BOOK
IV.

To the same cause may perhaps be ascribed, on the other hand, that eagerness for litigation and juridical controversy, which so remarkably predominates in most of these Islands. From this unfortunate passion, ruinous as it frequently proves to individuals, this advantage however results to the community at large; that the lower orders of men, from their frequent attendance at the courts of law as jurymen, acquire a degree of knowledge, and a clearness and precision of reasoning, which are not generally to

tween the general plenty and magnificence of their tables (at least in Jamaica) and the meanness of their houses and apartments; it being no uncommon thing to find, at the country habitations of the planters, a splendid sideboard loaded with plate, and the choicest wines, a table covered with the finest damask, and a dinner of perhaps sixteen or twenty covers; and all this, in a hovel not superior to an English barn. A stranger cannot fail also to observe a strange incongruity and inconsistency betweeen the great number of Negro domesticks, and their appearance and apparel. The butler (and he but seldom) is the only attendant that is allowed the luxury of shoes and stockings. All the others, and there is commonly one to each guest, wait at table in *bare-footed majesty*; some of them perhaps half-naked. Another peculiarity in the manners of the English in the West-Indies (in Jamaica especially) is the number of nautical expressions in their conversation. Thus they say, *hand such a thing*, instead of bring or give it. A plantation well stocked with Negroes, is said to be *well handed:* an office or employment is called *a birth;* the kitchen is denominated the *cook room;* a warehouse is called a *store*, or *store-room*; a sopha is called *a cot*; a waistcoat is termed *a jacket*; and in speaking of the East and West, they say to *windward* and *leeward.* This language has probably prevailed since the days of the bucaniers.

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