

CHAPTER XXIII

THE COMING OF NOREEN

THE next day came a new element in the situation: a ship arrived from England. On it was one who had come to Jamaica to act as governess to two children of the officer commanding the regular troops in the island. She had been ill for a week before nearing Kingston, and when the *Regent* reached the harbour she was in a bad way. The ship's doctor was despondent about her; but he was a second-rate man, and felt that perhaps an island doctor might give her some hope. When she was carried ashore she was at once removed to the home of the general commanding at Spanish Town, and there a local doctor saw her.

"What is her history?" he asked, after he had seen the haggard face of the woman.

The ship's doctor did not know; and the general commanding was in the interior at the head of his troops. There was no wife in the general's house, as he was a widower; and his daughters, of twelve and fourteen, under a faithful old housekeeper, had no knowledge of the woman's life.

When she was taken to the general's house she was in great dejection, and her face had a look of ennui and despair. She was thin and worn, and her eyes only told of the struggle going on between life and death.

"What is her name?" asked the resident doctor.

"Noreen Balfe," was the reply of the ship's doctor.