

once. You, at Basse-Terre, and I at Fort de France. Cepion drives me over, and stables the horses at Reynolds till all is safe for him to return," came the stubborn answer. Yet to evade his beseeching eye, Aimee fell on her knees, and feverishly recommenced packing.

Wrought beyond self-control in speech, Lacroix silently left the room.

Aimee sprang to her feet, and followed him for a few steps as he quickly passed down the passage to the outer court. From her face, fragrant in beauty as a flower, the obstinacy fled, and indecision and emotion took its place. Marking he would not turn round, she made as if to recall him; but with a shrug of contempt at herself she withdrew into the room again.

The next moment when another series of tremendous explosions, resounding like the first cracks of the Day of Doom, burst down from Mount Pelee's seething top, she shuddered and wondered if God and eternal punishment really existed! And for the first time the conjecture came to her—which man of the two loved her for better for worse. But recollections of Suffren's burning words, his vehement protestations and ardent pursuit of her scorched her wayward heart. With a choking cry she frantically began to pack anew, snatching the filmy fabrics from her panic-stricken maid, and crushing them pell-mell into the trunks and dressing cases.

As Lacroix drove at full speed towards Pierre, he was betossed with qualms for the safety of his wife and doubts as to his conduct in the matter. Yet what of Jean, his beloved brother, who in venturing all his money in and giving his business capacities to the management of the Martinique estate had established Bellairs' fortunes. Fully and sympathetically had he also carried out the English education of Bellairs as desired by the dying step-mother. Jean? Jean, who had hurried to his side when yellow fever had stricken him down! Jean who had out of his own small fortune redeemed the later mortgages resulting on Aimee's spendthrift ways! Jean, who himself was now lying sick unto death with the rapacious mortgagees foreclos-

ing on his plantation at Sta. Marie, Gadeloupe.

Jean or Aimee—whom was he to serve?

Her who had of her own accord lived her life totally apart from her husband; or him who had ever ventured life and fortune in his welfare? Ah, if Aimee would but love him—for Bellairs could not blink his eye to the truth—he told himself everything would be so different.

However, the road to Fort de France, round the foot of Les Pitons des Carbet, was certain to be safe, the earthquakes having been for the most in the locality of Mount Pelee and towards Carbet and Pierre. In the hands of Cepion and the other two men servants, she would be wholly out of danger. But, what of her staying at Madame Lestocques?

Of a sudden, sulphuric fumes spreading down the valley impinged against Lacroix's nostrils. At every inhalation it stung them painfully, and he awoke to realize the desolation about him. In apprehension Lacroix looked over his shoulder at Pelee's summit. A faint ruddy glare was suffusing the dusky centre of the clouds—the reflection of an awful abyss of fire. A subterraneous groaning vibrated three times, to die away in waves of fluctuating thunder. Compressing his lips, Lacroix energetically lashed his galloping horse. At sight of some fugitives out of Pierre running over the fields towards Carbet, doubts more lacerating than ever assailed him; was it right of him to leave Aimee on her own resources? Under the outlying heights of Mount Pelee, that morning still nestled the seaport of Pierre, France's well-known entrepot in the West Indies. Its whitewashed houses interspaced with groups of wild tamarind, cocoa-nut and palm; the white cupola of the Cathedral; the steeples of the churches, the red-roofed hospital, and masts and outlines of the vessels alongside the wharves; its quaint marketplace: its shady little streets where folk discussed matters leisurely over their vermouths or absinthes or coffee and liqueurs, where negroes with their pantomimic gestures and clamant nigger-French thronged around, and neat negresses