

# RICHARD REDPATH.

A TALE.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

## CHAPTER I.

Some account of the hero. Strange circumstances bring strange characters together.

My story commences nearly forty years ago, when the horrid traffic in human flesh was carried on with the greatest vigour in the West India Islands. The principal events in my tale, though whimsical enough, are, I believe, founded upon facts; the circumstances having been related to me by an intelligent West Indian merchant, who was intimately acquainted with the parties. From the materials which he afforded me, I thought an amusing story might be compiled; and, such as it is, I give it to my readers.

The supper bell had been rung for the last time, before the Ship Tavern, a house of public entertainment, situated in the most bustling part of the beautiful capital of Jamaica. This marine hotel stood conspicuously at the head of a short broad street, leading from the quay, and was the general resort of all the seamen who frequented the place. The little negro, who acted the part of bellman, had given the noisy announcer of good things in store, the last knowing shake, and turned upon his heel, in the act of re-entering the house, when two tired and travel-soiled strangers approached from the street leading to the quay. The little negro stopped upon the upper step of the verandah, that surrounded three sides of the building, and for some minutes surveyed the twain with very unequivocal glances of contempt; then muttered, as he disappeared into the dark passage: "Vel, dem-be queer customers; me neber see de like ob dem."

Nor was Mungo's exclamation of surprise to be wondered at: so begrimed were the men with dirt—so torn were their wet garments, and so dejected their looks. They were minus of hats, coats, and shoes; and looked as if they had just come out of some desperate affray, or had met with some sudden and unexpected misfortune. On entering the tavern they were confronted in the passage, by the landlord, who, in no very civil terms, demanded their names and business.

"Our names," said the foremost speaker, "are of very little moment now, to you, or to any one else. The names of men without money are the

most unimportant things in the world. Yet, to satisfy your curiosity, and shew you that we are not ashamed of our names, I will answer your question frankly. Our names are Redpath—we are brothers, and strangers in Jamaica. Our business is to eat, for we are very hungry; and to sleep, if we can procure a bed, for we are greatly fatigued, and stand much in need of rest."

"Hab you money enough to pay de reckoning?" asked the landlord, putting his arms a-kimbo, and filling up the breadth of the passage with his huge person.

"Dence a farthing!" returned the former speaker: "we must trust to your charity."

"Den be off at once!" growled forth the mulatto. De whites show no charity to us, and I'll hab none to dem; de — buckra! De off! I say. I hab no beds, no food, for men widout money—widout coats and hats. Dero is a low public, down by de wharf, dat takes in de vulgar."

At this speech the young man, who, under other circumstances, would have been reckoned a very handsome fellow, burst out a laughing, and, turning to his brother, said with a humorous smile: "We had better try our luck in the quarter he recommends, Bob. Until we can procure coats and hats, we must be content to rank with the vulgar."

Robert Redpath, whose countenance wore a sad and dejected expression, and whose slight frame appeared sinking from exhaustion and fatigue, sat quietly down upon the broad steps of the verandah, and answered with a sigh:

"You may do as you please, Richard; but I can go no farther."

"Hark you, friend!" said his brother, again addressing himself to the mulatto; "we are two unfortunate fellows, who have just escaped shipwreck. Our vessel was lost off the point, in the squall last night; and, to the best of our knowledge, all the rest of those on board perished. We were passengers—the sons of a respectable London merchant, who were coming out to settle on the Island. The storm robbed us of our all, and, with great difficulty we escaped with life. You see my brother—the condition in which he is demands attention. I am sure that you are too humane a man to turn from your door two