

and St. Joachim and Long Point marshes, and the St. Clair Flats: we can promise him a plethoric game bag, and materials for another pleasant volume of sporting chronicles.

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INCH BY INCH.

A WEST INDIAN SKETCH.

ONE fine morning in August, I arose at early dawn, and had just finished dressing myself, when an old black woman put her head into my room, exclaiming: "Hy, is you dressed, massa?" and seeing that I was, she went on: "I bring de coffee and cigars; how de dis maaning, massa?"

"Come in, Judy," I answered: "I'm all right. But what is the matter? You don't look well?"

"I is rader poorly, tank God!" she replied.

Judy did not leave the room, as usual, when I had taken my coffee; so, knowing that she had got something on her mind, of which she wished to disburden herself, I said: "Well, Judy, what is it?"

"Will massa look at de 'romoter bum-bye?"

"Look at the barometer! What for, Judy?"

"I tink we is goin' to hab hurricane."

"A hurricane! Why, there never was a finer morning came out of the heavens."

"Dat for true, massa; but we is goin' to hab hurricane for all dat. Massa no go to Paradise dish day."

"Not go to Paradise! Why not, Judy?"

"Paradise nice place in fine wedder: but him too much near de mountains for safe in hurricane."

"Well, I'll look at the glass as soon as I have finished my coffee; but as to not going to Paradise, that's out of the question."

The old woman left me; and finishing my coffee, I stepped out to examine the barometer. It stood at 30.0, and, as I have said, the morning was a splendid one; so, knowing that there was a young lady at Paradise who was expecting me, I laughed at Old Judy's fears, and determined to start.

At this moment, my friend came bustling out of his room. "How's the glass, Tom? Judy says we are going to have a storm; and she's always right."

"Nonsense!" I replied. "The glass is as firm as a rock; and as to Judy's feelings, that's all nonsense."

"Ah! but I tell you it's no such thing. I've been in four hurricanes, and Judy has foretold every one of them. We may not get it to-day; but she's better than any weather-glass; so, if you take my advice, you will defer your trip to the Gordons."

"Stuff!" I replied. "I gave my word, and go I shall! I don't want to drag you out, if you're afraid, but you must not think to frighten me."

"Ah, my dear boy!" answered my friend, "when you have had one taste of a West Indian hurricane, you will not want the second; besides, there is not a worse place in the island than that same Paradise of Gordon's. The wind gets between those two mountains, and rages up the valley like mad."

I was duly impressed with my friend's advice, and loath to leave him, for I perceived that he was really in earnest; but truth to say, there was a certain Mary Gordon at Paradise (the name, by the by, of her father's plantation), for whom, as sailors say, I had a sneaking kindness, and nothing short of the absolute presence of the tornado would have stopped me. Besides, I was in full health and spirits; and it was not likely that I, who had been knocking about in all parts of the world, could sympathise with the feelings of an ancient black woman, or with those of the climate-worn and sensitive old planter with whom I was staying. Mounting my horse, therefore, with a black boy for a guide, I started on my journey.

I rode on at a brisk pace, for there is something in the early breeze of a tropical morning which is peculiarly refreshing, and diffuses a buoyant

clasticity into your frame, which is only to be restrained by active exercise. In addition to this, the scenery through which I was travelling was of the most enchanting description, while I, with a light heart, was speeding on to seek a ereole houri in a tropical "Paradise." I had got about one-third of the way, when I came to two roads; I was somewhat puzzled which to take, for I had forgotten my guide, and had ridden so fast that I felt certain I had left him far behind. I was about to take the one to the left, when a voice behind me exclaimed: "Him de wrung way, massa; de lef is de right way." I turned round in surprise, and there I found my little black guide clinging to the horse's tail. The horse, I presume, being used to this sort of thing, took no notice of it, though the young rascal had in his hand a pointed stick, with which at times he accelerated the animal's movements.

The road, though it proved a very bad one, was wild and picturesque in the extreme. It followed the course of the deep gully, whose sides became more and more precipitous as I advanced, but were covered with a green and luxuriant vegetation, consisting of bushes and creepers, the blossoms on which were marvelously beautiful.

After wending for some distance through the bottom of this ravine, I at last emerged into the open country, at a spot of peculiar beauty. On my right and left rose high mountains, whose peaks now and then visible through the clouds, seemed to reach the heavens. The whole of these mountains were clothed with a perpetual verdure, while before me was a valley, spreading out in grassy slopes to the edge of the sea.

I had never seen anything so truly grand. I was fascinated, for in no part of the world is the imagination so powerfully affected by scenic effect as in the tropics. The majestic grandeur of the mountains, the mingled beauty and variety of the vegetation, and the deep and sombre forests, were all new to me. Then the strange convolutions of the clouds, which, pressed by the wind against the opposite side of the sierra, came rolling and tumbling over the mountains, now concealing and now disclosing some of the most romantic spots in nature, excited in me such lively and rapturous interest as could not be easily forgotten.

"Massa no get to Paradise dis day, if him 'top looking at the mountains all the maaning," said my little guide.

Admonished by this, I again started. I had not proceeded much further, when I perceived that Old Judy's prognostics were not without their significance, for a brilliant though ominous scene presented itself to my view. A tremendous bank of black clouds had risen up, as it were, out of the bosom of the ocean, and hung almost stationary on the distant horizon. I was looking at this, when all at once it seemed moved as by a mighty wind; mass after mass of murky vapour rolled up, and spread themselves athwart the heavens.

"Hurricane do come, massa, now for true!" cried my little Cupid. "Ole Judy always right; and massa no make haste, de rain catch we."

I did not heed what the boy said, for it was a strange and magnificent sight upon which I was gazing. One half of the heavens was black as night, and the other bright and radiant, the sky without a cloud. Never, perhaps, did the eye of man rest upon a greater contrast, never was a scene of greater loveliness mingled with one of more appalling magnificence. The contrast reached its climax when suddenly from out the dark pall flash after flash of lightning descended into the sea, and the thunder, after growling hoarsely in the distance, was echoed back by the mountains, reverberating from cliff to cliff, and from rock to rock. It was Peace and War personified; but, alas! the blue sky, the emblem of peace, was being fast swallowed up by the rolling war-cloud, which, in all the majesty of angry nature, was hastening to blot out all that remained of tranquillity and beauty.

At last I turned to go. Both my horse and my guide seemed impressed with the necessity of exertion, and I found myself, as it were, racing with the storm; but before I could reach my friend's plantation, the clouds were flying over

my head, and the wind was howling aloft as though a gale was blowing; though, below, there was not a breath of air, not a leaf stirred, and not a ripple ruffled the placid sea.

Paradise now appeared in view; and it well deserved its name, for a more beautifully situated place I had never seen. By the time I reached the house, it began to rain, and leaping from my horse, I dashed up the steps into the hall. I was warmly greeted by Mr. Gordon and his two daughters, for though Mary was not quite so demonstrative as Grace, the glance of her eye and the rose upon her cheek told me at any rate that I was not unwelcome.

"Very glad you are come," said Mr. Gordon; "though we did not expect you. But how is it the colonel is not with you?"

"He would not come because Old Judy prophesied we were going to have a hurricane. I laughed at her at the time, but I fancy I made a mistake."

"No doubt of it. That old woman is always right: the glass has gone down like a lump of lead; so let us get our breakfast at once, or we shall be done out of it.—Here's Mrs. Seuter and her girls; I think you know them."

Mrs. Seuter was the widow of a Scotch planter, very fat and very fussy; but with the remainder of the party, my story has nothing to do. During breakfast, the wind increased in violence, and by the time it was over, the hurricane had commenced in good earnest. Mr. Gordon, seeing this, immediately set about making preparations to withstand it. Windows and doors were hastily but strongly barricaded, and the most portable articles of value, together with a quantity of provisions, were conveyed down a trap-door into a cellar, built on purpose for safety during hurricanes.

This was scarcely accomplished, when the field-hands and the whole population of the village came hurrying up to seek for shelter and companionship with their master and his family.

Meantime the whole sky had become as black as night, the clouds as they advanced descending almost to the surface of the sea, which was now lashed into the wildest fury by the gale. Every now and then, flashes of the most vivid lightning burst from the clouds, and descending, were instantly engulfed in the sea; the next moment they reappeared from beneath the white foam, and apparently ascending towards the sky, were met by other masses hovering above.

The thunder burst in appalling crashes over our heads, waking up the echoes of the neighbouring mountains, and shaking the house to its very foundation; the rain, too, descended in cataracts: it seemed as though the flood-gates of heaven were opened, and the eternal waters were pouring down upon us. To add to the awfulness of the scene, it gradually became as dark as pitch, the wind every instant increasing in intensity.

About eleven o'clock, the noise of the gale was something I had never before heard, and yet every moment it seemed to wax stronger and stronger, till it increased to such an overwhelming roar, that the strongest efforts of the human voice, in closest proximity, was quite unheard.

The building began to show by its quakings that it was time to get below into a place of greater safety. The negroes were therefore roused from their stupor, and by signs desired to go below.

The house by this time had become little better than a rocking vessel, whilst a shower of shingles and tiles was every instant swept from the roof. Very soon all, save Mr. Gordon, were safely conveyed below, Mary and I being the last to descend. As we did so, a loud crash proclaimed that something had fallen; and I darted back to see if any accident had happened to my host. When I got back to the room, I found him uninjured; but a sudden break in the clouds, and a gleam of light, disclosed an extraordinary sight to me. The air was filled with missiles of all descriptions—branches of trees, huge stones, beams, and all sorts of movables, which were driven along with incredible speed.

Suddenly, a violent shock was felt, sending a thrill through my heart, for I expected to see the whole house come falling upon us. The clouds