

DOWN THE CARIBBEAN.

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VII.—MARTINIQUE.

The scene has changed. From a dilapidated village of shanties we have come in four hours to a large and busy city, considered by some the handsomest city in the Caribbean islands, St. Pierre, the commercial capital of Martinique. Discovered by Columbus in 1493, and originally called Madiana, colonized by the French in 1635, taken by the English in 1762, and again in 1794 and 1810, it was finally restored to the French in 1814. The island is about fifty miles long and sixteen broad, very irregular in form, and seems to be just three conical mountains rising together out of the ocean. The highest is Mount Pelee, an extinct volcano, enveloped in cloud. The roadstead in which we lie, about a quarter of a mile from the shore, is wide and beautiful on a day like this, but cruel and shelterless when the hurricane comes down, as not infrequently it does. Scores of coppery boys, tumbling about in curious little tubs, are calling for coins, at the first glimpse of which in the air every head disappears beneath the water. In a second one of them is sure to return with the piece of money between his teeth. Then they frisk and play about in the most marvellous fashion, wrestling or chasing each other, now over the surface and now beneath, but ever on the alert for the falling coin, when with it every head disappears. They are truly amphibious creatures, evidently as much at home in the water as they are on the land.

St. Pierre is prettily situated at the head of the large and beautiful bay, with a back-ground of heights of various forms, some yellow and green with crops, and some in the dark green of the forest, while above them rise the volcanic mountains vast and sombre, with shrouded summits. On the face of the hills there are well-made winding roads, from which magnificent views of ocean and of inland scenery are had, and refreshing breezes are felt. Terrace above terrace the city rises with flights of stone stairs leading off in all directions and in the most intricate fashion into queer little squares or courts, where the houses are almost hidden in masses of purple, and vermillion, and blue, and over all the majestic palms. Down both sides of the streets, and every alley and court, are rushing the limpid waters from the mountains, cooling the air and imparting to every corner the appearance of cleanliness, and then close to the barracks, and a line of beautiful villas literally clothed with flowers over the very roof, and near to a magnificent grove of tamarinds, is a wide rushing stream, in which dozens of dusky women up to the waist are washing their clothes and slapping them on the boulders in the most frantic manner, while they drown the noise of the river and fill the neighbourhood with their clanking voices. Amid the tamarinds stands an elegant monument of stone, commemorative of the great revolution of 1789, erected on its centenary, and bearing on one side the inscription "Ceperunt civis libertatem," 1789; and on the other, "Nepotes glorie avorum," 1889. Beyond this grove there is a botanical garden of considerable extent, with shady walks running everywhere to fairy bowers, and grottos, and cascades, and marvels of growth and beauty at every step. Shiny green lizards, startled at our approach, scamper off and up the trees, and we are not altogether free from a fear that the terrible Fer-de-lance may attack us, and no one near to deliver or tell the tale. But the sound of voices encourages, and we proceed till we come to a level, park-like place, clothed with cyathea arborea, or tree ferns, of different kinds, bounded on one side with a roaring burn, whose opposite bank rises rich with foliage from the touch of the hurrying water to the far-off blue. Under a palm tree we take a seat, watching the negroes lazily busy raking the fallen leaves and sweeping the walks; and thankful for their presence in the unknown wilds, we leisurely survey the strange beauty and grandeur. One of the negroes approaches us with a basket of fruit, mangoes, pomegranates, anocado pears and cashew nuts—most of them new to us. A sweet fragrance is everywhere, yet not from the fruit, but from a small bundle of black-looking beans—vanilla, which he says he gathered on the mountains, where it grows in great abundance on the branches of the trees. You know that vanilla is an orchid, so named from its resemblance to the blade of a knife. The fruit is gathered when yellow, is of a balsamic odour, and has an agreeable flavour, and is much used for seasoning dishes and confections. But we return to the busy town. In it are all the essentials to French existence: restaurants with perfect cuisine; music gardens and theatres; military pomp and parade, and what not? There is ample provision for mirth and amusement and the passing of time in mid gaities of every description. For the devout there is the Roman Church; here, as in Guadeloupe, the only Church, thrusting herself on your notice at every turn, whether in the streets, with their niches for idols and burning lamps before them, or religious houses of some sort or other; or up on the mountain side, with the cross at every twist of the road; or hideous plaster casts representing the stager of the cross, leading, as on the Mount at Montreal, to a revolting imitation of the crucifixion. But from all that we could hear the moral and religious life of Martinique and Guadeloupe are the same.

It was on this island, at Trois-Islets, about five miles from Port-Royal, the capital, but less than a third of St. Pierre, that Murzelle Fifine, afterwards the Empress Josephine, was born. What a troubled life from such a sweet, quiet spot! The natives treasure her name and have raised a statue to her memory! But the woman who can ever forget her, that has read her life, were there nothing else in the life of Napoleon

to render his designation the Great a complete misnomer, there is sufficient surely in his heartless treatment of the beautiful and accomplished woman, his devoted wife for thirteen years, whose influence contributed in no small degree to draw him from obscurity to high position; and this is more than sufficient if to the cruel, unjustifiable divorce of his faithful wife, we add the contemptuous neglect of his admirable mother when he ascended the throne of empire. What mean and contemptible lives has the world many a time called Great! and of how many ignoble characters, now rightly judged, do monuments reared to their glory perpetuate only shame and disgrace?

ST. LUCIA.

Leaving Martinique at midnight we reach, at four next morning, the island of St. Lucia, so called by a party of English who discovered it in 1635 on the day in the ecclesiastical calendar called St. Luke's. In 1650 the French effected a settlement, and from then to 1804, when it was finally acknowledged as British, it was in constant alternation a French and English Island. It is about thirty miles long and twelve in breadth, and of volcanic creation. The mountains, abrupt and fantastically shaped, are extinct volcanoes, their summits being craters of considerable breadth and depth, like huge limestone quarries. At the foot of an amphitheatre of hills, wooded to their summits, lies Cartrics, the chief town of St. Lucia. In front of it is a land-locked harbour, with a narrow entrance of about half-a-mile. Within it the British navy could ride at anchor, so large is the bay and so deep is the water. For this reason it is that the Government have resolved to make St. Lucia a garrison island, and are now constructing fortifications and barracks. For many years the troops have been stationed at Barbadoes, but it is not only 100 miles out of the line of the Windward Islands, but around it the water is so shallow that even steamers of small tonnage have to anchor far out from shore. Indeed this is the case with all the islands except St. Lucia, and very laborious it is to discharge a cargo into lighters when the sea is running high, which is often the case.

Cartrics is a town of considerable size. It has well-made streets of coral about twenty feet wide and rounded to almost five feet in the centre on account of the heavy rains, which would otherwise be apt to flood the place. The sidewalks are wide and all of concrete, and swept clean as a floor by female scavengers. To make it a beautiful city a fire is needed to sweep over the whole place and burn up the detestable lines of hovels and shabby-looking stores and low-looking drink shops with which the place seems to abound. Up on the hills, peeping out from the trees upon the blue expanse of ocean, are some beautiful villas, but even they are so few in comparison with the years that St. Lucia has been British and giving wealth to the British, that one cannot get rid of the suspicion that store-keepers here, having made their fortunes, return invariably to the mother-land, with the high-sounding name of West Indian Merchant, to enjoy not only amassed wealth, but the annual revenues of lands they intend never more to see. There is not a trace of a rich and benevolent citizen doing anything for the improvement of the place, if we except a few rural schools modestly endowed by Lady Mico long ago. "Make out of it what you can and leave it as it is" seems to be the prevailing spirit among the prosperous whites, as it must have been of the whites before them. The island itself is lovely, lovelier could not be, with its enchanting valleys and breezy uplands, and richly-wooded heights and magnificent mountains with the crowning and ever-clouded Souffrière. It is a spirit of enterprise and energy that is wanting, conspicuously so; it is the entire absence of anything that savours of real interest in the welfare and prosperity of the place that disappoints a loyal Briton who steps upon the island. It is the presence of a peevish discontent that is ever carping at the doings of the Government officials that is constantly causing irritation and indolence. Here is a fair specimen of it from the *Voice*, in which a public individual is thus described: "Not yet corrupted by the crown colonies virus; he believes in truth and justice; he is not impervious to argument; he will do the right thing if he can; he is civil in his official relations and most affable socially; above all, he is a gentleman." If they would only believe in hard work and civility all round, prosperity would not tarry long, and St. Lucia would become a land of wealth and a home of happiness for all its inhabitants, and not as it now is, a source of revenue for a few migratory birds.

The fortifications that are being constructed on the hills around the harbour are on a large scale, consisting principally of earthworks lined with brick. These bricks are carried from the wharf up the steep hill-sides on the heads of women. We met them in scores in the hottest part of the day footing it firmly, with wooden trays, on which were piled several dozen bricks, wonderfully poised on their heads, not even requiring an occasional touch of the hand. Down on the wharf we witnessed what has been described as one of the most demoralizing scenes in all the West Indies, the coaling of a steamer—the *Ardayndhu* on this occasion. We saw nothing demoralizing about it; only two lines of men and women running between the coal heap and the steamer, with baskets of coal upon their heads, busier than bees. We thought it was work too hard for women and unsuitable for them, but the black overseer was not of our opinion, for the women, he said, carried heavier baskets and held out longer than the men. We were, however, of the same opinion still: it is not seemly that women should be required to bear heavier burdens than men. Is it only in St. Lucia and among the negroes that we find this done?

But we are gliding away, and a sad farewell is being waved by a young lady that wins perhaps the sympathies, but assuredly the attentions, of all. Her face is round and black as pitch and polished, with large black eyes in broad white borders, low spreading nostrils and thick protruding lips, parted by a band of snowy teeth; the narrowest of foreheads, with a bushy covering of black, curly wool. The figure is crowned with a scarlet velvet wide-awake—doubt not the accuracy of the description—draped to a little below the knee with white linen, elaborately wrought with tucks, insertions and frills; from which descend two massive pillars in light blue covering, based on two feet of huge dimension and incased in scarlet velvet. Her ears hung heavily laden with silver pendants, her neck and breast are circled with silver chains, and her wrists are loaded with silver bangles. The elegant creature waves with a grace all her own her ungloved hands, while her dearly beloved, at first slowly then quickly receding from her sight, rushes from point to point, flying his yellow handkerchief, speaking to himself, and keeping his idol in his eye as long as he can. Very woeful he looks—poor fellow—when the beautiful landscape has vanished quite, and all is as the world when the sun has set.

Now are we passing the southern end of the island, where rise perpendicularly out of the sea two very remarkable pyramids of rock, one to the height of 2,710 feet and the other 2,600, about one mile apart and green from base to apex. These are the Pitous. The mythical story of three British sailors having attempted to scale the higher one, and one succeeding but all three disappearing forever, seized by the awful Fer-de-lance, or deadly serpent, has now given place to history. Two years ago eight men out of thirteen succeeded in reaching its summit in thirteen hours, planted the Union Jack, which waved from its peak for over a year, till blown away in a furious gale, and returned in safety, having seen no Fer-de-lance, but satisfied that such a feat performed once in one's life was more than sufficient.

WALKS IN JERUSALEM AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Our friends do not fail to devote an afternoon to the Mount of Olives. Here they visit the subterranean church said to contain the tombs of the blessed Virgin and her parents, as well as the tomb of St. Joseph. Thence they go to the cave which is the traditional scene of the agony in the garden, and thence to part of the traditional garden of Gethsemane, enclosed by the Latins. It contains some very ancient olive trees, supposed to date from the time of our Lord. This can scarcely be (even if olive trees ever live so long), for Titus is said to have cut down every tree in the neighbourhood of the city; but it is just possible that they may have sprung up from the old roots, as is the manner of olive trees. Our friends, moreover, visit the Convent of the Paternoster, said to mark the spot where the Lord's Prayer was taught to the apostles, and in the cloisters whereof the prayer may be read in thirty-two different languages. Lastly, they visit the supposed scene of the Ascension, on the top of the hill, which, for several reasons, seems a more unhappy identification than usual. A fine view of Jerusalem is obtained from the summit of the hill, and is worth more than many of those traditional places of which one cannot be certain. Perhaps the most interesting walk taken by our travellers in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem is the little expedition which, led by the Sister, they made one afternoon to Anathoth, the birth-place of Jeremiah—a village, now called Anata, some four or five miles to the north-east of Jerusalem. Starting on the old Damascus road, they soon pass a curious mound of grey-black soil by the wayside. This, as the Sister explains, is believed to consist of the ashes from the Temple sacrifice, thrown out here in days of old from time immemorial. Some of the soil was sent to London, and has been found on analysis to be such stuff as bones are made of. A little further on, the Sister points out some rock-hewn tombs of very great antiquity, cut vertically down into the rock, and now filled up with earth; and they have scarce left these when she again stops to show the travellers some traces of an ancient Christian church, some fragments of Mosaic pavement, an altar-stone with a cross cut on it, etc. "Unfortunately," says she, "this piece of land belongs to a Moslem, who is going to build him a house here, and will soon have obliterated every trace of the church"—*Blackwood*.

A GOOD CONFESSION.

In one of his last sermons the great English preacher, Spurgeon, gave utterance to these weighty words: "My time is ended, although I had much more to say. I can only pray the Lord to give you to believe in Him. If I should never again have the pleasure of speaking for my Lord upon the face of this earth, I should like to deliver as my last confession of faith this testimony—that nothing but faith can save in this nineteenth century; nothing but faith can save England; nothing but faith can save the present unbelieving Church; nothing but firm faith in the grand old doctrines of grace and in the ever-living and unchanging God can bring back to the Church again a full tide of prosperity, and make her to be the deliverer of the nations for Christ; nothing but faith in the Lord Jesus can save you or me. The Lord give you, my brothers, to believe to the utmost degree, for His name's sake! Amen."