

my infancy, hail! receive the wanderer to thy bosom! Once, that little nook was my world. My thoughts never stretched their wings beyond its sheltering hills. But time and passion, what a change ye work upon the heart! How many hopes had expired! What wishes had sprung up, and, in spite of the frosts which passed upon their vernal buds, had shot their roots deep, and attained a vigorous growth! A change seemed to have passed over my home also, and still it was the same in each loved feature. The old wingless windmill stood its ground still, but seemed some twenty rods nearer the house than fourteen years ago. The same was true of the sugar-house and other buildings. All were drawn more closely together since last I saw them, and the negro hamlet, the *Ultima Thule* of my childish rambles, stood within sixty yards of the rear of the great house. The grove of cocoa-nuts was there, and the brook still ran merrily between, with its tribute to the Wag-Water; but the trees were mere dwarfs to their image in my memory, and the cascade, where the river, as I used to call it, leaps down the mountain, hung like a white riband in the air, beautiful indeed, but nothing wonderful.

The delusion was strong but not lasting. Reason was forced to admit the conviction, that the change was altogether in myself. All were there, as they stood fourteen years before, neither grown nor lessened. But the mind in that interval had grown; and these objects, pictured on its tablets, like names cut in the bark of young trees, and which spread and extend with their growth, had grown also. Hence, they occupied now precisely the same space with regard to the whole as at the time of these impressions; and, on comparing notes, therefore, I confess I was disappointed. The picture far exceeded the original in size and vividness of colouring. Miles were shrunk into rods, rivers to brooks, and what I would have quoted an hour before as a paradise vast and beautiful, was indeed a very pretty valley, but much like other earth. Why, then, are not all early impressions, in a measure, erroneous? and, if so, all which the mind receives before it reaches its maturity? In fact, it is this exaggerated view of things which creates and nourishes the buoyancy of youth. The world appears larger and fairer than it really is; toys afford the mind business, and all beyond, to its little capacity, is wonderful, vast, strange; till, arrived at maturity, the mirror shows things in their proper colours and true dimensions—at least, so man, in his imbecility, too often thinks, forgetting that there are objects as far superior

to the pursuits of men, as the business of life and the structures of art are to the puerile gratifications and baubles of a child, and that there are minds which view the eager pursuit of mankind after wealth and fame with as much indifference or pity as we can bestow on the infant's rattle; nay, that the time is coming, when we shall wonder how they could possibly occupy so large a space in our minds.

I drew nearer to the house. Objects were now recognized, of which I was unconscious till that moment that there was any image in my memory; and had I been required an hour before to sketch a map of the place, I should not have put them in. Still their image must have been there, but drawn as with those chemical solutions, which are invisible till exposed to the heat. Or, to change the figure, there are ideas which enter our minds and fall asleep there, and are never waked but by the presence and touch of the object whence they spring, or, like the sensitive plant, by the waking of a neighbouring sleeper. Thus fruits were presented to me, which for fourteen years I had not seen, and whose names I had forgotten. Yet by tasting I knew them in a moment for old acquaintance. Their flavour was a familiar to my mind as if I had eaten them but yesterday, and with the greatest ease I picked out the favourites of a child of some five or six years.

The sun was just rising from the sea, when I entered Water Valley. Half a dozen horsemen were seen riding briskly up the opposite height, by a path which ran direct to Spanish Pass. I had followed the main road, which made a sweep round the foot of the hills, and entered the valley on the north.

"Poor fellows!" thought I, "you are gone upon a bootless errand." I tapped at the gate. To my utter astonishment, it was opened by Robert. The old fellow really smiled.

"Eh! massa, me get home fust."

In fact he had very coolly kept his saddle, and drifted with the flood till it crossed the plain of Aguaita, five miles below, where his mule first found a foothold. The old fellow, as he came down the stream, must have formed no bad representation of the god of a tropical river, where, from analogy, we must suppose that even spiritual essences must be rather dark-favoured.