



XII.

NEGRO WITCHCRAFT.

WHEN Christian Missionaries first entered upon their labours in the West Indies, they found the negro slaves, to whom they were more especially sent, in a very low and degraded condition. In addition to the gross ignorance and stupidity which was no doubt the result of their long-continued bondage and oppression, they had brought with them from Africa many superstitious notions and usages, which proved serious barriers to their religious instruction. The principal of these was a species of witchcraft known as obeism and myalism. Connected with these was a practice of numerous foolish and senseless magical rites, ceremonies, and incantations, by professed obei-men, the influence of which on the popular mind was extensive and powerful. These systems of witchcraft were employed avowedly to revenge injuries, and as a