

Grand Jury : and of another coloured man, one William Ward,\* at the factory, called Ki Koukih, in the Mandingo territory, on a charge of murder, who was, after six months' incarceration in gaol, liberated without even the formality of a trial, or a bill being at all preferred against him at the Quarter Sessions. Now, had such unjust acts as these been confined within the jurisdiction of the Colony, indefensible as they might be, they would not have so deeply degraded the British authority in the sight of the native African kings, who look upon us as a superior people and possessed of a good Government. To the individuals they were irreparable injuries, and the Mahomedans, with whom we were at peace, would naturally say, (for they are quite as sensible, if less refined in their notions, of the respect due to them, as are more civilised and enlightened potentates of other spheres,)—Are we not at peace with you? We know your power and your greatness; we have respected your laws, because hitherto we have been led to believe they are founded upon equity and justice; your predecessors have sought

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\* William Ward was an agent for the house of Messrs. Charles Heddle and Co., merchants, at Free-town, stationed at the factory of Ki Koukih. On his return, on one occasion, to the factory from a trading voyage up the River Mallicouri, he found that the stores had been broken open and robbed of some printed goods. Summoning his Kroomen labourers, he stated the loss; all denied any knowledge of it. The head Krooman, then, according to the custom of his nation, procured a wood from the forests, called *sassie wood*, of which was made a decoction, then causing all of them to drink copiously. *Sassie-wood* water possesses poisonous properties similar to the distillation of laurel leaves. The effects were these:—Those who vomited the liquid were declared to be innocent, and he who did not was the thief. The consequence was, most of them discharged the poisonous extract, and one died without doing so. The report of the affair reached the Colony. The Kroomen proved that Ward had compelled them to undergo this proof, and was imprisoned on the charge of wilful murder, as detailed. This strange and superstitious kind of proof of innocence or guilt is generally practised amongst the nations in the interior, without the jurisdiction of the Colony, and even within it is secretly practised, and by the liberated, the settlers, and Maroons, of whom better things might be expected. A case occurred to the writer's own knowledge, in the British Commissioner's office, when he was acting first writer. One of the supernumerary clerks, a Maroon, lost his umbrella from the piazza in the office. The messengers, who were Kroomen, were all assembled below; the professional thief-catcher was sent for; chewing a quantity of pod pepper, he inserted it into a quill tube; then, applying it to his mouth, blew the contents into the eye of each man. If the eye smarted or inflamed, the sentence was, "*Pepper catch him, he tief umbrella.*" Need I comment further upon this folly more than that the pepper did certainly make some, if not all their eyes smart. The umbrella was, however, never forthcoming. Where all were guilty, little hopes were there of restitution; the Maroon paying the professional one dollar. The matter was kept secret from the heads of the office, as they knew there existed a Colonial law punishing such practises; and it was a favour that I was allowed to gratify my curiosity at the sight, and in doing this I made myself liable to the charge of being an accomplice. At one of my lodgings with a settler's family, also, on my first arrival, I had the misfortune to lose half a doubloon and the contents of my purse one night, which I certainly did not steal from myself; the daughter was suspected of this unsanctioned loan or appropriation. Some time after I learned from a private source that the "*Pepperman*" had been in requisition, and that the evidence was so clear that they considered silence the best course to pursue in the affair.