully deserted; but custom has reconciled me to its appearance, I suppose, for my visits now do not give the same impression of dreariness and neglect. When it was all forest in the neighbourhood it must have been a pretty spot, though then, I believe, a favourite abode of ague.

About twenty years ago an elephant made its appearance in Leicester, and when the people pursued it with guns it turned round and gored one man, while all the others fled in terror. Next year another "huge earth-shaking beast," followed by a young one, was discovered near Gloucester, and both were ruthlessly killed. In those times a leopard used to visit Leicester every day, and the inhabitants always ran and shut themselves up in their huts, until the unwelcome guest thought proper to depart.

Although thus romantically situated on the very shoulder of a fine mountain, the only real beauty of Leicester consists in a magnificent orange-grove surrounding the spot where an hospital for the troops once stood. Everything in the shape of building falls rapidly into decay in this climate, if not constantly kept in repair, and trees seem universally doomed to disappear from the face of the landscape by dint of axe and fire, so that a relic of the art or taste of man is rare indeed: however, the haughty hills remain in their primeval formation; and these stately orange-trees, the finest of the kind I ever saw, having a peculiarly venerable stamp in their height and leafiness, contribute to throw an imposing air over the otherwise insignificant hamlet, that seems to claim for it the merit, amidst all its loneliness, of not being a mere mass of rude sheds raised by a semi-barbarous people, but a place associated with the early annals of the colony's civilization. I wish the climate were such as to admit of my exploring every place I have a mind to see, instead of limiting me to rides so short that you would hardly think it worth while to have your horse saddled for them in England. I should like to ascend the Sugar-Loaf—to go up the river as far as the village of Waterloo, famous for its pretty grass-woven mats and bags—I should delight in climbing the far signal-hill—I have even a fancy to visit the scene of the Kobloo war, of which colonial historical event I must tell you.

Our tropic peninsula is bounded inland to the south-west by a morass or swamp of mangroves, which is only passable at high tides, the Bunce river having an inlet to this shallow lagoon. Several years ago a party of runaway liberated Africans took refuge on the borders of this swamp, and formed a settlement called Kobloo. Here they set the law at defiance, and at times

sallied out and robbed plantations attached to some of the villages. The Governor of the colony, on hearing of these doings, despatched a body of two hundred volunteers to seize the delinquents and bring them to justice. The warlike body marched on very valiantly till near their destination, when, coming to a stockade erected by the enemy, the brave volunteers in the van, astonished at finding themselves resolutely opposed, turned and fled! This sudden running away threw the rear into confusion; several were killed, and others drowned or suffocated in the morass. On the remainder returning to the seat of the colonial government, a party of regular soldiers was sent against Kobloo; but on reaching the spot they found it almost deserted. They succeeded in taking one or two only of the offenders, numbers of whom were, however, drowned in the swamp, or starved to death in the woods, whither they had fled for security on approach of the troops. The village itself was neatly laid out, and had probably been founded on the site of some old English or Portuguese slave-factory, as there were regular rows of fine orange-trees down the centre and at the sides of the street; and otherwise the spot bore marks of former occupation by people more enlightened than these runaway negroes. There was much discussion as to whether Kobloo was within the bounds of the colony or not, and consequently of the right of the local authorities to try parties for the murder of British subjects not upon British territory; and at last it was decided that Kobloo was *without* the colony's jurisdiction, and therefore no cognizance could be taken of the matter.

A Mandingo merchant lately brought for sale a country saddle, bridle, and several whips. The saddle was very flat, with a high piece of wood both at back and front, covered with sheepskin dyed crimson. On the seat a square piece of embossed leather was stretched tight, and fastened with a round and hard knobby button at each corner. There were straps for stirrups; but none appended. Except as a ponderous curiosity it could, I should think, be of no use; and I was content to obtain the bridle and whips only. The bridle-reins are made of crimson leather, platted like the thong of a whip, and instead of straps and buckles to fasten round the horse's head there are loops and buttons. The whip-handles are of knotty wood, with black

leather sewed rather roughly over them, and platted crimson lashes. Having shown the man my little riding-whip, he promised to make one according to the same pattern; and did return shortly afterwards with some very good imitations formed of brilliantly dyed leather platted over bamboo instead of whalebone. Not having enough of *dollars*, we made up the sum required for the purchase in English money, which the wily Mandingo pretended not to "savey" at all, nor would indeed receive, until we had called one of the workpeople, also a Mahometan, who assured his fellow-disciple that English shillings were "good money,—good past Spanish or American dollar."

This old Mandingo merchant has quite a Jewish cast of countenance, with a cunning rather than intelligent expression in the keen restless eye and compressed lip; and except in his swarthy complexion has no feature resembling a negro. Encouraged by getting his goods disposed of, he comes back occasionally with others—such as powder-horns, roughly bound with rows of brass, and what appears like thin sheet lead, though gravely declared to be solid silver; cloth caps, richly embroidered in silk of all colours, and really done with great neatness; coarse sandals; curious-looking leather bags; and huge wooden bowls, cut out of the trunk of some enormously-sized tree, almost as well as if done by a turning-lathe. One of the pouches struck me as being very ingeniously contrived. It was shaped somewhat like those morocco or Russia leather reticules, with chains and clasps, that *once* were fashionable, though long since out of date—only that this had flaps the same as those of a saddle, which had to be lifted up ere you could put your hand into the deep pockets forming the bag itself. A solid and heavy tassel, covered with narrow strips of coloured leather, neatly interwoven into alternate squares of red and black, hung from the bottom; whilst the handle was fastened by strong loops at each end to a large round button, finished off in the same manner. Several smaller purses, drawn close by thongs, had the leather cut into chequered or vandyked patterns, and were ornamented by thick fringes. These pouches are made, I believe, for the warlike service of carrying shot. It is a sort of workmanship in which the Mandingoes excel, and I have seen several knife or cutlass scabbards made of the same stained leather. The process of tanning is performed

by rubbing the skins in water in which the bark of the mangrove has been steeped, and both the red and black dye are obtained from an infusion of different barks.

I have been making marmalade! The other day M—— was passing some orange-trees laden with large fine fruit on a wild hill at a spot that had once been cultivated; and he asked the man who now farms the place, and who was busy in his cassada-field, why he did not take them to market. He replied, “Oh! massa, because them bad too much—them sour, sour.” M—— examined one, and, finding that they were Seville oranges, bargained with their owner to bring me a basketful; which he soon did, evidently laughing at white people’s ignorance in buying oranges that were “bad too much.” But the marmalade they have yielded is excellent, quite different in appearance and flavour from that I have tasted here, made of the thin rind of the sweet orange. I am told that in Brazil the kernel of the cocoa-nut is prepared in the same manner, and makes a very good preserve.

My pony was ill some days since, and would eat nothing. In vain the young blades of the Guinea grass were carefully gathered and offered to it,—in vain it was coaxed to taste the fresh plantain-stalk and sugar-cane that horses usually esteem as good food here. It was in fair danger of dying for want of nourishment, when I bethought me of our hoarded little store of oatmeal that we had brought out with us, and, none of the blacks understanding how to make gruel, I set to work and prepared some for the poor animal, of which new delicacy it seemed greatly to approve; and every day after being put upon this strange diet, it got better and better until it is now able to resume its accustomed food, and show its gratitude by carrying me over the rugged mountain-paths as fleetly and steadily as ever.

May 6th.—A small brigantine arrived yesterday with a few home letters—the first mail from England since the vessel by which we came out three months ago. It is a long period to yearn for news of our dear and distant ones. H. M. sloops R—— and S—— arrived last month; but it is a rare thing for any man-of-war to bring a mail. I heartily wish the Admiralty would allow them to do so.*

* Mails are now taken to the colony every month by H. M. ships.

I saw lately a patch of ground planted with a particular sort of small yellow gourd, of which the negroes are very fond. They dry the seeds of it and pound them into a powder called "agouchee," which they use in soups, &c. It has a pretty yellow flower and light green leaf. Pompions and cucumbers grow plentifully here, and the water-melon is cultivated; but though beautiful to look at with its pinked-tinged icy pulp, I think it by no means a safe fruit for Europeans to eat in this climate. Tornados have begun some time since. The wind from the sea beats so furiously at one end, and that from the land at the other end, of our front piazza, that we have fixed iron rods across, several feet from each end window, and hung up storm-curtains, which can be drawn backwards and forwards as the weather demands. We brought out common holland sun-blinds, which are quite an improvement, even in appearance, as the windows in this part of the world look so odd and staring for want of a recess at that part of the thin wooden walls where they are placed.



LETTER XXIII.

Ague — The "Rains" — Baobabs — Village Church and Congregation — Melancholy Loss of a Boat — A Morning Walk — Early Market-goers — Gradual Distaste of Europeans for African Vegetables — Dogs — Unfrequency of Communication with England a great privation.

June 26th.

AGUE is the order of the day with us all here—a tiresome complaint! yet one of which *seasoned* Europeans think nothing, as during its sway we seldom dream of sending for medical advice. However, it and the "rains" together keep me rather a close prisoner in the house at present. You have often heard of the baobab,* or celebrated sour gourd-tree of Senegal, with its enormous trunk that can be hollowed out into chambers? I have lately seen its singular-looking flower. It hangs from a very thick and strong footstalk about a quarter of a yard in length. The calyx is of a texture resembling plush, pale green outside and cream-colour within. It has a very disagreeable perfume. This tree is commonly called the monkey-bread; but whether from its fruit being eaten by these animals, or because when hanging from the boughs it somewhat reminds one of a young monkey suspended by its tail, I cannot tell. It is an oval-shaped sort of nut, twice as large as the most gigantic apple or pear which ever grew, with the outside of the brittle shell covered with a rough substance like the nap of coarse woollen cloth. On breaking the husk, we find the seeds encased in a white farina of a pleasant acid taste, each layer of which is preserved by strong woody fibres. The fruit is ripe about April, when the inside is quite dry and mealy; and in this state it is not only good to eat raw, but the natives of the country around the Gambia make of it a cooling and nourishing fever-food they call *reu-a*. The baobab grows abundantly there, and small vessels sometimes

* *Adansonia digitata*.

come here from the Gambia, partly laden with its farina, which is eagerly bought up by the Joliffes of Freetown.

We have one young specimen growing under the western parapet, and which I often find stripped of its beautiful green leaves by our servants, who use them in their soup as a vegetable possessing the gelatinous property of the okra. The leaf is very like that of the pullam cotton-tree. The baobabs, from which I have obtained both flowers and fruit, stand on Mount Oriel, and, except in the richness and hue of their foliage, or when covered with their ornamental blossoms, are not at all fine objects—trunk and branches alike being in their massive thickness quite out of proportion to the height of the tree. After a short reign of the harmattan the leaves fall off, and it is then that the ungainly form of the stem and boughs strikes the eye as a framework made to stand riveted to the ground during the storm and tempest of succeeding centuries. It is said this tree attracts lightning, for which reason the negroes do not allow it to remain near their dwellings. The dimensions of the trunks of the baobabs growing in the colony by no means convey any idea of the great size they are said to attain in the Senegal.

Thanks to the Zigzag road, I was able one day ere the setting in of the wet season to ride to church at Gloucester. It was a gloomy but cool morning; and at ten o'clock we mounted our horses, proceeded leisurely through our own shady bush-paths, ascended the Zigzag, turned into the Queen's highway, and in due time entered the village. The huts there are almost all built on an elevation at each end of the winding road, which is carried over two ravines, both forming beds for noisy mountain brooks, crossed by rude bridges made of planks. The descent into these dells and ascent out of them are equally steep and sudden, requiring a sure-footed steed.

The village is entirely composed of embowered negro-dwellings, with the exception of two houses built of stone, with painted wooden verandahs; one formerly the Liberated African Department of the parish, the other the clergyman's abode. The church is a neat building, and would be thought unpretending and plain even to meanness at home; but here, amongst the thatched huts, it looks very conspicuous, with its dark shingled roof, large windows, and nicely whitewashed stone walls. We

passed a yet smaller and more humble-looking place of worship — the meeting-house of the Wesleyan Methodists; and then, climbing the hill, at last reached the open door of the church.

A respectably-dressed black man, who seemed by his garb and demeanour to be an official, pointed out the seat to which we were to go: and as we walked up the narrow passage, I noticed many of the women had infants strapped upon their backs. Some of the little things could not have been above a few months old; and yet there the mothers knelt, quietly and attentively, only, as the children became restless, lulling them again by a shaking movement of the body. The men sat on benches in one part of the building, the women at another; the schoolboys occupied a small gallery; whilst round the rails of the altar, at one side of which in the clergyman's pew (and the only one the church contains) we sat, were ranged children, many of them evidently not more than two or three years old, and even they conducted themselves with grave decorum. But, indeed, a black beadle, armed with a long wand, kept strict watch over them, going round to all who showed the slightest symptoms of impatience or weariness, and giving them some pretty smart taps on their heads. As they sat immediately in front of us, it was impossible not to observe these infant worshippers particularly; and they looked all perfectly clean and neat in their little scanty frocks of blue baft or coarse print, most of which had, however, body and sleeves of a pattern different from the skirt; while some had the letters of the alphabet and a name carefully worked *en tablier*, in that particular stitch known to all little girls who have mastered their first sampler as "eyelet stitch."

We had a plain and emphatic sermon, well suited to the capacity of its hearers; the service was occasionally somewhat interrupted by the crying of the babies; yet as, unless they too be taken to church, the mothers cannot go themselves, it would be a great pity, for the *very* trifling distraction of attention this practice occasions, to have it altered. A strange peculiarity in the people's voices caused each response to end with a loud hissing sound, which rendered the singing especially harsh. But it was very pleasing to notice that the little children were the first to raise their young voices in the psalm or hymn; so that even on this limited Christian spot of a heathen land are found

those who prove the truth of these words—"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." The devout attention which was manifested by all—their sober and respectful demeanour—their neat and suitable apparel—were alike creditable to themselves and gratifying to us. What a witness they bear to the patient and untiring zeal of many missionaries, whose earthly lives have formed the price at which this civilization has been bought!

We entered the clergyman's house by a long outside flight of steps, which had an English look, despite the roughness of their structure, with the balsams, roses, and other cultivated flowers, that were in full bloom in pots and boxes ranged up one side. The apartment into which we were shown luxuriated in the sea-breeze that was wafted in; whilst the heat of the sun was completely curtailed out at one window by the thickly-spreading leaves of a stately orange-tree, and partly at another by the graceful branches of the mango. Before the other windows rose a living picture—a green hill-side, studded over with the village huts, interspersed with foliage rich in the thousand glowing tints of the rainy season. The view was lovely, after the grand yet wild river and mountain scenery on which we had gazed with admiration during our morning's ride; and there was a sweetness and simplicity about this patch of, as it were, more *artificial* landscape, which, notwithstanding the foreign aspect of the lowly dwellings with their bamboo roofs and wattled walls, reminded us of some rural hamlet in our own distant and civilized country.

July 5th.—We heard this morning of a most appalling accident having occurred yesterday, in which the colonial chaplain and four other individuals were drowned. They had gone out in a small boat to the G—— emigrant transport, and after spending some time on board were returning, when, about two miles from the cape, the boat was upset, and all perished, except two or three black men, who swam until picked up by a fishing-canoe. The story they give is very lamentable. It would seem that, owing to some mismanagement on the part of an American sailor who was steering, a sudden squall caught the sail, which unfortunately was lashed to the tiller, and the boat instantly shipped a heavy sea. All sprang forward, the Kroomen clinging in alarm to the mast; when the next lurch poured in another

sheet of the overwhelming water, upon which Mr. — clasped his hands, and prayed for mercy upon them all. Others attempted to prepare for their contest with the waves by throwing off some of their garments; but no time was given, for the boat—which was of the particular build called by sailors “a death”—almost immediately went down. Oh! how awful must the terrors of these last moments have been! How awful to be the one minute in health and life, the next in eternity! One of the men who brought the melancholy news says he seized a loose plank, which served as a seat, and several of the rest swam for a few minutes, but, alas! the burthen of their clothes soon weighed them down, and the last was seen to sink after the fishing-canoe had been descried which rescued the others. Never has any accident excited so painful and terrible an interest in this grave of Europeans before. I hear that some think it strange that out of eleven people none save blacks should have been saved; but there is nothing remarkable in this when it is remembered their clothing was so different. The unfortunate men who lost their lives were all wrapped up for a storm in cloaks and blanket dresses, while the others wore nothing more than the usual garb of native boatmen. Last night the dreadful accounts were in Freetown, and literally, it may be said, “the voice of mourning was heard in the streets,” for the natives raised the same wild wailing sound they do when any of their own people die, and which they call “making cry for them.” Although some hours had elapsed from the time of the accident until the news reached town, at least one boat with lanterns went out to where the other had been swamped, in the hope that, if the tidings of the loss of *all* were indeed too true, nevertheless the bodies might perhaps be found. But the search has been vain; and they who were but yesterday as full of earthly hope as ourselves, can be seen no more until “the sea shall give up her dead.”

27th.—Just after sunrise this morning I accompanied M— in a walk up the Zigzag, down the Regent-road, and home again through the more level path that leads round by the bamboos, being altogether about two miles—a good stretch for this climate. But the morning was so delightfully cool during the climbing part of the way, I did not feel at all tired. Upon the flat summit of the Zigzag hill, which was before covered with

tall Guinea grass, several large patches have been cleared and planted with arrowroot,* the leaf of which, though more reedy-like, glossy, and upright, reminds me of that of the lily of the valley. The flower is a delicate little white blossom, and a small field of it is altogether a pretty-looking object. I was greatly amused by the groups of women going to market; and they seemed in the zenith of astonishment at seeing me walking on the road so very early. I confess rather liking to receive the cordial honest "good-morrrows" of these primitive sort of people, and they were not wanting as we passed. Here one diminutive figure of an ancient ma-amie, in blue baft petticoat and white country cloth round her shoulders, trotted along under the burthen of a huge basket of cassada; there, another and younger one—with a little woolly head peeping from behind under the arm raised to steady the bly heaped over with balls of foo-foo—walked with rather a graceful step in spite of the double load; while, farther on, a party of three young girls, dressed with much care in bright colours, and wearing strings of transparent green glass beads as a set-off to their complexions, moved with a grave, slow step and erect carriage, never, even in the steepest and roughest part of the road, lifting their hands to balance the shining calabash basins or small round baskets carried on their heads. These baskets were filled with light commodities, such as bananas and plantains (of course I mean in small bunches of six or eight broken off the parent bunch, as it is often between thirty and forty pounds in weight), ground-nuts, pineapples, and green leaves. Bronze-like elves, with no other garments than coarse, short, blue-chequered shirts, sped quickly on, most of them with little blies of Indian corn and coco-roots; and we met two such coming up from town, one with a load of dried fish—his companion with a very large and (notwithstanding its contents) clean-looking bottle-gourd,† full of palm-oil. Being Saturday—the chief market-day here—numbers of men, some with rough planks, billets of firewood, bundles of fagots, long straight sticks for hut-posts; others with perhaps a rude country table, sofa, or couple of chairs; besides many more with bunches of grass, baskets of yams, &c. &c., were wending their way to the grand emporium of Sierra Leone.

* *Maranta arundinacea.*† *Cucurbita lagenaria.*

Seeing some very fine yams in one woman's bly, I proposed to buy them from her, and she—evidently delighted at getting rid of her merchandise so readily—very willingly agreed, and followed us up to the house with my purchase. But our Aku cook, who always makes the markets, looked, although he said nothing, as if by no means pleased at my having for once encroached upon his prerogative.

Our small garden flourishes nicely this season, and we take the same interest in raising carrots, turnips, French-beans, Brussels-sprouts, and celery, that you do in tending your fuchsias and geraniums. We have some boxes, it is true, of beautiful little rose-trees, but we have a greater number filled with pot-herbs! I no longer think African vegetables so good as I did at first, unless it be, perhaps, the usually despised cassada; nor do I even care now for tropical fruits—always excepting oranges and (in their season) mangoes. I believe it is the same with most Europeans after a residence of a few years in this country.

A little English dog we got some months ago has just died. These animals when brought from colder climates do not thrive here; and the blacks steal them to kill and eat. But is it not a comfortable reflection that, amidst all the half-wild, half-starved native dogs to be seen here, no instance of one being mad has ever been known at Sierra Leone?

November 26th.—On the 23rd came in the "Greenhow," the first vessel from England that has dropped anchor in the harbour since the 19th of August. Being so many months without hearing from home is one of the greatest privations we have. Every one in the colony shared in the general anxiety for home news. M—— tells me when he was here at a former period, above *four* months have sometimes elapsed without a vessel arriving from England!



LETTER XXIV.

Horrors of the Harmattan — Household Revolution — Natti-barra — Mistakes made by domestic Novices — Visit of a Bride — Negro mode of Washing.

January 26th, 1845.

THE harmattan has blown steadily for the last fortnight. It is said that it especially favours new comers, but is rather against old residents. I suppose I am entitled to rank with the latter now; but, indeed, though it is generally extolled as being a healthy wind, I have never found it so. Its only good qualities I can discover are, that it cools the water, wine, &c., and dries up all damp paper: I have aired the contents of my writing-desk, as well as those of my wardrobe, in its parching blast; and there it certainly is of service.

A great revolution has lately taken place in my household kingdom. Sarah having married and gone to a house of her own, her place is filled by a recently emancipated little African girl, whom I got a few weeks ere Sarah left, that she might initiate the new Aku maiden into the mysteries of her novel situation. She appears to be about eleven years of age, has a pleasing expression of countenance, with a sweet soft voice, neither of which are common to the Aku nation. She can speak no English, being now not a month landed from a slave-ship, and is, as you may understand, in a state of pristine barbarism. Her country name was Natti-barra, and I have given her the more euphonious one of Lucy Barrow, of which she appears very proud. On first coming up she was quite afraid of me, and it seems actually imagined I would eat her! a dread which wondrously soon wore off, and she is now always laughing and singing. She appears as if she would learn, though evincing her readiness of imitation in rather inconvenient ways at times. For instance, she had been shown how to wash rice, vermicelli, &c., previous to its being sent down to the cook, and I found one evening that I was called away whilst about to make tea, that she had seized

the cup and carefully soaked its contents in cold water ere I went back, no doubt thinking that, tea being so much darker looking, it stood in greater need of washing than the other things. Many laughable mistakes occur with such novices for one's attendants. This reminds me of a similar anecdote. Shortly after a newly liberated and clever little Nufi boy had been added to our domestic establishment, we found it impossible to drink the tea I had just poured out, it tasting of nothing except salt. On inquiry I discovered that this boy, fancying the white powder used at dessert was salt (a prized rarity with the negroes of the interior—two small wicker hampers of it being in some places the price of a wife!)—had, unnoticed by the other servants, emptied the saltcellars into the sugar-basin, which happened that day to contain pounded sugar.

Sarah, decked in all her bridal finery, came up to visit me yesterday. She wore a chequered white muslin dress, with preposterously wide sleeves; a red woollen petticoat shining beneath the muslin; a yellow-spotted silk handkerchief for a shawl; a Dunstable bonnet, trimmed with white ribbons, and a coarse white veil over it. Two silver rings, gilt earrings and neck-chain, formed her jewellery. In one hand she held a capacious silk umbrella to do duty as parasol; in the other, a small coarse cotton pocket-handkerchief, with equally coarse cotton edging. Her hair was frizzed out in the most extraordinary fashion, and actually bound round with a narrow velvet ribbon, while two large side-combs, more for ornament than use, were stuck over each ear. Shoes and stockings completed the costume, of which its wearer seemed not a little proud, as, complaining of the heat of the stove in her old apartment, the back piazza, she went out and paraded up and down under the orange-trees with an air of conscious dignity, attended by her sister-in-law, a plainly dressed and rather nice-looking *Creole* (as all the children of liberated Africans, born after their parents' arrival in the colony, style themselves), who, as if fully aware of the great difference in their respective situations, humbly followed her new relative at the distance of a few paces.

I miss Sarah's services in many ways. She had learnt to be a very good needlewoman, and was an invaluable assistant at the *mendings* and *makings* which the negro system of washing

renders constantly necessary. Choosing a convenient spot upon which to stand in the brook, the washerwomen here, with sometimes a baby on their backs, and another paddling at their feet among the crabs and minnows, either take up a portable and tolerably smooth stone, and apply it as if it were a pestle in a mortar to the piece of linen spread out on the rocky channel of the shallow stream; or else, lifting with both arms the doomed table-cloth, or whatever it may be, high in the air, dash it down repeatedly on the stones with as much force as if it were a sledgehammer, and with nearly as much noise. The sound of this beating, or, as they call it, "pounding" of clothes, is incessant, and the mode of washing universal to all classes of the blacks, so that even the most liberal outfit, ere many months pass over, shows symptoms of approximating into a state of rags. Indeed, without the aid of machinery, our laundresses could in an incredibly short space of time reduce a good strong piece of cloth into the pulp you have seen at a paper-mill. The only redeeming point so ruinous a method has, is its being so very picturesque. The brook that separates Mount Oriel from this hill is a favourite resort with these good folks, who venture as high up its banks as they can, until awed by the murky recesses of our "bush" in the ravine, which their imagination peoples with snakes and alligators. The clear sparkling water, released from its mountain-hold, and bounding down with a song of glee to mingle with the waves of the blue estuary, refreshing the plants of many a humble garden-plot in its course, and shaded by the broad ever-green leaves of the banana and plantain, conveys the delicious idea of never-ceasing coolness even under this tropical sun; while the busy groups of women and children, the sound of their merry voices, the monotonous and echoing *beat* of their occupation, give a liveliness to the scene that contrasts pleasantly with the silence and solitude of the hills around.

LETTER XXV.

Moonlight — A Tornado — Difficulty of civilizing a Barbarian — Fanyah — Flower-seeds — Associations with the Names of particular Flowers — Gardenias — A Vision of British Scenery.

March 25th.

ON the night of the 19th we had the first tornado of the season. It was lovely moonlight, so that I could see the white sails of a vessel gleaming on the dark surface of the water, as far out as the cape; but on looking out about eleven o'clock, a light-grey shadowy fog seemed creeping stealthily down from Mount Oriel, as if to overwhelm our hill. Some moaning gusts came and went, and then all was obscured in the black cloud of the whirlwind, as with its wrathful voice it swept over us, shaking the poor house unmercifully in its giant teeth.

I told you in my last of my new attendant Natti-barra, or Lucy. After a trial of nearly two months I found the task of teaching her to be useful in the house, quite beyond my abilities. Instead of making up the beds, sweeping and dusting the rooms, she used either to *flop* down upon a stuff-bottomed chair, and commence beating the cushion of another as if it had been a tom-tom, or would stand before the dressing-glass making grimaces of delight at her own likeness, jumping and capering there for half-hours together. To learning the use of a needle Lucy preferred taking up the pens on my writing-table, deluging them with ink, and scrawling all sorts of hieroglyphics on whatever paper or even book lay in her way. She was, besides, as mischievously inclined to pilfer as any magpie; therefore I gave up the ambitious attempt of civilizing a barbarian, thankful to obtain one comparatively quite "finished" at school; and now more than ever I think with admiration of the missionaries and school-teachers, who, with their good wives, have all the trouble of rough-polishing these wild native children and fashioning them into that which, however removed from our ideas of

what is useful and industrious, is still strikingly superior to the rudeness, ignorance, and indolence of their aboriginal state.

Being too ill to go out myself, Mrs. — was kind enough to select for me a girl of eight years old from one of the village-schools. She is a Sarah too; but I shall distinguish her by her country name of "Fanyah," which besides is the prettiest of the two. She is a stout-made little thing, with particularly plain features, but fine large intelligent and good-tempered eyes. She has been three years in the colony, can read tolerably well, sew neatly enough, and seems very quiet, though rather slow and untidy. She and the little Nufi boy Dan are such mere children, that I teach both of them to work with a needle, as well as to read and write; and after the lamps are lighted of an evening, they sit down by themselves in high spirits to their lessons with books and slates. I like hearing their young voices sounding merrily after their day's employments are over. The boy has quite a good idea of copying large printed letters of the alphabet, and shades them in with his pencil until they are black as the originals.

I am making a collection of flower-seeds for you, which I hope to send home in a few weeks. Beautiful and curious as are the blossoms of many of the shrubs and plants of the "bush," people accustomed to the full, rich, double flowers of English gardens, detect, with few exceptions, amidst all the simplicity and delicacy of some, and the bright colours and rare forms of others here, a poverty of appearance that seems to plead the want of cultivation; and so far as my observation extends, there are few, if any, *coloured* blossoms possessing the least fragrance, the scented flowers being almost always white, though it by no means follows that all the white-petalled plants are odoriferous.

Orange and lime blossoms are familiar to everybody. That of the coffee-plant does not rank far beneath them; but while the former are associated in our ideas with love, youth, and bridal hope, would not the vision of a West Indian planter and his negroes—or at least of a city shopkeeper making up brown-paper parcels of groceries—rise up before the mind's eye, did we attempt the introduction of "a wreath of *coffee*-blossoms" into our sentimental ballads? while the pretty pink-white flower of tobacco is doomed to neglect from the same cause.

One tree bears a large cream-coloured bell of velvety texture, with a long fleshy tongue exactly like an ivory ear-pendant hanging from its centre. The viscous juice by which the seeds are surrounded is what the natives use to mark their faces with patterns a degree more jetty than even their complexions. I have heard it said that this plant was originally brought here from Australia; but as it is found abundantly in the wildest part of the "bush," and in some instances has attained a considerable height, I am inclined to think it indigenous to the climate.*

We have one rare and beautiful trumpet-shaped white flower I distinguish by the name of the "tree-lily." This pendulous blossom is eight inches long.†

Flowers are one of the gifts of nature for which we should be grateful; there is something about them so cheerful, refreshing, and innocent, as well as lovely: but though I always try to look on the sunny side of things, there are times here, even in the dry and comparatively safe season, that sorrow to see the failing health of others, to say nothing of the weakness of my own frame, contrives to shroud every visible object in a gloomy hue. It is then that the noble land and water-scenery, with all its adjuncts of magnificent flowers, rare plants, brilliant-plumaged birds, and strange insects; seems but a miserable and paltry compensation for the wearing-out anxiety and suffering caused by the climate to which they all owe their beauty; and the rebellious thoughts turn away equally with the eyes from the everlasting tropic glare; or dwell more on the neglected, uncultivated, and even desolate portion of the landscape before you; while a contrast presents itself to your memory, that causes you to long for the pinions of a bird to bear you over that blue ocean—for one thankful gaze at the broad pastures of old England, with their smooth green carpet spangled with primroses, buttercups, and

* In the 31st volume of the 'Botanical Register' is a plate of another variety of this plant, and a description of what I *think* must be the above-mentioned bell-flower, there named after Mr. Whitfield, the well-known botanist, "Gardenia Whitfieldii."

† I cannot find out, by comparing my dried and *now* blackened specimens with the beautiful plates in the 'Botanical Register,' whether this homely-termed "tree-lily" be the there-designated "Gardenia Stanleyana" or "Gardenia Devoniana," but am inclined to believe the latter.

daisies, and enlivened by herds of cattle; the furrowed fields where the husbandman is blithely ploughing or sowing; the white church-spires, busy homesteads, and ivy-covered cottages, that speak of piety and peace, content, comfort, and plenty; the hedgerows of budding hawthorn, with their grassy banks underneath all bright with violets, cowslips, and Wordsworth's "little celandine;" the moist shady dells, with their hoards of wild hyacinths, wood anemones, and cuckoo-flowers, which you can stoop down and gather, unchecked alike by tangled masses of riotous and briery jungle, *or the fear of snakes*; for one long look at the blooming heather, the broomy hollows, the furze-covered knowes of the familiar but far distant

" Land of the mountain and the flood,"

with its rich and verdant lowlands, and its own especial grandeur of Highland scenery! Oh! how doubly beautiful do the cultivated fields, the wide meadows, the stately woods, the green lanes, the purple and golden hills, and the pure healthsome rivers of our own happy country appear, as they pass in clear review before the mind's eye, while before the bodily eye all the time lie stretched out the lonely sierras, the swampy plains, the mangrove-bordered creeks, and the rank vegetation of the noxious western coast of Africa!



LETTER XXVI.

Slavers — Contested Cases—Equipment Articles—Evasion of the Treaties by Slave Captains — Mixed Commission Courts — H. M. S. Cruisers — Slave Trade — Names of captured Vessels.

April 30th, 1845.

VESSELS seized for being engaged in the slave-trade come in almost daily. Sometimes they are full of their miserable human freight, and then, of course, there is no difficulty in having them condemned and the negroes emancipated ; but oftener they are merely “ equipped for the traffic,” being captured before they enter a slave-port, or when lying there at anchor waiting to receive slaves. In the latter case it is astonishing to find, notwithstanding every palpable proof of the nature of the vessel, how her captain and seamen deny at their examination that they were on a slaving expedition, not unfrequently going so far as to employ counsel to defend their cause. They protest against the legality of the capture, more especially if the vessel be Brazilian, as they adapt the wording of our treaty with Brazil as if a slaver were liable to confiscation *only* when seized with slaves on board.

Happily, however, the treaty *does* prohibit the subjects of the empire engaging in the slave-trade in “ any manner whatsoever,” and therefore many thousands of the poor negroes have been saved from being carried into bondage by the vessel, previous to embarking them, being seized and condemned.

These “ contested cases,” as they are called, usually prove both tedious and troublesome, as, even when there is not the slightest *moral* doubt as to the objects of the voyage on which the prize was taken, still, owing to the precautions resorted to by the slave-dealers to evade the terms of the treaty by substituting other articles for those forbidden to be carried, with innumerable other artifices, I believe it is no easy matter at times to put forward enough of proof to admit of a legal condemnation.

The articles of equipment, specified by our treaty with Spain as giving cause for detention of vessels sailing under the flag of that country, are—a slave-deck laid, or a quantity of planks fit to be used for that purpose; shackles and handcuffs; bolts or bars, used for securing the hatchways; hatches with open gratings, so as to give air to the unfortunate beings confined below; more divisions or bulkheads than are necessary for merchant-vessels; a larger quantity of farina or rice, of water and water-casks, and of mess-kits or wooden bowls, than is required for the crew; also a boiler of great size.

The slave-dealer, however, substitutes mats, or even grass strewn on the top of water-casks, for a slave-deck, or it may be *sand* or *hides*; little woven baskets instead of mess-kits; a great many small cooking utensils in place of the interdicted boiler. Then jerked beef, coarse biscuit, calavances or beans, yams, Indian corn, in large quantities, render those of the objectionable farina and rice less; while often during the chase great part of the provisions, as well as the slave-irons and other suspicious articles, with sometimes flag and papers besides, are thrown overboard.

Thus there are frequently scarcely any of those equipment articles found on board, while again there may be others not specified by the treaty, and yet whose presence is enough to indicate the vessel's real character—such as an excessive quantity of firewood, many dozens of tin or wooden spoons, a large brick-lined fireplace with a moveable top, that, on being lifted, would admit of boilers being placed over the fire; medicines in excess; casks of vinegar; syphons, or long tin suckers used by the slaves to drink from the leaguers, so as to avoid the waste of water occasioned by their struggling and pushing when permitted to drink out of iron cups; wooden clappers, used instead of a bell to summon the slaves to their meals, and to warn them to desist when quarrelling or making a noise.

Another circumstance betraying engagement in the illicit traffic is a crew far exceeding in number what is necessary to navigate the vessel as a merchant-man; the sailors being entered, too, at an enormous rate of wages. Having guns mounted on board is also more than suspicious: whilst sometimes the nature

of the cargo, and often its total absence, afford a clue to the real objects of the voyage.

Then there is a build peculiar to almost all the craft now employed in the slave-trade—a long, low, sharp hull, with slender and sloping masts, than which nothing that sails can look more graceful on the water, the effect being heightened by the body of the ship being generally painted black, whilst the canvas is more dazzlingly white than that used by English vessels. A schooner or brigantine being fitted for and carrying sweeps—gigantic oars, easily worked by the slaves or large crew carried by a slaver, and which enable her to make way during a calm or in light winds—is another outward mark that cannot deceive. Yet even when nearly all these proofs exist, the ingenuity, or rather the effrontery, of the slave-captain appears in the excuses he puts forth in his own evidence. The surplus crew he terms passengers; the slave-deck is laid for free emigrants to be obtained sometimes on the coast of Brazil, or perhaps at the Azores; the excess of water-casks and provisions of the kind used solely by captive negroes are merely for the consumption of the emigrants, or else are said to form part of the vessel's cargo, or the leaguers were to be filled with palm-oil, of which the return lading was to consist. To the query, why his vessel was found so far out of his pretended course as to be about entering some one of the noted slave-haunts in the bights, he replies that either contrary winds or currents have driven her in that direction, or she had sprung her mast, or otherwise received damage in a heavy gale, and was accordingly obliged to put into the nearest port for repairs—that nearest port always chancing very conveniently to be Lagos, Whydah, Angola, Ambriz, or Cabinda. The plausible apology for too large a hatchway is that the vessel was originally built for carrying sugar among the West Indian islands, or on the coast of Brazil, and which, being packed in long boxes, could not be got into the hold at a smaller hatchway; and as for mats, "Oh! they were to be laid over the sand ballast, and a cargo of salt stowed upon them."

The word "slave" is carefully eschewed in the correspondence found on board these prizes, and all pains taken, by ambiguous wording, to mislead and deceive the captors into the

belief that the lading destined to be shipped was a legal one. They talk of a cargo of " salt," " palm-oil," " country cloths," " cam-wood," or " wax, ivory, and gold-dust;" when perhaps the injunction to obtain enough of provisions is all the clue afforded by the *papers* to the real nature of the intended return cargo. " Bales " used to be a favourite and common term for slaves, until the real signification became too well known. The postscript of a letter found in a vessel employed in that most inhuman of all traffics is sufficiently amusing: " Please let the bale be a female."

" Cakes of wax " and " kolas " are also used to designate slaves.

At times even when no negroes have been found on board at the period of capture, but the equipment too complete to admit of any dispute, the master and seamen freely admit on their examinations that they came to the coast on a slaving adventure, and so save an immense deal of labour and trouble to the adjudicating parties.

Latterly, however, some of the merest nutshells of vessels under the Brazilian flag, with little beyond excess of water-casks and fuel, and crews more than double what would be sufficient in lawful traders of the same size, have been sent in here for trial; and though they may have goods on board suited only to the slave-market, and consigned from one well-known slave-dealer in Brazil to another on this coast whose name is equally notorious, the real fact of their being concerned in the illegal traffic is found no easy task directly to prove.

It always has been proved as yet, nevertheless; and since coming out this last time, I rejoice at not having seen even one of these misery-spreading craft released.

The civilians connected with putting down the slave-trade comprise the Judges and Registrar, or Secretary, of the Courts of Mixed Commission, with their respective clerks.

After a period of eight years of *actual service at Sierra Leone*, the Commissioners and Registrar are entitled to retiring pensions. Previously to 1835 the period of service was six years, under which arrangement two commissioners did survive to obtain their retiring salaries, and these two are the *sole* instances of a pension having been claimed by any officer of the Mixed Commissions since the establishment of the Courts in 1819—a

speaking proof of the fatal nature of the climate, against which all Europeans who come out here have to combat.

After the term of twelve years' service the commissioners' clerks have likewise retiring allowances, which, however, not one of them as yet has lived to claim. The registrar's clerks have no pension.

There is a surgeon to the Courts merely to visit the slaves before emancipation. There is also a marshal, whose duty it is to visit and report the newly-arrived slaver, and take charge of her until she is broken up or sold; a commissioner of appraisement and sale, who arranges in lots and sells by auction the prize and her cargo; two surveyors, who survey the detained vessel, and send in their report of her equipment; an admeasurer, who measures the ship to ascertain her tonnage, on which the captors are entitled to receive bounty; and a translator of Spanish and Portuguese (when a proficient in these languages is to be found, otherwise the Judges translate as they best can themselves). All these subordinate officers, with the exception of the surgeon, have no fixed salary, but are paid by fees, and all are under the direction of the Commissioners, who examine and pass every paper connected with the sale of the different slavers.

There are also, as in other Courts, proctors to conduct the case of captor and claimant.

When neither Brazilian nor Spanish Commissioners are here, the British are empowered to act on behalf of the foreign Court, and when either of the latter is absent the governor of the colony officiates instead. There has been at least one Brazilian Commissioner here for more than three years past, and Spanish ones are expected. When the British and foreign Judges differ in opinion as to a vessel's liability to confiscation, an arbitrator (the junior or sub-Commissioner) is chosen by lot, and all must abide by his decision. In the only instance in which I have seen a slaver sweep out of the harbour, with her gay green and saffron flag flying triumphantly, the lot had fallen on the Brazilian Commissioner, who declared her capture illegal.

I believe the annual average for nine years of cases brought before the Courts is about thirty-two. But there have been as many as fifty-seven and sixty-two adjudicated during one year;

and within the last six months alone there have been about thirty vessels condemned by the Mixed Commissions, where you see it is *not* " idlesse all."

The " Mixed " Courts owe their rather singular title to their being empowered to try the vessels of so many different countries; but while the British and Brazilian Court is one of Mixed *Commission*, those of Spain, the Netherlands, Argentine Confederation, Chile, Bolivia, and Uruguay (with all of which we have treaties for the suppression of the slave-trade) are termed " Mixed Courts of *Justice*." Until the establishment last year of British and Portuguese Courts at Boã Vista, Loando, the Cape, and Jamaica, vessels belonging to Portugal were also tried here, but only if they had slaves on board.

That part of the correspondence of the British Commissioners which includes, amongst other matters relating to the traffic, the evidence of all the slave-vessels tried, is annually laid before Parliament, and is somewhat voluminous.

When a man-of-war captures a slaver, the latter is despatched for adjudication under charge of a prize-officer and crew, the captor forwarding a written declaration of his reasons for seizing the vessel. Several of the Spanish and Brazilian crew are also detained and brought up as witnesses, the remainder being generally sent on shore at the nearest port. But occasionally a considerable number, if not all, of the piratical seamen are landed here, to the no small annoyance of her Majesty's colonial subjects.*

At the different noted slave-harbours, some of which, those of Sherbro' and Gallinas for instance, are not much more than a day's sail southward from the colony, the slave-dealers have large baracoons, where the negroes on being procured are penned up, and kept waiting for a convenient opportunity of being shipped. The destruction of these baracoons at various times by some of our cruisers has been one of the most effective blows the slave-trade ever met with on this coast. Now the squadron is restricted to blockading and chasing, and the number of prizes sent in betokens its vigilance.

Last year two notorious slavers, the *Volador* and the *Ja-*

* More than once, these pirates have exceeded in number the English residents by three to one.

cinto, were captured, condemned, and cut up; the former was an old brigantine, but would still have made a good figure in a yacht regatta. A still more formidable and equally successful vessel, the felucca Huracan, was taken in February last. She was very heavily manned and armed, and would not "heave to" until the sixty-eight pounders of the capturing steamer reached her. I saw the prize come into harbour, and was astonished at the thickness of her mast, that looked enormous, though not seen through the spy-glass. I believe it was constructed so that it could be folded down out of sight, to render her less likely to be observed, while her large crew at the sweeps would give no cruiser, unless a steamer, a chance in the chase. She had seventy slaves on board, and was taken by H.M.S.V. Hydra.

We have lately heard of the dreadful and melancholy fate which has attended the prize-officer and crew of one slaver, the equipped Brazilian brigantine Felicidade, which was taken a few hours after another, the Echo, laden with slaves, had been detained. The crew of the latter, being too great to remain with safety to the captors in one vessel, was divided, and a portion of the men sent on board the Felicidade, where they rose and massacred the young British officer and all the sailors left in charge.

Oh! vile trade!—is it never to cease? How long is its name to remain a blot upon the nations whose flags it dishonours? How many more of the good, the gallant, and the brave of Britain's sons are doomed to fall victims to her endeavours for its suppression? There is still the old question occasionally whispered, "Oh, what would become of all the native prisoners of war were there not the slave trade to rescue them from death? Better be slaves in Brazil or Cuba, than undergo a worse fate in Africa!"

There would not be so many prisoners of war did no slave-trade exist. We all know that the chief of a tribe, or district, makes war on another for the purpose of obtaining slaves for the foreign market, and in too many cases accuses his own people of crimes they never committed, that he may have a pretence for selling them to the Brazilian or Spanish captain; nay, even the Africans who bring from the interior bees'-wax and other articles of legitimate trade, to be exported to England,

never return, but are embarked in the first slaver that touches at the place. These evils would not be were there no demand for slaves. But whether this vast continent, buried in the ignorance of centuries, is herself to lift up a remonstrating voice, and declare that she shall yield no more of her children into bondage; or Brazil, with the rest of the comparatively enlightened countries which countenance and keep up the debasing traffic, is to send forth an imperial decree that they shall no more owe their riches to the lives and liberty of their enslaved fellow-creatures, is a point that years alone will decide.

The names chosen by the slave-dealers for their vessels have often struck me as being singular enough, considering the business in which they are to be engaged. I remember one called the "Senhora da Bom Viagem," or "Lady of Good Voyage." Another, condemned last year, was actually named "El Grand Poder da Dios." The "Regenerador," "Feliz Ventura," "San Joã Bãutista," "Ave Maria," "Bom Fim," "Libertad," "Esperanze," "Triumfo," are all equally inappropriate. One, called the "Onze de Novembro," was, by an odd coincidence, condemned on the 11th of November, and its worthy slave-captain declared it was meant as an intentional insult to him. "El Imperador Don Pedro," and "Sua Majestad," are sounding titles enough, while "Pepita," "Vivo," "Fantasma," and "Flor de Rio," convey the idea of something swift, graceful, and beautiful.

Then, according to their peculiar build or rig, they are not only honest old brigs, brigantines, schooners, and topsail schooners; but outlandish polaccas, sumacoes, feluccas, launchas, paille-botes, yachts; and one, fitly christened "El no se," was designated a "mystico."



LETTER XXVII.

Expiration of our Treaty with Brazil — Incursion of Travelling Ants — Spiders — Mantis — Bungo Mason-bees — Waterspout — A Lost Child — Ludicrous Mistake — Touraco — “Kill-Fowls” — Equestrian Interruptions — Grey Grizzel — Cape Coast Conveyances — Mango Tree killed by Lightning.

August 19th, 1845.

SINCE I last wrote to you about the slave-trade, our treaty with Brazil has expired, and until a new one be entered into, the vessels taken under the flag of that country will be tried in the Vice-Admiralty Court, under an Act of Parliament.

I have had a more novel than pleasant interruption. Whilst sitting on a sofa in my room busily writing, I suddenly perceived first one black ant, and then a second and third, scampering over my papers, and, looking round, saw a portion of the wall covered with straggling ants, while another moment showed me that the floor was alive with them. Boiling water was immediately put in requisition, and, for upwards of an hour, poured over the outer boarding of the house, where the ants swarmed pretty thickly. A huge centipede was attempting to crawl from under one of the planks, but quite unable to extricate himself from a few ants, who, at regular distances from each other, held their colossal prey undauntedly, while large spiders were running about in terror, trying to hide themselves. The track of the main army was nowhere to be discovered, and, as our vigorous opposition had caused them to retreat from the room, I thought this had been merely a reconnoitring party, until an outcry was raised that they mustered in great force in the piazzas below. I ran down stairs, and beheld the floor, pillars, walls, and boarded roof literally black with myriads of ants, while here a great scorpion, startled out of his den, stood boldly at bay, and there another centipede was being dragged away alive after having in vain tried to elude pursuit. But it was not one or two—several dozens of cock-roaches, venomous-looking spiders, millipedes, and innu-

merable other ugly forty-footed creatures, were first pounced upon by a few of their Lilliputian enemies, and then in an instant hidden by the accumulating masses, which fastened upon each opponent, and bore it off the field with the utmost regularity. I forbade the people to kill any more of the ants, so long as they were kept from entering the house—really feeling compunction in waging war against the destroyers of such detestable reptiles as scorpions and centipedes, with their many almost equally unwelcome cousins of other tribes.

Yesterday I discovered on the branch of a coffee-tree a most magnificent spider, which I should be sorry to see fall a victim to ants or to any other enemies. It was about as large as a pigeon's egg, the back primrose-coloured, with eight round black spots; the sides and under part barred with black; the upper part of its fore legs primrose-colour, the rest black. It had spun a large web of silky yellow gossamer, and was quite a fat good-humoured-looking spider—very different from one that is sometimes found out of doors here, and whose bite the blacks aver to be highly venomous. It has a round flat body nearly as large as a crown-piece, with legs several inches long, and tremendous lobster-like claws thickly armed with sharp hard teeth. It is odd enough that I have never seen a tarantula here, although I hear of one being discovered now and then by the labourers.

An insect, of which the negroes also stand in unaccountable terror, is the mantis, or "Hottentot god" as it is often called. It is a singular-looking creature, with its great prominent eyes, elongated and winged form clothed in pale green, and six long legs; those in front being more of the nature of arms,—with keen serrated edges and spiked fore-fingers, which inflict a pretty severe scratch. I sometimes hold out a pen or pencil to a mantis, when it immediately raises itself on its hind-legs, and, seizing hold of the object presented, tries to tear it with these weapons of defence. It has a strange shaking motion when walking, resembling that of a coach set on springs, and a very common attitude of this insect is standing up with its well-armed hands meekly clasped together. Hence, I presume, the title *mantis religiosa*. I was watching one that had alighted on a window in the piazza, and which seemed nearly four inches long, when Fanyah happened to come in, and, as soon as she caught a glimpse of the object of

my examination, cried out in a voice of horror, "Oh! ma'am, what matter you go look dat thing?—it go tear your eye out for true—it can tear somebody's eye out too much in my country." I once got a Hottentot god's nest, which somewhat resembled that of an English wasp, only of much smaller dimensions, and had a polished outside; it was nearly oval, and hung from a spray of sweet-scented cream-coloured little blossoms.

Insects here construct many strange abodes. The Nufi boy Dan, knowing I am fond of natural curiosities, brought me lately a leaf with a tiny cup very neatly made of clay fastened upon it, and which seemed greatly to have struck his own fancy, as he exclaimed on giving it to me, "Please look dis lilly lilly country pot someting make on dis leaf!"—and to be sure it was exactly a country pot in miniature.

The fragrant gum called bungo is the principal material one mason-bee here uses for his dwelling, and, the sunny side of a wall being usually chosen as a site, a community of these harmless bees has established itself on the outside of a window-sill in the front piazza.

But I have been always rather backward in collecting insects' nests, ever since shortly after coming up here, I found a very pretty one, formed of small twigs firmly cemented together with great neatness in a fluted style, and which I carefully stowed away in a small box; when some days afterwards, wanting to exhibit my treasure, I opened the lid, and behold a hideous gray caterpillar crawled out, while the nest seemed as if it had been broken down and half devoured by its late inmate.

Sept. 5.—Last night we had a thunder-storm and a deluge of rain, which must have been something of the nature of a water-spout, the roads are so dreadfully cut up. On riding down to the garden this morning I find that the brook has burst over its banks at one place, and sent a rapid stream branching through the vegetable-beds, washing the mould completely off them, and sadly destroying the pretty little spot. Fortunately, a nursery of dwarf roses had been transplanted to the parapet, or they must have been every one lost. Our neighbours in the low ground have suffered equally. One has a dry-season garden nearly carried away, and I see a hut, standing on a newly-formed island, with the impetuous red waters rushing through its broken walls

—its poor inhabitants vainly trying to turn back the rebel current to its allegiance again, while dozens of children are paddling at the edge of the stream in excessive enjoyment. Much damage has evidently been done in every direction.

On walking out in the forenoon I was alarmed by hearing repeated shrieks of distress coming as it were from the Rose-Apple Glen, and, on calling out to know what was the matter, a wild-looking half-clothed figure issued from the path leading to the far brook, who by her frantic gestures and exclamations I at first fancied was mad; but after some questioning I learned that she had been gathering sticks on the other hill, and had sent her child with a message to a farm-man who was working on the opposite side of the water,—that the little thing never came back, and, although she had been called and looked for, was not to be found. I tried to lead the poor creature up to the house, but she contrived to slip out of my hold every minute, and, dashing herself on the ground, gave way to the most lamentable outcries. “O ma piccan!—ma piccan go lose in de bush by de water side—O ma-amie—O! O! O!” M—— came out, and, taking all the servants and labourers, went off to search, sending some into the bush, and others along the banks of the brook, both of us dreading that the poor child had been carried away by the water, now running so fiercely. The woman accompanied them to point out the place where she had left her “piccaninny,” but, instead of rendering the slightest assistance, continued to weep and wail like one distracted. She evidently believed her child was kidnapped by some prowling Mandingo, and therefore deemed it unnecessary to look diligently for her—instances of kidnapping being by no means unfrequent even at Sierra Leone. But in about half an hour afterwards I had the satisfaction of hearing that they had found the little girl quite safe, and sitting quietly in the bush awaiting the return of her ma-amie, whom she in her turn fancied was lost.

I was amused by a curious mistake of one of the servants yesterday. Shortly after breakfast this man came to tell us that another, who had gone to cut wood, was come back in great alarm, being afraid to pass a tree where he had seen a large uncommon-looking bird roosting. We asked if it were a hawk or a “kill-fowl.”

“ No—big bird past dem, massa.”

“ An eagle, perhaps?”

“ Not so big as eagle neider—he one black bird all same like turkey—no more no fedder live on him neck.”

I imagined this strange bird would turn out to be a vulture, and was surprised that the servants appeared all to stand in so great an awe of the black object which we saw sitting on the branch of a tree on the verge of the bush, not very far from the house. But on taking the glass to have a more minute view, I discovered this extraordinary bird was nothing else than a very large monkey, that was presently joined by several others, and there they frisked, and chattered, and jumped from one tree to another for the greater part of the forenoon. The poor wood-cutter was very much ashamed of having mistaken a black monkey for a bird.

M—— lately shot one of those beautiful birds called here the African woodcock, but whose proper name is the touraco, or plantain-eater. It has a magnificent green crest, while the upper eyelid being scarlet, and the under one black, with a white mark stretching between them and the short bill, adds to the brilliant appearance of the head. The neck and breast are both of the same light green as the coronet, but this green has not the metallic gloss seen in the darker green of some of the humming-birds. The wing-feathers are part bright shining purple, part gorgeous crimson, while those forming the tail are of a rich velvety blue-black: it is a noble-looking bird, and seems scarce.

A “ kill-fowl,” or “ gog-magog,” as the country people call it, is a hideous-looking bird, building its nest, as the hawks do here, at the top of high trees, and being, like them, a most formidable enemy to the poultry-yard: they are also at enmity with less useful creatures, for I have seen one bearing a large snake through the air to its nest. One that M—— shot the other day measured fully five feet three inches across the extended wings, and two feet from the bill to the tip of the tail. The “ kill-fowl” has a particularly fierce expression in its glaring eyes and great hooked bill of a yellowish-white colour. The head and breast are white, as are the pinions and shoulders; the rest of the wings and back are black: a broad bar of dingy white

stretches across the centre of the tail, the top and tip of which are black. Under the feathers the body is covered with a thick down like that on a duck. The feet are strong and large, with sharp black hooked claws exactly like those of the eagle. The crows here are also black and white; they are very numerous, and quite as fond of making a noise as the crows of Britain. Writing of birds reminds me that some time ago the old Aku servant who took the monkey for a vulture, and who you must know pretends to be very valiant, came up after dark to beg for one of "massa's" guns, because "one big bird been live in tamarind-tree," that he thought he could shoot. No specimen of the feathered tribe being forthcoming, notwithstanding a succession of shots on two different evenings, I began to think the gun was wanted for some other purpose, and that the bird existed only in imagination. But on going to the window, expecting to see nothing, I was rather surprised at perceiving a very large dark-coloured bird roosting on the topmost branch of the tamarind-tree; and in spite of having been so often shot at, back it comes almost every night, until the people seem to regard it with considerable superstition, although the gun is occasionally asked for as a matter of course.

Having lately got a new horse, I bemoan once more over the impossibility of teaching African steeds to canter nicely. They toss and shake their heads at a lady's paces, and, no matter what the road be, the verge of a precipice or the slope of a hill, they persist in galloping at full speed. Now one requires a steady horse in this part of the world: here you come upon a band of the *termes viarum*, or travelling ants, some stragglers of which, even supposing your steed escapes planting his foot in the centre of their line, will be quite enough to make him dance and curvet in a way that, however graceful to look at, is by no means comfortable to you: there a huge black monkey springs out of the bush at one side of the road, just under your horse's nose; and neither he nor you may have recovered from the surprise caused by the sudden apparition, when a more violent start, followed by a tremor all over, gives notice that a snake is in sight; whilst all the time, as you are obliged, if possible, to hold a parasol over your head, you have only one hand at liberty to guide the animal. Some extremely

narrow paths are cut and carved out ledgewise up the face of the hill near the top; and the horses, on coming up from town, usually of their own accord turn off the main avenue on to these, which make a much shorter way than going to the end of the other, and round by the orange-tree terrace.

There is certainly, in this country, no more cheerful mode of taking exercise than riding, and none where you can see around you so well. I have as yet been very fortunate in quiet ponies: after parting with my pretty bay sorrel from the Gambia, owing to its shying at crossing the brook, I got a sedate white horse; I call it Grizzel, after one M—— had formerly, and which eventually went into the possession of a native chief. I believe this last-mentioned horse had originally been sent out from England, and having, at any rate, seen better days, it was by no means disposed to be ridden by a shoeless master, even though he were a Mahomedan potentate: therefore Grizzel managed to throw its owner whenever he attempted to get into the saddle, so that at last the simple natives said, “Ah! dis horse fine too much for black man for ride!” and contented themselves by leading it up and down in their state processions. *On dit* an English merchant jokingly told the negro purchasers of this grey that it had always been accustomed to drink porter; whereupon they ordered a supply, and actually gave it a bottle of porter every morning!

But my poor Grizzel fell a victim to the early part of this rainy season, after which I used occasionally to ride M——’s very spirited horse, at first only on that tolerably level walk leading to the gate at the foot of the Zigzag, as even though he ran away there, the bush is too thick on each side to allow of his going off the path. The terror of the grooms at this animal is perfectly ludicrous: he is young and spirited, though not what one would call vicious; but these men are such cowards that no wonder with them he is sometimes unmanageable. Once when M—— had ridden my pony to town, and the other was to be sent for him to ride up, the new groom who was to lead it down came to me crying and wringing his hands, saying he could not lead massa’s horse to town because “it would surely go kill um!”

I am told that the grass at Cape Coast is of such a poisonous

quality no horses can live there, and the only mode in which Europeans are conveyed from one place to another on land, is by large baskets, which are carried on the heads and shoulders of the negroes! I never hear of Cape Coast Castle without thinking of poor Miss Landon; how strange to think that *her* grave should be *there* of all the uncivilized spots on the earth! Our view of the near burying-ground is now more exposed than ever, owing to our having been obliged to cut down a mango-tree in front of the house, the foliage of which screened our prospect in that direction. This tree was blighted in a tornado during the night of the 1st of June this year, when the wind and storm together came on before eleven o'clock, and lasted until after twelve. One terrific blaze of lightning, accompanied by a most dreadful crash, alarmed me fearfully, as I could scarcely believe the house was not struck. Next morning we found the earth all torn up close beyond the parapet, and the flourishing young mango-tree, though not rent, still with marks that showed it had not stood unscathed.



LETTER XXVIII.

H. M. S. "Eclair" — First Conviction of the Pestilent Nature of the Climate — Impaired Health of even the Acclimatized — A Self-willed Donkey — Phases of the Sierra Leone Landscape — Verdure of our own Hill — New Mode of carrying Pigs — Fanyah's History — Caterpillars — Unwelcome Recollections.

December 8th.

THE Dalepark arrived from England on the 30th of November, when our suspense regarding R—— was happily relieved. We heard, towards the end of October, of the fearful mortality on board the Eclair, and of the communication between her and the Growler at the Cape-de-Verds, and dreaded that the fever might spread to the latter ship. Lest by any chance we should not have had letters by the Dalepark, Mr. ——, with most considerate kindness, wrote up immediately to let us know that a friend of his had seen my brother safe in London; and you will understand that amidst our distress and horror at reading the heart-rending details respecting the unhappy Eclair, we felt most thankful on R——'s account. I remember, not long after coming out here first, the shock I experienced when, on sending to inquire at what time a particular merchant-vessel would be ready to sail, as we wished to send letters by her, the answer was, "The Ann Grant has been laden for some time, but cannot come down the river, *all hands being dead.*" I recollect too the very first time the conviction flashed on me of *what* this place really was. I had heard of the illness of a European resident who had called shortly before, looking quite well. The next thing I heard was that his horses were to be sold. I inquired if he were going home for his health. "He is dead!" was the reply. Such like tidings soon came too thick and fast for the same shock to attend them all: the surprise has long been when any one recovers. But of all the lamentable instances I know or ever heard of the deadly nature of the climate of Africa, that of the Eclair is the most harrowing; and to think too, even when the ship had

reached our own England, still there was no respite! Oh! how many childless parents—how many widows and orphans—has this fatal country made!

And for those who do survive on its baneful shores, what broken health and suffering is theirs! M—— has just recovered from another of those attacks of intermittent fever to which the acclimated are so subject, and even hail as a proof that they *are* acclimated; but repeated fits of ague in time produce their effect, obliging one at last to hasten home for a few months' change of air, and this is what we have been long recommended to do. The Q——'s sailed last week, and Mr. and Mrs. —— are on the point of leaving, all of them having come through a great deal of sickness. I again am much stronger and better than I have been for very many months past, which beneficial change I partly ascribe to taking daily easy exercise on *assback*.

When too weak to manage my fiery steed, which twice ran away with me, once on the very brow of the Zigzag, I got an humble donkey, on which I ride out every morning; and though at first it was so obstinate as actually to require one person to walk behind to urge it on, and another before to prevent it running away, I have now got it nicely broken in, and amenable to everything except being saddled, which necessary process, owing to the worthy quadruped's kicking propensities, always takes three men upwards of half an hour to execute! However, I have not quite given up my wild horse as incorrigible, and was lately indebted to it for the longest ride I have taken under a tropical sun.

There are three distinct phases of the landscape here. The first is hill and dale, clothed in all their original exuberance of stately forest, and appearing in their primeval grandeur, as it were, fresh from the hands of their Maker; the second is the first denuded and laid waste by fire and hatchet, as are now the greater number of the hills in this locality, and that is the scenery I would gladly see changed; the third is the second rich in partial cultivation, and which, with the first, constitutes the peculiar beauty of the tropics, and in it I certainly desire no variety. Here fruits and flowers, which attain to but a dwarfish height when coaxed in our home hothouses, spring up and flourish spontaneously in all their own native loveliness. Setting aside the

many graceful scions of the acacia tribe, from the noble locust-tree to the slender shrinking mimosa—overlooking the queen-like palm, with her not less regal sister the feathery-branched coconut tree—here the broad-leaved plantain and banana form a natural arcade that breathes of coolness even under the sun of Africa; there the pawpaw raises its slight shaft, which you wonder can support the green and golden load at top, while its yellow blossoms perfume the air, and form the centre of attraction to a flock of bright-winged humming-birds. But it is not *here* and *there*. Mingled in one rich mass of harmonious colouring, and flinging their sweet scent to the welcome sea-breeze, orange and lime trees, spangled with snowy flowers, and bending under the weight of their gorgeous fruit, vie with those of the luxuriant mango, the bay-leaved coffee, the pale-stemmed guava, the dark densely-foliaged rose-apple, the sour-sop, with its orchard-tree aspect and portly produce, upon our own pretty little hill, that boasts of many hundred others in the bush, whose names I cannot tell, but the descriptions of a few of which you shall have at some future period.

Whilst riding towards Regent one forenoon, suddenly we heard a most discordant sound, which first I fancied was a child crying in a passion; and then, as it came nearer, believed to be the neighing of a wild horse: both grooms, however, said gravely it was merely a “dog.” Presently a man appeared in sight on the brow of the hill, bearing on his head something evidently very weighty, that we soon discovered to be the object from which the unaccountable yelling proceeded. This was nothing else than a huge black pig, bound with withes across a flat board, and surmounted by the straw hat of the man, who trudged quietly along, merely balancing his extraordinary and noisy burthen with one hand, and with the other flourishing a cane, after the most approved negro fashion.

It has been excessively hot for some time, but a few mornings ago a heavy squall cooled the air so much that I went out for a little walk under the mango and orange trees. Fanyah, with whom on such occasions I usually hold a conversation, on passing a bush infested with ants, told me that in her country they take the red ants’ nests, open them, and drink the white water inside for “cough medicine.” So saying, she plucked down a nest,

and, heedless of the valiant little insects which covered her hand and arm in a moment, tore the leaves open, and exclaiming, "Ah, ma'am, dey smell sweet!"—held out to me what she called the "cough water," and which was actually the ant in its grub state! Fanyah is of the Kosso tribe, whose locality is not far to the southward of this colony. She has told me that when a very little girl, about, as I should think (from the time she has been liberated), not more than five years old, she remembers of the village in which she lived being set on fire by a neighbouring chief and his party; and whilst her father went to fight against them, her mother gathered her little household valuables together, and fled with Fanyah into the bush. They were discovered, however, taken prisoners, bound, and driven away as slaves, with a great many more of their country-people. Presently they came to a river that was very "potta-potta," or muddy, and which they were to cross. At this juncture the marauders were attacked by another tribe, and in the confusion Fanyah and her mother contrived to hide themselves again in the bush. The poor child had a loud and severe cough, which she was implored by her mother to try and check, or it would betray them to their enemies, who, having beat off the other party, were searching for the woman and child everywhere. Fanyah tells me that she crouched down, pressing her face close to the ground to try and stifle her cough, and, though the efforts nearly choked her, she succeeded in keeping quite silent while the band were beating the bush all around the spot where the mother and child lay trembling with pain and terror. This was an instance of great fortitude in one so young, and she was rewarded by hearing at last the retreating steps of the hostile tribe. After it was quite dark, Fanyah and her mother, who had managed to free herself from the rope with which her arms were secured, stole from their hiding-place back to the site of their home—now a mass of blackened ashes. She forgets how they reached another village, where, to their great joy, her father was found quite safe.

She remembers that he was a weaver of the strong narrow cloth made by the natives of the interior, and her mother manufactured crockeryware in the shape of country-pots, and that both died but a short time after their escape, leaving Fanyah in

charge of an old woman. But ere long the poor little thing found herself journeying, with several others, towards the same "potta-potta" river she had formerly reached with her mother, having either been sold to a slave-dealer or kidnapped. She distinctly recollects the baracoons in which they were confined for a day or two previous to being embarked at the Gallinas. They had been but a short time on board when a great commotion took place in the vessel; the slaves were told the English were chasing them, and would most assuredly eat the negroes if the vessel were taken! All sail was made, a quantity of the provisions thrown overboard, but at last the slaver was captured by the British cruiser. "And," to give the words with which Fanyah concludes every time she speaks to me of her own country, "pose me leff ma own country, and nebber see it no more, me not sorry, cause me come here; me *free*, and me learn good book; somebody no savey book in Kosso country, no Christian live there, and me glad for be Christian; and pose ma moder dead, you all same good to me as ma own moder, ma'am."

I never saw a better disposed negro child than my present little handmaiden; so thoughtfully attentive whenever I am ill, and so contented with her situation, which is rather an isolated one, as she never, except on the occasional coming up of her predecessor Sarah, or at the washerwoman's weekly visits, has any other girl to gossip with, which is a great change to what she was accustomed to at school among so many little companions of her own age. However, she chiefly amuses herself now with dolls and patchwork. One pleasing trait in her character is, that, having observed my interest in the productions of this country, she never misses an opportunity of bringing me in a pretty nose-gay, or some curious bush-fruit, in apple, berry, or pod—even conquering her natural aversion to insects in bringing me a strange-looking one whenever she can. She found a huge caterpillar, with a furry coat of dark-brown, and eight white spots on each side, feeding upon a bush-apple leaf, and brought it to me the other day. I am sure it was nearly five inches long, and proportionably thick. Its furry covering was coarse as norsehair, and very prickly. I suppose it would in due time turn out one of our most magnificent butterflies. I counted

thirty-two smaller caterpillars upon one leaf lately. They were remarkable-looking things, green with red heads; and instead of the hairy spines common to the species, were all stuck over with little sharp points.

I have often observed the young leaves of a particular tree here, hanging from the spray by two and two, and looking like flat pea-pods, from being so closely doubled. I have repeatedly examined them to try if I could open one, but not even a needle's point could penetrate the edges, that are thin as the finest lawn, though next day perhaps, the same spray would be clothed with properly-shaped glossy leaves. This morning, however, I discovered one just beginning to unfold at the upper end, and easily opened it out, until it displayed itself a fully-formed, light-green leaf, as soft as silk.

Extract from Journal.

December 24th.

A HEAVY shower of rain this morning. Strong sea-breeze. Opened the windows in front piazza as her Majesty's steamers Penelope and Avon were getting under weigh, and distinctly perceived the smell of *coal*-smoke, which I inhaled as a remembrance of home. Rode out after the rain cleared off. Saw a curious-looking plant, its branches being clothed with flowers, or rather berries, of pure white-wax, with a tuft of short capillaments at top. These pretty snowy capsules are in the centre of petals exactly resembling those of the orange and lime blossom, and, only containing a few pearly little seeds, crack like dry seaweed. They have a most artificial appearance, and, like many other flowers in this country, grow from the under side of the twig.

A ride or walk in the cool of the morning at this season is delightful, there is such a galaxy of fragrant flowers in full bloom. But, indeed, I do not know the time of year here when there are no flowers. In sauntering along the wooded paths round the house—where, through the green interstices of the arched foliage overhead, the blue sky is looking down lovingly upon you, and you look up with delight at the festoons of beautiful blossoms, which are so twisted among the tree stems and branches on either side, that you cannot distinguish what sort of

leaf individually belongs to each, while rare birds and glittering insects are flitting about among the boughs that are just beginning to rustle in the cheerful morning wind—it is almost impossible to believe that, amid all the bloom and beauty of nature in this climate,

“ There breathes through human life
A waft of death.”

But so it is: and as I turn round to look at the fine sea-view, with its peaceful bays, fringed like the green shore opposite with a belt of gleaming white sand, there, at anchor, above the powder-magazine, lies a vessel, with the flaunting stripes and stars of the United States at one mast-head, and the ominous yellow flag waving at the other—every one of her crew having been swept off by mangrove-fever in the Rio Pongas; and back comes the painful recollection of the *Eclair*'s fate, and of the present appalling mortality at Boã Vista, both of which resulted from the pestilent atmosphere of this very place, with all its deceitfully bright and inviting aspect.

But our times are in the hands of God, who, in preserving us from the evil itself, can also keep us from the *fear* of “ the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday.”



LETTER XXIX.

The Settlers — Mr. Clarkson — Trials of the Infant Colony — Attack by the French — Timmanee rising — The “Widow’s Brook” — Influence of a Missionary’s Wife — Mrs. Kilham.

January 12th, 1846.

HITHERTO my opportunities for observation with regard to the general character, disposition, and manners of the various castes of the negro population have been almost exclusively limited to the settlers and Liberated Africans—two classes as disproportioned in numbers as opposite in their habits and tendencies; the former comprising only about two hundred individuals—the latter, many thousands, who, in their turn, are composed of numerous separate tribes.

The history of the settlers is rendered interesting by their being so closely connected with the foundation of the colony, and an old settler-woman, who was but a girl when they landed here in March, 1792, once gave me a graphic description of that period, which however, owing to the quaint style of her expressions, can never be written down with the same force.

Sixty-five, out of the eleven hundred and ninety-six who left Nova Scotia, died on the passage hither; and many of the survivors were ill when they landed. The place was all so rankly overgrown with forest and jungle, that the men employed in cutting paths suffered greatly from the mere wounds caused by the knife-grass and prickly plants that obstructed their progress at every step; while, although the natives were kind in bringing to the new-comers country productions, such as cassada-roots and ground-nuts; the poor Nova Scotians, having been all their lives accustomed to the rich maize and rice of Carolina, did not know how to prepare the strange vegetables, and, not understanding a word of the native language, could receive no information on the subject.

The women and children remained in the ship until a small space had been hurriedly cleared for a tent for them, but there,

lying on the damp ground, with no other than a screen of canvas, in a wilderness exposed to wild beasts, and swarming with venomous reptiles and noxious insects; unable to procure some kinds of food, and almost as unable to prepare others—death by hunger as well as sickness rapidly thinning their numbers—this unfortunate body of people, previously habituated to comfort and plenty, were reduced almost to despair.

Mr. Clarkson, under whose management they had been brought from Nova Scotia, did all in his power to better their condition, and cheer their minds under these hardships, and they still mention him with grateful enthusiasm. But from the time of his departure my informant's statement seems too much biassed by bitter feelings to admit of its being perfectly correct. She, in common with the rest of her people, attributes all their misfortunes at that time to the servants of the Sierra Leone Company, forgetting that these poor Europeans suffered equally with the blacks themselves.

The mortality of that first wet season seems to have been ominous of the future. It set in about the middle of May, before many of the settlers' houses were finished building, and at the same time the accommodation of the white superintendents was so poor, that they were greatly exposed to the weather. It was no wonder then that the climate fever should have raged in all its virulence. Whilst about eight hundred of the negro colonists were suffering from its attacks, it proved as usual most fatal to the white people. At the height of the pestilence, all the medical men, excepting one, were laid up, and, owing to the death of the storekeepers, neither food, nor clothing, nor medicine could be distributed. A large ship laden with stores, frames of houses, and materials for building, that had been despatched from England with a view to meet the wants of the colonists, was driven back in a storm, and did not arrive here till nearly the end of the "rains."

The difficulty of cutting the necessary paths, so as to admit of the ground being surveyed, was increased tenfold by sickness and the weary weather of a Sierra Leone rainy season. Instead, therefore, of twenty acres to each man, ten to his wife, and five to every child, as had been promised them, it was found impossible to give at once more than four acres to each family.

This seems to have been the first cause of grievance to the settlers, and the evil effects may be traced to this day.

Great blame has been attributed to the Sierra Leone Company for not adhering to its original promise ; yet it should be borne in mind, that it *was* the intention of the Company to make more liberal allotments ; but all the people insisted upon having their individual lots in the best places, which of course could not be agreed to, the lands of the English on the level belt beneath the mountains not being enough. Certain proportions in situations nearest Freetown were therefore given, with the intention of granting the remainder elsewhere, when the ground, which proved to be of a much worse quality than had been expected, could be surveyed for that purpose. The clearing of paths to enable any measurement to be taken had of course to be done by the emigrants themselves, and, supposing a man with a wife and two children had (under the other disadvantages I have mentioned) unassisted to clear round a space of forty acres of the dense forest and matted underwood of the tropics, he could not by any human possibility also find time to clear and cultivate space enough to raise provisions for his family. Indeed, spite of the utmost exertions, by both Europeans and blacks, the succeeding dry season was well-nigh over before the distribution of even the lesser portions was concluded.

One published account of the matter states that the emigrants were quite willing to accept of the more limited divisions for the time, which I think must certainly have been the case, if they were at all gifted with common sense, as viewing the localities at present, and remembering that these high hills were one mass of forest at that period—taking also into consideration the difficulties with which the Europeans had to struggle—my only wonder is how, with such means as they had, the servants of the Sierra Leone Company succeeded in laying out the allotments they did apportion to the settlers.

That the numbers of these blacks, who were then, by all I can learn, a diligent and well-conducted set of comparatively civilized people, should have so dwindled away within the fifty-four years they have been in the colony, and that their whole nature should have changed, inasmuch as now there are amongst them generally no habits of continued industry, strikes me as being so

very remarkable that I hope you will forgive my expatiating upon such an old story.

But I should in the first place have stated that they were the negroes who had remained loyal to England during the American war, after which they emigrated to Nova Scotia, having received from Government promises of land there. But they found the climate and soil of Nova Scotia quite unsuited to them, and sent a delegate to England to represent that they were therefore desirous of becoming colonists in the new settlement which they had heard was about to be formed here. The directors of the Sierra Leone Company agreed in applying to Government for a free passage to the Nova Scotian Africans, and hence their coming to this place.

In 1787 a considerable district of land had been ceded, for the purpose of being colonized by several hundreds of destitute blacks then in London, and who were sent out here by the originators of the scheme for founding a free negro settlement on this coast. But these early colonists died away or departed beyond British boundaries; very few of them remaining when the Nova Scotians arrived five years afterwards, and found the place in the wild state I have already described.

After landing and fixing upon the site of the new town to be built, one misfortune after another attended the infant colony of Sierra Leone. The commencement of the war rendered communication to and from England very uncertain, as well as unfrequent, often detaining vessels at a time their cargoes were most likely to be of use. The store-ship in the harbour was unfortunately burnt with a considerable quantity of goods on board; and whilst the settlers naturally murmured at the privations consequent on all these untoward circumstances, matters were made still worse by an attack on the colony, in September, 1794, an account of which I have had from more than one eye-witness.

It was upon a Sunday morning, and guns being heard out at sea, the people rejoiced to think it was the long-expected "Harpy," one of the Company's ships that had been for some time anxiously looked out for. But daylight discovered several large French ships, which as they entered the harbour commenced firing upon the town. "I was in de street, poor ting!" was the pathetic beginning of one good woman, who is particularly fond

of relating the occurrence of that time, "and seeing one big round ball skipping and jumping before me, run after it trying to catch it;—poor ting! I was young and knew no better, when one old woman did pull me back just as dis great ting burst with such terrible noise, smoke, and flames! Den we all flung ourselves down on our faces, and de pieces passed over us. I, poor ting! never been see one shell before, and was so frightened when it did explode. Den we all been run to the bush, I and some others been go to Pa Demba's town, just dere where them fine farms live now, and this old head man give us shelter; but for two whole day my own moder not able to find me, dere was such a hiding and such a panic! Den after dey done burn Free-town, de big ships sail up de river to Bunce Island, and when dey pass Granville Town, dey go burn it too. De French peoples did not kill or hurt any of us, but oh! it was one terrible time!"

It was indeed a disastrous occurrence to the colony. The houses it had cost so much life, as well as money, to erect were plundered and burnt, while the French wantonly destroyed whatever they could not use. They scoured the town in search of stock, which they kept shooting at all day, rendering it dangerous to walk in the streets; books, plants, seeds, dried birds and insects, were torn, trampled upon, and scattered about: telescopes, barometers, thermometers, and an electrical machine, shared the same fate; the church was pillaged, its pulpit and clock broken to pieces; the apothecary's shop with every medicine in it was also destroyed; vessels and boats were burnt, and when the "Harpy" appeared at last, she was captured, the passengers robbed of their property, and all the cargo taken. The enemy sailed on the 13th of October, having, after many remonstrances from the Governor, first granted provisions to serve for the white people's consumption for no more than two or three weeks.

Soon afterwards two other English vessels were seized near Sierra Leone, and the crews sent ashore, to suffer, in common with the others, from a want of shelter and food. As might be expected, a general sickness broke out amongst the Europeans after all this excitement and distress, when the loss of medicines, as well as provisions, was felt most severely.

It is worthy of notice that whilst the slave-traders, in the neighbourhood, did all in their power to add to the hardships of the colony at that time, the native chiefs, on the contrary, were unanimous in rendering it every assistance.

In giving you the foregoing sketch of the early days of this settlement, I must acknowledge being *partly* indebted for its particulars to an interesting little volume of Church Missionary history that I have read since coming out last.

Taking all the circumstances of their case into consideration, it is perhaps less to be wondered at than lamented, that in 1800, or the year following, the Nova Scotians rose in rebellion against their government, owing to a small quit-rent having been levied upon the little farms, on which, under so many disadvantages, they had laboured for seven years; though, when we reflect on the enormous outlay of money the colony had cost, in sending vessels to explore it at first, then incorporating the Company, bringing home, clothing, and educating natives; and that the settlers themselves were receiving every encouragement, aid, and protection from its Government, it seems to have been but fair and reasonable that they were required to contribute their mite to its support.

When the insurrection was quelled, through the agency of the Maroons, who arrived from Jamaica the same year, the most disaffected of the settlers left their lands, and a few joined the Timmanees in an invasion upon the colony. Those who remained, however, seem to have acted at this crisis in a manner calculated to restore them entirely to the favour and esteem of their rulers.

The Timmanees twice attempted to seize this place; first in the same year as the settlers' rising, and again in 1803. The former time it was rumoured throughout the colony, that the surrounding natives were going to rise, kill all the Europeans, and make slaves of the free blacks. As the old chief King Tom, besides annually receiving many presents from the Company, was liberally paid for the mere permission of procuring water at the springs in his territory,—the then Governor would not believe that any such treachery was meditated, until one day, upwards of forty large canoes full of Timmanees were seen pulling towards King Tom's Point. Then, according to the version given me by the same person who boasts of her youthful attempt at catching

a grenade,—the settlers were the first to warn the Governor, who desired the women and children to come up within the walls of the fort, the old settler men arming themselves and coming up too. Before gun-fire next morning, the Timmanee drum was heard, and at once a large body of them attacked the fort, and as the Governor proceeded with lanterns to speak to the insurgents at the gate, he was wounded by a musket shot. The few old settlers within (amongst whom was this woman's godfather, the sheriff of the town) having been inured to fighting in America, now did good service, and shortly after daybreak the foe was obliged to retreat.

“ Oh den was de terrible sight ! ” continued my informant, holding up her hands, “ and de crying amongst de women and children. One said, Look my fader !—anoder, See my broder—or my son—or my husband dead ! Dere was my own godfader lying on de ground wounded and bleeding, and I spoke and spoke to him, but he not able for give me answer, because he dead too. Den in came de Maroons from Granville Town, and made cry and such a weeping and wailing I never been see before. Oh dat was one dreadful day—poor ting ! I young girl den, and never been look upon bloodshed before.”

After many similar exclamations, she went on to tell me that then a wall was built round the town, and three gates and watch-houses erected—that at seven o'clock every evening the gates were shut, and no one allowed to go out or in, until the same hour next morning. Yet notwithstanding all these preparations and precautions, two years had scarcely elapsed when the report of a Timmanee invasion was again heard, but now the Maroons were all armed, and every one in readiness.

“ It was daylight dis time, and dey been come from Port Logo, and from up de river where Kissy now stands, and after landing, been march right into Freetown. Some of de women and children been go up to de fort, but I and two or tree oders remain in de house, which was where my godfader de Sheriff been live before. De Timmanees not know dey been kill him toder time, so dey go straight to dat house, cause dey know it one headman's house, and so de first to be taken and burnt. I been look out of de window, and saw dem coming in one great band. At dem head been march de gree-gree or witch woman,

beating one drum and dancing and making so many monkey capers. She all hung round wid strings of beads and gree-grees, and shells, to keep as dey been tink, de balls from striking de Timmanees, and she went shaking, shaking, and jumping, jumping, all about, and never ceased beating de drum. When dey began firing into de piazza, we been trow ourselves down, and called upon Providence to keep the city. But soon dat body of dem forced to flee—suppose no more den three Maroon men returned de fire from our windows. De Timmanee was divided into tree parties to each of de tree gates, and fighting—fighting been go on everywhere—but for all dat dey were all driven back, and not one of us killed, but some wounded. De Maroons were so bloodtirsty dey would give no quarter, and all de bush about de town was so full of de dead bodies of Timmanees, dat de Governor been give order to trow de bodies into de sea—fearing great pestilence go come by dem remaining in de bush. But dey never come back no more, no! no! dere grand witch woman not able for save dem, dey been get such fright dat time — Freetown quiet ever since.”

I have written down the settler's own words so far as I can remember them, as they convey an idea of the correctness, upon the whole, of the language of her people. But some of the younger branches of the Nova Scotians speak very well, pronouncing the *the's*, &c. quite distinctly. In listening to these ancient records of the colony (of course when I say *ancient*, I speak by comparison), it seems so strange to picture its now bare hills and hut-covered plains, where one may walk as securely as in the streets of London, as at that period dark with pathless forests, numbering among their inhabitants the spotted leopard and untamed elephant, as well as the equally fierce heathen savage.

Yet after all these troubles and commotions, the Nova Scotians seem to have been very happy and comfortable for many years; the old people cultivating their lands, and those of the younger who had remained after their *émeute*, either assisting their parents in agricultural pursuits, or learning the trades of carpenters, masons, tailors, &c., under the auspices of the Sierra Leone Company, by whom the colony was transferred to the British Government in 1807.

The interest evinced in their well being, the schools, where

rewards for reading, writing, and needlework were bestowed by the hands of the Governor himself, are topics on which they all love to dwell—never failing to contrast their *then* condition with what it now is. On asking one day of a venerable settler matron, what was the origin of the name of the “Widow’s Brook,” which she applied to a mountain rivulet at some distance—she told me it was so called from all the widows of the Nova Scotians giving, upwards of forty years ago, a great feast on its banks to the European inhabitants of the colony—adding in a very decided tone, “Ah! dem were de good times! white people *were* white people den!” They also speak of a Missionary’s wife who a great many years since endeared herself very much to all the native women in the place, by her kind manners and apparent anxiety for their welfare. She used to go freely into their houses, and teach them how to *manage* their different employments in the best way, giving little presents at the same time, and had already made a visible improvement, not only by stimulating them to industry, but by showing them there is a method to be observed in all sorts of labour—when she fell a victim to the climate, “And oh!” to use their own words, “had you only been see her funeral—de crowds of people dat follow—crying and weeping and wailing—you would have said it was dat of one great queen!”

I have spoken to them of Mrs. Kilham and what she had done; but the settlers, being of a contrary religious persuasion, do not seem to appreciate the efforts which that lady made in this part of the world.

LETTER XXX.

Thieving propensities of newly emancipated Negroes — Reasons for the decay of the Settlers' fortunes — Their animosity towards the Liberated People — Sick-nurses — Jubilee Dinner — Freetown Spring Fashions — Sukey Webb — Visit to the Site of a Settler's Farm Cottage.

February 28th.

FROM the period slaves taken by English cruisers began to be landed here, the early colonists date their reverse of fortune, their crops being constantly stolen—their wood cut down and burnt by these barbarous new-comers—who nevertheless were neither prevented from robbing and destroying their neighbour's property, nor punished afterwards. This was undoubtedly the case; and now the same class of the Liberated steal with as much assiduity from the older-established and more respectable of themselves, and with nearly as much impunity. I have seen a gang of about a hundred negroes, in going up and down between Freetown and the villages, enter the cassada-fields by the way, and plunder wholesale, to the utter disheartening of the industrious proprietors. But other causes operated in effecting a change of circumstances to the settlers.

About twenty-five years ago, house-rents and the prices of labour here were exorbitantly high. Small houses, containing no more than a couple of rooms on each floor, were let to Government for 250*l.* and 300*l.* In a few years rents were reduced, but many of these people preferred allowing their houses to fall to ruin rather than abate a few pounds of what they had formerly been accustomed to receive. A carpenter's or mason's daily wages were then six shillings, with three shillings additional for his apprentice—most of the apprentices being Liberated Africans, granted by Government, and upon them were laid all parts of the work requiring the greatest manual exertion; so that the young settler-apprentice, though ostensibly learning a useful trade, was not merely brought up in comparative idleness, but with an overweening idea of his own importance.

The elder people indeed continued to labour, but as I was made early sensible on first coming to this place—their children were never exercised in the same habits of industry and activity, little Liberated Africans being apprenticed out in as great numbers as was required by any head of a family.* By and bye, when these Liberated people became competent to work at the same trades as their haughty fellow-colonists, wages fell of course considerably. But instead of competing with those they deemed so utterly their inferiors—the Nova Scotians, with few exceptions, withdrew from the field in disgust, some embarking in petty mercantile pursuits, where they were almost uniformly unfortunate, through giving credit to the natives beyond the jurisdiction of the colony; others, without much thoughts of the future, living upon the money they had acquired in the golden age, but none of them making any permanently strenuous effort to acquire more.

Meanwhile many of the emancipated negroes were rising by degrees to comparative eminence and wealth, partly by their own diligence, and partly through the favour shown them by the Colonial Government; while the settlers, feeling themselves becoming more needy and neglected, in proportion as their overwhelmingly numerous rivals advanced in affluence and respectability, regarded them with envy, jealousy, and bitter dislike.

In illustration of how high this feeling runs, I may mention that one old woman, after telling me how hard it was to see the captured people petted and patronized so much, as to have an hospital, with “fine boarded floors” to go to when sick, besides so many schools and teachers—summed up by exclaiming,—“Well! it is only my wonder dat we settlers do not rise up in one body and *kill* and *slay*—*kill* and *slay*! Dem Spanish and Portugee sailors are quite right in making slaves; I would do de very same myself suppose I were in dere place!”

Indeed some years ago these charitable sentiments were partially put in practice, a poor Liberated woman, whom a settler had made his bride, being set upon by a mob of her husband’s country women, and well-nigh beaten to death. More recently, how-

* The apprenticeship system has been since done away with, and, it is to be hoped, will be followed by more industrious habits on the part of the Creoles.

ever, there have been one or two instances of intermarriages between them and the colony-born daughters of Liberated parents.

Amongst the Nova Scotians as they now exist, women predominate in number, the greater portion of whom either go out as sick-nurses, or take into their own houses those Europeans who are ill, and have no settled home here, the most lucrative (for the settlers) of all employments in this field of fever, and one commonly admitted to blunt and deaden the finer feelings of its *professed* followers, in whatever country. Others amongst them take in washing and needle-work. Of the few men, none are cultivators of the soil; some are engaged in trade, one or two are master artisans, several are pilots, but nearly all of the latter are also *preachers* in some one of the very many chapels of various sects that are sprinkled over the streets of Freetown and its outskirts. Those who still retain their original grants of land, let them out to Liberated Africans, on condition of obtaining half the produce.

But the masons, carpenters, sawyers, &c., as well as laundresses, of this caste—having the main portion of their respective employments performed by Liberated Africans—cannot of course afford their labour at the same rate as those of the latter, who unassisted follow similar callings, and thus the settlers do not obtain employment so readily as their despised competitors.

The settlers too have not only been always accustomed to the necessaries of life, but rather incline to extravagance so far as regards eating and drinking, whilst the habits, in that respect, of even the most civilized among the Liberated are exceedingly simple, temperate, and frugal. Then, while the great bulk of the latter class wear anything beyond the scantiest clothing as a mere gala-day ornament, to be thrown aside at all other times—silk or muslin gowns, flounced and furbelowed—white veils—gay shawls—a superabundance of rich coral necklaces—bright pink or lilac parasols—are considered but necessary articles of dress by many of the Nova Scotians.

“When my daughter was married,” said one of the elder people to me, “she been wear one white silk dress I been send for to England six months before—over it was one robe of very fine white net, I been buy here at four shilling de yard. She

had on at church one white silk bonnet, and afterwards, at de dinner I give on de occasion, one white turban all trimmed wid roses,—and she been look *well*, oh ! so well !”

Yet this identical family think nothing of dunning you for *green* tea, sugar, bottles of wine and ale, white cambric pocket-handkerchiefs, lace edgings, and a multitude of things I cannot enumerate. Nay, though you generally anticipate their requests, and have some little trifle in readiness for them, its bestowal seems but to open their hearts to beg for more. I am told too, that some of them have beaufets decorated with old-fashioned silver plate, yet they ever complain of poverty, hard times, and the injustice of Government in countenancing people who once were slaves—quite forgetting they are themselves but the descendants of slaves.

It is merely to a few of them, who go out as sick-nurses, that my personal acquaintance with the Nova Scotians extends, though in this capacity I have seen but too much of them, especially since we last came out. And as they are persons of whose services every European who visits Sierra Leone must sooner or later have need, it may not be out of place to observe that their daily wages vary from five to seven shillings; while their continually telling you of the many “foine presents” made to them by every patient they have nursed, conveys a hint you may take or not, as you like. Provided you keep them in good humour, and let them have wine and spirits *ad libitum* by day and night, they testify their gratitude, as soon as you begin to recover, by recommending you to breakfast off Westphalia ham; and instead of doling out the prescribed tea-spoonfuls of Madeira, will dash nearly half the contents of the decanter into your glass, with a liberality that speaks more for their readiness of doing as they would be done by, than for their skill and common sense.

Yet, seriously, although you cannot help being uncomfortably sensible of the contrast between even the most attentive and intelligent of these negro women, and English attendants in general, the settlers are still so immeasurably superior, in the external gloss of civilization, to the common herd here, that you are naturally led to regard them with favour, and easily overlook such little airs and whims as they choose to amuse you with,—and which are merely exhibited to give you some notion of their

all-paramount importance in this "Grave of the British," as their demeanour towards yourself is far more humble and respectful than could possibly be expected from people who have little idea of the distinctions of society as they exist at home, and who, at the same time, possess a too high opinion of themselves, with a disposition deeply imbued with selfish pride and obstinate prejudices.

I have, however, seen few persons whom you can more highly gratify by showing anything like an interest in their history, and although they usually give you to understand that climbing to this solitary place, merely to attend upon a patient, is a stretch of complaisance not lightly to be appreciated—the same individuals think nothing of coming up, perhaps a week or two afterwards, for the sole ostensible reason of paying me a visit! If admitted (which they often are, for the sake of my gathering a little information about themselves), after many a sweeping curtsey, and well-worded apology for encroaching upon my time,—they seat themselves—arrange the folds of their usual garb, that consists of scarlet moreen petticoat, yellow silk shawl, and light cotton print gown; lay aside the high-crowned black beaver hat, in order that the almost equal jetty countenance it shades may contrast to greater advantage with the snowy kerchief head-dress; or if the party be young, to display the hair either clipped and disposed in fantastic shapes like some antique yew-tree of a Dutch garden, or else twisted into short stiff plaits, which give the head the appearance of being stuck over with so many black crayons;—after all which preliminaries they begin to talk—the most venerable amongst them launching forth in querulous complaints of their present condition, and grumbling at the "Liberated," lamenting above all the things the beating of drums and firing of muskets that goes on from sunset to sunrise, not so much because such noises disturb people's rest, but because—"De Timmanee might come again, and shoot half of us before midnight, and who could tell it was de Timmanee, when de same drum is allowed to be beat from night till morning, and de loaded muskets are popping off here and popping off dere, when honest people should be asleep in bed!"*

* Since the above was written the negroes have been interdicted from firing muskets during the night.

But their animosity is not displayed towards the Liberated Africans alone ; the Maroons are equally hated by the settlers, and indeed even more so, as I was told by one of them that they would sooner intermarry with the emancipated negroes than with the Maroons. I asked the same old dame, who really seemed not to have a good word for any body, why she did not emigrate to the West Indies, now that so many fine ships were sent out to convey all who chose to go ; but the very question seemed to fill her with horror, “ No no, marm ! de first move we settlers make will be to de church yard ! ” and she continued her conversation in a still more discontented tone than before, crying down Demerara and Trinidad as the worst places under the sun, and repeating several nonsensical tales of the fatality of these climates, especially to black people.

The middle-aged, on the contrary, try to impress you with an idea of their comfort and respectability as a class, tell you of their jubilee dinner, when all the men of the Nova Scotians sat down to a table graced by eight roast pigs, some dozens of roast ducks, and (colonial rarity !) a “ young *veal*,” with many a luxury in the shape of ham, pickled pork, cabbages, porter and pale ale ; of the remnants of which repast the wives and daughters, after officiating as waiters, partook in all due humility and contentedness.

But nothing amused me so much as the young matron of the rose-wreathed turban, after telling me that such and such a merchant had received a whole cargo of English straw bonnets, so beautiful that all the settlers of any taste had henceforth resolved to discard hats, gravely begging to be the medium of sending me up a quantity of the said bonnets to choose from, seeing they had become so fashionable *among the blacks of Freetown ! !*

Speaking of shops then reminded her that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to get needles in the stores in town, the “ Liberated ” buying them all up to hawk through the country, and therefore my very self-possessed visitant stretched her great black hand, all glittering with silver rings, across to my work-box, adding with a complacent smile, “ So I shall just make bold, if you please, marm, to help myself to some of your fine needles.”

The settlers are very strict in the outward observances of

religion, attending, I believe, both morning and evening service daily, at their "meeting-houses," and profess their different sects to be offshoots from the Wesleyan Methodists.

Notwithstanding that ludicrous sort of pride and self-esteem, which leads all the younger scions of the Nova Scotians to consider labour as something far more disgraceful and degrading in itself than idleness or begging; there is no question but that those who were grown up when they came over here from America, were an industriously disposed and intelligent class of persons.

I was confirmed in this opinion by a visit to the deserted site of one of the original settler farms; formerly the property of its occupant, an old matron named Sukey Webb, famed for her habit of courtesying, almost as much as for her diligence; and who, having often many a humble and importunate request, had her will drawn out in the quaintest of approved forms, by the colonial advocate for the crown—used to bring the precious document from its place of safe keeping, and show it to her visitors, as that of which she was proudest of all things she possessed.

Extract from Journal.

February 18th.—A cold sunless morning, afterwards becoming very hot; glass 86° to 88° in the shade. Set off early to the high hill above Mount Oriel, that one over which the grey and murky fogs linger so long in the rainy season, so that often even when the sun is shining blithely everywhere else, still one conspicuous tree on that hill looms through the mist, like the tall mast of a ship at anchor on a wintry sea. After passing through the Rose-apple Glen—no longer the *very* darkly shaded place it was five years ago, though sheltered and beautiful enough yet—we struck off the regular path, into one traced by ourselves as we ascended, and where the brown, withered-up stalks of the Guinea grass, bending across each other and twisting and tangling, made the route seem as if it lay over a forest of bristling walking-canes; while the great loose rocks scattered upon the blackened surface of the ground reminded me of a quarry. Stones about the size of cannon-balls were strewed so thickly on the steep ascent, that my sure-footed little donkey could scarcely step without treading upon them. A few low shrubby plants, with leaves scorched

brown and red, had a peculiarly dreary aspect, and nothing looked green and bright on the steep slope, save the fresh young blades of grass that contrived to pierce singly through the ashes.

We passed under the fine *live* forest-tree which, being about fifty feet high ere it sends out a branch, has always struck me as so remarkable an object, standing almost alone upon the bleak hill-side. The ground near it was covered with its half-burnt fruit, which the country-people say is excellent for making "palaver sauce." Our attendants stopped to pick up a quantity of these productions, that look like coarse apples squeezed flat on each side, and are hard as wood. I had some of them split open : a strong fibrous substance, of a bright yellow colour, surrounds a white kernel, which is the part eaten after cooking by the natives.

Fanyah gathered her pinafore full, and after reaching home had a great deal of amusement in preparing them. I tasted one, and thought it very insipid.

As we ascended I turned round every few minutes to look at the different pictures the view presented. First taking our house as the central object, it greets us with an animated face ; there the goats (at this distance diminished to the size of rabbits) are bounding about from crag to crag, or browsing in the shade under the coffee-trees ; and there a couple of white-garbed domestics are busy, taking advantage of the shortlived coolness to gather oranges for the day's consumption ; while another in blue woollen blouse and smart straw-hat, by not loitering to hold a conversation with the labourers employed with pickaxe and hoe upon the broad terrace-walk, as he leads a prancing horse from the far stable to that near the house, shows that he is intent upon being ready to attend his master to town by and bye ; and here two figures appear in sight, wending their way homewards, one crowned by a bundle of grass almost bulky enough to thatch a house, and at which the horses' hearts must rejoice this parched-up weather, the other by a huge log of wood, that would make a right merry blaze on an English hearth, this same month of February.

Three steps further, my patient donkey turns round mechanically and I gaze down on our rocky hill, as it stands boldly out in the foreground, well clothed with verdure that grows gradually

richer and denser as it deepens down towards the ravine, which forming from this point a narrow vista, gives the barracks as its farthest extremity; and for once the very barracks look pretty, hemmed in as they appear by a frame of green trees; the hill on which the Garrison stands, and part of the buildings at its foot, become visible as we mount higher; then Freetown and its adjacent huts—the Wilberforce hills and the wide blue sea, that indescribably refreshing feature in tropical scenery.

At last, passing through an old dilapidated stone wall, we came to the very summit—where the grass-grown mounds that marked the place of the former garden-like beds—a few mango, orange, and locust-trees—with the relics of a plantation of cotton-shrubs growing dispersedly within a fence, whose remaining sticks showed themselves in thick, broken pollard-like stems—gave sure but dreary proof that the hand of careful cultivation had once been there. No trace, however, is now left of the solitary dwelling which formerly stood on this mountain, and where an old settler woman lived under the shade of her friendly fruit-trees; and who used to cultivate, amongst native fruits and vegetables, substantial English cabbages, which she carried daily to Freetown market, where they met with a ready sale, being duly appreciated alike by settler and European.

As I looked round the deserted spot, that after so many years of neglect and spoliation still bears witness to its ancient possessor's industry, I felt quite a respect for the memory of the worthy old woman who had once through her care and management had this quite a sheltered and beautiful place. Indeed trees are all it now wants, the scenery around being magnificent.

Passing over the often-described Sugar-Loaf and Leicester mountain ranges, with the sea-view in the other direction—immediately in front rose a breastwork of hills, destitute of trees and verdure, except in the ravines that partly separate them—over the top of the lowest, at the extreme left, appeared part of the Bunce river that branches off from the wide Mitomba, and on its quiet surface one small island threw a patch of shadow. Advancing a few paces further, we overlooked the road to Kissy winding along at the base of the mountains—the dense bush that hides the precipitous gorge formed by a rapid-running stream which empties itself into Fourah bay—and the romantically-

situated planked bridge we drove across in one of my first excursions in this country. I could not distinguish the depth of the ravine from the height where we were—all below us seeming flat as a map—the race-course peninsula—the site of Granville Town—the roads with their border of huts and fruit-trees, looking like strips of reddish-brown ribbon edged with green—while the two or three white-washed villas of Europeans glittered brightly in the now overpoweringly hot sun—in this bird's-eye peep all being softened into neatness and regularity of disposal.

There are certainly few spots that can boast of so much natural grandeur and beauty as Sierra Leone, yet you feel that the want of wood, the absence of cultivation and of animal life, in the grim bare hills, is neither entirely counterbalanced by the sublimity of the frowning peaks and yawning chasms, nor by the distant prospect of the opposite shore, the silvery river and its sleeping islands.

I looked on those to-day, and then turned to the immediate objects around me. A large tree, charred and partially burnt, lay prostrate and uprooted close by us, telling not only of man's neglect, but of the strength of storm and tempest in this land. There the once smiling orchard-trees were fast yielding their territory to the rest of the wilderness, their unpruned branches loaded with, instead of their own golden riches, the withered leaf-nests of a horde of red ants. The graceful boughs of the locust-trees alone were exempt from these intruders. The very grass, if I might judge from the stamping and uneasiness of my long-eared steed, was alive with them, and as I rode under the orange-branches a few stragglers found their way from my bonnet to my face, which was far from being agreeable, and caused me to retreat to a more respectful distance. All around was wild beyond expression; the yellow flowers of the few cotton-bushes were actually the only flowers I saw. Not even a lilac ipomea twined itself up the tall stalks of the Guinea grass, nor yet a common blue pea-blossom amongst that of lower growth. Only one bird, a beautiful red-winged pigeon, flew past; and a rustling in the grass attracted me just in time to see a living animal, that I fancied to be a wild pig, scamper down the brow of the hill, but which it seems was a large porcupine. Nothing else beyond ourselves broke the silence and solitude,

except the distant apparition of a half-clothed savage, bearing on his head a bly of peeled cassada, and followed by a gaunt, sinister-looking dog.

We returned by another path, which was exactly a very steep flight of the roughest stone steps, and when we came nearer Mount Oriel, as I compared its aspect with that of the place we had just left, and then glanced over to our own green hill with its *home* features, I felt quite melancholy to think that in all likelihood a few years hence will find our house fast hastening to ruin, the pretty shady paths on which so much care has been bestowed, all grown over with grass and weeds, and the trees that shelter them given a prey to the flames and cutlasses of "bush-thieves," as well as to those of more honest cultivators of their native soil.



LETTER XXXI.

First hasty Impressions regarding the Natives — Second Considerations — Missionaries — Love of Learning displayed by Liberated Africans — Domestic Servants — Their Fondness for Writing — An “Affectionate Butcher” — Good disposition of a little Kosso Girl — Different Tribes — National Marks — Ornaments.

February—March 16th.

HOWEVER philanthropically disposed you may be towards the negro on taking up your residence at Sierra Leone, so soon as the first novelty of situation wears off, the indolence, stupidity, and want of tidiness (to say nothing of graver faults) of the only persons you have to depend upon as domestic servants, throw you into a sort of actual despair. You teach, persuade, remonstrate, lecture, by turns; your words are listened to with a good-humoured apathy, but neither your rhetoric nor example effecting the slightest improvement, you begin to doubt whether the negro be gifted with any good quality or mental capacity whatever, and feel irresistibly led to include the whole race in a most sweeping kind of condemnation.

“Use lessens marvel,” it is said; and as time wanes by, custom rendering you less fastidious, trifling physical discomforts become less felt, and you look to the causes of all this semi-barbarism in a place that has been colonized and under British rule for upwards of half a century; and upon duly examining and weighing these causes, come to a totally opposite conclusion to that you were at first inclined to adopt; the disadvantages under which the blacks emancipated here have laboured, striking you far more than the partial advantages they have enjoyed.

As a people, they have been enslaved and oppressed for upwards of four hundred years, and even this solitary consideration tells us, that to form an unbiassed judgment of the liberated Africans, we must not institute comparisons between them and the lower classes of our own free England. Brought here in a state of utter degradation and barbarism, where the language, laws,

manners and customs are totally new to them—where European society is by far too limited to afford an example of civilization as it exists at home, and where, excepting the patient, pious, and indefatigable Missionary, there are very few to guide, teach, and instruct the minds of these ignorant heathens,—it is surprising to find so many of the liberated Africans advanced to the degree they are; more especially as shiploads of negroes, in their rudest condition, constantly arriving here, are the means of keeping up and perpetuating amongst the others all the prejudices and practices of their own savage nations.

Nothing can exceed the pains taken in teaching the people by the different Missionaries, among whose ranks mortality is most awfully frequent: but yet their numbers are not adequate to ensure to the *whole* of the vast population here the benefits of instruction in the thorough manner it must be conveyed, ere we can look for its fruits in that improvement of mind, heart, and soul which a right knowledge of our holy religion in all its truth, purity, simplicity, and beauty, is calculated to produce. Still, to a certain degree, they have seen their labours rewarded, and of their dense and orderly congregations it is to be hoped that the greater part are not merely Christians in outward profession, but to the utmost extent of their abilities. Yet many, many of the liberated Africans are savages in every sense of the word, whilst numerous others, who were either never at school, or else taken away ere they had made the least progress, apprenticed out in early childhood to the rudest and most ignorant of their country people, although they have grown up conforming externally to a few of the most striking usages of civilized life, in every other respect are as barbarous as the lowest slave in their own country.

But when we read and think of the miserable degradation of mind, the superstitions and horrid practices of the tribes of the interior; and then look at the quiet, sober, lighthearted, individuals of these very barbarous tribes, whether pursuing their way to market, going out in their tiny fishing-skiffs, cultivating their little farms, waiting upon you at table, or in the superior occupations of tradesmen and mechanics; we perceive that it is not so much *intellect* the negro wants, as a wider field of example and encouragement from others, to teach him to exercise the sense

his Creator has given him. They are undoubtedly a lazy and indolent race naturally, yet it should be borne in mind that the same degree of exertion can never be expected from them, as from the inhabitants of more temperate climates, for under the fiercely burning sun of these latitudes, the strength even of the black man flags. This want of energy shows itself in the mind as well as the body, yet when obliged to exert their thinking faculties, I have found some of the liberated children not only intelligent, but what one would actually term *clever*. The younger people and children, whether liberated or colony-born, show a much greater aptitude and fondness for learning than you commonly find amongst the lower classes at home; very possibly, however, because here there are no factories, no collieries, no mines, in short no employment of any kind calculated to cramp mind and body alike of the happy negro-child, who passes away his life in an atmosphere of idleness and freedom, the pride of his unlettered parents, who think every thing desirable or needful fully gained when their son can read and write; or when their daughters can read, sew, and mark.

But gratifying as it is to see a hitherto despised and degraded people making rapid progress in the plain branches of education, it is not to be denied that something more is wanted in our servants than a knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic;—and a striking error in the judgment of the negroes is the opinion that anything in the shape of *work* is not compatible with even the slightest degree of education. I can only account for this by supposing that in their own minds the idea of *slavery* is as yet too closely associated with that of *work*. You never, in consequence, see them taking that pride in their ordinary manual occupations which we often perceive in persons similarly employed at home. Your pantry domestics (in many instances mere boys, it is true) sit down to read, write, or otherwise amuse themselves, leaving plates, knives, cups, and platters, just as they had been used, and your only chance of a clean glass, spoon, or fork, is to say, on finding them put on table after but a very superficial cleaning, “Now until these be properly done, I shall give you neither paper, pens, nor ink.”

I have discovered this to be the only means of getting the younger servants to be attentive or tidy, and I think it a good

sign of their dispositions that it is always successful. How often at school is a double lesson given as a punishment!—I find here it is counted a reward.

If these young people would only show the same alacrity and cheerfulness in learning to work, that they do in learning “book,” they might soon become valuable servants, as indeed some of them, comparatively speaking, have. My first Sarah, for instance, became exceedingly useful, though a mere ignorant child when she came to me; and Fanyah too is now not far behind her predecessor, though she has not had the same advantages in seeing how things are managed in “white man’s country.” When teaching them anything new in the way of useful household duties, both of these little people have often remarked in rather a querulous tone—“Ah, ma’am! me can nebber do dat ting!” to which I would answer,

“Oh yes!—but you will by and bye, when you try again: you see *I* can do it, and why should you not?” “Cause black person can’t do all same as white person,—dey no savey!” was invariably the next answer, uttered with great decision.

“And what matter they no savey? Let me look at your hand” (the hand being held out, the head would be then hung down and the lips pouted): “well! now you have quite as many fingers as I have, and I don’t see why black person’s hand not as good as white person’s hand to do anything,—come now, like a good girl, and let me see how nicely you will do this.”

By this time the lips had usually relaxed their pouting—the eyes would brighten up, and the duty being set about, they found that when once they tried willingly they seldom failed of success; so that now I have considerably less trouble than I had in my first experience of this outlandish ménage.

Hackneyed and subject to ridicule as the theme be, I must observe that this is a country and climate where the want of proper domestic attendance falls heavily upon Europeans. You may form some idea of the uselessness of the generality of native female servants here, when I mention that out of the very few European ladies in the colony, several have often preferred being without a female attendant, to the trouble and annoyance of breaking one in.

Sometimes a white nurse or lady’s maid has been brought out,

but they have, with perhaps but two exceptions, fallen victims to the baneful climate; and indeed it is a responsibility not lightly to be incurred, bringing any one in such capacities out to a pestilent land like this.

But to return to the blacks. One of our Liberated African servants, who has been with us nearly all the time we have spent here, rather surprised me lately, by begging that his colony-born son might be taken and initiated into the mysteries of white man's service, in our household; and really this boy does credit to the school (conducted by the Church Missionaries) at which he has been brought up. He not only can explain the meaning of what he reads, but every day fills a page of his "copy-book" with a story, usually out of the Bible, but written down from memory. The handwriting is good and the history always correct, but being composed in "black man's English," it is really impossible not to smile sometimes at the language. In a treatise (or whatever it may be called) on England, the commencing sentence is, "England is one very fine colony, the very best of all the colonies in the world."

The negroes here are certainly touched with the "cacoethes scribendi." If one come to offer himself as cook, groom, or pantry servant, besides his written character obtained from former masters, he sends up a document, purporting to be written by himself, which sets forth his qualifications in a highly original style; while a person coming on any other business commonly announces his errand in the same way. Nay, one morning the market-messenger brought me up the following ludicrous note:—

"Please, madam, I very sorry no mutton live in market this morning.

"Your affectionate butcher,
"JOHN MACAULAY."

I mean to send you some other specimens* of their literary acquirements, from which you will perceive they delight in using fine sounding words, though evidently often without knowing their meaning. The love of learning exists equally in Fanyah, who gives proof of a mental capacity I never saw

* See Appendix.

excelled by any black child, whether Liberated or colony-born, though the latter are generally thought to surpass the others in abilities. After her Bible lesson one Sunday, she asked me whether I thought, had Adam *not* eaten the forbidden fruit when it was offered him by Eve, he would have been allowed to remain in Paradise;—a question which betokened a depth of thought one could never have looked for in a child of her years. I cannot better give you an idea of Fanyah's disposition than by the following incident:—She had been rather rebellious and headstrong one day, and on being found fault with, showed so much ill temper, that as a punishment I desired her to go and stand in a corner of my room, telling her she was at liberty to come out whenever she wished to be good. I dare say eight minutes elapsed ere she entered the piazza, and coming up to me, asked pardon in quite a mild tone of voice: I spoke to her a few serious words, when she interrupted me by saying, “When I first been wish to leff corner and come ask pardon, de devil always say to me, No, don't go—but de good spirit say, Go—and I listen to de good spirit and come: and so you been forgive me, ma'am.”

Although by no means *active*, this little girl's docility and diligence lead me to think, if she be a fair specimen of her people generally, that the Kossoes are very superior to all the rest of the Liberated negroes. Not that I have had experience of individual character out of more than one or two of the various tribes composing that portion of the black community known as Liberated Africans, some idea of whose diversity may be gathered from the fact, that though externally forming one vast social body of people, nearly forty distinct languages are spoken amongst them. Indeed I know but little of the tribes, beyond the names by which they are distinguished, and which are usually, though not always, identical with that of the country whence they were taken. There are Congoes—Coanzoes—Coromantins—Calabars—Bonnys—Bassas—Mokoes—Eygies—Tapuas—Kossoes—Pawpaws—Eboes—and Akus, or Eyoës.

The latter, from whose ranks our domestic servants are chiefly obtained, and so called from the salutation in their own dialect on meeting,—come from Yarribah,—a country lying between the kingdom of Dahomey and the Niger, with the great slave-mart

of Badagry in the Bight of Benin for its principal seaport. They are unquestionably the most painstaking and industrious amongst all the Liberated population; and probably the most numerous, although dividing themselves again into several different clans. "My country is to the other Aku countries what England is to this place," said an old Aku in reply to some questions respecting his nation, and, evidently much flattered thereby, added he would write a book about his country and send it to me; and shortly afterwards I received a written paper, in which, after mentioning that it was six days' journey from "the great salt water," the grandeur and extent of his country, with its king's house, fifty feet high, strong walls, and seven gates, through which any person wishing to enter the town would have to pass, was set forth in somewhat extravagant terms, its only drawback being that other nations always come and steal his country-people and sell them for slaves. In this carefully-penned history, a wish that Missionaries might go to Ephee, as he called the place, was more than once expressed in these words: "If those Missionaries catch to my land, there will be no more war in any country, for we will have peacemakers."

The Eboes are natives of the town and district of that name,—or, as it is sometimes written, Ibbo—Aboh—or Heebe,—situated on the right bank of the Niger, and I believe the first of any importance reached after crossing the bar of the river. Though perhaps equally enterprising with the Akus, the Eboes are considered to be, even in their civilized state, a more savagely disposed race; yet their women are said to have made the most willing and laborious slaves in the West Indies, in days when the inhuman traffic was considered legal; as of the men of all the Slave-tribes, the Joloffs were esteemed the best. The Pawpaws, who appear, from the few examples I have seen, to be a peculiarly quiet and harmless set of people, come from that part of the coast on the Bight of Benin called Great and Little Popoe. The Calabars and Bonnys are natives again of the sea-coast, towards the left of the Niger, in the Bight of Biafra. These Bights—great wide bays at each side of the mouth of the Niger—swarm everlastingly with slave-ships, and are amongst the places most closely guarded by our cruisers. I think it was a Calabar negro of whom the story is told, that when on his trial at the sessions here for some crime

or other, he was asked if he had any objection to the persons serving as jurors. The first pointed out to the criminal was a fat ruddy-faced European, and on the Calabar-man shaking his head with "I no savey,"—the question was translated into negro-English by the interpreter as he again pointed to this juror, saying "Do you like um?" A grin of intelligence spread over the sable countenance of the prisoner as he replied with great fervour,—"Yes—me like for *nyam um*."* The stigma of man-eating rather attaches itself therefore to the Calabars and Bonnys.

The Congoes, as their name imports, come from the kingdom of Congo, many degrees farther to the south, and though an exceedingly barbarous and inferior tribe in their rude state, make, I am told, well-disposed and diligent members of the free negro community here. Their village is prettily situated on a rising ground, amidst wooded bays, between Freetown and the Cape, and the inhabitants are almost all fishermen. The Coanzoes are natives of Angola, and, I understand, not so swarthy as the rest of the Liberated people.

The Bassas, or people of Grand Bassa, which is situated considerably to the south of Cape Palmas, approach in appearance and character to the Kroomen or Grebos of the latter place.

The Coromantins come from Cape Coast, a place rendered of peculiar interest to Englishmen as being the grave of L. E. L. The Kossoes are the natives of Mendi, that party of the country to which the Gallinas river leads, and are thus quite close to the peninsula of Sierra Leone. The Tapuas come from Nufi, while the Mokoës, distinguished for their large and clumsily-shaped hands and feet, and the Eygies also, seem, from the scanty information I can glean, to be natives of the interior countries watered by the Niger; all I can learn of the latter is, that not content with the usual gashing and tattooing of their *complexions*, they mark their foreheads in various figures, and pull the skin over their eyes in vandykes! But not only do the Liberated themselves appear with carved faces and arms, they mark even their colony-born children in the same way; as besides the beauty to an African eye, in these embossed patterns, it seems to keep up a better feeling betwixt them and those of their parents' country-people who are emancipated here. It is also associated in their

* "Yes, I'd like to eat him."

minds with a distinction of rank, having themselves disfigured thus, being considered a badge of high birth. But I could scarcely have fancied any of them heroic enough to inflict such a torture on themselves, until, the other day when a young girl of less repulsive countenance than many of the Liberated, appeared with her formerly smooth black cheeks impressed with four hideous scars, the distinguishing Aku mark ; and my inquiries elicited that she had done it herself with the acrid juice of the cashew-nut. A leopard's tooth tied round the wrist is a badge of freedom, and in the interior cannot be worn by the child of a slave. A circlet of ivory round the wrist is another favourite ornament.



LETTER XXXII.

Airs assumed by the Colony-born Children of Liberated Africans — Trading Speculations — State of Agriculture — Sellers of Rice — Jamaica Coco — Vegetable Gridiron — Freetown Market-place — Wooden Dressing Combs — Mats and Baskets — Country-made Furniture — Different kinds of Wood — Mason and Carpenter Work — Negro Domiciles — Superstitions — Aku Devils — Dancing — Gree-grees — Watch-huts — A Grazing Farm — Pilfering Habits of the Blacks — “Never-die” — Comparison between Sierra Leone and West Indian Negroes in favour of the former — Usual rate of Servants’ Wages — A pertinacious Thief — Glow-worms — A Cricket in the Store-room — Colony-fed Beef and Mutton.

April 14.

I THINK I mentioned in an early letter from this place, that there were instances of the blacks here amassing considerable wealth by their own exertions, and rising up to be influential and respectable members of their own society. But it is almost in every case actually those only who were once captured slaves who thus distinguish themselves; as, generally speaking, their children born in the colony, forgetting their own descent, look down with the utmost contempt upon all the negroes emancipated here, assume equal airs with the settlers and Maroons, and do little save spend the money made by their frugal parents.

So far as my observation extends, the Liberated Africans appear fonder of embarking in trading speculations than of plodding and persevering at any sort of manual labour that requires settled habits of industry. While the more wealthy individuals of the class compete with even the European merchants, those in the very rudest and most ignorant state contrive to have somewhat “to go sell in market” at Freetown; the focus that attracts them all alike, and the way in which money can be made with the least effort of either mental or bodily energy, although certainly they show considerable activity in leaving their houses in the morning. I often hear their voices upon the village road as early as five o’clock. Still the walk of several miles into town is an exertion

deemed not merely repaid by the profits of what they sell, but also by the opportunity of seeing their fellow-people, and sitting for hours in the market-place gossiping. Some go up to the Sugar-Loaf or other places where wood is to be had, cut down a tree, and saw it into boards for sale; others procure in the same way (or occasionally by stealing in their neighbour's bush) fire-wood, posts, rafters, and wattles for building huts; fence-sticks and bush-ropes; others cut down the exuberant grass on the hill-sides to sell as provender for horses;—and the price obtained for such articles especially, is like *found money* to beings who have no idea of the value of time, and whose time really is but of little value, seeing many of them spend so much of it in complete idleness. Their wants are so few, that each man, if careful, can yearly raise upon his half-rood of allotted ground, fruit and vegetables sufficient for his subsistence during that period, besides admitting of a part being sold. They have thus but little motive for exertion, that of a few days being enough to cultivate so mere a spot. The patches reclaimed from the general wilderness of underwood and Guinea grass, and planted with cassada, coco, yams, and Indian corn, are also ready sources of riches to their self-elected and more industrious owners, yet without costing much trouble,—the art of agriculture* being in its lowest and rudest stage here—the climate producing rich crops almost spontaneously. Ginger and arrow-root I see comparatively seldom; the former soon wears out the ground in which it is planted, and the latter is an article which, when not sold in its raw state, takes a good deal of care and application in its manufacture. The chief demand for both of these is for exportation. Rice and sugar-cane I have seen growing even less frequently; but the former, equal in quality and whiteness to that of Carolina, is at times to be obtained from the Bullom shore. One common sort of native rice is red, and though large in the grain, sweet and wholesome enough, looks so ill upon table (it being impossible, without a mill for the purpose, to separate the red inner husk) that it is never used by Europeans.

I am told they have a strange system of selling this rice in Freetown. The Timmanees come from “up the country,” and take up their abode in a house in town, for which its inmates

* The sole implement is a small rude hoe fixed in a short wooden handle.

charge no rent from the rice-merchant ; but the buyer has to pay an additional sixpence upon every bushel for the “ *house*,” and a shilling for the use of the “ *tub*,” in which the rice is measured. My informant, a poor black woman, said this custom falls particularly hard upon those who can only afford to purchase in small quantities, as while sixpence is put upon every bushel for the house, no more than one shilling is charged for measuring nine or ten. It was lately four shillings and sixpence per “ *tub* ;” so if a person wanted to buy a single one, one and sixpence beyond the value of the rice was charged. It is not a general article of food amongst Liberated Africans, but the Kroomen and Timmanees live upon little else than rice mixed with palm-oil and chillies.

It is to the culture and sale of the every-day country eatables that the village-people’s attention is chiefly devoted. Plantains, bananas, pawpaws, ground-nuts, yams, cassada, and yaboes are the vegetables obtaining the most ready sale. A very superior sort of coco-root has been lately introduced here from Jamaica ; and as, when properly cooked, by being first parboiled and then roasted, it is excellent, there is quite a demand for it, even for the tables of Europeans.

Amongst the different sorts of things daily carried down to town, you also see foo-foo, native-made soap, tobacco of poisonous-smelling qualities, plantain and other broad leaves which answer the same purpose for rolling up confections in, as paper does. Leaves for various purposes, both culinary and medicinal, are also sold in the market. Those of a pretty reedy plant very common in our “ *bush*,” with yellow blossoms, and seeds like young gooseberries,—somewhat like leaves of arrow-root, but much larger, harder, and more glossy, are in great request with the country-people, as answering all the purposes of a gridiron to broil fish, which being wrapt in one of these leaves, is laid on the glowing embers, where the novel cooking utensil shrivels and scorches, but does not consume, and the fish is done to perfection. The stem of the same plant is dried in the sun, the outer part peeled off and sold to be platted into hats. The pith resembles that of rushes, and I think might make lights like them. Rough coarse wicks for palm-oil lamps are twisted up of cotton gathered here, and also form an item for sale.

Saturday is the great day on which country-made furniture,

baskets, mats, boards, poultry and eggs, swell out the list of the usual articles for market ; whilst thread, pins, needles, tape, with many a country viand, such as agahdee and ginger-cake ; or liqueur, such as brown-plum or sorrel-beer, and palm-wine, are daily added by the townspeople themselves.

Never having been in the market-place myself, I cannot describe its appearance from personal observation, but judging from the countless numbers who on their way thither, throng the mountain-road of a morning, I can imagine there is no exaggeration in an old settler woman's recent account : " Dem market-people, marm, are indeed in such crowds dat dare heads rise up as close togedder as ever you been see grass grow in a field."

The quick return of money renders market-selling the favourite pursuit of the lower classes, but there are a few even of them who follow handicraft trades of various kinds, down to making the wooden combs used by the Negro women at their toilettes—strange-looking things, with teeth like those of a garden-rake, and which are sold at the rate of three big copper each,—a branch of trade which receives great encouragement from the emigrants to the West Indies, each individual amongst the hundreds of passengers, always patronizing the comb-merchant ere departure. Others of the industriously disposed make mats and baskets of different common kinds. The finest of this sort of grass-work is carried on at Waterloo, a village many miles up the river. Table-covers and bags prettily woven into gingham-like patterns are made there, and have found their way into shop-windows in London. Such articles of native manufacture are ingenious and neat ; but all attempts at imitating even the simplest pieces of European furniture are, however praiseworthy, most particularly clumsy, and do not go beyond bedsteads, benches with upright ends termed sofas, chairs and tables. In one of the latter brought here for sale, was a drawer about a foot square, and an inch and a half in depth, while the wood forming the bottom and sides was actually nearly two inches thick all round. The chairs are odd-looking things, with one leg at least always shorter than the others, the seats inclined planes, or warped into still more irregular shapes, and the bars across the backs always fastened on crookedly. I should mention, how-

ever, that they are so low-priced (varying from one shilling to eighteen-pence a piece) that it will not ruin you to patronize their enterprising maker, even should you burn them for firewood.

Some of the common country wood is rather remarkable. One kind is the colour of brimstone; another, dark and brown as chocolate; a third is bright red; and one, of a finer grain than any of these, is a light chestnut prettily veined. But there is plenty of a very superior description found up the rivers. I have seen a table and cabinet made of a beautiful yellow wood variegated with broad streaks of black, that came from the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone; and we have a bookcase (the neat-enough workmanship of an American black here), the wood of which resembles old sombre-hued mahogany. That of the coffee-tree is somewhat like box, white, hard, very finely grained, and capable of taking a beautiful polish: alternate squares of it and the rich crimson camwood of the country would look well in a chess-table.

The mason and carpenter work of even the best finished houses here are exceedingly rude. A *plane* is evidently what the blacks either cannot or will not use, and to build in a straight line seems to be impossible with them. While the walls of your house look alarmingly off the perpendicular, the carpet or oilcloth has to be cut into graceful undulations or slopes at the edges to fit the floor, owing to the unevenness of the sides of the room. Doors and window-frames are sometimes obtained from England, and the difference between the very plainest of them and those cut and carved by negro hands is indeed striking. As the colony-made casements are hung, there is generally space enough between them and the sill, as well as at the hinges and fastenings in front, to admit in the "rains" almost as much water as would float a canoe.

The more opulent of the Liberated people have good, substantial (if the last be a word applicable to the skeleton edifices here), and well-furnished houses. The mortality amongst Europeans, and the unavoidable migratory habits of those who survive, render sales by auction of household property of very frequent occurrence; and the high price given for second-hand furniture by the better classes of the Liberated, evinces their appreciation of personal comfort. For a plain mahogany chest of drawers, not

worth even when quite new above five or six pounds, these blacks, fond as they are of money, will sometimes readily give nine or ten.

But the great mass of the "emancipados" are the occupiers of these mud-walled and grass-thatched huts, that form amidst their banana and pawpaw trees one of the most striking features of our Sierra Leone landscape. They vary in size and neatness of finish; some consist of but a solitary apartment, others have two, and, with few exceptions, all have narrow piazzas in front. Many of these cabins are simply wattled, others plastered inside only, but the greater portion are done so both within and without. Here stands one with no inlet for light or outlet for smoke beyond the low doorway; next to it another displays one small opening, we may term a window; while a third boasts perhaps of two with boarded shutters.

I have lately watched the erection of one or two very humble huts, not far from the foot of our hill, and in a part of the suburbs occupied by a body of the poorest of the Liberated Africans; and it seems to me their common mode of building is this:—First four rough posts, the stems of as many young trees, or the straight branches of older ones, are driven at equal distances into the ground so as to form a square; other uprights of the same sort are placed between the corner posts; when a piazza is intended, another row of stakes is made about three or four feet out from the inner wall, and on them the roof rests, the top of each being hollowed out to receive the "plates" (as a carpenter would say), which are also formed of rounded poles. But when, as in the case of these lowly huts I have observed, there is no piazza, and before the roof is begun, the light-coloured flexile sticks called "wattles" are woven between the uprights, the structure looks like nothing more nor less than an enormous clothes-basket. Beams are then thrown across, upon the centre one of which, two straight posts, notched at the top, are fixed to receive in their turn the horizontal and short upper beam, that on being fastened into the notched poles shows the domicile is to be like all those surrounding it—pavilion-roofed, gable-ended buildings not being a fashionable style of architecture here. The rafters, consisting always of fine, straight, young trees cut for the purpose, are next put up, and the slighter sticks crossing them again are simply tied with bush-ropes. The roof

may remain in this chequered state until the walls are plastered with black or red mud, but more commonly thatching is the next process, the native mode of which is anything but neat, the grass seeming as if flung on by a pitchfork, and left to put itself into shape. When done with green boughs, the roof looks unique and picturesque for a short time, but soon fades and becomes ragged. Bamboo thatch is by far the prettiest, and being less apt to catch fire, people have been lately prohibited to use any other in Freetown.

In the Mandingo quarter of the town, which we partly overlook (our own brook running through it, after emerging from the depth between the two hills), many of the dwellings are built solidly of mud alone; and they have, previously to being roofed in, a still more novel appearance than the wattled huts, having invariably no windows of any description in the walls, which seemed to be occasionally two or three feet thick. Some are really spacious oblong buildings, divided by partitions of clay into several apartments, but the thatch being made to project very far, causes them all to look lower than they really are.

I have never seen the interior of a native hut, but from what the people themselves tell me, it would seem that the poorest and most indolent boast of no more household stuff than perhaps an iron pot, a spoon, tin panikin, and rug or blanket, such as they were provided with on emancipation. To these some may afford to add a few delf plates and calabash-bowls, with a country chair, bench, and table. Their beds are usually raised heaps of hard mud, over which, after being smoothed and dried, a mat is spread; though others again possess country sofas. The wardrobe of the hut-occupying population is sometimes so scanty that a bly is sufficient to contain it all. Others have boxes or small native-made chests, while, as they gradually advance in affluence, a cupboard is set up, and country pot (in which to keep the spring water cool at all times), with a wooden mortar to separate the husk from the rice by pounding—deemed indispensable.

The negroes are a very superstitious race. Even those who have been taught better, are still deeply attached to the idolatrous practices of their own nations. Devil and image worship prevail to a great extent, and I have been told of one man who takes his

family out every morning to pay their devotions to a great snake that lives under a rock, and which they regularly feed. Some of the women will not cut their children's hair until they first sacrifice a white fowl, the blood of which is offered as a propitiation to the devil; and the fragrant frankincense or bungo is burnt in the interior to drive away the same evil power. They have ceremonies on the decease of their friends, called, like those of the Irish, "wakes," and the wild crying and howling on such occasions ascending up here in the depth of night, is by no means a pleasant addition to the other inharmonious noises of musketry and yelping curs.

Few days pass that I do not see from the windows, usually early of a forenoon, a figure grotesquely dressed in a scarlet mantle and peaked cap, with masked or muffled face, who, uttering discordant shouts and performing all sorts of antic gestures, as he walks, or rather runs along from hut to hut, soon gathers around him a crowd of people, who follow dancing and jumping after his own example. Individuals of this stamp are called "Aku devils," and after fixing upon some house as the scene of the amusement, seat themselves outside near the entrance, and commence beating their tom-toms and tinkling their guitars; the enclosure meanwhile being densely filled by dancers, and the road in front displaying dozens upon dozens of motley-attired groups—men, women, and children springing and wheeling about in attitudes that remind you of the ungainly gambols of a shoal of porpoises. Dancing, such as it is here however, is a passion with the blacks, and each different tribe patronizes a different dance.

But indeed I must candidly confess myself to be totally ignorant of most of the national usages and habits of the negroes. A person may live for years here, but, unless circumstance and climate alike permitted of his going about amongst the people, return to Europe at the end of that time with the impression of having merely had for so long, a moving panorama of tropical scenery and figures before him, further than the little every-day incidents that fell under his own immediate observation, or were told him by others. This will be the case with me; for as to any one, situated as I am, acquiring a personal knowledge of the native customs and manners, it is quite impracticable, even were

interest enough excited by the subject to tempt braving the climate.

The most common superstition that has come under my notice is a belief in charms, here called "gree-grees." One morning on riding past a small field of peas, then rich in blossoms, I desired Fanyah to pluck one for me, which she went to do, but immediately came back without the flower, saying it was a "medicine bush," that would kill her if she "been touch um."

Not understanding this, I asked an explanation of the Aku horseman (or rather donkey-man), who said, pointing to an upright stick in the midst of the plot of peas, and to which a bunch of dried grass was fastened (as I had imagined to scare away birds), that tied up within this grass were poisonous leaves, which the proprietor of the farm had put there as a "gree-gree;" and that the general belief was that whoever *stole* any of the produce, would die from the effects of the poison contained in these leaves, as much as if he ate them. This man, however, professed himself no believer in the charm, and of his own accord gathered one of the flowers, on seeing which Fanyah mustered courage to follow his example; and my usual bouquet was thus augmented by two pretty yellowish white pea-blossoms, with a very sweet perfume. I have since seen many gree-grees of the same description: a broken bottle is placed on a stone in a conspicuous part of the cassada or corn grounds, or it may be an old bly or calabash, each said to contain a potion of deadly effect to the daring individual who attempts to appropriate any of the productions of the farm; and such charms have effect, it would seem, when all other means fail, to prevent this very common description of robbery.

There are usually upon every farm, small watch-huts, where some one remains during the night to guard the property; yet a man, who has liberty to plant on the boundaries of our ground, repeatedly complains of people coming in bands, and taking up every one of his yams, sweet potatoes, and cassada-roots. Such depredations must dishearten even the most diligent of those engaged in husbandry; but I have sometimes thought if they and their families would only settle themselves down in humble homesteads at no great distance from each other, beside their hill grounds, instead of all congregating into the town and villages,

leaving their farms to be watched by single individuals, that surely this stealing of agricultural produce would not be carried on to such excess. It is very rare to see in an isolated situation any other than a mere watch-hut; indeed, I have only twice discovered what I could term a Negro country-residence. One of these I told you of long ago; it was situated at the bottom of the ravine between the hills behind this, but is now hastening to decay, its proprietor having died lately. The other is of more recent erection, but is what one would call at home a *grazing* farm, there not being even a patch of cassada near it.

On turning off the Gloucester road and riding for some time through bush of a very low growth, we came one day to this solitary habitation, in an exceedingly wild place among the hills, nearly as high up as the site of Sukey Webb's ancient abode, and commanding a fine sea-view. It was the barest spot I ever saw even here, although its solitude was somewhat enlivened by the presence of a horse, several cows, and a quantity of well-conditioned poultry, all of which live-stock seemed to be in excellent quarters. This farm, and the cattle around it, belong to a liberated African, who is rapidly becoming rich by his speculation as a grazier. The cowhouse, an apartment under the same roof as the dwelling itself, appeared to be very strongly built, and secured by a door with a good padlock, the owner no doubt being too well aware that dishonesty is the prevailing characteristic of his own race.

This may seem a very harsh allegation, but it is not the less true;—a propensity to thieve, being indeed, of all the evil ones which appear in the Liberated African, that most difficult to eradicate. It is inherent in the newly emancipated savage. It clings to those who are otherwise tolerably civilized. House, or rather *hut*-breaking, is a common crime in Freetown, and petty thefts of all kinds are constantly committed. There is no lack of constables, but those of the Aku nation will not, unless in extreme cases, take up their delinquent countryman, nor will an Eboe constable apprehend an Eboe thief, and so on through all the different tribes. But while faithful to their own separate clans, all alike actually seem to consider it by no means a wrong thing to steal from *white* people. If there be fruit-trees on your farm, rest assured you will, in most cases, be saved the trouble

of gathering more than the refuse of the laden branches, unless the trees be close to your house; and should you have the smallest spot of ground planted with cassada for your own use, or that of your goats and horses, it is deemed public property.

Now, although orange, mango, and cocoa-nut trees bear so plentifully, that no European wants above the twentieth part for himself and household, however willing one is to give away, nobody likes being robbed. Even the corn, or rather rough rice, given out for your horses' consumption is sometimes appropriated by the grooms, who have merely to soak it in water, and beat it in a mortar to take off the husk, when it is ready for their own use. And not only are you exposed to thieves from without, but even your household servants think fraud or cheating no dishonesty. The little Liberated children, who may be apprenticed or located with you, and whom you try to train up in some sort of pious and moral habits, are coaxed and bribed by your hired domestics to steal tea, sugar, biscuit, butter, needles, pins, thread; in short, any little thing that falls in their way. Sometimes they pretend that they merely ask the articles to keep for the other's own use, when their period of servitude is expired; but if the young creatures remain faithful and honest despite of persuasions to the contrary, then they are told, "Ah! berry well!—soon your massa and missis can go England and leff you here, den you catch hungry too much, but 'pose you go beg from black man, dem no gib you nothing, cause you like white people better past we."

I have known some of the best-educated and well-conducted servants we ever had, tamper in this way with the younger members of the establishment, and it is constantly done with those apprenticed out to the more wealthy classes of the blacks. If the children are of the same tribe as those who would corrupt them, they are seldom proof against the temptation, and think it a much greater fault to expose their country-people than to rob their employers.

But though I cannot say as much for the boys, who being down amongst the others, are more apt to be led away to bad practices, I have found, generally speaking, my own immediate attendants, children though they were, not only proof against

either threats or bribes, but trustworthy and interested in the family.

That white people should obtain eggs from their own poultry, or milk from their own goats, appears a great hardship in the eyes of some of your servants, who no doubt deem that their country-people are deprived of custom they would otherwise get. Therefore the eggs are stolen, and the nice rich goat-milk watered unmercifully, or else you are told the animals have none. This would be nothing were it possible to buy the one or the other as good in town ; but while the thin, blue, ill-tasted milk of cows is all you can obtain (to say nothing of the report that some people keep *milch-pigs* as a profitable speculation), it is absolutely necessary to direct your servant before buying eggs in the market to try whether they be fresh or not by putting them to sink or swim in a bowl of water, as out of a dozen seldom more than four are capable of being used. But the country-people themselves not considering stale eggs at all unfit to eat, and some thinking them much more delicate for being all save hatched—the difficulty of procuring at any price that almost indispensable article of cupboard economy may be understood.

By the way, I have been much amused lately to find that, despite my best endeavours to weaken all faith in gree-grees, we are ourselves gravely suspected of giving full credence to the powers ascribed to them. Having had sent us by a friend, famed here for his pretty grounds and gardens, two curious leaves possessing the property of throwing out shoots if hung up in a current of air, one has been suspended accordingly in each of the under piazzas, and every day I watch what progress they have made—no doubt with a look so profound that our servants are justified in supposing, as they do, that these are “medicine-leaves” hung up as charms to prevent the pilfering of eggs, which at times greatly prevails on our premises as well as on those of most of our neighbours—and they have actually *taken effect* as such !!

The plant from which these leaves are procured is however not quite unknown here, and is called “never-die” by the blacks. It is very hardy, and always keeps green. The leaf is of a fleshy texture like house-leek,* nearly oval with slightly

* *Sempervivum*.

indented edges—from the clefts of those, long thread-like pink shots have first sprouted forth—followed in a few days by three of the tiniest of leaves—each indentation of the parent leaf actually showing a perfect plant in miniature—root, branch, and foliage being there.

In concluding this sketch of the Liberated Africans, I must say that, all circumstances considered, it is matter of astonishment to me, that there has been so much progress in civilization made at Sierra Leone, though I am well aware the general opinion is quite opposed to mine. But indeed the difficulty—nay, impossibility of rooting out the idolatry, superstitions, and barbarous practices of those grown up ere they come here, or of teaching humanized habits to any except the mere infants among them, is perfectly beyond comprehension to those who have never tried to tame or teach an ignorant savage.

It would be unfair did I not add, that the most trustworthy, active, willing, and attached domestic in our household (the ancient Aku whose country may be compared to England), and who has been so long with us, cannot read, nor was, I believe, ever at school. He was a grown-up lad on being emancipated, after which he served nine years with a good European master; and is now a devout attendant upon “meeting,” as they term individually the places of worship of the Wesleyan Methodist Society.

By what I hear and read of the West Indian blacks, I am convinced that those of Sierra Leone—if not perhaps such efficient servants or workpeople as their brethren across the Atlantic—are at least much more humble-minded and manageable than they are. Taken in a body the negroes here are a sober set of people, for considering the great extent of the population, one seldom sees any of them in a state of intoxication. The Liberated Africans, as I have already mentioned, are a frugal-living class. They follow the native custom of having but two regular meals in the day; breakfasting about nine or ten in the morning, and dining, or rather supping, at any time between four and six in the afternoon, but more customarily towards the latter hour. Their period of daily labour is from sunrise until four in the afternoon, with one hour allowed for breakfast, and the usual wages of out-door labourers is only four-pence to nine-pence

a day ! Except they be apprentices (who always receive both food and clothing) servants here are not fed by their employers ; and their pay varies according to their post and abilities, from fourteen, twenty, and thirty shillings per month, or “ moon ” as they call it. From two and a half to three and a half dollars for a mere boy, and from four to six dollars for a man, is perhaps the most general rate of colonial wages. But I have known ten shillings a day given for a professed cook on a great occasion. I heard a laughable anecdote the other day, which I must tell you. A gentleman here had a beautiful goat stolen from him, and the thief being traced to his hut, the constables entered just as he was popping part of the stolen animal into a large pot that boiled merrily away upon a huge blazing fire.

On being taken into custody he was indignant at nothing except at not being permitted to wait until he had eaten “ um mutton ; ” and after entreating, grumbling, remonstrating, arguing, and storming—finally summed up by protesting against white man’s injustice, not for sending him to gaol, but because he “ no for let um eat dat goat first, when he been hab trouble too much for catch and cook um ! ”

A bright spark appearing on the parapet a few evenings ago, I sent Dan to see what it was, and he brought up a fawn-coloured caterpillar, having six legs, a proboscis, antennæ, and two large eyes, with a body scarcely an inch in length, formed of eleven scale-like joints. I put it under a glass in a dark room, and noticed that the light (which it gave for but a few moments) had a greenish-tinge. I had it carried carefully back to the parapet again, where every night I see its solitary lamp shining amidst the grass. I only once observed a glowworm in this country before, and that was shortly after my first arrival. I remember so well seeing the luminous little speck lying in the street in front of our house, and being in hopes it might be a firefly resting its wings. But although we have many fine insects, fireflies are not amongst their ranks. If we have not a “ cricket on the hearth ”—seeing we have not a hearth on which to have a cricket,—we have at least a cricket in the store-room, a beautifully spotted one having taken up its abode there to my great satisfaction, I do so very much like its merry note.

Talking of the store-room ; meat here, of which, as I have

before told you, there is no other variety than beef and mutton, is exceedingly poverty stricken. Really one gets from Freetown market, beef that would only be considered fit to feed dogs with at home. Mutton is a shade better, still it is sometimes miserably lean, tough, and dry. A friend lately sent us part of a sheep brought from Accra, and it tasted *like* mutton, which even the best of that obtained here does not. The blacks evidently do not understand the art of feeding and fattening cattle. How they would stare at the "roast beef of old England!" I sometimes wonder that European families here do not club together, and feed and kill their own cattle, so as to have good wholesome meat at all seasons of the year. I was assured by a guest one day (when, for a wonder, I happened to have a respectable-looking joint on the table) that the sight of even a morsel of fat upon beef here was quite a rarity to him. In the rains, there being better pasturage, meat is not so very bad; but since we came out last, there have been times in the dry seasons, when I found it very difficult, even with all good Mrs. Rundell's and Mrs. Meg Dodd's valuable help, to contrive methods of rendering it presentable.

One brings out loads of hams, tongues, cases of preserved meat, fish, fruit, &c., and they are occasionally to be had tolerably good in the colony; but then one cannot live upon such things. They are not so high priced now, but I remember when small kegs containing half a dozen pickled tongues were sold here at 3*l.* 10*s.* Poultry we *can* manage to have in very good condition, but people soon tire of such shipboard fare.

LETTER XXXIII.

Maroons — Jollofs — Timmanees — Kroomen — Mandingoes — Foulahs — “Cork-Trees” — “White Coral-Tree” — New Bush Path — Thickness of stems of Climbers here — Brown Plum-tree — Cluster of Palm Nuts — Manufacture of Palm Oil — Palm Wine — Uses of the Palm-Tree — Beautiful Flowers.

April 24th.

BESIDES the Settlers and Liberated Africans, you know the colony, or rather its capital, is inhabited by several other sets of blacks, such as the Maroons, Jollofs, Timmanees, Kroomen, and Mandingoes.

Since my residence in Freetown, I have seen nothing of the two former classes, except having for one day only, a Joloff sempstress, who seemed a very good-humoured quiet girl; but though she came up of her own accord, asking me to give her needlework, evidently thought this too dull a place to venture to spend another day at it. This said young lady was attended by her “own maid,” or, as she wished it to be understood, her *slave*.

Although knowing nothing of the Maroons from personal experience, I believe they are, as compared with the Nova Scotians, a superior and more industrious people, but their stumbling-block is conceit, overrating their own abilities and pretensions. Outwardly they profess the Christian religion.

The Timmanees, whose territory lies up the river to the eastward, are the tribe from whom the lands of the colony were first purchased. The few of them I have seen, though they still worship Satan, and religiously believe in *fetiches*, are yet tolerably civilized, and seem an intelligent and industrious set of men; devoting themselves at all times, not occupied by their regular employment as boatmen, to the plating and manufacture of strong grass hats, which for the rainy season are rendered waterproof by aid of a coating of black paint, and are thought

so serviceable as to be occasionally patronized even by the seamen of our coast squadron.

The Kroomen, natives of the coast at Cape Palmas, are a hardworking and enterprising tribe, of whom it is never possible to make slaves; though they readily give their assistance to the Spaniards and Brazilians who come to the coast to traffic in their fellow-creatures. But the Kroos also find ready employment in a nobler cause. Many of them serve on board the cruisers engaged in the suppression of the slave-trade; and in one recent melancholy instance of the loss of a prize-vessel in a tornado, during those twenty-one awful days of misery endured by the officer and crew upon a raft, a Kroo sailor was mainly instrumental in preserving the lives of the sufferers by his dexterity in catching *sharks*, which formed almost the sole food they had to subsist upon.* The Kroos or Grebos (as I believe their proper name is) are pagans, and there has never yet been an instance of one of them being converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, I am told (for with the solitary exception of our old friend of the talking shoes, we have never had any of that nation about us) they make very good and faithful servants. It is said that whilst a Kroo will steal from you himself, he will permit no one else even of his own tribe to do so with impunity.

The Mahommedan portion of the colonial population is composed in its turn of several different nations, Mandingoes, Foulahs, Felatahs, the two first named coming from countries to the north, the latter from the south of the peninsula, and in the interior; and they have been but too successful in propagating their doctrine amongst the Liberated Africans. Indeed the followers of the Moslem religion here are not only numerous, but constantly on the increase; and although the genuine Foulahs and Mandingoes are more ingenious, neat-handed, and outwardly civilized, than most of the blacks around, both they and their proselytes are the greatest thieves and craftiest rogues in the colony. Even kidnapping the emancipated children is by no means an uncommon crime amongst them. They are usually called by the majority of the liberated African tribes, "Allah-ka-barras," from a corruption of their salutation, "Alla-ba-ka-

* The singularity consisted in catching the sharks by the tail with a noose—there being neither hook nor harpoon on the raft.

yawa-rai," or, " God give you long life ;" and are both disliked and dreaded by all the orthodox negroes, who say, " Ah ! bad man, Alla-ka-barra ; 'pose you make palaver wid him, he go poison you by force !"

They are great hunters, and when they sit down to cook the game they have killed, at a large fire kindled for that purpose on the hill-side, their tall figures, with the gaudy caps, flowing upper garments, bare legs, and sandalled feet, flitting before the flames in the dusk of evening, and handling their long formidable-looking muskets, present quite a picture that reminds you in its wildness of some of Salvator Rosa's.

On the breaking up of some of their fasts, they present an imposing spectacle, as they assemble in one dense crowd upon the " grass-field," near their own quarter ; each dressed in his robe of state, seated on a white sheep-skin, and holding a red, green, or yellow umbrella over his head ; the wealthiest of them galloping on to the field on their spirited Foulah horses, as if advancing to the charge at the head of a regiment ; the women decked out in the gayest of scarf head-dresses, with the children seating themselves at some distance on the grass to listen to the palaver. On returning to their homes the firing of muskets and the beating of drums never cease during the remainder of the day. The green and shaded banks of the brook that flows through their suburb are upon Sundays especially, covered with clothes, bleaching and drying ; that day above all others being chosen by the Mandingo wives to execute their labours as washerwomen.

The Mahommedans are keen traders, and parties of them, generally Bulloms from the opposite shore, have often found their way up here with rice for the horses. Instead of the usual little cap, these people wore hats that were quite curiosities in their way, and more appropriate to the climate than the other, their brims being nearly half a yard deep, and as strong as basket-work ; while the crowns were closely stuck over with straws nearly as thick as porcupine-quills, and which, bristling up all round, like the top of a wheatsheaf, gave rather an unfinished look to that part of the *chapeau*.

The Foulahs are decidedly the best-looking of all the natives I have seen, being not so very black as the rest ; and having

noses less flattened, and hair which they either plait or twist into long ringlets; but they are generally tall to a fault, their figures not being broad and muscular enough in proportion to their height.

Though all alike, with the exception of the Foulahs and Mandingoes, possess the usual negro-features, nowhere perhaps is there such a diversity of personal appearance as among the various tribes at Sierra Leone. Whilst many of the Liberated Africans, other than those emancipated after being grown up, present countenances rendered repulsive not only by their natural unsightliness, but by the expression, whether it be that of utter vacancy of ideas or of the predominance of bad passions, added to forms cast in the very coarsest mould; the free-born children of perhaps those very people have better features, with fine intelligent eyes, and figures often well-proportioned and delicately made. Indeed some of the little mountain-maidens I meet bringing down their blys of vegetables to market, have quite a prepossessing aspect; and I have seen several amongst the school-children too, both boys and girls, with that frank, ingenuous, animated look, and upright graceful carriage, it is impossible could belong to any one who did not *know* he was free. I should think that to no people on earth is expression of countenance of greater importance than to the Negroes; flat noses, thick lips, woolly locks, and all the characteristic features of the race, being divested of half of their ugliness when lighted up by good temper and intelligence.

And now having at length disposed of the people, I must proceed to finish my account of the productions of this country, as at least *my* sojourn on its shores is fast drawing to a close, the knowledge of which causes me to take an interest even greater than usual in all that I see around me.

Besides the palms, which at once stamp the scenery here with a tropical aspect,—among the dense underwood of this place,—I mean more particularly in the richly waving bush that clothes the sides of this and part of the neighbouring hill,—the eye is struck by the “cork-trees,” whose white branching stems rise up amid their fellow-denizens of the wood, reminding you (upon no doubt a very grand scale) of hemlock growing. Viewed from a distance the foliage very much resembles the horse-chestnut, and

it seems to quiver like that of the aspen, to which it is also not unlike in colour : the under side of the leaf is indeed of a pale ashen hue. When quite near, the tree strikes you as equally strange looking. Instead of the trunk springing out of the earth in the manner of most others, you here see the formation of the roots as it were for several feet above the surface of the ground, the slender shaft itself seeming thus to rest upon a straggling foundation of six or eight twisting and lesser stems, which somehow conveys the idea that the next puff of wind will blow the tree down.

Next to the above you are attracted by a tall and very slender tree, without foliage except at the very top, which is crowned by a graceful tuft, formed of long straight branches regularly bordered on each side by leaves, not broader, but three or four times the length of a common apple-tree leaf, which they also very much resemble in colour and texture. Sometimes one of these trees shoots out into two or three separate heads, and "overtopping" the great mass of the exuberant bush, presents a light and elegant appearance. A near inspection shows the stem closely studded with great limpet-shaped excrescences, pointed with thick sharp black thorns like those of the pullam cotton, only considerably larger. The natives use the leaf and bark in fishing ; strewn on the water it possesses the property of stupifying the fish, when they are easily caught.

The third tree that at once strikes you as having a particularly foreign aspect, is one which grows in the same manner as the last ; except that instead of branches it is surmounted by a crest of immense leaves as broad at the upper end as those of the banana and plantain ; but never broken like them, and of quite a different shape and shade, being very dark and curled at the edges like no leaf I ever saw save that of "green kail." But the chief curiosity of this plant is its flower. I have at two different seasons, in January and February, observed something white growing amongst the riotous verdure on the hill side, which on taking the glass I discovered to be the blossom of this tree springing up from the midst of its feathery diadem of leaves, and exactly resembling a magnificent piece of white branch coral.

The fertility and vigour of the underwood, that has sprung up after the destruction or decay of the parent stems, in part atones

for the lack of venerable forest; and once fairly in its cool and shady depths, the leaf and flower of every individual plant, arrest attention by their foreign aspect.

But it is not merely the leaves and flowers around that appear strange to a European eye. As the dry season advances, vegetation is so much burnt up and withered, that the forms of the various stems and branches become, even in the shadiest part of the bush, more visible than they are at any other time of the year. My daily rides for some time past have been along a new path, scarcely yet finished making, and that winds through a part of the grounds, until now sacred to monkeys, being on the steep and well-wooded slope of the ravine at the western side of the hill. From the windows the foliage of its trees presents the most picturesque feature of our near view; but owing to the denseness and luxuriance with which they grow, their actual size and height could never be guessed,—climbers of every description wreathing themselves up to the very top of each tree, and interweaving themselves with its boughs, until the whole appears one indistinguishable mass of waving verdure, with few exceptions beyond those trees I have already described as being pre-eminently remarkable.

Extract from Journal.

March 24th.—Rode down to-day by the new walk into the very heart of the bush, where on every side the leafless stems of those extraordinary climbers termed “country ropes” can be compared to nothing else than iron, leaden, or leathern pipes (according to the rusty, grey, or brown-black colour of their different barks) all twisted and re-twisted, plaited and woven into every grotesque and fantastical form, until the whole space under the trees, as far as the eye can reach, appears occupied by a succession of enormous *nets* of irregularly-sized meshes; or if you could imagine the rigging of a ship in the most remarkable disorder,—the ends of the highest ropes dangling down on the deck, and tying themselves, in a thousand intricate knots, to great lengths of thick *coire*, that in their turn wound up one mast, and down another, in every strange and varied convolution.

During my residence here, I never before saw, amongst all the vegetable ropes at which I have wondered, any approaching

to the quantity and denseness of these, with the exception of one on a hill beyond Mount Oriel, and which, formed of hundreds of stems twisted together into a single rope, thick as the trunk of a moderate-sized tree, rolls itself round and round an upright shaft of the same circumference; till you could fancy you gazed on the writhing form of a huge anaconda. But down in the ravine-walk, here one thick stem looks like a gigantic corkscrew stretching between two trees,—that which once supported it having left no trace of its existence, further than in the regular dimensions of each twist of the climber; and there the more slender shoots of a second wind round a quantity of straight twigs, till they seem, if not “like bundles of lances which garlands had bound,” at least as if they had been fastened firmly together by other hands than those of nature, and with a bit of sailor’s cordage; while now the spiral folds of another have sunk into the bark of the young tree they encircle, causing it to appear like a wooden pillar rich in antique carving.

These tortuous plants form so complete a barrier, that it is impossible for one, except in a creeping posture, to penetrate through any part of the bush where they revel in this wild exuberance, although it be generally the spot chosen by monkeys as their favourite haunt. The want of leaf, at present, of some of the smaller climbers is partly made up by their stems being loaded with the shining bunches of the Angola and blue peas; and I noticed a slight rope to-day, bearing narrow canoe-shaped pods, about a foot in length, which I found on opening to be closely packed with what appeared like thistle-seeds, except that this fine down was more silky-looking.

April 28th.—The weather just now is most unbearably hot, the glass in the shade even up here standing at 90°. Still I contrive to get a breath of fresh air either morning or evening. The new walk is invaluable for its shade and coolness, and my donkey seems to think so too, as he now trots off in that direction of his own accord.

Amongst the tall trees whose trunks rise up from the lower bush, and the matted ropes at each side, the pigeon-plum is most frequently met with. Its brown mottled fruit consists of a stringy pulp of a pleasant flavour surrounding but very thinly a large stone, and is not only used by the natives to make a sort of

beer, but affords food for the sly geckoes as well as the pretty wild doves, whilst the tree itself, with its light-coloured bark, smooth shining leaves, and small greenish-white blossoms, forms when young an ornament for a shrubbery ; when old, a forest-tree of stately dimensions.

Here and there too a lofty pullam cotton, with its arrowy stem braced in armour that defies even the touch, and its spreading boughs throwing wide their sheltering canopy of light green leaves, contrasts pleasingly with the massive trunk and dark regular foliage of the palms, the haughty plumes of which meet the eye at every other step. It is but very lately that I have had the good fortune to see the nuts on the tree, those in bearing being generally too lofty to admit of my seeing their fruit, which grows out from among the topmost branches, though I often notice the ground underneath thickly strewed with the fallen nuts, which, shaped like those of the cocoa-palm, are when quite ripe about the size of walnuts. When young they resemble in their manner of growth a rich cluster of grapes, but seem as if made of clear reddish-brown glass, with long green spiky points interspersed through the bunch, which springs out close to the parent stem, and might at first be taken for a large rounded lump of glittering gum. They contain a beautifully white, but hard kernel, enclosed in an extremely thick strong shell, covered in its turn with a fibrous but yet highly oleaginous substance, protected by a fine skin of a bright red hue. The thick crimson oil so common as an article of food here, is procured from the pulpy outer part of the nuts, which when quite ripe are beaten in a mortar, but without breaking the stones ; a proportion of water is then added, and the mass strained ; the liquid is then boiled, and the bright-coloured oil rising to the surface carefully skimmed off.

Another sort of oil is made from the kernels, these, after the shells are broken, being picked out—parched over the fire—pounded, and mixed with water, which is then also boiled and skimmed. This is called “nut-oil,” gives a beautiful light when used in lamps, and is, I believe, well known in England (whither the nuts themselves are exported for manufacture), but in the interior it is kept until it gets thick like butter, when it is eaten by the natives as well as the common “palm oil.” The palm is a

truly valuable tree to the people of this country. Besides oil they obtain their favourite beverage of palm-wine by tapping the trunk under every bunch of fruit ; and from each opening nearly a gallon of liquid can be obtained in a single day. When perfectly fresh-drawn, this wine is sweet and pleasant to the taste, but soon fermenting, becomes quite an intoxicating drink. The palm-cabbage too is got from a peculiar species of the tree, of which we have several ; their branches being less thick and shady, and far more prickly than those of the *Elæis guineensis* : but although now it is at times to be bought in Freetown market, being brought across from the Bullom shore, the natives in the interior do not cut it down for their own use, unless in a time of scarcity. They also tell me that two large, fat, white grubs are to be found in the heart of the palm, and esteemed by negro-picures as more delicate eating than the cabbage ! We cut down one lately, and I found that Fanyah went every day for some time to try and find these said dainties, but I suppose some of the other servants had been beforehand, her search proving unsuccessful.

I do not wonder at the blacks being loath to destroy a tree that is in every respect such a source of riches. Besides what it affords as food, its leaves make a good and durable thatch, while by stripping off the green part and twisting the fibres, a strong thread is manufactured, which is not only employed in sewing, but to make fishing-lines and nets. I have seen too a thick *felt-like* sort of cloth prepared from the inner bark of the palm, and from both the leaves and outer-bark baskets and mats are made.

The "bush" just now is redolent with the perfume of the "great white bell-flower," and its sister the "trumpet-shaped tree lily," the branches of which seem more heavily laden with their magnificent blossoms than we have observed in any season since we first found them out.

LETTER XXXIV. .

Sudden changes of the Atmosphere — “Ting-bing” — Bats — “Cut-Grass” — Young Alligator — Fruit of Bush Plants — Forest Trees — Monkey Locust — Doves — “Pepper Bird” — Christmas and Mocking Birds — Kingfishers, &c. — Palm-Bird’s Nest — Convolvuluses — Acacias — Tamarind Trees — The “Rose Eater.”

May 8th.

AFTER a morning of intense heat, with the thermometer at 88°, a heavy tornado came on about noon, when, after the glass had fallen about two degrees, it was hung out of the window for a few minutes, in which short space of time it actually fell 18° further: so you see the rapidity with which the atmosphere changes in this climate. Vivid lightning and violent rain continued for many hours afterwards, and now in the evening the land-wind is blowing very strongly.

A few days ago, the little boy Dan, who is fonder of setting snares in the bush than of any other occupation, brought into the house a very curious little animal, called a “Dong,” “Emma,” or a “Ting-bing” in country language. Its body is scarcely larger than that of a full-grown mouse, and it has a long, bushy tail. Its head is shaped somewhat like a cat’s, only it has a very long pointed nose. It has large prominent eyes which glance like diamonds, and on each foot has five fingers, precisely like those of a monkey, but the fore-finger is furnished with a claw. The fur is a reddish-grey, with a sort of green gloss on it. Altogether it is a pretty little creature, and thrives very nicely, and although seemingly very fond of sugar and sweet-things, tries to catch flies and mosquitoes, which it eats. It has a very shrill ringing cry, to which it only appears to give utterance when pleased; it has also a dissatisfied kind of note, but seldom allows either of them to be heard.*

Another day the same boy brought me a bat of a very light

* Its ears were remarkably large, but exquisitely delicate, bare and patulous—the hind legs being long and the others short, the extended figure resembled that of the hare.

grey colour, and with a head actually shaped like that of a young calf: I never saw an animal with so mild an eye as this bat, and altogether—from the short look I had ere it took advantage of an open window to regain its liberty—I thought it remarkably pretty; very different from another sort more common here, and which is much smaller, with a black leathery skin and hideously wrinkled face.

I have just seen for the first time a strange animal which the country-people hunt for food, and call a “cut-grass,” as it lives upon herbage. It is something between a pig and a porcupine, and about as large as a tolerably-sized young pig. It is clothed with exceedingly strong, hard, coarse bristles, has a cleft upper lip which fully displays its large vicious-looking teeth, and is very fat and ugly, with five toes upon its fore feet, and four upon the hinder ones. A young crocodile was caught at the brook about a week ago, which Dan has taken under his especial protection, keeping it in an old cask, under the shade of an orange-tree, close to the stables, and feeding it with “potta-potta,” or muddy water. This uncouth kind of pet is almost three feet long at the least, but its dark scaly body is scarcely thicker than that of a large guana which used to prowl about on the walks last year, until some of the servants or workpeople caught it to form the basis of their soup-dinner. Monkeys, rats, squirrels, and various sorts of birds, including hawks, they also think excellent food, and there is no end to the different sorts of leaves and berries they eat.

The black people, and the monkeys together, are so fond of the thin coating of pulp which surrounds the seed of the *Thunbergia Chrysops*, that it is seldom I can get it in a fit state to plant. It is pretty hanging in the “bush” with its hard rind of a deep reddish orange colour, and about as large as a Seville orange. The seeds, which resemble black kidney-beans, are enclosed in a slight parchment-like sheath, and then disposed in compartments. One really beautiful “bush-fruit” shaped somewhat like a lime, and of a bright yellow at one end, gradually shading into scarlet, is still more prized by the blacks, though really containing nothing except seeds like those of the tamarind, embedded in an insipidly sweet and viscous matter; while when broken, a milk-white and highly glutinous juice oozes from the

rind. The leaf is light green and rather oval in form, but the flower I have never seen. The country-people say this fruit is not the same as the real pomegranate, only "sister to um."

They are also very fond of another called by them the "palm ground-nut," which I presume is a corruption of pomegranate, as it has a crimson rind, and is full of large black seeds surrounded by an acid pulp scarcely thicker in consistence than cream. Many different plants are found in the bush bearing white flowers very similar in scent and appearance to those of the coffee-shrub, the leaf of which they also resemble. The blacks call these trees "wild coffee." One of them has a peculiarly rich-looking round berry of a bright brick colour, powdered over with a white farina, but it contains *three* seeds quite different from those of the real coffee.

I know few things that stamp our scenery with a foreign aspect—always excepting the palm and plantain tribe—more than the few remaining forest trees of the colony; their trunks at the base forming, as it were, high niches, whose sides gradually decrease in breadth as they ascend, until they insensibly taper off to nothing at a considerable height up the trees. It may seem a very whimsical and far-fetched illustration, but I have seen no figure at all approaching to the appearance of that part of the trunk,—except a closed umbrella, held so as the handle (which should not exceed the spokes in length) rests on the ground, and then whirled round until all the folds stand out; or it might be better to fancy about half a dozen great chairs, deserving the name of *easy* from their circular form, but made of hard wood, and with their backs leaning against the tree,—placed closely round its stem. You may thus have some idea of the odd formation of the base of these trees; but still their wooden buttresses are of enormous size and various shapes, some triangular, some curving round horseshoe-wise, and others again still more irregular. They are evidently a means of support to the tree, many of which stand quite exposed to the fury of the storm wind on a high bleak hill, and show, by their being unencumbered by a single branch for perhaps upwards of forty feet, that formerly they were far too darkly and closely hemmed in by their fellows of the forest, to have either room or air for expanding their boughs any nearer to the surface of the earth.

One of the bush-paths passes close to a splendid tree-acacia, called commonly the "monkey locust," the bark of which being of a uniform shade of reddish-brown, contrasts strongly with that of all the other trees, and gives the appearance of rusty iron to the stately trunk—that rising like a symmetrical column, displays its giant boughs towering high above the surrounding foliage, and richly adorned by their gracefully feathery leaves of the most vivid dark-green. Early of a morning, beautiful small green squirrels, with the softest of glossy furs, and brightest of sly little eyes, are constantly to be seen springing from branch to branch of this their favourite tree, whose long fruit-pods no doubt afford the pretty creatures abundance of food. It gives shelter to many a bird too, which, as my humble steed paces soberly past, fly startled into some more solitary part of the bush, scarcely affording me even a glimpse of their plumage. More than once I have perceived near this spot a brown bird about the size of a fieldfare, that on taking wing spreads its tail like a fan, showing it to contain two orange-coloured feathers. The woodpecker abounds in these coverts, and makes a loud monotonous sound with its bill, as it runs up the old timber-trees, quite dissimilar to the *tapping* noise of our English species. I had a good opportunity of seeing two which M—— shot. Each was nearly as large as a thrush, with the same sort of mottled breast enlivened by some touches of bright scarlet. The neck and upper part of the back was of an olive-green, darker on the wings, which were variegated with regular white spots on every feather; those of the lower part of the back were lead-colour, tipped with scarlet; and the tail, which was very short, and contained only six feathers, each tapering to a point, was of a dull brownish black. One of these specimens had a small scarlet crest, the other's head was unadorned and of a deep glossy black.

Both the brown and green doves are very common with us, but they are extremely shy, and their plaintive note is heard much oftener than they themselves are seen. I have never found out a guinea-fowl here, but we have a red-legged partridge, or "bush-fowl," as the negroes term it, and which seems of very solitary habits, as but one only is to be seen at the same time, that, starting up, darts away on "whirring wing" like any other partridge. It has a monotonous and shrill note, and a brown

and red plumage. I have already described in an early letter our prettiest and tamest birds, but there are various others about the grounds that are all but complete strangers to me. There is the "pepper-bird," whose note is an admirable warning to bush-thieves, being nothing more nor less than this one forcible sentence drawled out in genuine African patois, "You teef! get out o' dere!" and which is the first to be heard of a calm morning, of the many notes that pierce the air around our dwelling. The blacks say the bird that has this singular song lives upon the pods of the small red capsicum plant, but whether it be a large brown bird with slender curved bill, or a very tiny and dark-grey one that appears equally shy with the first, I have never been able to ascertain. Twice this season I have had a glimpse of a black bird with red bill, and which, except in being of handsomer shape, quite resembles the "merle" of the north. The natives call it "Christmas bird," because it first appears at that time, but as it seemed to me to hop along the ground, instead of to fly, I think it may probably be the "walking drongo." One remarkably gracefully-shaped bird, exactly resembling the yellow wagtail, except in having plumage of a lighter shade, is very tame, allowing any person to approach quite near it, and has the same long mark round the eye that is common to several of the birds here, and gives so arch an expression to their generally pretty faces. Another wagtail, of greyish green plumage, appears at the commencement of the rains, and has a sort of familiar British aspect that I greatly like.

We have the mocking-bird too, and though not aware of having seen it, think I have heard it; as after the first time that a wheelbarrow was used here, we used constantly for several days to hear a creaking sound exactly like that made by it on being wheeled along; and which apparently proceeded from some bird snugly hidden in the trees. I have also heard a tune that has been whistled, almost immediately imitated, evidently by an unseen and feathered songster.

The kingfisher most common here is larger than the British one, and though clumsily formed, like most of his kind, is of exquisitely beautiful plumage. As it glances past with the rapidity of a meteor, its wings gleam in every shade of blue, from the palest turquoise to the deepest lapis lazuli, and are set off by

glossy black on the shoulders and edges. I have one dried specimen which M—— shot, and certainly the brilliance of its colours rivals that of the humming-bird. The tail is of the same rich blue as its wings, and the feathers on the back are bright chestnut, bordered with blue. The neck is of a grey stone-colour, and the head and breast chestnut. It has a long red beak, fitted to utter a harsh, discontented, and most peevish screech, that often attracts me to the windows, when I never fail to see the glittering bird, either winging its arrowy flight through the air, or perched upon some one of the trees close to the house. The colony boasts of a small and crested kingfisher of still more gorgeous colours, but I have never seen one.

On the piece of table-ground at the summit of the Zigzag, I often listen in the early morning to the sprightly song of a bird that, soaring up to the sky, reminds me of our own cheerful lark; and many are the strange notes heard at times in the bush, the most harmonious of which is like the sound produced by a first attempt at playing upon musical glasses.

A bird, whose cry at one time resembles that of a whipped puppy, and at another reminds you of the whistling of a boy who knows no tune, besides sundry odd noises to which I can give no similitude—perched itself on the tamarind-tree one day and was shot by M——. Its head is very clumsy, flat-topped, with dark brown eyes; excessively broad-based, sharp-pointed, short beak, slightly hooked at point, the inside of which and the outer edges are yellow, the rest rusty black. The head, beak, throat and upper part of the wings are a rich brown. The wing-feathers are light blue on the broad side beneath, and black upon the narrow; outside for an inch from the point of each feather they are black, the broad side being light, and narrow side deep blue. The tail is shaded light azure, tipped with black, except the two centre feathers (which are uppermost when the tail is shut) being all black. The under part of the body is a pale blue, and it is altogether an extraordinary bird.

During the dry season swallows visit us in great numbers, and I have often flattered myself that they might be some of those who had just spent their summer with you; but after all, am inclined to believe that the nearer shores afford a better winter retreat than this for all our migratory British friends of the

feathered class. The brown-crested birds, which from their note we familiarly called "Perriwigs," are our constant companions. They remain here at all seasons, never tire of their lively song, and seem to fear no one. They are especial favourites of mine, and notwithstanding their sober hue, have such handsome figures that they cause even their more gorgeously robed acquaintances to look quite awkward beside them. Another and larger brown bird, with white throat and breast, plain unornamented head, and mild dove-like eyes, sometimes ventures to remind the perriwigs that they must not monopolize all the little yellow figs of the Indian-rubber tree; but its habits appear totally different, as it climbs up the bark almost like a wood-pecker, hides itself among the leaves, and takes to flight if we only look at it; whilst its coroneted hosts hop about in the most flaunty manner—perch on this twig, then on that, gaily singing and chattering all the time, and even seem as if they talked and nodded their pretty heads to whoever looked at them from the windows. A very small and primrose-coloured bird is equally forward, flying almost in at the open casements, with its shrill "Quy-quee-Quy," which it sings out so loudly, you would think the note proceeded from a body twice its size.

This is but a meagre summary of the many birds whose aspects and notes alike have so often attracted my notice and admiration during my residence here; but the heat and general unhealthiness of the climate, the impossibility of threading one's steps through tangled and intricate thickets in some places, and the total want of shelter in others, throw serious obstacles in the way of attaining even a superficial knowledge of the most interesting objects the country presents.

The nest of the palm-bird is very curious. It is round, with a short covered avenue of woven grass leading to it, and having only a small entrance. Nothing can equal the neatness with which it is *stitched* as it were to a leaf or two of the branch where it hangs, and by which means it is attached so firmly that the twig itself will break ere the nest falls. But what strikes me as being most ingenious in its little builder, is a short twist of grass being fastened between it and the bough as a sort of "guy" or balance, and which causes the pendent and fragile structure to swing in perfect safety during the heaviest gusts of

wind. The prettiest nest I ever saw was that of a humming-bird, which had been blown from its snug resting-place in the cleft of a coffee-tree stem, when the tree itself had broken over in a violent tornado. It was made of the softest of mosses—green outside, and lined with a delicate velvety grey; and so small that my little French watch could just have fitted into it.

13th.—We had a very heavy tornado last night, which rendered this morning cool, the glass being only 82°. On going out I discovered in full bloom near the ancient palm-tree, quantities of a bulb I have not seen for several seasons, and which, from being most commonly found growing in the grass-fields, I used to call the grass-field lily.* It is very pretty, being composed of six lily-like petals, each about four inches long, and of the most delicate white, with a peach-coloured streak up the centre of each. Its six white wax-like stamens are surmounted by broad black anthers.

There are at present also growing at the roots of trees, rich groups of a bright deep-red flower † that, rising from a thick green stalk covered with brown spots, is composed of hundreds of florets clustered closely together into one great rounded mass; and another lily-flowering plant with long streaming petals of scarlet and orange enlivens the underwood, where it grows so high that at first I believed it climbed among their branches.

Convolvuluses here seem to bloom all the year round. I have seen one pretty buff specimen with a crimson centre, but they are generally lilac or white, each flower appearing to spring out of a canoe-shaped leaf, which manages to retain the dew long after the sun has dried up every other leaf and blade of grass, and by this means the cup is kept moist for one day, when, like the cistuses, it fades.

One very common creeper has a small bell-shaped white blossom, that grows in thick bunches like our furze. Its milk-white cups open only when the sun shines upon them, but they are very pretty, either when embroidering the footpath reminding us that it requires clearing, and looking boldly up to the bright sky from their humble situation, or when displaying their closed tufts under the shade of some high branch to which they have

* *Crinum Broussoneti*.

† *Hæmanthus multiflorus*.

clambered. The bush on the "Zigzag" has attained a great height in some places, and just now is particularly fertile in flowers, especially a species of the "tree carnation," which I begin to conjecture must be the Frangipane of the West Indies. This new plant is of more lowly growth than the other. Its blossoms are in companies of six or eight together, and their petals are neither so long, nor do they twist round so much, as those of our old friend, but they are quite as fragrant, and being in clusters have upon the whole a richer appearance.

The flowers growing wild here, have been indeed one untiring source of interest to me ever since I came amongst them; and yet I know they are, except with a few striking exceptions, neither so gorgeous nor beautiful as the greater part of those to be found in many other tropical lands; especially South America, that mine whence are derived some of the choicest treasures of our English hothouses; nor are they generally so sweet-scented as the mass of our old *home* garden favourites. Still I know I shall never hear the name of Sierra Leone hereafter, without a vision rising up before me, of the shady paths on this lonely hill, with their strange trees laden with bright berries and tempting-looking "bush" fruit, and enwreathed by the many-coloured blossoms of magnificent climbers. Pleasant memories cling so much more naturally to us than those that are unpleasant. For now it is not the snows and leafless woods of Britain that are recalled to my mind's eye half so readily as the orchards and hawthorn hedges, in all the glory of their May bloom, with the primrose banks of earlier spring; and the very first tufts of the yellow and purple crocuses, to the lovely roses of later summer,

"That grew within the garden ever dear,
With ruddy apple blended, and the thorn
On which the currant ripened, humble cheer,
But well worth golden fruit of foreign climate born."

But to return to this country. Besides the African laburnum, we have here two other pretty yellow-flowering shrubs. One bears racemes of butter-cup shaped blossoms, the winged seeds of which ere ripening are beautifully streaked with light green and red, like those of our handsomest scarlet climber. The other reminds me very much of broom by the way its flowers grow on

the spray, and also in being tinged with deep red, but they are stellated. Those of one very rare climber with a delicious scent somewhat resemble a bunch of purple auriculas ; and I once saw, when out riding, a curious flower that consisted of but one finely pencilled crimson and lilac petal, so shaped as to appear like one of a circle of five that had fallen off, and with three long stamens projecting from it. The shrub on which this grew had a silvery green leaf and looked particularly pretty, but unfortunately was destroyed by fire, ere we succeeded in getting a slip of it.

One tall tree bears a flower exactly the same as London pride, so far as I can recollect the latter ; and there are in the bush numerous shrubs quite like the snowberry plant.

Of the acacia tribe there are here very many different sorts. That with the yellow, sweet scented, globular blossom, has a thorny stem, a rough brown bark, and a very pretty dark green little leaf. It makes when growing a good fence, but the wood, if by chance used as fuel, has a most disagreeable smell ; and even when it is being pruned or cut down this odour is distinctly perceptible. Another with the same doubly-pinnated leaves has singularly pretty flowers shaped somewhat like those of the palm-willow. These light drooping blossoms are pale lilac for about an inch from their stalks, where they are also thickest, but the remaining half inch of minute florets is of a bright yellow. These two kinds, besides the thorny creeping acacia, with the fragrant round white blossom, are remarkable for the extreme beauty and delicacy of their foliage. Another leguminous shrub, very common in the bush here, has a smooth bark and straggling branches clothed with laburnum-like leaves, while its pretty lilac and white blossoms are papilionaceous, and hanging in long clusters, have a rich effect. This tree bears very pretty pods which are quite flat, and contain four or five deep chestnut-coloured seeds, each about two inches long, and about half an inch broad. These are brittle as paper, than which they are scarcely thicker, and every one lies closely packed and flat until shaken out, when they all hang from the pod, to which they are attached by long slender threads.

I have already told you of the noble monkey locust-tree ; but the common locust-tree is almost equally beautiful. Its elegant foliage is of a pale green, and the flower, which depends

from a long flexile stalk, is in the form of a large crimson ball. Six or seven pods, each about a foot long, and three quarters of an inch broad, spring from the rough round knob left when the flower is shed. One pod contains from twenty to twenty-four seeds, encased in a yellow farina of a sweet taste, and of which the native children are particularly fond.

The tamarind* is one of the same family. It has a venerable-looking rough grey bark, and pinnated leaves of a dull light green. The blossoms come out in little tufts from the sides of the boughs, and are remarkable for the way in which the three small petals of each are variegated with streaks of red; the petals being otherwise of a light yellow, as are also the calyxes. The few pods borne by ours were rough and hard, about four or five inches long, and of a roundish shape. The pulp inside is intensely acid in its raw state.

The leaves and pods of the velvet or wild tamarind† are quite different from those of its more civilized namesake, the former being larger and having only four on the spray, besides a terminal one, whilst they have quite a glossy surface. Its flower is insignificant, but the pod, which is but a small shining black shell, like a round velvet button, contains a single seed surrounded by a mealy powder, which the blacks eat.

In riding along the bush paths, I often see lying on the ground curious large pods, in texture so much resembling leather, that the first one I noticed I actually fancied to be part of an old shoe. But observing quantities of the same substance lying near the spot, I found out my mistake, and subsequently got several of them before they had split open and dropped off. Each had closely packed in it four or five broad, flat, brown beans, fully an inch and a half square. One day last February, I discovered one or two young pods of this species, and hoped to gather them when ripe to take home as curiosities, but I could never make out afterwards on which tree in the bush they were, and suppose they had somehow or other been plucked off. It is very difficult in the dense bush to distinguish individual plants when not in flower, unless one ties a strip of coloured stuff round the stem or marks it in some way or other.

* *Tamarindus indica*.

† *Codarium acutifolium*.

Our Chinese and dwarf scarlet damask-roses on the parapet are in beautiful bloom just now ; but notwithstanding the bamboo fence all round,—one of the goats, a pretty fawn-coloured creature, with great stag-like eyes, and a startled look, contrives to leap over all obstacles to get at the rose-trees, for the leaves of which she has a most unaccountable liking ; so that we distinguish her by the title of the Rose-eater.



LETTER XXXV.

Rainbows — Amaryllis — Ginger — Parting notice of favourite Flowers — Hog Plum — Poverty of Fruits indigenous to Africa, as compared with those of other tropical climates — Water-lemon — Guava jelly — Kolas — Cashew-nut — Cinnamon-tree — Talacuna — Fungus — Orchideous Plants.

June 1st.

THE heavy rains, hot suns, chilly winds, thunderstorms, and tornadoes of the present season, raise many a cheerful contrast in my mind to the weather you should all be enjoying at home just now; and cause me to wish we had an Aladdin's lamp to transport us to England, instead of having to wait for so sluggish a mode of conveyance as a heavily laden merchant-vessel.

We have often observed that the saying of

“A rainbow in the morning is the shepherd's warning,
A rainbow at night is the shepherd's delight,”

should be reversed in this climate, at least as regards the evening warning; for very commonly a beautiful rainbow is the precursor of a tornado, and it always, without a tornado, betokens that the next day will be wet.

Our beautiful white amaryllis is in richer bloom now than I ever saw it before, having five of its magnificent white flowers crowning each stalk. The bergamot plant and the woodruff-scented shrub are also now in full blossom;—while on the cleared side of the hill above this, bordering the path leading out to the Regent road by the bamboos and ant's-nest palm-tree, is a wide patch of most flourishing ginger; a plant that seems to be much of the same habit and nature with the Malaguetta pepper, only the leaves of the ginger are short and narrow, and spring singly from the stalk, which is not above two feet in height, and its pale rose-coloured flowers are much smaller and more insignificant looking. I have never been satisfied with my attempts at preserving its young green roots; but since coming out last have often succeeded in making very good ginger-beer,

substituting one or two bottles of porter for yeast—a thing one cannot get in this climate.

But leisure would fail me did I attempt to give you a parting description of *all* my friends of the floral kingdom here. I have from time to time made you acquainted, in a homely manner, with the most remarkable and the most fragrant:* so that although the seeds sent did not flourish as I had wished, still you will have some idea of many of the tropic blossoms, that are now as familiar to me as the wild flowers of my native land. I have a few tolerably good dried specimens too, which I hope to convey home in safety.

There are still unnoticed the various common marigolds rich in golden rays, and much of a size with your petted cinerarias. There are also the lowly blue and lilac pea-blossoms, great favourites of mine, and about the same rank in African flower society as blue-bells and pansies are at home; and we have different sorts of small white starry cups, that I like from their resemblance to your wood anemone. Nor must I forget a humble grass that bears a feathery blue flower, a patch of which in full bloom well compensates for the absence of daisies and buttercups. The ground-nut with its papilionaceous blossoms of bright yellow, and leaves a little like those of clover, only growing in pairs of four upon the stalk, deserves a word of remembrance for its pretty aspect when in flower, as well as for its excellent fruit. Zinnias, everlastings, water-lilies, and magnificent African marigolds, I have seen here, but not growing wild. We lately got from a friend some slips of a shrub with a pretty laurel-like leaf, and bearing a splendid yellow flower, consisting of one velvety petal, deeply cleft into five rounded segments that rather turn back when full blown. It was found in the bush in the low ground, but the slips we have planted on the parapet seem likely to flourish.

Our monkey apple-trees bore richly this season. Thickets of them and of the brown-plum have, since I came first to the hill, sprung up on all sides to so considerable a height, that did I not remember how very rapidly trees shoot upward in the tropics, it would seem as if I had been here ten years instead of less than five.

The hog-plum† is one of the fruits that are much prized by

* Several of these descriptions have been necessarily abridged, or wholly omitted.

† *Spondias myrobalanus*.

the negroes. A fine large tree of this sort grows on Mount Oriel, close to the old house, kindly sheltering the battered roof by its spreading branches, among whose shining dark-green pointed leaves the bright yellow plums look very pretty. They are of an oval shape, scarcely larger than damsons, and have rather a slight flavour of turpentine, that renders them, in my opinion, by no means pleasant to the taste.

There is no question but that many of the vegetable productions formerly found growing wild here have been lost through the indiscriminate burning of bush. Yet still it seems to me that, as compared with what one hears of other tropical regions, Africa is very inferior in its fruits. Those Liberated Africans I have asked about their own country in the interior tell me that they have none of the fruit-trees that are cultivated in this place, except the banana, plantain, and (I *think*, though it is difficult to make out exactly from their mode of expressing themselves) the pawpaw and guava also. I rather fancy that even these are not indigenous, but have been brought at some early period from the West Indies, or Brazil, by ships trading for slaves. The bush fruits, such as I have often described to you, though of ornamental appearance, are all extremely poor, and these no doubt are natives of the soil, as are the palms, including the cocoa-nut tree.

The sugar-apple, the avocado or alligator pear, and the water-lemon,* are fruits which have been recently introduced here from the West Indies. We have now on the hill a few young plants of the two first raised from seed. I have never seen the last growing. It is the size of a small lemon, and the same shape, except in being more pointed at the ends; and has a very soft, though tough, yellow rind spotted over with white. It is much liked by most people, although containing merely a pleasant-tasted pulp full of flat brown seeds, which it is impossible to separate from the eatable part. It has also an agreeable aromatic scent, and altogether is a nice-looking fruit; but really I do not consider it worth the trouble of eating, the usual mode of which is to suck the pulp through a hole made at one end of the fruit.

A guava,† of a deep purple colour, and not larger than a very fine cherry, is now cultivated in some gardens here, and is much

* *Passiflora laurifolia*.

† *Psidium cattleianum*.

prettier than the common yellow sorts. I also saw lately a new variety of banana, which was of a dull red, and very small. I thought it too luscious, except when cut in slices and fried like plantain, when it made an excellent dish.

The sweetmeats of both East and West Indies being famed, I was at first very ambitious to try to make some, having the same sort of fruit that grows in these countries. But I cannot say I ever succeeded: although my guests politely ate and praised my guava jelly, I myself thought it very inferior, and never so pretty and clear as that sent home from abroad; and being told that hanging over a stove, the heat of which rendered the temperature of the room so high as 96°, was even to the acclimated a hazardous experiment, I soon gave up all idea of becoming a proficient in making African preserves.

Amongst the trees growing by the banks of the brook in the Rose-apple Glen, is one with a light bark and handsome leaf which reminds me of that of the walnut. I have never observed it in bearing, but am told it is that which produces the kola-nut,* and it is decidedly a native of this part of Africa. I believe the fruit grows in clusters containing several kolas. Those I have seen were usually about the size of large walnuts, but resembled beans rather than nuts, each having a thick leathery skin, with a thinner one inside, that on being taken off causes the kernel-like substance to split in two after the fashion of a bean. There are two sorts of kola, one being white, and the other the colour of beetroot. It is as bitter as quinine, and is said to possess the same medicinal properties. The blacks, after chewing the kola, take a draught of water, which they say it causes to "live sweet in mouth." It does not seem to grow plentifully here, but is brought as an article of native trade to Freetown market, from the Bullom shore, and is esteemed very valuable by the negroes, by whom it is used as a complimentary token, a peace-offering, and a pledge of betrothment. They are all fond of chewing it, and old people, who have lost their teeth, have the kernels ground into powder and eat it in that way.

Another favourite with the natives of this place is the cashew-nut,† or acajou as they call it. This tree, which has been

* *Sterculia acuminata*.

† *Anacardium occidentale*.

originally introduced here by Europeans, grows low and spreading, and has a light green oval leaf rather depressed at the top, and with white veins distinctly marked, branching out from the centre fibre to the edges. The leaves are large and glossy, and with the corymbs of small red flowers, which are slightly fragrant and appear in January, cause the tree to look very handsome. Early in March this year those at Mount Oriel were in full bearing. From a yellow apple somewhat like a Keswick codling, but with a more beautifully polished surface than it, sprouts an ear-shaped black nut, the husk or shell of which contains between it and the kernel a caustic oily liquid, that took the skin off my fingers as I tried to break it open. When roasted, the kernel has a rich flavour and is good enough to eat; but the apple, in which the juice separates like whey from curd, is, according to my taste, very nauseous, and smells like *coal-tar*. In one variety the fruit is of a deep pink.

There was an old cinnamon-tree lately growing on the other hill. The leaves are narrow at both ends and gradually broaden out to the middle. They are of a bright shining green on the upper surface, but underneath are much paler, and have at each side of the central one a white vein running from the stalk to the point. The bark is smooth and of a greyish brown. I never saw it in flower. We transplanted a young one to our own hill, but it does not seem to flourish.

A tree, the broad curl-edged leaf of which is used by the natives to thatch their huts, is very common by the sides of our brook and in several places throughout the bush, and bears a large, coarse, clumsy-looking brown fruit, growing in clusters, in the same manner as cocoa-nuts do, at the top of the tree. These rough thick husks contain eight or ten seeds, shut up in separate cells and embedded in a coarse thready substance, like that lining the pods of garden-beans. Each seed is about as large as a horse-chestnut, and irregularly shaped; they are brown outside, but within are of a beautiful white. The Talacuna oil is made from these kernels, which some of the country-people tell me they also eat. Others again say this nut is not edible, but is only used to make oil and soap.

On the fallen trunks and branches of trees that lie half hid among the grass and bush, quantities of a species of fungus

grows that is really very pretty and curious looking. I would call them funnel-shaped, only they spread out too flatly at top. Within they are of a deep shining mahogany colour, ringed with black ; but the surface outside is of a yellowish white, and the texture, though much harder than vellum, is about the same thickness, and quite as glossy. These burnished cups are of various sizes, some not larger than a primrose, others broad and expanded as great sunflowers. I have gathered these strange cryptogamic productions repeatedly and kept them for weeks in the house, where they undergo no change,—resembling all along artificial forms cut out in thin wood, stained tawny brown, and then well varnished over.

With the exception of one small red flower I often see growing upon young trees in the bush, I have never observed any of those orchideous plants that one reads of being so common in the dark damp forests of South America. Yet I know they are to be found here, and I have noticed, very high up on the trunks, or rather the great branches, of our few forest-trees, tufts of leaves, apparently different from those of the trees themselves, and which no doubt belong to this singular class.

LETTER XXXVI.

Ill Health — Benefit of Tornadoes — A lingering Gaze at African Scenery
— Fourah Bay Institution — Snakes — Freaks of the Ting-bing.

June 26th.

IN chronicling the pleasant things that appertain to this land, those of a contrary nature should not altogether be overlooked, especially as they seem themselves determined to be kept in mind as well. Besides the rapid inroads the climate has made in M——'s health of late, I have also had, during the last few months, repeated severe attacks of intermittent fever, that leave me but little equal to the exertion of packing and preparing for our departure.

Violent tornadoes are still our almost nightly visitors ; and as the howling wind rushes against the house, till you all but feel it give final way beneath the blast's impetuous strength, and the thunder rolls overhead or breaks in deafening crashes, while the lightning gleams incessantly through the darkness of the storm ; I think how often during my residence here even such fearful sounds have been eagerly watched for and welcomed by me as the messengers of Heaven, that, in cooling the suffocating air, gave, humanly speaking, a greater chance for life to the sufferer in climate fever ! And though I cannot but feel that the very next flash of lightning may strike the house, still there is now no terror mingled with that feeling, although much of awe ; for, in the very consciousness of the utter helplessness of earthly agency, one is naturally led to rely the more humbly and trustfully upon that Omnipotent yet All-merciful Power, without whose permission a sparrow falleth not to the ground, and by whom "the very hairs of our head are all numbered."

July 2nd.—We now trust to get away so as to be at home early in October, and I have in my last ride to Mount Oriel taken a farewell survey of the magnificent view from the brow of that hill—a view that still as at first strikes the eye, by the

contrast presented between the civilized comfort of the limited foreground; and the wild uncultivated aspect of the widely-stretching region beyond, upon whose beautiful natural features the seal of silence and solitude seems always to rest. But passing over the river and mountain prospect, alike with the cheerful negro cottages bordering the road to Kissy, and the white-walled dwellings of our own countrymen in their wooded grounds; there, on the margin of the quiet and peaceful-looking Fourah Bay, stands a large building in rapid progress of erection, and which is to afford accommodation for the students of the institution, established by the Church Missionary Society, for the education of natives as teachers, or even to be ordained as clergymen. And where is the British heart that would not feel proud in reflecting to what nation *alone* these Liberated Africans owe their redemption from hereditary bondage, their advancement in civilization, and, above all, that knowledge of Christianity which it is to be hoped they will in their turn propagate amongst their heathen brethren, not only on the banks of the famed and fatal Niger, but all along the slave-trading line of coast?

Yes! while she may well mourn and lament over the fearful loss of human life sustained by her on this pestilent shore, let England at the same time take comfort in the testimony given by these reclaimed barbarians and converted pagans, towards the real and lasting good effected by her heroic and persevering endeavours in suppressing the slave-trade.

In returning home I saw a very large black snake glide under a stone by the side of the road; and another day, whilst riding with M—— along that shady path between the Monkey Locust-tree and the gate leading up to the Zigzag, we passed near a most formidable-looking snake, that was coiled round the stem of a tree, with its head stretched out as if to see what we were about. The horses started violently, and the horsemen shouted with alarm, but the reptile did not stir. It was the largest snake I ever saw here, and seemed, from the very respectful glance I gave it, to be mottled black and yellow.

The grey and green whip-snakes are both rather fond of prowling near the house. M—— shot one of the latter sort from a window the other day, and he also shot one near the stables marked in the same way, but, if a whip-snake, uncom-

monly large—its body being about seven inches round, and its length fully seven feet two inches. The servants were all in terror at it, and declared it to be the most venomous snake in the country. Its mouth, being thrust open with the end of a stick, showed its jaws were well furnished with sharp teeth.

The curious little bush-animal, caught in April, continues to thrive nicely, and has become very tame. It laps up milk or custard like a dog or cat, and, if a spoonful of food be held out to it, advances quite boldly and begins to eat, taking up anything solid in its fore-paws, and nibbling it like a mouse. It has got a comfortable box to live in, but by no means approves of being moped up there, and it accordingly is occasionally permitted to run free about the piazzas—and how the playful thing skips about and enjoys itself! It even climbs upon M——'s shoulder, and then springs on his writing-table, where it plays at "hide-and-seek" amongst the papers, taking now and then a sly peep into the ink-bottle. Then, with the agility and action of a squirrel, it makes a succession of leaps over sofa, tables, and chairs, climbs up the storm-curtains, runs along the iron rods at top, and, in the height of its glee, laughs out its shrill, merry, ringing note, till the very house echoes again.

But when the time for putting it into its box for the night comes, it generally thinks proper not to be found; and then commences a search, in which the ting-bing baffles me more by showing itself every other minute, and then lightning-like vanishing, than if it were to remain completely concealed. Here I see the wicked bright eyes gleaming from out some snug corner, but, as I put out my hand to seize the little creature, away it whisks again like a vision, and aided by Fanyah (for whom by the by it evinces no liking) I hunt everywhere, until there peer out the brilliant living opals again at the farthest extremity of the piazza, or perhaps in another apartment altogether. We attempt to catch it, and the next minute it is overhead, perched on the top of an open door. Sometimes, as if tired of its gambols, if we hold out a hand, it will jump into it, but otherwise we have to pounce upon the tiny animal and take it prisoner by force. It struggles so when being put into its box, that often its impertunity, like that of a spoiled child, prevails, and it gets leave to have another frolic. But sometimes it is very naughty, and bites

our fingers with its needle-like teeth ; so I usually throw a handkerchief round it, pop it into its dormitory, and, partially shutting down the lid, gradually withdraw the protective covering, and thus escape its attack ; after which I put a small piece of sugar in through the window of its house, to appease its indignation at being treated so unceremoniously.

It does not appear so friskily disposed during the day, which seems its natural time for sleeping ; but as evening comes on it begins to be restless, and gets more lively the later it is. One night I was awoke by hearing its shrill cry resounding through the house, and, not wishing to run the risk of losing the ting-bing, got up to see where it was. It had been that day in a larger box than its usual one, and had contrived somehow or other to push aside the loose wire grating, and was off, and nowhere to be found. At last, hearing a strange rustling sound on passing near the clock, after a sharp search I discovered my wilful pet climbing up and down the ropes to which the weights are attached, evidently greatly delighted with the exercise of swinging to and fro, and very unwilling it was to be marched back to its box again, poor little thing ! The black people say the dong, in its wild state, lives on fruit, and that it has no permanent house or nest, but seeks a new one for itself every night.



LETTER XXXVII.

Sight the Irish Coast — A Retrospect — Choosing a Vessel — Farewells — Final Leave of the Hill — Hospitable Friends — Bread-fruit — Embarkation — Last Look of Sierra Leone — Books — Death of the Ting-bing — Cape de Verde Islands — Negro Steersmen — A motley Crew — Chimpanzee — Monkeys — Baboon — Parrots — Gale off the Western Islands — Fair Wind — Sea Anemones — A polite Pirate — Comfort of a Filter.

On board the R—, off Dursey Island,
September 15th.

ONCE more in sight of land—and by good fortune have encountered a pilot-boat! A bargain, to pilot us into the Cove of Cork, has been made with the honest-looking old man, its master, who says we are *somewhere* between Dingle and Bantry Bay. I ran out on deck with great eagerness to catch a first glimpse of the green isle of Erin, but can only distinguish brown hills and rocks, of no very prepossessing aspect. Some of the latter stand out frowningly in the water; one, reminding me of the Bass, though on a much smaller scale, is called the Bull; two lesser ones near it, the Cow and Calf; which is all the lore I have gained to-day.

Our good ship makes but slow progress, and whilst M—, the captain, and our fellow-passenger are busily engaged gleaning what information the pilot can afford respecting politics—the change of ministry, &c.—I (rejoicing to be again in smooth water) sit down to write to you, seeing there is now a prospect of a letter reaching you in a few days.

When we had finally decided upon leaving Sierra Leone, of course the next thing to decide upon was a suitable vessel. Our inquiries elicited that the N— had excellent accommodations, was very light for a “timber-ship,” but unfortunately had a drunken master and sickly crew. The P—, also a barque, was to have a light cargo of palm-oil, hides, arrowroot, &c.; but she had been trading on the coast for six months, her captain died the day she came into harbour, and the command devolved

upon the mate, who had never taken home a vessel before; her crew were all ill, and her time of sailing uncertain. The brigantine J—, which had been long expected from the rivers, we now heard had lost her rudder, and met with so much other damage as rendered it matter of doubt whether she would ever go to sea.

We were recommended to wait for the R—, said to be nicely fitted up, and now daily looked for from Yawry Bay. I had become quite familiarized to her appearance whilst she remained in the harbour, discharging her cargo of coals, on arriving from England; and, though remembering it was anything save inviting, felt very anxious for her return, that M— might inspect her accommodations.

On Saturday the 11th of July, a signal and white flag led me to the window, in time to see, immediately beyond Wilberforce, a large ship with the English merchant-ensign displayed, standing in for the harbour, and, though the tide was against her, making very good way. The little spyglass was in instant requisition, but the vessel, which I knew to be the R—, looked so alarmingly deep in the water that I felt quite disappointed. The N— sailed next day, making an enviably good offing, and on Monday M— went to look at both the P— and the R—. The former had extremely limited accommodations, consisting of a small, close, hot main-cabin down stairs, with but two narrow berths off it, while the smell of hides and palm-oil pervaded every corner. The master looked very sickly, as did the crew, which was also deficient in numbers. Still she was by no means a bad-looking craft, and had the prospect with her light lading of making a beautiful passage.

The R— was thirty years old by her register, and had latterly sunk into a second-letter ship. She was exceedingly heavily laden, and owing to her peculiar build looked deeper than she was. Being greatly "down by the head," as the sailors say, she seemed as if the fore-part of the deck would be constantly under water when fairly out at sea. Her decks were crowded with water-casks, and, the timber being stowed forward, the after-cabin below was appropriated to the crew—thus leaving little room for passengers, luggage, or stores. But then, to counterbalance these disadvantages, she had an experienced captain,

healthy crew, and compact if not very extensive accommodations—having a poop roundhouse, which, besides its small main-cabin, extra berths, and steward's pantry, had rather a comfortable little state-room beyond, with two windows opening on deck.

Well! we weighed the advantages and disadvantages, and finally fixed to leave by the R——. I cannot say our friends gave us much encouragement. Even some of our black servants, who from their long residence with us thought themselves privileged to give their opinion, shook their heads and said, “ Ah, please massa, dat ship hebby too much.”

To those accustomed to make voyages, longer ones too than ours was to be, in large East Indiamen, well-appointed emigrant ships, or, above all, in regular steam-packets, it may seem trifling to be thus circumstantial about what appears so very easy and every-day a matter as embarking for England. But the difference between the fitting-up, accommodations, crew, and, in short, everything connected with a “ timber-ship,” and the generality of vessels carrying passengers to more frequented parts of the globe than Sierra Leone, is so great, that it becomes a matter of some importance to choose a vessel, where, with marvellously few exceptions, all are insufficiently manned, heavily laden, and miserably cramped as to room for passengers. In short, on leaving Sierra Leone, you must make up your mind to *rough it*, even at the best.

The R—— was to sail on Saturday, and of course the few remaining days were busy ones with us, and gave rise to considerable regret on my part; as being the last I was ever to spend in the land which, in spite of all the bodily suffering I had both endured and witnessed on its shores, and the great anxiety undergone thereby, had nevertheless been my *home* for so long that it could not but be endeared to me by many associations.

The weather was dark, dull, and rainy, and the house, being dismantled of most of its furniture, looked dreary even before its time. I was sorry to see the poor horses led off to be sold, especially M——'s pretty spirited little steed. But there was no help for this, as, left with none capable of managing it, the fiery creature would have been useless ere its master's return. In spite of all its faults, I was yet more sorry to send back my poor little donkey to its former owner; for not only had I been much in-

debted to the easy exercise and fresh air daily obtained by its humble assistance, but it had become quite an amusement to us, trotting after both M—— and myself like a tame dog, as it grazed under the orange-trees, and thrusting its great broad head to be patted, into our very hands. It often even walked half-way up stairs to receive a piece of biscuit. However, it had also been a pet with its old master, who had given it up to my use as a favour, and we had promised to let him have it again in the event of our going home; so down the hill it paced, or was rather dragged, evidently in a very lugubrious mood itself. But it was not only saying “good by” to dumb animals. For the last few days the house was besieged by all and sundry of my old black nurses, sempstresses, and attendants of every description, and with this primitive sort of people even in the adieus of so lowly a class there was something touching. Others, not content with saying farewell, penned elaborate leave-taking epistles, some of which were full of kindly wishes; although others were nothing more nor less than begging petitions, that, had they been all granted, would have left us with little else than the house to ourselves, seeing their burthen invariably was for “a piece of land for one small farm to plant cassada.”

The little Liberated boy and girl shewed their feelings in different ways. The former, no doubt fancying he would then be free in good earnest, appeared in high spirits at the prospect of roaming through the bush, and setting snares for bird and beast, from morning till night, without fear of reprimand; and, as the best way of showing his desire to be obliging meanwhile, catered for the ting-bing, bringing me a stock of flies he had killed as a portion of sea-stores for the little animal. On the other hand, poor Fanyah was not only really sorry, but a little indignant to boot, and, although quite willing to remain as *help* to Petah’s wife (his family being now installed in their old quarters), could not refrain from an occasional grumble now and then, such as, “Ah! missis, you go leff me for work for black woman; well! I glad for you go your own country, for see your piccans, and your fader and moder, no more I sorry too much for myself because you go leff me.” To cheer up the little maiden’s heart, I gave her, in addition to various things of a more useful nature, two nicely-dressed Dutch dolls, for which I had sent home; and

a whole cargo of scraps of silk, calico, and muslin for her patchwork ; an employment of which she was very fond, and had already formed out of shreds of every shape, colour, and texture, a goodly-sized piece of cloth, which she thought the most becoming garment in the world, rolled round above her European-fashioned frock, in the national style of the most uncivilized tribes. She only made two requests, and these were to get, as chief parting-gifts, a small japanned candlestick lamp, and a tiny enamelled saucepan ; and which two things, with of course the addition of a little oil, she fancied constituted a fortune in themselves as far as furniture went, and it was really pleasant to look at her face of importance and delight on receiving them as her own exclusive property.

Saturday came, and with it was sent on board the pretty graceful rose-eater, which, with a far more matronly grey goat, was to yield us the luxury of milk during the passage home. We were, of course, ready to start at half-an-hour's notice, but, to my great relief, a day's grace was granted to us, and the evening was spent in writing home-letters to go by separate ships.

Next day we left the hill before eleven in the forenoon, M—— riding, and I as usual indebted to Mrs. D—— for her nice comfortable palanquin, in which, with poor Fanyah's sobbing farewell ringing in my ears, the ting-bing for my travelling companion, and a motley train of bearers and followers, I proceeded down the steep shady walks, now so familiar to me, but on which I was not to look again ; the last glimpse I caught of any of the people, except those who accompanied us, being the little agile figure of Dan, the Nufi boy, making all sorts of salaams, and apparently uttering all sorts of parting benedictions.

As the vessel could not sail until the tide served, we passed the few intervening hours at the house of Mr. and Mrs. D——, where, on the staircase, and all about the piazzas and saloon, were disposed numerous vases of beautiful blossoms, some of them quite new to me. A luxuriant granadilla vine, completely covered with its gorgeous passion-flowers of crimson and bluish-purple, and trained across horizontal espaliers, was a pretty bowery object from one of the windows ; and in the same plot of ground grew some graceful-looking green vegetables, interspersed with different plants of a statelier growth. I also saw

the bread-fruit,* the leaf of which is about two feet long and more than one broad, while it is very deeply indented at the edges. The fruit, which grows out from the extremity of each branch, has a rough knobby surface, and is round and very large. When quite ripe it is of a greenish-yellow colour. I doubt there must be some degree of exaggeration in the accounts, given by travellers, of its eating like a fresh-baked roll: or else that raised at Sierra Leone is inferior to the other sorts; as I was told that when cooked and eaten hot it is no better than a common roasted yam, although cold it is very palatable.

Dessert was scarcely finished when a message was delivered that the R—— had all her sails set and was waiting for us; so, bidding adieu to our hospitable friends, whose kind attention, with their pretty house and its atmosphere of flowers, had contributed to render my last impressions of Sierra Leone as pleasant as my first, we set out to the wharf, accompanied by Messrs. W—— and S——. On stepping out of the palanquin, a heavy shower came on, which continued as we rowed to the R——, whose anchor was up as we came alongside.

Thicker and heavier fell the rain, and with a final glance at the mountains, now wreathed in mist, and but a confused vision of sailors, water-casks, and hen-coops, I retreated at once into our little state-room, with a fellow feeling for the imprisoned ting-bing. But the sight of a tolerably well-filled book-shelf—containing, amongst other works of some note, ‘Tales of the Colonies,’ a ‘Life of Cowper,’ and a stray volume of Hannah More—I immediately looked upon as a good omen, speaking well for the captain’s tastes. Therefore, sitting down on one of the sofa berths, with the bookcase at head and a window at foot, I amused myself by watching the physiognomies of the different sailors who passed up and down the companion-way under the window. Mr. S—— and Petah presently came to wish me good by, and shortly afterwards M—— told me our boat was off, and we were making rapid way out of the harbour; whilst, as the rain still came down in torrents, instead of going out on deck to take my last look of Africa, I contented myself by gazing on its receding shores from the little stern-light, until the sudden

* *Artocarpus incisa*.

movement consequent on the first order of "'Bout ship" left nothing save the cold grey waters visible.

Beating out without a pilot—one squall after another coming on—with a crew as yet unused to the ship, and evidently intolerably awkward—that was an evening in which we resigned ourselves to discomfort. Being separated merely by a bulkhead from the helmsman, we overheard every direction that was given, and I was not sorry when we dropped anchor off Murray Town to await daylight.

Even had my usual sea enemy permitted me to lift my head, the wet and windy weather was enough of itself to keep one close prisoner; so for the first week I did nothing else than read and attend to the ting-bing, which gradually had become reconciled to the fare and confinement of shipboard, especially as it was taken out on deck occasionally. But, alas! while shaking and teasing out its flannel bed, as it always used to do itself, the poor animal had its foot hurt by a thread twisting round it. Lock-jaw followed, and, in spite of all M——'s skill and my care, the pretty little thing died, to my real regret, for it had been a great source of amusement as well as interest to me; and I missed it more than you can imagine.

On Sunday, the 2nd of August, we were sailing amongst the Cape de Verdes. We passed rather near to Boã Vista; what we saw of it appearing singularly desolate and barren, not a spot of verdure being visible. We also sighted St. Nicolas and St. Antonio, both of which seemed more hilly than Boã Vista. The navigation being considered rather dangerous in these localities, what with rocks, shoals, and long low reefs stretching far out into the sea, I was glad when we had fairly cleared the last of these islands.

We enjoyed tolerably favourable weather as far as sunshine went, but our good fortune as regarded wind deserted us in three weeks. We have a greater complement of men than a vessel of the R——'s tonnage generally carries; yet few of them are efficient sailors, and the captain partly attributes our long passage to their bad steering. How my ears have rung during the last eight weeks with the helmsman's answer to the query of how the vessel's head lay! One of our black sailors, whose perverse steering greatly tried everybody's patience, once actually replied,

“North-west and by south,” as the point of the compass in which the ship was going! We got farther to the westward than we ought, and I have always watched with great interest the track that has been regularly pencilled upon our good old chart, which I regard as an excellent companion on board ship,—much indeed in the same light as a clock on shore.

Our crew is composed of people from many lands. Of blacks we have two Timmanees, both of whom are good seamen; one Joloff, who of course speaks French; one Nova Scotian, who dresses himself out in the most extraordinary manner on Sundays, and walks the fore-deck with a cane in his hand, gazing up at the heavens all the time with a sagely mysterious expression of countenance; a Papell or Bissão negro, who formed one of the crew of the V—— when we last went out; one Sherbro’ man, and one Aku. The carpenter is either a Finn or a Shetlander. One of the mates has really amused us by the easy, good-humoured way in which he takes everything, assuring us, even when Æolus blew right in our teeth, and “south and by east” was the answer to the incessant inquiry, that “there was a fair wind coming,” and prophesying, until we *had* very nearly *been* six weeks at sea, that our voyage would be safely completed within that period. There is one Brazilian, named Antonio, a little insignificant-looking man, with not nearly so honest a cast in his dark features as in those of the negroes on board, yet uncommonly neat-handed at making such things as monkey-jackets and trowsers, and sealskin caps ornamented with tassels of his own manufacture. Though at first the sound of the different languages was deafening to me, upon the whole the sailors have been very quiet and orderly, especially the blacks. However, three out of four European apprentices are the veriest imps I ever beheld even on ship-board; and, amongst other of their pranks, it was discovered, before we had been a fortnight at sea, that they had (aided by the worthy carpenter) drunk and distributed the greater portion of our stock of porter, &c., which was stowed below; while they had as little spared the captain’s stores of biscuits and different things. Yet the crew of this vessel have most liberal allowances of pork, beef, pease-soup, *duff* (as they call dough-pudding), coffee, sugar, and biscuit. They have everything good for them

excepting grog, a moderate supply of which (at least in stormy weather) I confess I cannot help thinking *sailors* do require.

At first starting we had on board, besides four other animals of the monkey tribe, a hideous-looking, peevish, fretful, grinning *chimpanzee*, which, shame to my humanity, I was by no means sorry to hear was dead, after we had had a few weeks of real annoyance from the horrid noise it constantly made. The rest all flourish as yet, and consist of two small mangrove monkeys, that are rather amusing in their gambols, but great thieves in the steward's pantry; a dog-faced baboon, and a large grey monkey, which are both kept chained forward. The last I have never seen, but hear it is very vicious. The ape sometimes manages to break its chain, and take a scamper round the deck: it is very ugly, and has a sort of hoarse grunting bark.

We had originally four parrots, but lost one. Two of those remaining are of a beautiful mottled grey, with scarlet tail-feathers; the third is a crow-parrot, and was taken young out of its nest on the banks of the Sherbro'. It is the tamest of them all, cries "pretty poll" in a loud whistling note, imitates the noise of the fowls, and even the creaking of an ungreased boom, to perfection; and disdains to take a bit of sugar from any save a white person's hand, and that only if ungloved. We have had by no means a disagreeable passage, though so very tedious. We have a civil captain, well-informed fellow-passenger, good cook, and obliging steward—all valuable *helps* to comfort at sea.

The Europeans had all had country fever long ere they came on board, and some of them suffered a good deal from ague during the early period of our voyage. The poor black people now feel the cold very much, and are so grateful to M—— for the many warm garments he has bestowed upon them. I overheard one of the Timmanees the other day begging to be taken into our service, and only to return to Sierra Leone when M—— did. However, I doubt that poor George, in his red cap, blue blouse, with leather belt and great knife stuck in it, though a very good sailor, would make but a grotesque and awkward valet.

When off the Western Islands we experienced rather a heavy gale, during which we were more than once exposed to some risk by the negligence of the man at the wheel allowing the vessel

to "broach to." The blacks, with the exception of the two Timmanees, are so cowardly that they lost all presence of mind on seeing the huge waves curling up as if to bury the vessel to her very masts, so that, when even two of them were at the helm, the captain was repeatedly obliged to take it himself on the sudden approach of a fresh squall. When that gale was somewhat abated, I took my station in one of the doorways leading out on deck, being well secured against the heavy rolling of the vessel, and watched with great admiration the wild commotion of the sea. Several vessels were within sight, and you will have some idea of the size of the waves when I tell you that at one minute you saw one of these tall and stately ships standing steadily on her course, and the next a liquid mountain had risen up between her and our vessel, threatening to engulf us both in its yawning depths. As I looked on the angry waters, I could no longer feel provoked at the stupidity or alarm of the negroes at the helm; for it is so natural for an ignorant person utterly to disbelieve the possibility of a heavily-laden ship rising buoyant on the crests of these enormous waves, but, on the contrary, to think that the whole mass, with her living souls, would go down unresisting, overwhelmed in the trough of the mighty ocean.

We had of course our share of hot weather, but under the awning it was supportable, and I used to sit on deck as much as possible. But when the days are only marked by seeing a strange sail—seeing a couple of grampuses dancing the gallopade after their fashion—speculating about where a Mother Carey's chicken contrives to build her nest—counting the pieces of pink gulfweed that float past—admiring the fearless way in which the pretty tropic bird, with its curious long tail-feathers and milk-white plumage, circles round your vessel—or watching a beautiful dolphin gliding alongside in its regal robe of purple and gold—they pass too monotonously for a more lengthened account to be interesting to you.

We have had to be sure some really enjoyable days since we came into colder latitudes; days with the sunshine so gloriously bright, the sky so calm and clear, and the sea so deeply blue, that one would feel the repose of nature to be too languid and dreamy, were it not for the wind with its cheering whistle among the shrouds, and its invigorating breath on your cheek;

as it gives to each wave over which the ship goes bounding along, a broad feathery coronet of snowy foam, that, glancing in the sunlight, seems studded with a myriad of jewels, and, indeed, to your eyes, looks more brilliant than a royal diadem; while the plashing noise of the water at the bows, and the merry voice of the breeze, together whispering of home and welcome, sound in your ears more sweet and spirit-stirring than the finest music. I do not in truth wonder at the desire displayed by so many boys for becoming sailors, but must frankly own that my enthusiasm for the sea is only in proportion as the wind is *fair*.

A few days ago we came upon a mass of marine creatures, that made the water appear as if it were strewn over with full-blown anemones, of a deep purple crimson spotted with white. I never saw these animals in any former voyage. The sailors said their appearance betokened a storm, but we have had none as yet.

How odd it is that storms, shipwrecks, and other disasters incident to vessels and voyages, should so often form the favourite theme of discourse on board! It would seem that, before our African naval force was so great as it is now, pirates were occasionally met with off the coast. Vessels engaged in the slave-trade, instead of remaining exposed to the risk of capture before a slave-station, waiting till their human cargoes were ready to be shipped, not unfrequently put out to sea, cruised about for a short time, and plundered any unprotected ship they thought might yield them a fair booty. One of these pirate-craft has been known, when prevented through the vigilance of our men-of-war from embarking her slaves, to attack another engaged in the same trade, and possess herself both of the slaves and the vessel which carried them. I have heard, especially during this voyage, many a tale about pirates; but as most of such stories, though very interesting, are either melancholy or dreadful, I shall only tell you a short one in which there is no bloodshed.

Several years ago an English gentleman at Sierra Leone purchased a small vessel that had been condemned as a slaver, and, having fitted it up, he embarked in it with his family for England. They were fallen in with, somewhere about the vicinity of the Cape de Verdes, by a very suspicious-looking sail, the captain of which, with a party of men strongly armed, boarded

the little British schooner, having probably at first taken her for a Spaniard or Portuguese—for these lawless rovers do not often run the risk of attacking a vessel that bears our “meteor-flag.” But, finding out his mistake, he put on a courteous demeanour, and entered into conversation with the proprietor of the schooner, at the same time prying into every nook and corner on board. The stranger, which had now shown the tri-colour at her mast-head, lay at a short distance, displaying the bright muzzles of her guns; whilst her commander with his armed men coolly paced the deck of the defenceless English vessel, neither asking nor demanding a single article, but praising everything that struck his fancy after this fashion: “You have got some very fine pigs on board—very fine indeed! *Our* last porker was killed some days ago.”

A request that he would be pleased to accept of as many as he chose was instantly made by the poor owners, who were perfectly aware of the real character of their visitant, who went on,—“Your poultry are certainly the most beautiful poultry I ever saw—I have now scarcely one fowl remaining.”

He continued in the same manner to extol the appearance of all the live stock on board, and to accept in good earnest of “as many as he *chose*,” seeing he did not leave the vessel he so politely plundered as much as one goat, sheep, pig, or fowl. The wine, ale, biscuit, and other stores had also to pay heavy tithe, the passengers and crew being left to subsist on a scanty supply of salt provisions and water during the remainder of their voyage.

In both of our homeward voyages we have had excellent filtering vessels, which have been the means of supplying us with clear fresh water for all purposes. No one should go to sea without sending a filter on board as part of his (or her) cabin furniture. We have found ours quite valuable, even though there are others in the ship.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Bays, Rocks, and Islands — Irish Boatmen — Fish — Crookhaven — Cape Clear — Stags of Castlehaven — Dangerous Position of our Ship off the Old Head of Kinsale — Seven Heads — Courtmacsherry Bay — Clear the Old Head at last — Sight of a White Woman.

16th, Wednesday.

TO-DAY is lovely, and I have been much out on deck. The aspect of the coast is beyond description bleak and barren, presenting a formidable front of steep rocks close to the water's edge, and against which the waves dash up in a continual foam. Upon the highest points of the bare desolate hills stand square towers, built as signal-stations at the time of the threatened French invasion. Not a tree to be seen—not even a morsel of verdure—all of the “green isle” at present in our sight being, without exception, brown and stony. Passed close to Bear Island, which is situated in Bantry Bay. Passed Castlepoint. Beat across Dunmanus Bay. Very tedious work weathering the “heads” forming the entrance into these bays. Cape Trepoint, Sheep's Head, and Mizen Head (the two latter crowned with towers that look like handles to lift the great headlands up by), seem still very far distant; and we tack every two short hours, the ship “missing stays” oftener than is agreeable. But with a most hard-hearted wind and heavy craft, we must all practise patience as we best can.

17th, *Thursday*.—Notwithstanding our slow progress and the bleak aspect of the coast, I greatly enjoy the novelty of the near land view, and am much amused by watching the boats that constantly come alongside with newly-caught fish, eggs, poultry, and buckets of “rare” potatoes for sale. The owners of all these good things are wild-looking Irishmen, who at first offer their cargo as a present, then ask what you will give, stating, at the same time, their decided preference to bottles of rum and pieces of old rope compared with money; and after

they do make a bargain always beg for more, and are never satisfied. The potatoes are watery, but, though not very good, are acceptable to us as fresh vegetables. The fish is excellent, and is indeed a luxury at sea—preferable, I think, to the very best preserved salmon, &c. The sailors caught a good deal of fish during the passage. One, said to be a tunny, we all thought particularly nice to eat. A small pot of fresh butter that tasted of turf-smoke came on board to-day, and amongst other land rarities there was also a bottle of milk, its stopper formed of a piece of raw potato neatly cut to fit. So much for the county of Cork!

Have cleared Mizen Head at last, sailing at times so close to the shore as to perceive some slight attempt at cultivation; the ground, barren as it is, being divided and subdivided by rude stone fences into the veriest patches of fields that I ever beheld, always excepting the tiny cassada-farms of our Sierra Leone blacks. Passed Crookhaven, the whitewashed buildings of its lighthouse forming a pleasing feature in the wild sterile landscape. Mount Gabriel, a hill of greater height than any we have yet seen here, diversifies our view to-day. The pilot says there is a lake on its summit. He, poor man! is rather cast down by the little way our vessel makes, and thinks he has concluded a very bad bargain with us, as we might have reached Cork by this time had the wind been favourable and the ship more obedient to her helm. M—— tells me the pilot pointed out the churchyard, a lonely spot with the sea on one side and the grey rocks on the other, as the place where he had, within the last few months, buried a son and daughter who had both died of consumption. The tears rolled down the old man's weather-beaten face as he spoke, and adverted in touching terms to the loss he had sustained in the death of his children. A surviving son, who came on board with the pilot, looks pitiably thin and careworn. Alas! by all we hear, there seems a miserable prospect for the poor people in this quarter during winter.

Lloyd's agents boarded us, but said, had they known we were from Sierra Leone, they would scarcely have ventured, so fearful a name has our sunny colony obtained!

Saw the lighthouses on Cape Clear, which is itself an island,

having a narrow channel at the back. Passed in the twilight about half way between this point and a great round isolated rock called the Fastnet, significantly pointed out to me as an object from which the ship will gladly keep a respectful distance. It is just the sort of rock I should like to sail close to in a small boat, as it has a strange mysterious look about it as it looms through the shadowy dusk of evening.

There is a great difference between coasting along here and in the English Channel, where soundings have repeatedly to be taken as a ship beats her way up or down. Here appear to be neither shoals nor sandbanks, yet in stormy weather the rock-girt shore must render this a most dangerous locality. I observe with what eagerness the lights on the different heads are looked out for. "How does the light bear?" is now a more frequent inquiry than "How does her head lay?" That on Cape Clear is our beacon to-night.

We have had some idea of landing more than once since we sighted land, and as yet have been deterred, not so much by the certainty of having to row in a small boat for many hours, as by the land-journey afterwards of thirty or forty miles to a more civilized place, by no other conveyance for ourselves or heavy luggage than a cart or open car.

18th, *Friday*.—A very wet day, but I got for a short time on deck in the afternoon. We are creeping on by degrees. Passed Twohead, a bluff tower-crowned point, and sailed within a cluster of most frightful-looking rocks called the "Stags of Castlehaven," one of which seemed to change to the view every five minutes, according as the ship moved on; now appearing as if cleft in three, then as if all in one like the top of a church spire; while over each rock the sea breaks in tremendous clouds of surf, especially against the lowest and least of all, which presented the aspect of an immense fountain, every instant throwing off magnificent jets of boiling foam. I sat on deck until late, and felt quite relieved when we had left these sea-girdled crags far behind.

19th, *Saturday*.—Off Clonkilty, about ten in the forenoon, making tolerable progress. The glass going down and a gale of wind prophesied, but instead fell almost a dead calm at five in the afternoon, when off the Old Head of Kinsale, against whose perpendicular and rocky sides the waves lift themselves in sparkling snow-white wreaths.

I had been on deck for some time, pleased to see how well the tide bore us on, when whispers began to arise on every side—captain, pilot, and mate at the same time casting earnest and uneasy glances, now up to the sails, then to the bows, and then to the iron-bound headland on our lee, to which it soon became apparent, even to me, that the vessel was steadily, though slowly, drifting onwards. There was not wind enough to give her steerage way, and she refused to go about, until it was too late, from our proximity to the shore, to attempt wearing the ship in the usual manner. The tide was running in strongly; each individual of the crew seemed the very picture of alarm, and there was not one on board who did not look anxiously across the water for but a “cat’s paw” to ruffle its too tranquil surface; whilst, as the necessary orders were given in a low tone, or signified only by a look or gesture, instead of singing out as they always do in merchant-ships on hauling the ropes, &c., the sailors preserved a profound and ominous silence. In spite of every strenuous effort made to bring her head round, the R—— remained for nearly three-quarters of an hour immovable, except in being impelled, as by an unseen power, towards the dark front of the rugged and perpendicular cliff that seemed waiting to receive her. A pilot-boat kept hovering near, as if for the purpose of affording help when the moment of extremity came, and some of the men suggested getting its assistance, with that of our own boats, to tow the ship, but it was declared that three gnats might as well attempt to drag along an elephant.

I must say that, although conscious of our danger, yet the calmness of the sea, and of the evening together, had the effect of rendering me less really alarmed than I often was during the gales or squalls of our homeward passage; and, warned by M—— just as the last desperate endeavour was about to be made, I returned to our little cabin, where, after looking out of the window for about two minutes, I saw to my great thankfulness the formidable rock astern, but so very, very close, that, although nearly dark, I could distinctly trace the broken surface it presented.

The pilot wished to cast anchor, but in thirty fathoms water the captain did not think it advisable. They say it is fifteen fathoms deep quite close to the cliffs. I now see the lighthouse

glimmering rather farther off, but it is nine o'clock at night and still no breeze.

10 *o'clock*.—I am glad to overhear the pilot saying we have now drifted out clear enough of the Head. Yet it would seem that we are too near some other rocks. The captain and pilot both appear to be apprehensive, and the former means to sit up all night.

11 *o'clock*.—They are still far from easy as to the position of the vessel. Every few minutes I overhear, from some one or other on deck, the watchword of "We are *very* near the rocks!"

12 *o'clock*.—Our own little cabin looks cheerful with its bright light, and there is so little motion, I somehow feel as secure as if we were at anchor in a sheltered haven. Yet here we are sitting up so as to be ready should the ship strike! But the night is so calm and silent I cannot realize the presence of danger. I mean I do not feel in the least degree "nervous," and, as being once safe on shore will bring its own occupations and interests, I am glad to employ the present idle time in giving you these little details, that otherwise would certainly not be written at all.

We were spoken to-day by a pilot-boat from Cork, and told that, coming from Sierra Leone, we shall have fifteen days' quarantine. But surely, when there has been neither death nor contagious sickness on board, and the vessel has a clean bill of health, we cannot be detained. I almost begin to wish, however, that we had landed at Bantry, or even at some one of the dreary little fishing-hamlets we passed.

20th, *Sunday*.—Very wet. We have lost above ten miles since last night, having been carried so far to leeward of the Old Head of Kinsale, which now at nearly eleven in the forenoon is but faintly seen in the distance. I am now told that, had the ship not come round when she did last night, another ten minutes would have rendered her going on the rocks inevitable. We can now speculate on the matter coolly; and although, humanly speaking, with a perfectly quiet sea and our boats, no lives would have been lost, still we all, I should hope, feel most thankful to a merciful Providence that we have escaped such a disaster. Had we struck, the cargo must have been lost, as well as the effects of every person on board.

Off Seven Heads, a promontory so called from its being divided into as many different points, one of which is again broken into several low rocks, those near to which the tide at one time set us last night. The rocks, coves, islands, and bays which we pass render the land-view very interesting to me in spite of its wildness.

Sailing now in Courtmacsherry Bay, the shores of which present the most cultivated aspect I have yet seen on this coast. A village, several substantial-looking houses, one partially surrounded by a plantation, and evidently a better sort of residence, have been successively passed. Tacked to avoid an island rock called the "Horse," and two others named the "Barrels," to which we were also in most dangerous neighbourhood last night. Making short tacks, and at five in the afternoon fairly cleared the grim Old Head. Looked out of the stern windows, and saw it on the opposite side to which we were off it the previous evening; the lighthouse appearing quite in a different point of view to what it did then.

21st, *Monday*.—Have again lost several miles during the night. Our ship, notwithstanding her regal name, makes most sluggish and unqueenlike progress. The poor pilot evidently does not understand her disposition and habits, for he constantly contrives to let her "hang in stays," and the hurrying and noise on deck, with the peculiar motion at such times, cause even me, when sitting in the cabin, to know quite well what is the matter, and since our danger on Saturday night I never feel quite comfortable until M—— makes the report that all is right again. Passed the entrance to Kinsale Harbour, observed several prettily situated houses; and the country greatly improves in cultivation, although the coast is one succession of jutting-out headlands, cliffs, and rocks. A small yacht cruising about with ladies on board. Felt quite impatient to see the face of a European woman once more, and through the great ship-glass I had a good view of two nice-looking people, apparently sisters, and a little fair child in a straw bonnet, about the size I suppose dear F—— should now be. On going out at three o'clock see Cork Head, and those forming the entrance into Cork Harbour, the two last still very far distant. Passed a craggy islet called "Saffron Island," and two very curiously formed round rocks

standing high out of the water with a narrow strait between them: one covered with bright green grass is really like a "gem of the sea." The wind is very chilly to-day; I think the sheltered *lee side* of a ship ten times more comfortable than the *weather side*, and cannot see why the latter should be the more honourable situation.

LETTER XXXIX.

Hubbub on entering the Cove — Health Inspectors — Quarantine — Wet Weather — Scenery around — Anxiety to be set at large — Confusion on Deck — An Irish Blunder — Grumblings thereat.

On board the R——, at anchor off Cove,
September 22nd.

HERE we are at length! a fair wind having sprung up about six yesterday afternoon, gradually increasing to half a gale, that carried us gallantly on; the old ship seeming anxious to retrieve her character at the last, and show that, had she been favoured by a less adverse breeze, even she would easily have run over in twenty-four hours the same line of coast along which we had been wearily beating for the last eight days.

The narrow entrance to the Cove requiring a careful hand, the captain steered, while our old pilot gave the orders as we met or passed various vessels: "Hard a-port"—"starboard"—"steady"—the answer to the one being scarcely sung out when the other followed. The orders and counter-orders were so loud and reiterated, and the "yo-he-o-ing" being perfectly deafening; the commotion and noise altogether caused me to feel an apprehension of experiencing a shock like that which so startled us all when the steamer ran into our vessel, in Gravesend Roads, on the evening of my first embarkation. What greatly added to the hubbub was being met by the quarantine boat, and told to have no communication with the shore until visited by the health inspector this morning.

When, exactly at eleven o'clock, the cheering, and, under the circumstances, to me actually *euphonious* sound of the chain, followed by the deep sullen plunge under the waves, told that we had cast anchor, and if not, according to the song,

"in the Channel of Old England,"

at least not very far from its familiar waters, I thought surely

now it would be possible to have some sleep. But no! boats hailed us every five minutes, some to ask idle questions, others with people wishing to come on board to sell porter, whisky, meat, and vegetables, and a hundred *et ceteras*. It was of no avail in keeping them away that they were told we were forbid to let any one come on board—the Babel of tongues would not cease; and then our sailors, getting impatient at the prolonged disturbance, answered in no gentle tones themselves. It was most wearing out. Had we dropped from the moon in land where never ship had been seen or heard of before, there could not have been a greater commotion excited. Surely the Cove of Cork is different from all other civilized harbours!

At eight this morning we all mustered on the gangway to have our numbers taken and our appearances scanned by the health inspectors in their boat alongside; the motley crew, all dressed in their motley finery, leaning over the side; the white seamen, who appeared rather indignant at the whole thing, chatting to each other and staring carelessly around them; the negroes, who, on the other hand, seemed to think it a most imposing ceremony, wearing a grave, solemn expression, and keeping their eyes fixed all the time upon the consequential-looking customhouse officials, who in their turn looked up at us with as much wondering curiosity depicted upon their features as if we had been all fresh from Timbuctoo. Their chief read the muster-roll, and then, counting us slowly and deliberately over, exclaimed “I want two yet,” in a tone as if he suspected the master of the vessel to have sworn falsely, and that two of the crew must be dead. Still, when one of the loiterers, the black cabin-boy, came grinning forward, and showed his goodhumoured countenance with its *Aku* mark, “But yet I want one” was cried out more indignantly than before, and called forth a most impatient and angry summons to the dilatory steward, who thereupon rushed out of his pantry, where he had evidently been busy at work with the dough for the morning’s bread, stood an instant beside his comrades, and rushed back again. I was very much amused by the scene altogether, but especially it seemed to me so truly ludicrous and farcical to send a bevy of revenue officers, instead of a physician, to judge whether it was necessary to place us in quarantine or not.

But although the vessel is provided with a clean bill of health, and there have been no deaths on board during the voyage, nor yet any sort of infectious illness—the colony too being free from contagious disease at the time the R—— left, and all of us being equally so at the present moment—fancy our astonishment and chagrin to have it intimated to us, not only that we are *not* at liberty to land, but that, until an answer be received from authorities in Dublin (to whom the case has in the first place to be reported), it cannot be known whether we are to be admitted to pratique, or to undergo quarantine for an indefinite period! And that answer, owing to the slow methods of communication in this part of the United Kingdom, cannot be received before the 27th, a period of five clear days!

The Customhouse people, who appear to act as health inspectors here, have installed one of their subordinates on board, but no medical man has come near the vessel. I really wonder, had there been illness in the ship, if there would have had to be a reference to “the Board in Dublin” ere the sick persons were permitted to have a doctor to visit them.

But I must despatch this immediately, as no letters are allowed to be sent on shore except by the revenue-boat, and I hear it hailing us now. I must only add that, in spite of all my grumbling, I trust we feel less disposed to fret at this temporary annoyance than to be heartily grateful to the Almighty that there has been no fever on board. We should then have had incomparably greater cause for being dispirited. The poor pilot is the person most to be pitied. He has now been on board eight days, and has the prospect of being nearly as many more. He says this has been an “unlucky ship to him,” and continually regrets that his was not the pilot-boat which assisted a foreign vessel in distress into Crookhaven a few days ago, and by which her owner was expected to clear twenty or thirty pounds.

Extracts from Journal.

23rd, *Wednesday*.—Both yesterday and to-day have been dismally wet, so that, being quite unable to go out on deck, I content myself by writing various epistles, reading stray newspapers, working a little now and then, meanwhile indulging in

philosophic reflections. The scenery around is remarkably pretty, so far as I can judge by peeping out of the stern windows.

24th, Thursday.—It blew very hard last night, so that we had to drop a second anchor. To-day is showery and windy. The houses on the quay are all faced with dark-grey slates, which give them a warm but strange appearance.

The entrance to the harbour is very strongly guarded on both sides, while naval storehouses and fortifications stand around in all directions, and add to the fineness of the landscape formed by the islands, trees, hills, and fields; the grass of the latter, in its vivid brightness, doing all credit to the “emerald isle.”

Up beyond the streets, close to the water banks, are several pretty terraces of neat houses, with flowery garden-grounds in front; in which the sight of little merry children playing overthrows all my philosophy, and causes me to feel eagerly anxious for a release to our weary imprisonment. Is it not strange that the anxiety people feel, regarding those from whom they have been separated for a lengthened interval, should become doubly intense as the long-anticipated period of meeting draws near? We cannot now hear of our dear ones until we reach them, as we trust to be set at large long before an answer can be received to any of our letters. Our latest home news are now nearly six months old, and it does seem so singular to be for several days in one of the British isles, and yet be obliged to remain ignorant of the welfare of our friends in the other. Heard this instant of the *N*—having put into Crookhaven in distress, and with the loss of four men during the passage.

25th, Friday.—A little sunshine to-day, but the wind is bitterly cold. Lord Mountcashel’s yacht “*Wandering Spirit*”* lies at anchor near us, and is one of the most beautiful objects in view. Our vessel’s decks are one mass of confusion—coils of old ropes, sails, empty casks, sea-chests, packages, oil-jars, and pots of paint, with a solitary pair of magnificent elephant’s tusks, are strewed up to the very entrance of the main cabin, putting it

* A few weeks afterwards I read an account in the newspapers of the loss of this vessel, with the narrow escape of those on board, off the entrance to Kinsale harbour.

completely out of one's power to take exercise. This is the fourth day of suspense, and heavy *beating* rain for the greater part of that time has rendered it equally impossible to obtain fresh air.

26th.—We are now in an absolute ferment of indignation, yet can afford to laugh at what is after all but an Irish blunder illustrated. Here are we all in comparative good health, and having had no deaths on the voyage, placed in quarantine; whilst the sickly sailors of the N——, who were discharged at Crookhaven and landed here in a pilot-boat, are now walking about on the quay in our very sight. It is too ludicrous! At an Irish port they place the healthy in quarantine and allow the sick to go freely ashore! But we are not alone in our unjust detention. The P——, which came in from Sierra Leone on Tuesday morning, is in the same agreeable position with ourselves.

That the greatest caution ought to be observed, with regard to even healthy vessels arriving from places where contagious disease rages, is evident to every person. Still greater care is indispensable when the vessel is in a sickly state, even though the port whence she last cleared was perfectly healthy; and after that most melancholy case of the *Eclair*, and the terrible consequences to the Cape de Verdes which followed communication with that devoted ship, one cannot blame the strictness with which the quarantine laws may be enforced.

But what seems to me the peculiar hardship both of our case and that of the P—— is that the authorities at Cove, or at least at Cork, should not be deemed competent to decide whether there be any necessity for placing a vessel in quarantine or not; or that they should not even have the power of sending a medical man on board, who surely would be able at once to say whether we were ill or well, since it would appear we are not the best judges ourselves of that question.

Five days of cooping up under such disagreeable circumstances is enough to injure the health of robust people; much more might so vexatious a detention operate unfavourably upon those who, though not labouring under an attack of fever, are returning to England for the benefit of their health, after years of exposure to a tropical climate,—and that the climate of Sierra Leone.

What crowns the ridiculous is, that we have been permitted to anchor close to the town amongst other vessels in the harbour; while so little do the people around seem influenced by any dread of our proximity, that boats come continually alongside to offer things for sale, the yellow flag at our mast-head not even deterring pleasure-yachts from sailing round the vessel, so near that one could almost spring from our decks on to theirs.



LETTER XL.

Admitted to Pratique — Sail up the Lee — City of Cork — Irish Cars —
Costume of the Lower Classes — Gloomy Thoughts banished by remembrance of past Mercies.

Cork, September 28th.

I REJOICE to say we were released yesterday,—Sir J—— P——, a Scotch physician of Cork, having at length received instructions to visit the ship and decide as to our fitness or not to be admitted to pratique. It did not occupy a moment. We all stood at the side as before, and immediately that he had glanced at us, and taken our numbers, he told us we were free once more ; so “ Jump up, boys ; haul down the yellow flag and hoist the ensign,” was the quick and cheering order, that was as quickly and cheerily obeyed ; while the doctor politely shook hands with us, and wished us joy of being out of quarantine.

Being Sunday, however, nothing could be done in the way of clearing luggage (by the by, it cannot be managed at Cove at any rate), for which purpose we *steamed* up here this morning.

The banks of the river from Cove to Cork are strikingly pretty, their natural beauty of wooded rocks and green slopes being enlivened by pleasant-looking cottage-villas, with sunny gardens stretching down to the water's edge ; and here and there the eye gets a peep of some stately mansion with park and forest ; while busy little watering-places thronged with well-dressed women and children, and the number of fine vessels quietly gliding up and down, still further add to the cheerfulness of the picture.

So far as I can judge, this is really a fine town, with broad streets, handsome shops, and numerous carriages ; those novel-looking vehicles called Irish cars—well-appointed and ill-appointed—public and private—open and close—preponderating over every other sort of equipage ; while the streets are crowded with people of all grades. The dress of the women of

the lower orders strikes me as equally foreign and un-English with the cars. They all seem clothed in a uniform made up of brown cloth cloaks and great hoods, under which appear clean cap-borders quilled full all round. The men patronize long straggling great-coats, and napless, weather-beaten, black-brown hats, stuck on one side the head.

M—— is now at the Customhouse, with our fellow-passenger and the master of the vessel; and I sit in a comfortable hotel, out of the windows of which I have looked till I am tired, writing to you, having also dashed off a few lines to —— and ——, telling of our being set at liberty. But we have still some steam-voyages to perform, and railway journeys too, ere we can reach ——, where Heaven grant that we find all our dear home-people well!

Yet, although there is something so indescribably animating and gladsome in being once more safe on land in the temperate zone; after former experience of the instability of human hope on a similar occasion, it is not enough to prevent gloomy anticipations from flitting through the mind. But I try to *feel* as in those beautiful lines of Addison's, at once remarkable for their truth and simplicity:—

“ In foreign lands and realms remote,
Supported by His care,
Through burning climes I've pass'd unhurt,
And breath'd in tainted air.”

And therefore, in the words of the same touching hymn,—

“ In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
God's goodness I'll adore,
And praise Him for His mercies past,
And humbly hope for more.”



APPENDIX.

THE following are a few samples of negro epistolary correspondence.

The address upon the first is—

“ M—— —, Esqre.

Have me excuse for the other name.

“ Honoured Sir,

Freetown, Sierra Leone.

With deep humiliation and earnest desire I come to sollicite you a certain thing, and that of your kindness it will grant to your humble servants. Sir, will you be good enough as to employ me in the business as a messenger in your office, Sir, and only try me, and you will not see me in advertent.

I must subscribe my name under this paper.

(Sygned)

DANIEL DAVIS.”

(No. 2.)

“ Sir,

Your humble petitioner brings his petition to you, showing that he is about passing within your premises to his farm, and would be obliged should you be good enough by allowing him to shot any birds or monkey, for to be eaten, previous to his going along.

And your petitioner as in duty bound,

I ever pray to be your Obedient Servant,

J. S. D. DAVIES.”

(No. 3.)

“ Dear Sir,

Your humble servant have the liberty to inform you this few lines, hopin it will found you in Good state health Sir, all my wish is this that I come to ask you a Picese of Ground to cultivet, as much as 2 or three arca (*acres*) of land, I will great obliged Sir,

Your most humble servant sir,

JOHN COFFEE.”

(No. 4.)

“ Dear Sir,

I have hard that you are in want of a Horse man, and I can re-take furthering myself; should my services be required as a Horseman, you will find a good horse man and a man of knowledge of aboute Horse.

I am your very truly servant,
MOSES JOHNSON.”

(No. 5.)

“ Sir,

I have the Honour of wrighting these few lines to you Sir, I am in need of work, and will be very much obliged to you if you will be kind as to give me some work to do, or put me in some place as a four-man. I am a cook by trade, your honour. I humble beg and pray that you will be anable to give me something to do, so that I may not be Idler in the town, and so your honour I will do the best of my necessity to please the world. I humble beg your honour to grant my offer, and answer will oblige from you.

I am your thruly and humble obed^t Servant,
WILLIAM KINNESS.’

(No. 6.)

“ Sir,

I humble solicit your honour and highness. Be pleased to listen unto my petition which I am about to make unto your highness, be kind enough dear Sir and employ me in some business such as a school-master in any of the villages. I will endeavour with all my ability to serve and please you as I ought; that is the desire of your humble servant, for I have no money that I might buy large paper of addressing you this few lines Sir, but there is no money in my hand.

I humbly remain your most humble and obed^t Serv^t,
_____”

“To His Clemency” is rather a favourite superscription with some, and one letter from a person who says he “will feel very much glad to be employed as a schoolmaster,” begins thus:—

“I, thy humble servant, take upon himself to come this day and to ask a petition of thee which I hope you will grant unto me thy unworthy servant by thy clemency or tenderness.”

Another commences—“I, a Deliberated African, do state to your honor my case.” “Honoured Sir,” “Good Master,” and “My Master,” with “Please your honour to hear the prayers of this humble and needful petition,” appear sprinkled through different epistles, while

the following mysterious paragraph intervenes in one begging document:—

“There is a way of which one cannot complain in common terms. It would draw imprecations from a man that never used a stronger affirmative in all his life than yea verily, and raise the indignation even of the mildest father of the Oratory.”

I believe there are professed black scribes, who take fees for writing petitions, &c., which no doubt they have several generally approved forms of wording, as I have seen two letters, each asking for the same situation in exactly the same words, but written in totally different hands, and signed by different names. At the same time a very great many of the people can compose and write letters without assistance, though they occasionally transpose the meaning of the words they use. For instance, a Maroon or settler woman who emigrated to the West Indies, instead of saying, in a letter written to a friend here (who showed it to the person who told me of it), “Remember me kindly to your sister,” used the expression, “Remember my kindness to your sister.”

But here is another genuine specimen of African literature, written by a man released from prison :

“I humbly feel myself to be under every obligation to Great Britain for the privileges of which I am allowed from that most Gracious, most benevolent, and Fatherly Nation and well-wisher to all human race on Earth. I humbly kneel down at your honour's feet by praying and begging that your honour will pardon me for the liberty I am taking in thinking that it was by your honour's Wisdom, Power, and Protection that I am this day a Freeman, and that I feel that it is my bound duty, my honoured sir, to make you many thousand thanks for the kind part which you have taken in my behalf; and may the Almighty God Bless you for it, and that you may reign for ever in your Wisdom and Power to protect the Poor, and may ever reign over us all for evermore. Honoured Sir, I am truly ashamed of myself for not having returned you the due thanks for the liberty you have given me in delivering me out of the hands of the Wild Lion, and have set me at liberty the mean time.”

THE END.

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