

came to arrange for the shipping of his bundle of Kroomen, who would be taken on board to do the hot, dirty work of the ship while she was in the tropics. After a brief interview with the captain, it was decided that his men should be shipped, and come on board the next day.

What a crew that was that had been drafted on board H.M.S. *Bluster*! What a study of character! What varied types of face and expression! What dialect and brogue! There was the typical cockney, with his sharp, cunning ways, and his strange, uncouth back slang, in which he usually conversed with his "pals," and which seemed like a foreign tongue to the quieter and more solid west-countrymen, who, with an intense love for his native country, and a strong predilection for "pastry," secured for himself the nickname of "Pudden," as the Londoner pronounced it. The sturdy independence and broad speech of Yorkshire and Lancashire made a great contrast to both these other types; while the rich humour and impulse of the warm-hearted Irish character, stood out distinctly from the cautious, keen, sinowy-framed Scotchman.

The day following the vessel's arrival at Sierra Leone, Johnson Macauley, as the head Krooman had been christened on his first entrance into Her Majesty's Service, who was very proud of his name, arrived on board the *Bluster* with his twelve hands. They formed a striking picture; their suits of naval white duck, bleached in that tropical sun, contrasting so vividly with their almost jet black faces, which were in most cases horribly disfigured with brandings and tattoo marks, the remnants of heathen or slave days.

As they came over the ship's side, they were told to fall in for inspection on the quarter deck, the crew of the vessel meanwhile gathering in a body just before the main-mast, interested and amused spectators.

After a few words with Macauley and the captain the former stepped briskly out towards his men, and shouted, "Tention, Kroomen! Answer to you's names."

"Tom Snowflake." "Yah, sir."

"Jim Bannan." "Yah, sir."

"Jack Toby, Ike Handy, Noah Snowball, Tom Shark, Joe Chickens, Phil Softly, Charl Flatfoot, Abel Surley, Bill Surprise, Alexander Cooper."

All these, interspersed with the ready "Yah, sir," as each name was called, caused fresh amusement to officers and crew; the oddness of the names being accounted for only by the humour of those who, years before, had dubbed them so on their first entrance into that service.

Each of the Kroomen had several bundles made up in large, gaudily coloured handkerchiefs, which are, in themselves, quite a specialty in the African trade. The man who had answered to the name of Alexander Cooper had, besides the bundles, a small chest, and altogether in appearance and speech seemed far more intelligent than the others, the majority of whom knew very few words of English, the head Krooman being the usual medium of communication with them.

This man Cooper, however, spoke very fair broken English, and had earned his name because of his having learned and practised the trade of a cooper. He was very tall, particularly ugly, even for an African, had an immense head, and his face was hideous to look upon till one got used to it, soamed, as it was, all over with terrible brandings, while that which made it more horrible still was the deeply indented small-pox scars, a relic of that awful scourge. He was an exceedingly quiet man, appeared to mix very little with the others, loved to be alone, and when not at work was generally found reading a large-type version of the Psalms or the New Testament. Of course, all sorts of fun was made of him by the crew, but his invariable reply, with a broad smile, showing a set of magnificent teeth, was, "Bery well, shentlemen, you laugh, but me best off." It was soon found that he was exceedingly clever in making little fancy barrels and other curios, and on account of his steady, quiet ways, became a great favourite among the officers.

One day he was going forward along the lower deck from the after part, and was passing the gun-

room mess, where the junior officers were located, and where, at the time, most of them were congregated, when a jovial young fellow a sub-lieutenant, spiced Cooper, and called him in, at the same time remarking in an undertone, "Let's have a spree with the 'Great Alexander'!"

"Yass, sar, you call me!" said the black as he doffed his cap, and looked round smilingly.

Yes, Cooper, we've nothing to do, so we want you to tell us a yarn. I suppose you can do that?"

"Dunno 'bout dat, sar. What shall I tell?"

"Why, tell us how you came to be a Government man. Were you ever a slave? How were you made a slave? How came you free? and all about it."

"Ah, sar," replied Cooper, "that berry sad to me, to tell all dat, but s'pose you like to hear. Please God, it help you to think how good he is, then me to tell you."

"Go on, darkey, but don't give us too much religion; it's the yarn we want."

"Well, sar, I dunno for sartin, but tink me 'bout 30 years old now. Me born in place they call Shire Valley, me member it quite well. Me big boy, 'bout 14 years old. Me help fader do him work, me collect nuts to make de palm oil; and do lots of work besides. Dat such litle little place, lots ob pretty little house, nice round tops, round as cannon ball, and plenty much bigger than the capstan; and we all so happy. We worship idol; we wear 'fetish' for good luck; we hab plenty feasts, and we tink idol likes us, and do us good, because we gib him rice and nuts, and plantain, and all sorts. One night, ah, me I 'member it so well, just so it only yesterday. De sun go down behind de big palm-trees, all the chickens go to dere perch; de picaninnies go sleep; and den me mammee and fader, and me too, go. But some time in de night, it all berry dark, when, all at once, we wake very much frightened, for we hear great noise, and yell, and shout, and guns and pistols go bang, bang, and den we hear poor black peoples cry and groan, and den— and den—"

And here the poor black's face was wet with tears as the memory seemed too much for him, and one of the younger middies said kindly, "Poor old fellow, perhaps he would rather not tell it all, if it cuts him up so."

"Tank you kindly, sar," said Cooper, as he dried his eyes, and wiped his face with a bright-coloured silk handkerchief, "Tank you, I better now."

"Den I make up my mind, and one night I get away. Plenty days pass, I find it hard to get food, but one day I go sleep near river, I wake when I hear noise, I look trough the bushes and see two white mens in boat, and tree black mens wid de paddles, but no boat move, him stuck on sand lumps in water little way from shore, so I go in, and pull, and push, and presently him come clear. Den de white man speak, him know my speech, and ask me 'bout meself. He speak kind to me, and dey soon get de collar off, and dey take me wid dem."

"Who were these white men, Cooper?" enquired one of the officers, breaking the silence among them, but they were not only interested, but intensely moved.

"Dey was missionaries, sar, and I was wid dem long time; den dey tell me nol no use, dat Jesus Christ, him only, help black man same he help de white man. He say plenty sin an in me, and den he show me dese words in de Testament." And suiting the action to the words, Cooper took out his own Testament from his pocket, and read: "Romans 5. 12: 'Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'"

As he read these words in broken English, the officers were very quiet, yet no one said, "Stop!" no one seemed to care to prevent him, and the man himself seemed deeply moved as he continued:

"Ah, me soon find out me all wrong. De missionary talk plenty times wid me, but me somehow no see de way. One day, massa missionary, him preach beautiful, he tell 'bout Jesus, how he pity poor men, black and white, and he ask him Fader, de great King in heaben, to let him come down to dis earth and die instead of dem. He come

like little picanunny, he 'bey him fader and him mudder, he go to school, grow up and be man go 'bout and preach, tell peoples he 'be lifted up like serpent in de wilderness, and when peoples bitten wid sin look to him, like peoples look to de brass serpent in de wilderness, den, when dey look, and believe he died for dem, den dey hab oberlasting life. Plenty tear run down me face, and den, as de missionary tell me all 'bout de cross and de nails and de crown ob thorns, and de good Jesus do all him Fader in heaben want done for our sin, den he cry right out, ober all de world, to ebery peoples, 'It am finished! It am finished!' and den I jump up in de mission room and I say, 'Oh, Jesus, you hab finished it for me, I tank you so much, I do believ it for true, and den—den I so happy, because I hab oberlasting life. And, oh! shentlemen, if you hab no 'surance ob salvation, if you dunno you've got de oberlasting life, please make haste to Jesus for it, or else—"

"Thank you, Cooper," interrupted the officer who had first called him in, and who had been considerably impressed with the story, but who did not want the "preaching," as he styled it, "thank you, my man, so I suppose you escaped all the horrors of being packed between decks of a slave ship, and of the slave market?"

"Yes, sar, but I hab been in five ob Her Majesty's ships on the slaving ground, and hab seen all dis, and cos I know the language, hab heard all de fearful story, plenty often."

"Ah! that's what we want to know about, Cooper," replied one of the officers, so fire away, old fellow."

"Well, sar, de berry first ship I come in catch plenty slaves. One day we chase one, and when she see we make quick to catch her, she don't want English ship to get de prize money for all de slave, so she tie de slaves by their necks to the links of de anchor cable, and den let de anchor go, and dey rush trough de hawse-hole, and, if dey not killed by de blows, dey soon drown under de water."

"Oh, this is awful! It fires my blood!"

At this moment the drum sounded off to quarters, and all further talk was stopped, Cooper going forward; the officers on deck. But the words of the poor negro had moved more than one to an unwonted degree.

On the arrival of the vessel at the Cape, after remaining a fortnight, failing to get all stores they sought, they received orders to proceed to Trincomalee.

This was somewhat damping to the eagerness and desire of officers and crew, who, as they almost passed over the cruising ground on their way northward, longed to stay and chase the slavers.

When the vessel had been out from Cape about a week all hands were saddened by the sudden death of poor Cooper. While standing, one evening, in the forepart of the vessel, talking with his head Krooman in his own language, he suddenly fell. He never stirred, or spoke, or sighed, and by the time the doctor had come forward to examine him he was quite dead. The doctor said it was heart disease.

Everyone felt depressed for the time, but like all things at sea, as well as upon land, among the careless it was soon forgotten.

As Alexander Cooper passed up to the pearly gates, it was to meet the Saviour whom he loved and preached in his simple fashion upon earth; and, as others spoke of his death, he realized life—triumphant life.

(To be continued.)

UNPROFITABLE TOIL.

THERE was a man in the town where I was born who used to steal his firewood. He would get up on cold nights and go and take it from his neighbour's woodpile. A computation was made, and it was ascertained that he spent more time and worked harder to get his fuel than he would have had to if he had earned it in an honest way and at ordinary wages. And this thief is a type of thousands of men who work a great deal harder to please the devil than they would have to do to please God.—Selected.