

FROUDE JAMES ANTHONY

THE ENGLISH IN THE
WEST INDIES; OR, THE
BOW OF ULYSSES

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	10
CHAPTER III	15
CHAPTER IV	21
CHAPTER V	26
CHAPTER VI	31
CHAPTER VII	38
CHAPTER VIII	43
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	47

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CHAPTER I

Colonial policy – Union or separation – Self-government – Varieties of condition – The Pacific colonies – The West Indies – Proposals for a West Indian federation – Nature of the population – American union and British plantations – Original conquest of the West Indies.

The Colonial Exhibition has come and gone. Delegates from our great self-governed dependencies have met and consulted together, and have determined upon a common course of action for Imperial defence. The British race dispersed over the world have celebrated the Jubilee of the Queen with an enthusiasm evidently intended to bear a special and peculiar meaning. The people of these islands and their sons and brothers and friends and kinsfolk in Canada, in Australia, and in New Zealand have declared with a general voice, scarcely disturbed by a discord, that they are fellow-subjects of a single sovereign, that they are united in feeling, united in loyalty, united in interest, and that they wish and mean to preserve unbroken the integrity of the British Empire. This is the answer which the democracy has given to the advocates of the doctrine of separation. The desire for union while it lasts is its own realisation. As long as we have no wish to part we shall not part, and the wish can never rise if when there is occasion we can meet and deliberate together with the same regard for each other's welfare which has been shown in the late conference in London.

Events mock at human foresight, and nothing is certain but the unforeseen. Constitutional government and an independent executive were conferred upon our larger colonies, with the express and scarcely veiled intention that at the earliest moment they were to relieve the mother country of responsibility for them. They were regarded as fledgelings who are fed only by the parent birds till their feathers are grown, and are then expected to shift for themselves. They were provided with the full plumage of parliamentary institutions on the home pattern and model, and the expectation of experienced politicians was that they would each at the earliest moment go off on their separate accounts, and would bid us a friendly farewell. The irony of fate has turned to folly the wisdom of the wise. The wise themselves, the same political party which were most anxious twenty years ago to see the colonies independent, and contrived constitutions for them which they conceived must inevitably lead to separation, appeal now to the effect of those very constitutions in drawing the Empire closer together, as a reason why a similar method should be immediately adopted to heal the differences between Great Britain and Ireland. New converts to any belief, political or theological, are proverbially zealous, and perhaps in this instance they are over-hasty. It does not follow that because people of the same race and character are drawn together by equality and liberty, people of different races and different characters, who have quarrelled for centuries, will be similarly attracted to one another. Yet so far as our own colonies are concerned it is clear that the abandonment by the mother country of all pretence to interfere in their internal management has removed the only cause which could possibly have created a desire for independence. We cannot, even if we wish it ourselves, shake off connections who cost us nothing and themselves refuse to be divided. Politicians may quarrel; the democracies have refused to quarrel; and the result of the wide extension of the suffrage throughout the Empire has been to show that being one the British people everywhere intend to remain one. With the same blood, the same language, the same habits, the same traditions, they do not mean

to be shattered into dishonoured fragments. All of us, wherever we are, can best manage our own affairs within our own limits; yet local spheres of self-management can revolve round a common centre while there is a centripetal power sufficient to hold them; and so long as England 'to herself is true' and continues worthy of her ancient reputation, there are no causes working visibly above the political horizon which are likely to induce our self-governed colonies to take wing and leave us. The strain will come with the next great war. During peace these colonies have only experienced the advantage of union with us. They will then have to share our dangers, and may ask why they are to be involved in quarrels which are not of their own making. How they will act then only experience can tell; and that there is any doubt about it is a sufficient answer to those rapid statesmen who would rush at once into the application of the same principle to countries whose continuance with us is vital to our own safety, whom we cannot part with though they were to demand it at the cannon's mouth.

But the result of the experiment is an encouragement as far as it has gone to those who would extend self-government through the whole of our colonial system. It seems to lead as a direct road into the 'Imperial Federation' which has fascinated the general imagination. It removes friction. We relieve ourselves of responsibilities. If federation is to come about at all as a definite and effective organisation, the spontaneous action of the different members of the Empire in a position in which they are free to stay with us or to leave us as they please, appears the readiest and perhaps the only means by which it can be brought to pass. So plausible is the theory, so obviously right would it be were the problem as simple and the population of all our colonies as homogeneous as in Australia, that one cannot wonder at the ambition of politicians to win themselves a name and achieve a great result by the immediate adoption of it. Great results generally imply effort and sacrifice. Here effort is unnecessary and sacrifice is not demanded. Everybody is to have what he wishes, and the effect is to come about of itself. When we think of India, when we think of Ireland, prudence tells us to hesitate. Steps once taken in this direction cannot be undone, even if found to lead to the wrong place. But undoubtedly, wherever it is possible, the principle of self-government ought to be applied in our colonies and will be applied, and the danger now is that it will be tried in haste in countries either as yet unripe for it or from the nature of things unfit for it. The liberties which we grant freely to those whom we trust and who do not require to be restrained, we bring into disrepute if we concede them as readily to perversity or disaffection or to those who, like most Asiatics, do not desire liberty, and prosper best when they are led and guided.

In this complex empire of ours the problem presents itself in many shapes, and each must be studied and dealt with according to its character. There is the broad distinction between colonies and conquered countries. Colonists are part of ourselves. Foreigners attached by force to our dominions may submit to be ruled by us, but will not always consent to rule themselves in accordance with our views or interests, or remain attached to us if we enable them to leave us when they please. The Crown, therefore, as in India, rules directly by the police and the army. And there are colonies which are neither one nor the other, where our own people have been settled and have been granted the land in possession with the control of an insubordinate population, themselves claiming political privileges which had to be refused to the rest. This was the position of Ireland, and the result of meddling theoretically with it ought to have taught us caution. Again, there are colonies like the West Indies, either occupied originally by ourselves, as Barbadoes, or taken by force from France or Spain, where the mass of the population were slaves who have been since made free, but where the extent to which the coloured people can be admitted to share in the administration is still an unsettled question. To throw countries so variously circumstanced under an identical system would be a wild experiment. Whether we ought to try such an experiment at all, or even wish to try it and prepare the way for it, depends perhaps on whether we have determined that under all circumstances the retention of them under our own flag is indispensable to our safety.

I had visited our great Pacific colonies. Circumstances led me afterwards to attend more particularly to the West Indies. They were the earliest, and once the most prized, of all our distant

possessions. They had been won by the most desperate struggles, and had been the scene of our greatest naval glories. In the recent discussion on the possibility of an organised colonial federation, various schemes came under my notice, in every one of which the union of the West Indian Islands under a free parliamentary constitution was regarded as a necessary preliminary. I was reminded of a conversation which I had held seventeen years ago with a high colonial official specially connected with the West Indian department, in which the federation of the islands under such a constitution was spoken of as a measure already determined on, though with a view to an end exactly the opposite of that which was now desired. The colonies universally were then regarded in such quarters as a burden upon our resources, of which we were to relieve ourselves at the earliest moment. They were no longer of special value to us; the whole world had become our market; and whether they were nominally attached to the Empire, or were independent, or joined themselves to some other power, was of no commercial moment to us. It was felt, however, that as long as any tie remained, we should be obliged to defend them in time of war; while they, in consequence of their connection, would be liable to attack. The sooner, therefore, the connection was ended, the better for them and for us.

By the constitutions which had been conferred upon them, Australia and Canada, New Zealand and the Cape, were assumed to be practically gone. The same measures were to be taken with the West Indies. They were not prosperous. They formed no outlet for British emigration; the white population was diminishing; they were dissatisfied; they lay close to the great American republic, to which geographically they more properly belonged. Representative assemblies under the Crown had failed to produce the content expected from them or to give an impulse to industry. The free negroes could not long be excluded from the franchise. The black and white races had not amalgamated and were not inclining to amalgamate. The then recent Gordon riots had been followed by the suicide of the old Jamaican constitution. The government of Jamaica had been flung back upon the Crown, and the Crown was impatient of the addition to its obligations. The official of whom I speak informed me that a decision had been irrevocably taken. The troops were to be withdrawn from the islands, and Jamaica, Trinidad, and the English Antilles were to be masters of their own destiny, either to form into free communities like the Spanish American republics, or to join the United States, or to do what they pleased, with the sole understanding that we were to have no more responsibilities.

I do not know how far the scheme was matured. To an outside spectator it seemed too hazardous to have been seriously meditated. Yet I was told that it had not been meditated only but positively determined upon, and that further discussion of a settled question would be fruitless and needlessly irritating.

Politicians with a favourite scheme are naturally sanguine. It seemed to me that in a West Indian Federation the black race would necessarily be admitted to their full rights as citizens. Their numbers enormously preponderated, and the late scenes in Jamaica were signs that the two colours would not blend into one, that there might be, and even inevitably would be, collisions between them which would lead to actions which we could not tolerate. The white residents and the negroes had not been drawn together by the abolition of slavery, but were further apart than ever. The whites, if by superior intelligence they could gain the upper hand, would not be allowed to keep it. As little would they submit to be ruled by a race whom they despised; and I thought it quite certain that something would happen which would compel the British Government to interfere again, whether we liked it or not. Liberty in Hayti had been followed by a massacre of the French inhabitants, and the French settlers had done no worse than we had done to deserve the ill will of their slaves. Fortunately opinion changed in England before the experiment could be tried. The colonial policy of the doctrinaire statesmen was no sooner understood than it was universally condemned, and they could not press proposals on the West Indies which the West Indians showed so little readiness to meet.

So things drifted on, remaining to appearance as they were. The troops were not recalled. A minor confederation was formed in the Leeward Antilles. The Windward group was placed under Barbadoes, and islands which before had governors of their own passed under subordinate

administrators. Local councils continued under various conditions, the popular element being cautiously and silently introduced. The blacks settled into a condition of easy-going peasant proprietors. But so far as the white or English interest was concerned, two causes which undermined West Indian prosperity continued to operate. So long as sugar maintained its price the planters with the help of coolie labour were able to struggle on; but the beetroot bounties came to cut from under them the industry in which they had placed their main dependence; the reports were continually darker of distress and rapidly approaching ruin; petitions for protection were not or could not be granted. They were losing heart – the worst loss of all; while the Home Government, no longer with a view to separation, but with the hope that it might produce the same effect which it produced elsewhere, were still looking to their old remedy of the extension of the principle of self-government. One serious step was taken very recently towards the re-establishment of a constitution in Jamaica. It was assumed that it had failed before because the blacks were not properly represented. The council was again made partially elective, and the black vote was admitted on the widest basis. A power was retained by the Crown of increasing in case of necessity the nominated official members to a number which would counterbalance the elected members; but the power had not been acted on and was not perhaps designed to continue, and a restless hope was said to have revived among the negroes that the day was not far off when Jamaica would be as Hayti and they would have the island to themselves.

To a person like myself, to whom the preservation of the British Empire appeared to be the only public cause in which just now it was possible to feel concern, the problem was extremely interesting. I had no prejudice against self-government. I had seen the Australian colonies growing under it in health and strength with a rapidity which rivalled the progress of the American Union itself. I had observed in South Africa that the confusions and perplexities there diminished exactly in proportion as the Home Government ceased to interfere. I could not hope that as an outsider I could see my way through difficulties where practised eyes were at a loss. But it was clear that the West Indies were suffering, be the cause what it might. I learnt that a party had risen there at last which was actually in favour of a union with America, and I wished to find an answer to a question which I had long asked myself to no purpose. My old friend Mr. Motley was once speaking to me of the probable accession of Canada to the American republic. I asked him if he was sure that Canada would like it. 'Like it?' he replied. 'Would I like the house of Baring to take me into partnership?' To be a partner in the British Empire appeared to me to be at least as great a thing as to be a State under the stars and stripes. What was it that Canada, what was it that any other colony, would gain by exchanging British citizenship for American citizenship? What did America offer to those who joined her which we refused to give or neglected to give? Was it that Great Britain did not take her colonies into partnership at all? was it that while in the United States the blood circulated freely from the heart to the extremities, so that 'if one member suffered all the body suffered with it,' our colonies were simply (as they used to be called) 'plantations,' offshoots from the old stock set down as circumstances had dictated in various parts of the globe, but vitally detached and left to grow or to wither according to their own inherent strength?

At one time the West Indian colonies had been more to us than such casual seedlings. They had been precious regarded as jewels, which hundreds of thousands of English lives had been sacrificed to tear from France and Spain. The Caribbean Sea was the cradle of the Naval Empire of Great Britain. There Drake and Hawkins intercepted the golden stream which flowed from Panama into the exchequer at Madrid, and furnished Philip with the means to carry on his war with the Reformation. The Pope had claimed to be lord of the new world as well as of the old, and had declared that Spaniards, and only Spaniards, should own territory or carry on trade there within the tropics. The seamen of England took up the challenge and replied with cannon shot. It was not the Crown, it was not the Government, which fought that battle: it was the people of England who fought it with their own hands and their own resources. Adventurers, buccaneers, corsairs, privateers, call them by what name we will, stand as extraordinary, but characteristic figures on the stage of history, disowned or acknowledged by their sovereign as suited diplomatic convenience. The outlawed pirate of one year

was promoted the next to be a governor and his country's representative. In those waters, the men were formed and trained who drove the Armada through the Channel into wreck and ruin. In those waters, in the centuries which followed, France and England fought for the ocean empire, and England won it – won it on the day when her own politicians' hearts had failed them, and all the powers of the world had combined to humiliate her, and Rodney shattered the French fleet, saved Gibraltar, and avenged York Town. If ever the naval exploits of this country are done into an epic poem – and since the Iliad there has been no subject better fitted for such treatment or better deserving it – the West Indies will be the scene of the most brilliant cantos. For England to allow them to drift away from her because they have no immediate marketable value would be a sign that she had lost the feelings with which great nations always treasure the heroic traditions of their fathers. When those traditions come to be regarded as something which concerns them no longer, their greatness is already on the wane.

CHAPTER II

In the train for Southampton – Morning papers – The new 'Locksley Hall' – Past and present – The 'Moselle' – Heavy weather – The petrel – The Azores.

The last week in December, when the year 1886 was waning to its close, I left Waterloo station to join a West Indian mail steamer at Southampton. The air was frosty; the fog lay thick over city and river; the Houses of Parliament themselves were scarcely visible as I drove across Westminster Bridge in the heavy London vapour – a symbol of the cloud which was hanging over the immediate political future. The morning papers were occupied with Lord Tennyson's new 'Locksley Hall' and Mr. Gladstone's remarks upon it. I had read neither; but from the criticisms it appeared that Lord Tennyson fancied himself to have seen a change pass over England since his boyhood, and a change which was not to his mind. The fruit of the new ideas which were then rising from the ground had ripened, and the taste was disagreeable to him. The day which had followed that 'august sunrise' had not been 'august' at all; and 'the beautiful bold brow of Freedom' had proved to have something of brass upon it. The 'use and wont' England, the England out of which had risen the men who had won her great position for her, was losing its old characteristics. Things which in his eager youth Lord Tennyson had despised he saw now that he had been mistaken in despising; and the new notions which were to remake the world were not remaking it in a shape that pleased him. Like Goethe, perhaps he felt that he was stumbling over the roots of the tree which he had helped to plant.

The contrast in Mr. Gladstone's article was certainly remarkable. Lord Tennyson saw in institutions which were passing away the decay of what in its time had been great and noble, and he saw little rising in the place of them which humanly could be called improvement. To Mr. Gladstone these revolutionary years had been years of the sweeping off of long intolerable abuses, and of awaking to higher and truer perceptions of duty. Never, according to him, in any period of her history had England made more glorious progress, never had stood higher than at the present moment in material power and moral excellence. How could it be otherwise when they were the years of his own ascendancy?

Metaphysicians tell us that we do not know anything as it really is. What we call outward objects are but impressions generated upon our sense by forces of the actual nature of which we are totally ignorant. We imagine that we hear a sound, and that the sound is something real which is outside us; but the sound is in the ear and is made by the ear, and the thing outside is but a vibration of air. If no animal existed with organs of hearing, the vibrations might be as before, but there would be no such thing as sound; and all our opinions on all subjects whatsoever are equally subjective. Lord Tennyson's opinions and Mr. Gladstone's opinions reveal to us only the nature and texture of their own minds, which have been affected in this way or that way. The scale has not been made in which we can weigh the periods in a nation's life, or measure them one against the other. The past is gone, and nothing but the bones of it can be recalled. We but half understand the present, for each age is a chrysalis, and we are ignorant into what it may develop. We do not even try to understand it honestly, for we shut our eyes against what we do not wish to see. I will not despond with Lord Tennyson. To take a gloomy view of things will not mend them, and modern enlightenment may have excellent gifts in store for us which will come by-and-by. But I will not say that they have come as yet. I will not say that public life is improved when party spirit has degenerated into an organised civil war, and a civil war which can never end, for it renews its life like the giant of fable at every fresh election. I will not say that men are more honest and more law-abiding when debts are repudiated and law is defied in half the country, and Mr. Gladstone himself applauds or refuses to condemn acts of open dishonesty. We are to congratulate ourselves that duelling has ceased, but I do not know that men act more honourably because they can be called less sharply to account. 'Smuggling,' we are told, has disappeared also,

but the wrecker scuttles his ship or runs it ashore to cheat the insurance office. The Church may perhaps be improved in the arrangement of the services and in the professional demonstrativeness of the clergy, but I am not sure that the clergy have more influence over the minds of men than they had fifty years ago, or that the doctrines which the Church teaches are more powerful over public opinion. One would not gather that our morality was so superior from the reports which we see in the newspapers, and girls now talk over novels which the ladies' maids of their grandmothers might have read in secret but would have blushed while reading. Each age would do better if it studied its own faults and endeavoured to mend them, instead of comparing itself with others to its own advantage.

This only was clear to me in thinking over what Mr. Gladstone was reported to have said, and in thinking of his own achievements and career, that there are two classes of men who have played and still play a prominent part in the world – those who accomplish great things, and those who talk and make speeches about them. The doers of things are for the most part silent. Those who build up empires or discover secrets of science, those who paint great pictures or write great poems, are not often to be found spouting upon platforms. The silent men do the work. The talking men cry out at what is done because it is not done as they would have had it, and afterwards take possession of it as if it was their own property. Warren Hastings wins India for us; the eloquent Burke desires and passionately tries to hang him for it. At the supreme crisis in our history when America had revolted and Ireland was defiant, when the great powers of Europe had coalesced to crush us, and we were staggering under the disaster at York Town, Rodney struck a blow in the West Indies which sounded over the world and saved for Britain her ocean sceptre. Just in time, for the popular leaders had persuaded the House of Commons that Rodney ought to be recalled and peace made on any terms. Even in politics the names of oratorical statesmen are rarely associated with the organic growth of enduring institutions. The most distinguished of them have been conspicuous only as instruments of destruction. Institutions are the slow growths of centuries. The orator cuts them down in a day. The tree falls, and the hand that wields the axe is admired and applauded. The speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero pass into literature, and are studied as models of language. But Demosthenes and Cicero did not understand the facts of their time; their language might be beautiful, and their sentiments noble, but with their fine words and sentiments they only misled their countrymen. The periods where the orator is supreme are marked always by confusion and disintegration. Goethe could say of Luther that he had thrown back for centuries the spiritual cultivation of mankind, by calling the passions of the multitude to judge of matters which should have been left to the thinkers. We ourselves are just now in one of those uneasy periods, and we have decided that orators are the fittest people to rule over us. The constituencies choose their members according to the fluency of their tongues. Can he make a speech? is the one test of competency for a legislator, and the most persuasive of the whole we make prime minister. We admire the man for his gifts, and we accept what he says for the manner in which it is uttered. He may contradict to-day what he asserted yesterday. No matter. He can persuade others wherever he is persuaded himself. And such is the nature of him that he can convince himself of anything which it is his interest to believe. These are the persons who are now regarded as our wisest. It was not always so. It is not so now with nations who are in a sound state of health. The Americans, when they choose a President or a Secretary of State or any functionary from whom they require wise action, do not select these famous speech-makers. Such periods do not last, for the condition which they bring about becomes always intolerable. I do not believe in the degeneracy of our race. I believe the present generation of Englishmen to be capable of all that their fathers were and possibly of more; but we are just now in a moulting state, and are sick while the process is going on. Or to take another metaphor. The bow of Ulysses is unstrung. The worms have not eaten into the horn or the moths injured the string, but the owner of the house is away and the suitors of Penelope Britannia consume her substance, rivals one of another, each caring only for himself, but with a common heart in evil. They cannot string the bow. Only the true lord and master can string it, and in due time he comes, and the cord is stretched once more upon the notch, singing to the touch of the finger with

the sharp note of the swallow; and the arrows fly to their mark in the breasts of the pretenders, while Pallas Athene looks on approving from her coign of vantage.

Random meditations of this kind were sent flying through me by the newspaper articles on Tennyson and Mr. Gladstone. The air cleared, and my mind also, as we ran beyond the smoke. The fields were covered deep with snow; a white vapour clung along the ground, the winter sky shining through it soft and blue. The ponds and canals were hard frozen, and men were skating and boys were sliding, and all was brilliant and beautiful. The ladies of the forest, the birch trees beside the line about Farnborough, were hung with jewels of ice, and glittered like a fretwork of purple and silver. It was like escaping out of a nightmare into happy healthy England once more. In the carriage with me were several gentlemen; officers going out to join their regiments; planters who had been at home on business; young sportsmen with rifles and cartridge cases who were hoping to shoot alligators, &c., all bound like myself for the West Indian mail steamer. The elders talked of sugar and of bounties, and of the financial ruin of the islands. I had heard of this before I started, and I learnt little from them which I had not known already; but I had misgivings whether I was not wandering off after all on a fool's errand. I did not want to shoot alligators, I did not understand cane growing or want to understand it, nor was I likely to find a remedy for encumbered and bankrupt landowners. I was at an age too when men grow unfit for roaming, and are expected to stay quietly at home. Plato says that to travel to any profit one should go between fifty and sixty; not sooner because one has one's duties to attend to as a citizen; not after because the mind becomes hebetated. The chief object of going abroad, in Plato's opinion, is to converse with θειοι ἄνδρες inspired men, whom Providence scatters about the globe, and from whom alone wisdom can be learnt. And I, alas! was long past the limit, and θειοι ἄνδρες are not to be met with in these times. But if not with inspired men, I might fall in at any rate with sensible men who would talk on things which I wanted to know. Winter and spring in a warm climate were pleasanter than a winter and spring at home; and as there is compensation in all things, old people can see some objects more clearly than young people can see them. They have no interest of their own to mislead their perception. They have lived too long to believe in any formulas or theories. 'Old age,' the Greek poet says, 'is not wholly a misfortune. Experience teaches things which the young know not.'¹ Old men at any rate like to think so.

The 'Moselle,' in which I had taken my passage, was a large steamer of 4,000 tons, one of the best where all are good – on the West Indian mail line. Her long straight sides and rounded bottom promised that she would roll, and I may say that the promise was faithfully kept; but except to the stomachs of the inexperienced rolling is no disadvantage. A vessel takes less water on board in a beam sea when she yields to the wave than when she stands up stiff and straight against it. The deck when I went on board was slippery with ice. There was the usual crowd and confusion before departure, those who were going out being undistinguishable, till the bell rang to clear the ship, from the friends who had accompanied them to take leave. I discovered, however, to my satisfaction that our party in the cabin would not be a large one. The West Indians who had come over for the Colonial Exhibition were most of them already gone. They, along with the rest, had taken back with them a consciousness that their visit had not been wholly in vain, and that the interest of the old country in her distant possessions seemed quickening into life once more. The commissioners from all our dependencies had been fêted in the great towns, and the people had come to Kensington in millions to admire the productions which bore witness to the boundless resources of British territory. Had it been only a passing emotion of wonder and pride, or was it a prelude to a more energetic policy and active resolution? Anyway it was something to be glad of. Receptions and public dinners and loyal speeches will not solve political problems, but they create the feeling of good will which underlies the useful consideration of them. The Exhibition had served the purpose which it was intended for.

¹ ὃ τέκνον, οὐχ ἅπαντα τῷ γήρῳ κακά;

The conference of delegates grew out of it which has discussed in the happiest temper the elements of our future relations.

But the Exhibition doors were now closed, and the multitude of admirers or contributors were dispersed or dispersing to their homes. In the 'Moselle' we had only the latest lingerers or the ordinary passengers who went to and fro on business or pleasure. I observed them with the curiosity with which one studies persons with whom one is to be shut up for weeks in involuntary intimacy. One young Demerara planter attracted my notice, as he had with him a newly married and beautiful wife whose fresh complexion would so soon fade, as it always does in those lands where nature is brilliant with colour and English cheeks grow pale. I found also to my surprise and pleasure a daughter of one of my oldest and dearest friends, who was going out to join her husband in Trinidad. This was a happy accident to start with. An announcement printed in Spanish in large letters in a conspicuous position intimated that I must be prepared for habits in some of our companions of a less agreeable kind.

'Se suplica á los señores pasajeros de no escupir sobre la cubierta de popa.'

I may as well leave the words untranslated, but the 'supplication' is not unnecessary. The Spanish colonists, like their countrymen at home, smoke everywhere with the usual consequences. The captain of one of our mail boats found it necessary to read one of them who disregarded it a lesson which he would remember. He sent for the quartermaster with a bucket and a mop, and ordered him to stay by this gentleman and clean up till he had done.

The wind when we started was light and keen from the north. The afternoon sky was clear and frosty. Southampton Water was still as oil, and the sun went down crimson behind the brown woods of the New Forest. Of the 'Moselle's' speed we had instant evidence, for a fast Government launch raced us for a mile or two, and off Netley gave up the chase. We went leisurely along, doing thirteen knots without effort, swept by Calshot into the Solent, and had cleared the Needles before the last daylight had left us. In a few days the ice would be gone, and we should lie in the soft air of perennial summer.

Singula de nobis anni prædantur euntes:

Eripuere jocos, Venerem, convivia, ludum —

But the flying years had not stolen from me the delight of finding myself once more upon the sea; the sea which is eternally young, and gives one back one's own youth and buoyancy.

Down the Channel the north wind still blew, and the water was still smooth. We set our canvas at the Needles, and flew on for three days straight upon our course with a steady breeze. We crossed 'the Bay' without the fiddles on the dinner table; we were congratulating ourselves that, mid-winter as it was, we should reach the tropics and never need them. I meanwhile made acquaintances among my West Indian fellow-passengers, and listened to their tale of grievances. The Exhibition had been well enough in its way, but Exhibitions would not fill an empty exchequer or restore ruined plantations. The mother country I found was still regarded as a stepmother, and from more than one quarter I heard a more than muttered wish that they could be 'taken into partnership' by the Americans. They were wasting away under Free Trade and the sugar bounties. The mother country gave them fine words, but words were all. If they belonged to the United States they would have the benefit of a close market in a country where there were 60,000,000 sugar drinkers. Energetic Americans would come among them and establish new industries, and would control the unmanageable negroes. From the most loyal I heard the despairing cry of the Britons, 'the barbarians drive us into the sea and the sea drives us back upon the barbarians.' They could bear Free Trade which was fair all round, but not Free Trade which was made into a mockery by bounties. And it seemed that their masters in Downing Street answered them as the Romans answered our forefathers. 'We have many colonies, and we shall not miss Britain. Britain is far off, and must take care of herself. She brings us responsibility, and she brings us no revenue; we cannot tax Italy for the sake of Britons. We have given them our arms and our civilisation. We have done enough. Let them do now what they can or please.' Virtually this

is what England says to the West Indians, or would say if despair made them actively troublesome, notwithstanding Exhibitions and expansive sentiments. The answer from Rome we can now see was the voice of dying greatness, which was no longer worthy of the place in the world which it had made for itself in the days of its strength; but it doubtless seemed reasonable enough at the time, and indeed was the only answer which the Rome of Honorius could give.

A change in the weather cut short our conversations, and drove half the company to their berths. On the fourth morning the wind chopped back to the north-west. A beam sea set in, and the 'Moselle' justified my conjectures about her. She rolled gunwale under, rolled at least forty degrees each way, and unshipped a boat out of her davits to windward. The waves were not as high as I have known the Atlantic produce when in the humour for it, but they were short, steep, and curling. Tons of water poured over the deck. The few of us who ventured below to dinner were hit by the dumb waiters which swung over our heads; and the living waiters staggered about with the dishes and upset the soup into our laps. Everybody was grumbling and miserable. Driven to my cabin I was dozing on a sofa when I was jerked off and dropped upon the floor. The noise down below on these occasions is considerable. The steering chains clank, unfastened doors slam to and fro, plates and dishes and glass fall crashing at some lurch which is heavier than usual, with the roar of the sea underneath as a constant accompaniment.

When a wave strikes the ship full on the quarter and she staggers from stem to stern, one wonders how any construction of wood and iron can endure such blows without being shattered to fragments. And it would be shattered, as I heard an engineer once say, if the sea was not such a gentle creature after all. I crept up to the deck house to watch through the lee door the wild magnificence of the storm. Down came a great green wave, rushed in a flood over everything, and swept me drenched to the skin down the stairs into the cabin. I crawled to bed to escape cold, and slid up and down my berth like a shuttle at every roll of the ship till I fell into the unconsciousness which is a substitute for sleep, slept at last really, and woke at seven in the morning to find the sun shining, and the surface of the ocean still undulating but glassy calm. The only signs left of the tempest were the swallow-like petrels skimming to and fro in our wake, picking up the scraps of food and the plate washings which the cook's mate had thrown overboard; smallest and beautifullest of all the gull tribe, called petrel by our ancestors, who went to their Bibles more often than we do for their images, in memory of St. Peter, because they seem for a moment to stand upon the water when they stoop upon any floating object.² In the afternoon we passed the Azores, rising blue and fairy-like out of the ocean; unconscious they of the bloody battles which once went on under their shadows. There it was that Grenville, in the 'Revenge,' fought through a long summer day alone against a host of enemies, and died there and won immortal honour. The Azores themselves are Grenville's monument, and in the memory of Englishmen are associated for ever with his glorious story. Behind these islands, too, lay Grenville's comrades, the English privateers, year after year waiting for Philip's plate fleet. Behind these islands lay French squadrons waiting for the English sugar ships. They are calm and silent now, and are never likely to echo any more to battle thunder. Men come and go and play out their little dramas, epic or tragic, and it matters nothing to nature. Their wild pranks leave no scars, and the decks are swept clean for the next comers.

² This is the explanation of the name which is given by Dampier.

CHAPTER III

The tropics – Passengers on board – Account of the Darien Canal – Planters' complaints – West Indian history – The Spanish conquest – Drake and Hawkins – The buccaneers – The pirates – French and English – Rodney – Battle of April 12 – Peace with honour – Doers and talkers.

Another two days and we were in the tropics. The north-east trade blew behind us, and our own speed being taken off from the speed of the wind there was scarcely air enough to fill our sails. The waves went down and the ports were opened, and we had passed suddenly from winter into perpetual summer, as Jean Paul says it will be with us in death. Sleep came back soft and sweet, and the water was warm in our morning bath, and the worries and annoyances of life vanished in these sweet surroundings like nightmares when we wake. How well the Greeks understood the spiritual beauty of the sea! θάλασσα κλύξει πάντα τὰνθρώπων κακά, says Euripides. 'The sea washes off all the woes of men.' The passengers lay about the decks in their chairs reading story books. The young ones played Bull. The officers flirted mildly with the pretty young ladies. For a brief interval care and anxiety had spread their wings and flown away, and existence itself became delightful.

There was a young scientific man on board who interested me much. He had been sent out from Kew to take charge of the Botanical Gardens in Jamaica – was quiet, modest, and unaffected, understood his own subjects well, and could make others understand them; with him I had much agreeable conversation. And there was another singular person who attracted me even more. I took him at first for an American. He was a Dane I found, an engineer by profession, and was on his way to some South American republic. He was a long lean man with grey eyes, red hair, and a laugh as if he so enjoyed the thing that amused him that he wished to keep it all to himself, laughing inwardly till he choked and shook with it. His chief amusement seemed to have lain in watching the performances of Liberal politicians in various parts of the world. He told me of an opposition leader in some parliament whom his rival in office had disposed of by shutting him up in the caboose. 'In the caboose,' he repeated, screaming with enjoyment at the thought of it, and evidently wishing that all the parliamentary orators on the globe were in the same place. In his wanderings he had been lately at the Darien Canal, and gave me a wonderful account of the condition of things there. The original estimate of the probable cost had been twenty-six millions of our (English) money. All these millions had been spent already, and only a fifth of the whole had as yet been executed. The entire cost would not be less, under the existing management, than one hundred millions, and he evidently doubted whether the canal would ever be completed at all, though professionally he would not confess to such an opinion. The waste and plunder had been incalculable. The works and the gold that were set moving by them made a feast for unclean harpies of both sexes from every nation in the four continents. I liked everything about Mr. – . Tom Cringle's *Obed* might have been something like him, had not *Obed's* evil genius driven him into more dangerous ways.

There was a small black boy among us, evidently of pure blood, for his hair was wool and his colour black as ink. His parents must have been well-to-do, for the boy had been in Europe to be educated. The officers on board and some of the ladies played with him as they would play with a monkey. He had little more sense than a monkey, perhaps less, and the gestures of him grinning behind gratings and pushing out his long thin arms between the bars were curiously suggestive of the original from whom we are told now that all of us came. The worst of it was that, being lifted above his own people, he had been taught to despise them. He was spoilt as a black and could not be made into a white, and this I found afterwards was the invariable and dangerous consequence whenever a superior negro contrived to raise himself. He might do well enough himself, but his family feel their blood as a degradation. His children will not marry among their own people, and not only will no white girl

marry a negro, but hardly any dowry can be large enough to tempt a West Indian white to make a wife of a black lady. This is one of the most sinister features in the present state of social life there.

Small personalities cropped up now and then. We had representatives of all professions among us except the Church of England clergy. Of them we had not one. The captain, as usual, read us the service on Sundays on a cushion for a desk, with the union jack spread over it. On board ship the captain, like a sovereign, is supreme, and in spiritual matters as in secular. Drake was the first commander who carried the theory into practice when he excommunicated his chaplain. It is the law now, and the tradition has gone on unbroken. In default of clergy we had a missionary, who for the most part kept his lips closed. He did open them once, and at my expense. Apropos of nothing he said to me, 'I wonder, sir, whether you ever read the remarks upon you in the newspapers. If all the attacks upon your writings which I have seen were collected together they would make an interesting volume.' This was all. He had delivered his soul and relapsed into silence.

From a Puerto Rico merchant I learnt that, if the English colonies were in a bad way, the Spanish colonies were in a worse. His own island, he said, was a nest of squalor, misery, vice, and disease. Blacks and whites were equally immoral; and so far as habits went, the whites were the filthier of the two. The complaints of the English West Indians were less sweeping, and, as to immorality between whites and blacks, neither from my companions in the 'Moselle' nor anywhere afterward did I hear or see a sign of it. The profligacy of planter life passed away with slavery, and the changed condition of the two races makes impossible any return to the old habits. But they had wrongs of their own, and were eloquent in their exposition of them. We had taken the islands from France and Spain at an enormous expense, and we were throwing them aside like a worn-out child's toy. We did nothing for them. We allowed them no advantage as British subjects, and when they tried to do something for themselves, we interposed with an Imperial veto. The United States, seeing the West Indian trade gravitating towards New York, had offered them a commercial treaty, being willing to admit their sugar duty free, in consideration of the islands admitting in return their salt fish and flour and notions. A treaty was in process of negotiation between the United States and the Spanish islands. A similar treaty had been freely offered to them, which might have saved them from ruin, and the Imperial Government had disallowed it. How, under such treatment, could we expect them to be loyal to the British connection?

It was a relief to turn back from these lamentations to the brilliant period of past West Indian history. With the planters of the present it was all *sugar*—sugar and the lazy blacks who were England's darlings and would not work for them. The handbooks were equally barren. In them I found nothing but modern statistics pointing to dreary conclusions, and in the place of any human interest, long stories of constitutions, suffrages, representative assemblies, powers of elected members, and powers reserved to the Crown. Such things, important as they might be, did not touch my imagination; and to an Englishman, proud of his country, the West Indies had a far higher interest. Strange scenes streamed across my memory, and a shadowy procession of great figures who have printed their names in history. Columbus and Cortez, Vasco Nuñez, and Las Casas; the millions of innocent Indians who, according to Las Casas, were destroyed out of the islands, the Spanish grinding them to death in their gold mines; the black swarms who were poured in to take their place, and the frightful story of the slave trade. Behind it all was the European drama of the sixteenth century – Charles V. and Philip fighting against the genius of the new era, and feeding their armies with the ingots of the new world. The convulsion spread across the Atlantic. The English Protestants and the French Huguenots took to sea like water dogs, and challenged their enemies in their own special domain. To the popes and the Spaniards the new world was the property of the Church and of those who had discovered it. A papal bull bestowed on Spain all the countries which lay within the tropics west of the Atlantic – a form of Monroe doctrine, not unreasonable as long as there was force to maintain it, but the force was indispensable, and the Protestant adventurers tried the question with them at the cannon's mouth. They were of the reformed faith all of them, these sea rovers of the early days, and, like their enemies,

they were of a very mixed complexion. The Spaniards, gorged with plunder and wading in blood, were at the same time, and in their own eyes, crusading soldiers of the faith, missionaries of the Holy Church, and defenders of the doctrines which were impiously assailed in Europe. The privateers from Plymouth and Rochelle paid also for the cost of their expeditions with the pillage of ships and towns and the profits of the slave trade; and they too were the unlicensed champions of spiritual freedom in their own estimate of themselves. The gold which was meant for Alva's troops in Flanders found its way into the treasure houses of the London companies. The logs of the voyages of the Elizabethan navigators represent them faithfully as they were, freebooters of the ocean in one aspect of them; in another, the sea warriors of the Reformation – uncommissioned, unrecognised, fighting on their own responsibility, liable to be disowned when they failed, while the Queen herself would privately be a shareholder in the adventure. It was a wild anarchic scene, fit cradle of the spiritual freedom of a new age, when the nations of the earth were breaking the chains in which king and priest had bound them.

To the Spaniards, Drake and his comrades were *corsarios*, robbers, enemies of the human race, to be treated to a short shrift whenever found and caught. British seamen who fell into their hands were carried before the Inquisition at Lima or Carthage and burnt at the stake as heretics. Four of Drake's crew were unfortunately taken once at Vera Cruz. Drake sent a message to the governor-general that if a hair of their heads was singed he would hang ten Spaniards for each one of them. (This curious note is at Simancas, where I saw it.) So great an object of terror at Madrid was El Draque that he was looked on as an incarnation of the old serpent, and when he failed in his last enterprise and news came that he was dead, Lope de Vega sang a hymn of triumph in an epic poem which he called the 'Dragontea.'

When Elizabeth died and peace was made with Spain, the adventurers lost something of the indirect countenance which had so far been extended to them; the execution of Raleigh being one among other marks of the change of mind. But they continued under other names, and no active effort was made to suppress them. The Spanish Government did in 1627 agree to leave England in possession of Barbadoes, but the pretensions to an exclusive right to trade continued to be maintained, and the English and French refused to recognise it. The French privateers seized Tortuga, an island off St. Domingo, and they and their English friends swarmed in the Caribbean Sea as buccaneers or filibustiers. They exchanged names, perhaps as a symbol of their alliance. 'Filibustier' was English and a corruption of freebooter. 'Buccaneer' came from the boucan, or dried beef, of the wild cattle which the French hunters shot in Española, and which formed the chief of their sea stores. Boucan became a French verb, and, according to Labat, was itself the Carib name for the cashew nut.

War breaking out again in Cromwell's time, Penn and Venables took Jamaica. The filibustiers from the Tortugas drove the Spaniards out of Hayti, which was annexed to the French crown. The comradeship in religious enthusiasm which had originally drawn the two nations together cooled by degrees, as French Catholics as well as Protestants took to the trade. Port Royal became the headquarters of the English buccaneers – the last and greatest of them being Henry Morgan, who took and plundered Panama, was knighted for his services, and was afterwards made vice-governor of Jamaica. From the time when the Spaniards threw open their trade, and English seamen ceased to be delivered over to the Inquisition, the English buccaneers ceased to be respectable characters and gradually drifted into the pirates of later history, when under their new conditions they produced their more questionable heroes, the Kidds and Blackbeards. The French filibustiers continued long after – far into the eighteenth century – some of them with commissions as privateers, others as *forbans* or unlicensed rovers, but still connived at in Martinique.

Adventurers, buccaneers, pirates pass across the stage – the curtain falls on them, and rises on a more glorious scene. Jamaica had become the depôt of the trade of England with the western world, and golden streams had poured into Port Royal. Barbadoes was unoccupied when England took possession of it, and never passed out of our hands; but the Antilles – the Anterior Isles – which stand like a string of emeralds round the neck of the Caribbean Sea, had been most of them colonised

and occupied by the French, and during the wars of the last century were the objects of a never ceasing conflict between their fleets and ours. The French had planted their language there, they had planted their religion there, and the blacks of these islands generally still speak the French patois and call themselves Catholics; but it was deemed essential to our interests that the Antilles should be not French but English, and Antigua, Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Grenada were taken and retaken and taken again in a struggle perpetually renewed. When the American colonies revolted, the West Indies became involved in the revolutionary hurricane. France, Spain, and Holland – our three ocean rivals – combined in a supreme effort to tear from us our Imperial power. The opportunity was seized by Irish patriots to clamour for Irish nationality, and by the English Radicals to demand liberty and the rights of man. It was the most critical moment in later English history. If we had yielded to peace on the terms which our enemies offered, and the English Liberals wished us to accept, the star of Great Britain would have set for ever.

The West Indies were then under the charge of Rodney, whose brilliant successes had already made his name famous. He had done his country more than yeoman's service. He had torn the Leeward Islands from the French. He had punished the Hollanders for joining the coalition by taking the island of St. Eustachius and three millions' worth of stores and money. The patriot party at home led by Fox and Burke were ill pleased with these victories, for they wished us to be driven into surrender. Burke denounced Rodney as he denounced Warren Hastings, and Rodney was called home to answer for himself. In his absence Demerara, the Leeward Islands, St. Eustachius itself, were captured or recovered by the enemy. The French fleet, now supreme in the western waters, blockaded Lord Cornwallis at York Town and forced him to capitulate. The Spaniards had fitted out a fleet at Havannah, and the Count de Grasse, the French admiral, fresh from the victorious thunder of the American cannon, hastened back to refurnish himself at Martinique, intending to join the Spaniards, tear Jamaica from us, and drive us finally and completely out of the West Indies. One chance remained. Rodney was ordered back to his station, and he went at his best speed, taking all the ships with him which could then be spared. It was mid-winter. He forced his way to Barbadoes in five weeks spite of equinoctial storms. The Whig orators were indignant. They insisted that we were beaten; there had been bloodshed enough, and we must sit down in our humiliation. The Government yielded, and a peremptory order followed on Rodney's track, 'Strike your flag and come home.' Had that fatal command reached him Gibraltar would have fallen and Hastings's Indian Empire would have melted into air. But Rodney knew that his time was short, and he had been prompt to use it. Before the order came, the severest naval battle in English annals had been fought and won. De Grasse was a prisoner, and the French fleet was scattered into wreck and ruin.

De Grasse had refitted in the Martinique dockyards. He himself and every officer in the fleet was confident that England was at last done for, and that nothing was left but to gather the fruits of the victory which was theirs already. Not Xerxes, when he broke through Thermopylae and watched from the shore his thousand galleys streaming down to the Gulf of Salamis, was more assured that his prize was in his hands than De Grasse on the deck of the 'Ville de Paris,' the finest ship then floating on the seas, when he heard that Rodney was at St. Lucia and intended to engage him. He did not even believe that the English after so many reverses would venture to meddle with a fleet superior in force and inspired with victory. All the Antilles except St. Lucia were his own. Tobago, Grenada, the Grenadines, St. Vincent, Martinique, Dominica, Guadaloupe, Montserrat, Nevis, Antigua, and St. Kitts, he held them all in proud possession, a string of gems, each island large as or larger than the Isle of Man, rising up with high volcanic peaks clothed from base to crest with forest, carved into deep ravines, and fringed with luxuriant plains. In St. Lucia alone, lying between St. Vincent and Dominica, the English flag still flew, and Rodney lay there in the harbour at Castries. On April 8, 1782, the signal came from the north end of the island that the French fleet had sailed. Martinique is in sight of St. Lucia, and the rock is still shown from which Rodney had watched day by day for signs that they were moving. They were out at last, and he instantly weighed and followed. The air was

light, and De Grasse was under the high lands of Dominica before Rodney came up with him. Both fleets were becalmed, and the English were scattered and divided by a current which runs between the islands. A breeze at last blew off the land. The French were the first to feel it, and were able to attack at advantage the leading English division. Had De Grasse 'come down as he ought,' Rodney thought that the consequences might have been serious. In careless imagination of superiority they let the chance go by. They kept at a distance, firing long shots, which as it was did considerable damage. The two following days the fleets manœuvred in sight of each other. On the night of the eleventh Rodney made signal for the whole fleet to go south under press of sail. The French thought he was flying. He tacked at two in the morning, and at daybreak found himself where he wished to be, with the, French fleet on his lee quarter. The French looking for nothing but again a distant cannonade, continued leisurely along under the north highlands of Dominica towards the channel which separates that island from Guadaloupe. In number of ships the fleets were equal; in size and complement of crew the French were immensely superior; and besides the ordinary ships' companies they had twenty thousand soldiers on board who were to be used in the conquest of Jamaica. Knowing well that a defeat at that moment would be to England irreparable ruin, they did not dream that Rodney would be allowed, even if he wished it, to risk a close and decisive engagement. The English admiral was aware also that his country's fate was in his hands. It was one of those supreme moments which great men dare to use and small men tremble at. He had the advantage of the wind, and could force a battle or decline it, as he pleased. With clear daylight the signal to engage was flying from the masthead of the 'Formidable,' Rodney's ship. At seven in the morning, April 12, 1782, the whole fleet bore down obliquely on the French line, cutting it directly in two. Rodney led in person. Having passed through and broken up their order he tacked again, still keeping the wind. The French, thrown into confusion, were unable to reform, and the battle resolved itself into a number of separate engagements in which the English had the choice of position.

Rodney in passing through the enemy's lines the first time had exchanged broadsides with the 'Glorieux,' a seventy-four, at close range. He had shot away her masts and bowsprit, and left her a bare hull; her flag, however, still flying, being nailed to a splintered spar. So he left her unable to stir; and after he had gone about came himself yardarm to yardarm with the superb 'Ville de Paris,' the pride of France, the largest ship in the then world, where De Grasse commanded in person. All day long the cannon roared. Rodney had on board a favourite bantam cock, which stood perched upon the poop of the 'Formidable' through the whole action, its shrill voice heard crowing through the thunder of the broadsides. One by one the French ships struck their flags or fought on till they foundered and went down. The carnage on board them was terrible, crowded as they were with the troops for Jamaica. Fourteen thousand were reckoned to have been killed, besides the prisoners. The 'Ville de Paris' surrendered last, fighting desperately after hope was gone till her masts were so shattered that they could not bear a sail, and her decks above and below were littered over with mangled limbs. De Grasse gave up his sword to Rodney on the 'Formidable's' quarter-deck. The gallant 'Glorieux,' unable to fly, and seeing the battle lost, hauled down her flag, but not till the undisaabled remnants of her crew were too few to throw the dead into the sea. Other ships took fire and blew up. Half the French fleet were either taken or sunk; the rest crawled away for the time, most of them to be picked up afterwards like crippled birds.

So on that memorable day was the English Empire saved. Peace followed, but it was 'peace with honour.' The American colonies were lost; but England kept her West Indies; her flag still floated over Gibraltar; the hostile strength of Europe all combined had failed to twist Britannia's ocean sceptre from her: she sat down maimed and bleeding, but the wreath had not been torn from her brow, she was still sovereign of the seas.

The bow of Ulysses was strung in those days. The order of recall arrived when the work was done. It was proudly obeyed; and even the great Burke admitted that no honour could be bestowed upon Rodney which he had not deserved at his country's hands. If the British Empire is still to have

a prolonged career before it, the men who make empires are the men who can hold them together. Oratorical reformers can overthrow what deserves to be overthrown. Institutions, even the best of them, wear out, and must give place to others, and the fine political speakers are the instruments of their overthrow. But the fine speakers produce nothing of their own, and as constructive statesmen their paths are strewn with failures. The worthies of England are the men who cleared and tilled her fields, formed her laws, built her colleges and cathedrals, founded her colonies, fought her battles, covered the ocean with commerce, and spread our race over the planet to leave a mark upon it which time will not efface. These men are seen in their work, and are not heard of in Parliament. When the account is wound up, where by the side of them will stand our famous orators? What will any one of these have left behind him save the wreck of institutions which had done their work and had ceased to serve a useful purpose? That was their business in this world, and they did it and do it; but it is no very glorious work, not a work over which it is possible to feel any 'fine enthusiasm.' To chop down a tree is easier than to make it grow. When the business of destruction is once completed, they and their fame and glory will disappear together. Our true great ones will again be visible, and thenceforward will be visible alone.

Is there a single instance in our own or any other history of a great political speaker who has added anything to human knowledge or to human worth? Lord Chatham may stand as a lonely exception. But except Chatham who is there? Not one that I know of. Oratory is the spendthrift sister of the arts, which decks itself like a strumpet with the tags and ornaments which it steals from real superiority. The object of it is not truth, but anything which it can make appear truth; anything which it can persuade people to believe by calling in their passions to obscure their intelligence.

CHAPTER IV

First sight of Barbadoes – Origin of the name – Père Labat – Bridgetown two hundred years ago – Slavery and Christianity – Economic crisis – Sugar bounties – Aspect of the streets – Government House and its occupants – Duties of a governor of Barbadoes.

England was covered with snow when we left it on December 30. At sunrise on January 12 we were anchored in the roadstead at Bridgetown, and the island of Barbadoes lay before us shining in the haze of a hot summer morning. It is about the size of the Isle of Wight, cultivated so far as eye could see with the completeness of a garden; no mountains in it, scarcely even high hills, but a surface pleasantly undulating, the prevailing colour a vivid green from the cane fields; houses in town and country white from the coral rock of which they are built, but the glare from them relieved by heavy clumps of trees. What the trees were I had yet to discover. You could see at a glance that the island was as thickly peopled as an ant-hill. Not an inch of soil seemed to be allowed to run to waste. Two hundred thousand is, I believe, the present number of Barbadians, of whom nine-tenths are blacks. They refuse to emigrate. They cling to their home with innocent vanity as though it was the finest country in the world, and multiply at a rate so rapid that no one likes to think about it. Labour at any rate is abundant and cheap. In Barbadoes the negro is willing enough to work, for he has no other means of living. Little land is here allowed him to grow his yams upon. Almost the whole of it is still held by the whites in large estates, cultivated by labourers on the old system, and, it is to be admitted, cultivated most admirably. If the West Indies are going to ruin, Barbadoes, at any rate, is being ruined with a smiling face. The roadstead was crowded with shipping – large barques, steamers, and brigs, schooners of all shapes and sorts. The training squadron had come into the bay for a day or two on their way to Trinidad, four fine ships, conspicuous by their white ensigns, a squareness of yards, and generally imposing presence. Boats were flying to and fro under sail or with oars, officials coming off in white calico dress, with awnings over the stern sheets and chattering crews of negroes. Notwithstanding these exotic symptoms, it was all thoroughly English; we were under the guns of our own men-of-war. The language of the Anglo-Barbadians was pure English, the voices without the smallest transatlantic intonation. On no one of our foreign possessions is the print of England's foot more strongly impressed than on Barbadoes. It has been ours for two centuries and three-quarters, and was organised from the first on English traditional lines, with its constitution, its parishes and parish churches and churchwardens, and schools and parsons, all on the old model; which the unprogressive inhabitants have been wise enough to leave undisturbed.

Little is known of the island before we took possession of it – so little that the origin of the name is still uncertain. Barbadoes, if not a corruption of some older word, is Spanish or Portuguese, and means 'bearded.' The local opinion is that the word refers to a banyan or fig tree which is common there, and which sends down from its branches long hairs or fibres supposed to resemble beards. I disbelieve in this derivation. Every Spaniard whom I have consulted confirms my own impression that 'barbados' standing alone could no more refer to trees than 'barbati' standing alone could refer to trees in Latin. The name is a century older than the English occupation, for I have seen it in a Spanish chart of 1525. The question is of some interest, since it perhaps implies that at the first discovery there was a race of bearded Caribs there. However this may be, Barbadoes, after we became masters of the island, enjoyed a period of unbroken prosperity for two hundred years. Before the conquest of Jamaica, it was the principal mart of our West Indian trade; and even after that conquest, when all Europe drew its new luxury of sugar from these islands, the wealth and splendour of the English residents at Bridgetown astonished and stirred the envy of every passing visitor. Absenteeism as yet was not. The owners lived on their estates, governed the island as magistrates unpaid for their

services, and equally unpaid, took on themselves the defences of the island. Père Labat, a French missionary, paid a visit to Barbadoes at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was a clever, sarcastic kind of man, with fine literary skill, and describes what he saw with a jealous appreciation which he intended to act upon his own countrymen. The island, according to him, was running over with wealth, and was very imperfectly fortified. The jewellers' and silversmiths' shops in Bridgetown were brilliant as on the Paris boulevards. The port was full of ships, the wharves and warehouses crammed with merchandise from all parts of the globe. The streets were handsome, and thronged with men of business, who were piling up fortunes. To the Father these sumptuous gentlemen were all most civil. The governor, an English milor, asked him to dinner, and talked such excellent French that Labat forgave him his nationality. The governor, he said, resided in a fine palace. He had a well-furnished library, was dignified, courteous, intelligent, and lived in state like a prince. A review was held for the French priest's special entertainment, of the Bridgetown cavalry. Five hundred gentlemen turned out from this one district admirably mounted and armed. Altogether in the island he says that there were 3,000 horse and 2,000 foot, every one of them of course white and English. The officers struck him particularly. He met one who had been five years a prisoner in the Bastille, and had spent his time there in learning mathematics. The planters opened their houses to him. Dinners then as now were the received form of English hospitality. They lived well, Labat says. They had all the luxuries of the tropics, and they had imported the partridges which they were so fond of from England. They had the costliest and choicest wines, and knew how to enjoy them. They dined at two o'clock, and their dinner lasted four hours. Their mansions were superbly furnished, and gold and silver plate, he observed with an eye to business, was so abundant that the plunder of it would pay the cost of an expedition for the reduction of the island.

There was another side to all this magnificence which also might be turned to account by an enterprising enemy. There were some thousands of wretched Irish, who had been transplanted thither after the last rebellion, and were bound under articles to labour. These might be counted on to rise if an invading force appeared; and there were 60,000 slaves, who would rebel also if they saw a hope of success. They were ill fed and hard driven. On the least symptom of insubordination they were killed without mercy: sometimes they were burnt alive, or were hung up in iron cages to die.³ In the French and Spanish islands care was taken of the souls of the poor creatures. They were taught their catechism, they were baptised, and attended mass regularly. The Anglican clergy, Labat said with professional malice, neither baptised them nor taught them anything, but regarded them as mere animals. To keep Christians in slavery they held would be wrong and indefensible, and they therefore met the difficulty by not making their slaves into Christians. That baptism made any essential difference, however, he does not insist. By the side of Christianity, in the Catholic islands, devil worship and witchcraft went on among the same persons. No instance had ever come to his knowledge of a converted black who returned to his country who did not throw away his Christianity just as he would throw away his clothes; and as to cruelty and immorality, he admits that the English at Barbadoes were no worse than his own people at Martinique.

In the collapse of West Indian prosperity which followed on emancipation, Barbadoes escaped the misfortunes of the other islands. The black population being so dense, and the place itself being so small, the squatting system could not be tried; there was plenty of labour always, and the planters being relieved of the charge of their workmen when they were sick or worn out, had rather gained than lost by the change. Barbadoes, however, was not to escape for ever, and was now having its share of misfortunes. It is dangerous for any country to commit its fortunes to an exclusive occupation. Sugar

³ Labat seems to say that they were hung up alive in these cages, and left to die there. He says elsewhere, and it may be hoped that the explanation is the truer one, that the recently imported negroes often destroyed themselves, in the belief that when dead they would return to their own country. In the French islands as well as the English, the bodies of suicides were exposed in these cages, from which they could not be stolen, to convince the poor people of their mistake by their own eyes. He says that the contrivance was successful, and that after this the slaves did not destroy themselves any more.

was the most immediately lucrative of all the West Indian productions. Barbadoes is exceptionally well suited to sugar-growing. It has no mountains and no forests. The soil is clean and has been carefully attended to for two hundred and fifty years. It had been owned during the present century by gentlemen who for the most part lived in England on the profits of their properties, and left them to be managed by agents and attorneys. The method of management was expensive. Their own habits were expensive. Their incomes, to which they had lived up, had been cut short lately by a series of bad seasons. Money had been borrowed at high interest year after year to keep the estates and their owners going. On the top of this came the beetroot competition backed up by a bounty, and the Barbadian sugar interest, I was told, had gone over a precipice. Even the unencumbered resident proprietors could barely keep their heads above water. The returns on three-quarters of the properties on the island no longer sufficed to pay the expenses of cultivation and the interest of the loans which had been raised upon them. There was impending a general bankruptcy which might break up entirely the present system and leave the negroes for a time without the wages which were the sole dependence.

A very dark picture had thus been drawn to me of the prospects of the poor little island which had been once so brilliant. Nothing could be less like it than the bright sunny landscape which we saw from the deck of our vessel. The town, the shipping, the pretty villas, the woods, and the wide green sea of waving cane had no suggestion of ruin about them. If the ruin was coming, clearly enough it had not yet come. After breakfast we went on shore in a boat with a white awning over it, rowed by a crew of black boatmen, large, fleshy, shining on the skin with ample feeding and shining in the face with innocent happiness. They rowed well. They were amusing. There was a fixed tariff, and they were not extortionate. The temperature seemed to rise ten degrees when we landed. The roads were blinding white from the coral dust, the houses were white, the sun scorching. The streets were not the streets described by Labat; no splendid magazines or jewellers' shops like those in Paris or London; but there were lighters at the quays loading or unloading, carts dashing along with mule teams and making walking dangerous; signs in plenty of life and business; few white faces, but blacks and mulattoes swarming. The houses were substantial, though in want of paint. The public buildings, law courts, hall of assembly &c. were solid and handsome, nowhere out of repair, though with something to be desired in point of smartness. The market square would have been well enough but for a statue of Lord Nelson which stands there, very like, but small and insignificant, and for some extraordinary reason they have painted it a bright pea-green.

We crept along in the shade of trees and warehouses till we reached the principal street. Here my friends brought me to the Icehouse, a sort of club, with reading rooms and dining rooms, and sleeping accommodation for members from a distance who do not like colonial hotels. Before anything else could be thought of I was introduced to cocktail, with which I had to make closer acquaintance afterwards, cocktail being the established corrective of West Indian languor, without which life is impossible. It is a compound of rum, sugar, lime juice, Angostura bitters, and what else I know not, frisked into effervescence by a stick, highly agreeable to the taste and effective for its immediate purpose. Cocktail over, and walking in the heat being a thing not to be thought of, I sat for two hours in a balcony watching the people, who were thick as bees in swarming time. Nine-tenths of them were pure black; you rarely saw a white face, but still less would you see a discontented one, imperturbable good humour and self-satisfaction being written on the features of every one. The women struck me especially. They were smartly dressed in white calico, scrupulously clean, and tricked out with ribands and feathers; but their figures were so good, and they carried themselves so well and gracefully, that, although they might make themselves absurd, they could not look vulgar. Like the old Greek and Etruscan women, they are trained from childhood to carry heavy weights on their heads. They are thus perfectly upright, and plant their feet firmly and naturally on the ground. They might serve for sculptors' models, and are well aware of it. There were no signs of poverty. Old and young seemed well-fed. Some had brought in baskets of fruit, bananas, oranges, pine apples, and sticks of sugar cane; others had yams and sweet potatoes from their bits of garden in the country. The men were

active enough driving carts, wheeling barrows, or selling flying fish, which are caught off the island in shoals and are cheaper than herrings in Yarmouth. They chattered like a flock of jackdaws, but there was no quarrelling; not a drunken man was to be seen, and all was merriment and good humour. My poor downtrodden black brothers and sisters, so far as I could judge from this first introduction, looked to me a very fortunate class of fellow-creatures.

Government House, where we went to luncheon, is a large airy building shaded by heavy trees with a garden at the back of it. West Indian houses, I found afterwards, are all constructed on the same pattern, the object being to keep the sun out and let in the wind. Long verandahs or galleries run round them protected by green Venetian blinds which can be opened or closed at pleasure; the rooms within with polished floors, little or no carpet, and contrivances of all kinds to keep the air in continual circulation. In the subdued green light, human figures lose their solidity and look as if they were creatures of air also.

Sir Charles Lees and his lady were all that was polite and hospitable. They invited me to make their house my home during my stay, and more charming host and hostess it would have been impossible to find or wish for. There was not the state which Labat described, but there was the perfection of courtesy, a courtesy which must have belonged to their natures, or it would have been overstrained long since by the demands made upon it. Those who have looked on at a skating ring will have observed an orange or some such object in the centre round which the evolutions are described, the ice artist sweeping out from it in long curves to the extreme circumference, returning on interior arcs till he gains the orange again, and then off once more on a fresh departure. Barbadoes to the West Indian steam navigation is like the skater's orange. All mails, all passengers from Europe, arrive at Barbadoes first. There the subsidiary steamers catch them up, bear them north or south to the Windward or Leeward Isles, and on their return bring them back to Carlisle Bay. Every vessel brings some person or persons to whom the Governor is called on to show hospitality. He must give dinners to the officials and gentry of the island, he must give balls and concerts for their ladies, he must entertain the officers of the garrison. When the West Indian squadron or the training squadron drop into the roadstead, admirals, commodores, captains must all be invited. Foreign ships of war go and come continually, Americans, French, Spaniards, or Portuguese. Presidents of South American republics, engineers from Darien, all sorts and conditions of men who go to Europe in the English mail vessels, take their departure from Carlisle Bay, and if they are neglected regard it as a national affront. Cataracts of champagne must flow if the British name is not to be discredited. The expense is unavoidable and is enormous, while the Governor's very moderate salary is found too large by economic politicians, and there is a cry for reduction of it.

I was of course most grateful for Sir Charles's invitation to myself. From him, better perhaps than from anyone, I could learn how far the passionate complaints which I had heard about the state of the islands were to be listened to as accounts of actual fact. I found, however, that I must postpone both this particular pleasure and my stay in Barbadoes itself till a later opportunity. My purpose had been to remain there till I had given it all the time which I could spare, thence to go on to Jamaica, and from Jamaica to return at leisure round the Antilles. But it had been ascertained that in Jamaica there was small-pox. I suppose that there generally is small-pox there, or typhus fever, or other infectious disorder. But spasms of anxiety assail periodically the souls of local authorities. Vessels coming from Jamaica had been quarantined in all the islands, and I found that if I proceeded thither as I proposed, I should be refused permission to land afterwards in any one of the other colonies. In my perplexity my Trinidad friends invited me to accompany them at once to Port of Spain. Trinidad was the most thriving, or was at all events the least dissatisfied, of all the British possessions. I could have a glance at the Windward Islands on the way. I could afterwards return to Barbadoes, where Sir Charles assured me that I should still find a room waiting for me. The steamer to Trinidad sailed the same afternoon. I had to decide in haste, and I decided to go. Our luncheon over, we had time to look over the pretty gardens at Government House. There were great cabbage palms, cannon-ball trees, mahogany trees,

almond trees, and many more which were wholly new acquaintances. There was a grotto made by climbing plants and creepers, with a fountain playing in the middle of it, where orchids hanging on wires threw out their clusters of flowers for the moths to fertilize, ferns waved their long fronds in the dripping showers, humming birds cooled their wings in the spray, and flashed in and out like rubies and emeralds. Gladly would I have lingered there, at least for a cigar, but it could not be; we had to call on the Commander of the Forces, Sir C. Pearson, the hero of Ekowe in the Zulu war. Him, too, I was to see again, and hear interesting stories from about our tragic enterprise in the Transvaal. For the moment my mind was filled sufficiently with new impressions. One reads books about places, but the images which they create are always unlike the real object. All that I had seen was absolutely new and unexpected. I was glad of an opportunity to readjust the information which I had brought with me. We joined our new vessel before sunset, and we steamed away into the twilight.

CHAPTER V

West Indian politeness – Negro morals and felicity – Island of St. Vincent – Grenada – The harbour – Disappearance of the whites – An island of black freeholders – Tobago – Dramatic art – A promising incident.

West Indian civilisation is old-fashioned, and has none of the pushing manners which belong to younger and perhaps more thriving communities. The West Indians themselves, though they may be deficient in energy, are uniformly ladies and gentlemen, and all their arrangements take their complexion from the general tone of society. There is a refinement visible at once in the subsidiary vessels of the mail service which ply among the islands. They are almost as large as those which cross the Atlantic, and never on any line in the world have I met with officers so courteous and cultivated. The cabins were spacious and as cool as a temperature of 80°, gradually rising as we went south, would permit. Punkahs waved over us at dinner. In our berths a single sheet was all that was provided for us, and this was one more than we needed. A sea was running when we cleared out from under the land. Among the cabin passengers was a coloured family in good circumstances moving about with nurses and children. The little things, who had never been at sea before, sat on the floor, staring out of their large helpless black eyes, not knowing what was the matter with them. Forward there were perhaps two or three hundred coloured people going from one island to another, singing, dancing, and chattering all night long, as radiant and happy as carelessness and content could make them. Sick or not sick made no difference. Nothing could disturb the imperturbable good humour and good spirits.

It was too hot to sleep; we sat several of us smoking on deck, and I learnt the first authentic particulars of the present manner of life of these much misunderstood people. Evidently they belonged to a race far inferior to the Zulus and Caffres, whom I had known in South Africa. They were more coarsely formed in limb and feature. They would have been slaves in their own country if they had not been brought to ours, and at the worst had lost nothing by the change. They were good-natured, innocent, harmless, lazy perhaps, but not more lazy than is perfectly natural when even Europeans must be roused to activity by cocktail.

In the Antilles generally, Barbadoes being the only exception, negro families have each their cabin, their garden ground, their grazing for a cow. They live surrounded by most of the fruits which grew in Adam's paradise – oranges and plantains, bread-fruit, and cocoa-nuts, though not apples. Their yams and cassava grow without effort, for the soil is easily worked and inexhaustibly fertile. The curse is taken off from nature, and like Adam again they are under the covenant of innocence. Morals in the technical sense they have none, but they cannot be said to sin, because they have no knowledge of a law, and therefore they can commit no breach of the law. They are naked and not ashamed. They are *married* as they call it, but not *parsoned*. The woman prefers a looser tie that she may be able to leave a man if he treats her unkindly. Yet they are not licentious. I never saw an immodest look in one their faces, and never heard of any venal profligacy. The system is strange, but it answers. A missionary told me that a connection rarely turns out well which begins with a legal marriage. The children scramble up anyhow, and shift for themselves like chickens as soon as they are able to peck. Many die in this way by eating unwholesome food, but also many live, and those who do live grow up exactly like their parents. It is a very peculiar state of things, not to be understood, as priest and missionary agree, without long acquaintance. There is immorality, but an immorality which is not demoralising. There is sin, but it is the sin of animals, without shame, because there is no sense of doing wrong. They eat the forbidden fruit, but it brings with it no knowledge of the difference between good and evil. They steal, but as a tradition of the time when they were themselves chattels, and the laws of property did not apply to them. They are honest about money, more honest perhaps than a good many whites. But food or articles of use they take freely, as they were allowed

to do when slaves, in pure innocence of heart. In fact these poor children of darkness have escaped the consequences of the Fall, and must come of another stock after all.

Meanwhile they are perfectly happy. In no part of the globe is there any peasantry whose every want is so completely satisfied as her Majesty's black subjects in these West Indian islands. They have no aspirations to make them restless. They have no guilt upon their consciences. They have food for the picking up. Clothes they need not, and lodging in such a climate need not be elaborate. They have perfect liberty, and are safe from dangers, to which if left to themselves they would be exposed, for the English rule prevents the strong from oppressing the weak. In their own country they would have remained slaves to more warlike races. In the West Indies their fathers underwent a bondage of a century or two, lighter at its worst than the easiest form of it in Africa; their descendants in return have nothing now to do save to laugh and sing and enjoy existence. Their quarrels, if they have any, begin and end in words. If happiness is the be all and end all of life, and those who have most of it have most completely attained the object of their being, the 'nigger' who now basks among the ruins of the West Indian plantations is the supremest specimen of present humanity.

We retired to our berths at last. At waking we were at anchor off St. Vincent, an island of volcanic mountains robed in forest from shore to crest. Till late in the last century it was the headquarters of the Caribs, who kept up a savage independence there, recruited by runaway slaves from Barbadoes or elsewhere. Brandy and Sir Ralph Abercrombie reduced them to obedience in 1796, and St. Vincent throve tolerably down to the days of free trade. Even now when I saw it, Kingston, the principal town, looked pretty and well to do, reminding me, strange to say, of towns in Norway, the houses stretching along the shore painted in the same tints of blue or yellow or pink, with the same red-tiled roofs, the trees coming down the hill sides to the water's edge, villas of modest pretensions shining through the foliage, with the patches of cane fields, the equivalent in the landscape of the brilliant Norwegian grass. The prosperity has for the last forty years waned and waned. There are now two thousand white people there, and forty thousand coloured people, and proportions alter annually to our disadvantage. The usual remedies have been tried. The constitution has been altered a dozen times. Just now I believe the Crown is trying to do without one, having found the results of the elective principle not encouraging, but we shall perhaps revert to it before long; any way, the tables show that each year the trade of the island decreases, and will continue to decrease while the expenditure increases and will increase.

I did not land, for the time was short, and as a beautiful picture the island was best seen from the deck. The characteristics of the people are the same in all the Antilles, and could be studied elsewhere. The bustle and confusion in the ship, the crowd of boats round the ladder, the clamour of negro men's tongues, and the blaze of colours from the negro women's dresses, made up together a scene sufficiently entertaining for the hour which we remained. In the middle of it the Governor, Mr. S – , came on board with another official. They were going on in the steamer to Tobago, which formed part of his dominions.

Leaving St. Vincent, we were all the forenoon passing the Grenadines, a string of small islands fitting into their proper place in the Antilles semicircle, but as if Nature had forgotten to put them together or else had broken some large island to pieces and scattered them along the line. Some were large enough to have once carried sugar plantations, and are now made over wholly to the blacks; others were fishing stations, droves of whales during certain months frequenting these waters; others were mere rocks, amidst which the white-sailed American coasting schooners were beating up against the north-east trade. There was a stiff breeze, and the sea was white with short curling waves, but we were running before it and the wind kept the deck fresh. At Grenada, the next island, we were to go on shore.

Grenada was, like St. Vincent, the home for centuries of man-eating Caribs, French for a century and a half, and finally, after many desperate struggles for it, was ceded to England at the peace of Versailles. It is larger than St. Vincent, though in its main features it has the same character.

There are lakes in the hills, and a volcanic crater not wholly quiescent; but the especial value of Grenada, which made us fight so hardly to win it, is the deep and landlocked harbour, the finest in all the Antilles.

Père Labat, to whose countrymen it belonged at the time of his own visit there, says that 'if Barbadoes had such a harbour as Grenada it would be an island without a rival in the world. If Grenada belonged to the English, who knew how to turn to profit natural advantages, it would be a rich and powerful colony. In itself it was all that man could desire. To live there was to live in paradise.' Labat found the island occupied by countrymen of his own, '*paisans aisez*', he calls them, growing their tobacco, their indigo and scarlet rocou, their pigs and their poultry, and contented to be without sugar, without slaves, and without trade. The change of hands from which he expected so much had actually come about. Grenada did belong to the English, and had belonged to us ever since Rodney's peace. I was anxious to see how far Labat's prophecy had been fulfilled.

St. George's, the 'capital,' stands on the neck of a peninsula a mile in length, which forms one side of the harbour. Of the houses, some look out to sea, some inwards upon the *carenage*, as the harbour is called. At the point there was a fort, apparently of some strength, on which the British flag was flying. We signalled that we had the Governor on board, and the fort replied with a puff of smoke. Sound there was none or next to none, but we presumed that it had come from a gun of some kind. We anchored outside. Mr. S – landed in an official boat with two flags, a missionary in another, which had only one. The crews of a dozen other boats then clambered up the gangway to dispute possession of the rest of us, shouting, swearing, lying, tearing us this way and that way as if we were carcasses and they wild beasts wanting to dine upon us. We engaged a boat for ourselves as we supposed; we had no sooner entered it than the scandalous boatman proceeded to take in as many more passengers as it would hold. Remonstrance being vain, we settled the matter by stepping into the boat next adjoining, and amidst howls and execrations we were borne triumphantly off and were pulled in to the land.

Labat had not exaggerated the beauty of the landlocked basin into which we entered on rounding the point. On three sides wooded hills rose high till they passed into mountains; on the fourth was the castle with its slopes and batteries, the church and town beyond it, and everywhere luxuriant tropical forest trees overhanging the violet-coloured water. I could well understand the Frenchman's delight when he saw it, and also the satisfaction with which he would now acknowledge that he had been a shortsighted prophet. The English had obtained Grenada, and this is what they had made of it. The forts which had been erected by his countrymen had been deserted and dismantled; the castle on which we had seen our flag flying was a ruin; the walls were crumbling and in many places had fallen down. One solitary gun was left, but that was honeycombed and could be fired only with half a charge to salute with. It was true that the forts had ceased to be of use, but that was because there was nothing left to defend. The harbour is, as I said, the best in the West Indies. There was not a vessel in it, nor so much as a boat-yard that I could see where a spar could be replaced or a broken rivet mended. Once there had been a line of wharves, but the piles had been eaten by worms and the platforms had fallen through. Round us when we landed were unroofed warehouses, weed-choked courtyards, doors gone, and window frames fallen in or out. Such a scene of desolation and desertion I never saw in my life save once, a few weeks later at Jamaica. An English lady with her children had come to the landing place to meet my friends. They, too, were more like wandering ghosts than human beings with warm blood in them. All their thoughts were on going home – home out of so miserable an exile.⁴

⁴ I have been told that this picture is overdrawn, that Grenada is the most prosperous of the Antilles, that its exports are increasing, that English owners are making large profits again, that the blacks are thriving beyond example, that there are twenty guns in the Fort, that the wharves and Quay are in perfect condition, that there are no roofless warehouses, that in my description of St. George's I must have been asleep or dreaming. I can only repeat and insist upon what I myself saw. I know very well that in parts of the island a few energetic English gentlemen are cultivating their land with remarkable success. Any enterprising Englishman with capital and intelligence might do the same. I know also that in no part of the West Indies are the blacks happier or better off. But notwithstanding

Nature and the dark race had been simply allowed by us to resume possession of the island. Here, where the cannon had roared, and ships and armies had fought, and the enterprising English had entered into occupancy, under whom, as we are proud to fancy, the waste places of the earth grow green, and industry and civilisation follow as an inevitable fruit, all was now silence. And this was an English Crown colony, as rich in resources as any area of soil of equal size in the world. England had demanded and seized the responsibility of managing it – this was the result.

A gentleman who for some purpose was a passing resident in the island, had asked us to dine with him. His house was three or four miles inland. A good road remained as a legacy from other times, and a pair of horses and a phaeton carried us swiftly to his door. The town of St. George's had once been populous, and even now there seemed no want of people, if mere numbers sufficed. We passed for half a mile through a straggling street, where the houses were evidently occupied though unconscious for many a year of paint or repair. They were squalid and dilapidated, but the luxuriant bananas and orange trees in the gardens relieved the ugliness of their appearance. The road when we left the town was overshadowed with gigantic mangoes planted long ago, with almond trees and cedar trees, no relations of our almonds or our cedars, but the most splendid ornaments of the West Indian forest. The valley up which we drove was beautiful, and the house, when we reached it, showed taste and culture. Mr. – had rare trees, rare flowers, and was taking advantage of his temporary residence in the tropics to make experiments in horticulture. He had been brought there, I believe, by some necessities of business. He told us that Grenada was now the ideal country of modern social reformers. It had become an island of pure peasant proprietors. The settlers, who had once been a thriving and wealthy community, had almost melted away. Some thirty English estates remained which could still be cultivated, and were being cultivated with remarkable success. But the rest had sold their estates for anything which they could get. The free blacks had bought them, and about 8,000 negro families, say 40,000 black souls in all, now shared three-fourths of the soil between them. Each family lived independently, growing coffee and cocoa and oranges, and all were doing very well. The possession of property had brought a sense of its rights with it. They were as litigious as Irish peasants; everyone was at law with his neighbour, and the island was a gold mine to the Attorney-General; otherwise they were quiet harmless fellows, and if the politicians would only let them alone, they would be perfectly contented, and might eventually, if wisely managed, come to some good. To set up a constitution in such a place was a ridiculous mockery, and would only be another name for swindling and jobbery. Black the island was, and black it would remain. The conditions were never likely to arise which would bring back a European population; but a governor who was a sensible man, who would reside and use his natural influence, could manage it with perfect ease. The island belonged to England; we were responsible for what we made of it, and for the blacks' own sakes we ought not to try experiments upon them. They knew their own deficiencies and would infinitely prefer a wise English ruler to any constitution which could be offered them. If left entirely to themselves, they would in a generation or two relapse into savages; there were but two alternatives before not Grenada only, but all the English West Indies – either an English administration pure and simple,

the English interest in the Island has sunk to relatively nothing. Once Englishmen owned the whole of it. Now there are only thirty English estates. There are five thousand peasant freeholds, owned almost entirely by coloured men, and the effect of the change is written upon the features of the harbour. Not a vessel of any kind was to be seen in it. The great wooden jetty where cargoes used to be landed, or taken on board, was a wreck, the piles eaten through, the platform broken. On the Quay there was no sign of life, or of business, the houses along the side mean and insignificant, while several large and once important buildings, warehouses, custom houses, dwelling houses, or whatever they had been, were lying in ruins, tropical trees growing in the courtyards, and tropical creepers climbing over the masonry showing how long the decay had been going on. These buildings had once belonged to English merchants, and were evidence of English energy and enterprise, which once had been and now had ceased to be. As to the guns in the fort, I cannot say how much old iron may be left there. But I was informed that only one gun could be fired and that with but half a charge. This is of little consequence or none, but unless the English population can be reinforced, Grenada in another generation will cease to be English at all, while the prosperity, the progress, even the continued civilisation of the blacks depends on the maintenance there of English influence and authority.

like the East Indian, or a falling eventually into a state like that of Hayti, where they eat the babies, and no white man can own a yard of land.

It was dark night when we drove back to the port. The houses along the road, which had looked so miserable on the outside, were now lighted with paraffin lamps. I could see into them, and was astonished to observe signs of comfort and even signs of taste – arm-chairs, sofas, sideboards with cut glass upon them, engravings and coloured prints upon the walls. The old state of things is gone, but a new state of things is rising which may have a worth of its own. The plant of civilisation as yet has taken but feeble root, and is only beginning to grow. It may thrive yet if those who have troubled all the earth will consent for another century to take their industry elsewhere.

The ship's galley was waiting at the wharf when we reached it. The captain also had been dining with a friend on shore, and we had to wait for him. The off-shore night breeze had not yet risen. The harbour was smooth as a looking glass, and the stars shone double in the sky and on the water. The silence was only broken by the whistle of the lizards or the cry of some far-off marsh frog. The air was warmer than we ever feel it in the depth of an English summer, yet pure and delicious and charged with the perfume of a thousand flowers. One felt it strange that with so beautiful a possession lying at our doors, we should have allowed it to slide out of our hands. I could say for myself, like Père Labat, the island was all that man could desire. 'En un mot, la vie y est délicieuse.'

The anchor was got up immediately that we were on board. In the morning we were to find ourselves at Port of Spain. Mr. S – , the Windward Island governor, who had joined us at St. Vincent, was, as I said, going to Tobago. De Foe took the human part of his Robinson Crusoe from the story of Juan Fernandez. The locality is supposed to have been Tobago, and Trinidad the island from which the cannibal savages came. We are continually shuffling the cards, in a hope that a better game may be played with them. Tobago is now-annexed to Trinidad. Last year it was a part of Mr. S – 's dominions which he periodically visited. I fell in with him again on his return, and he told us an incident which befell him there, illustrating the unexpected shapes in which the schoolmaster is appearing among the blacks. An intimation was brought to him on his arrival that, as the Athenian journeymen had played Pyramus and Thisbe at the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta, so a party of villagers from the interior of Tobago would like to act before his Excellency. Of course he consented. They came, and went through their performance. To Mr. S – 's, and probably to the reader's astonishment, the play which they had selected was the 'Merchant of Venice.' Of the rest of it he perhaps thought, like the queen of the Amazons, that it was 'sorry stuff;' but Shylock's representative, he said, showed real appreciation. With freedom and a peasant proprietary, the money lender is a necessary phenomenon, and the actor's imagination may have been assisted by personal recollections.

CHAPTER VI

Charles Kingsley at Trinidad – 'Lay of the Last Buccaneer' – A French *forban*– Adventure at Aves – Mass on board a pirate ship – Port of Spain – A house in the tropics – A political meeting – Government House – The Botanical Gardens' – Kingsley's rooms – Sugar estates and coolies.

I might spare myself a description of Trinidad, for the natural features of the place, its forests and gardens, its exquisite flora, the loveliness of its birds and insects, have been described already, with a grace of touch and a fullness of knowledge which I could not rival if I tried, by my dear friend Charles Kingsley. He was a naturalist by instinct, and the West Indies and all belonging to them had been the passion of his life. He had followed the logs and journals of the Elizabethan adventurers till he had made their genius part of himself. In Amyas Leigh, the hero of 'Westward Ho,' he produced a figure more completely representative of that extraordinary set of men than any other novelist, except Sir Walter, has ever done for an age remote from his own. He followed them down into their latest developments, and sang their swan song in his 'Lay of the Last Buccaneer.' So characteristic is this poem of the transformation of the West Indies of romance and adventure into the West Indies of sugar and legitimate trade, that I steal it to ornament my own prosaic pages.

THE LAY OF THE LAST BUCCANEER

Oh! England is a pleasant place for them that's rich and high,
But England is a cruel place for such poor folks as I;
And such a port for mariners I'll never see again
As the pleasant Isle of Aves beside the Spanish main.
There were forty craft in Aves that were both swift and stout,
All furnished well with small arms and cannon all about;
And a thousand men in Aves made laws so fair and free
To choose their valiant captains and obey them loyally.
Then we sailed against the Spaniard with his hoards of plate and gold,
Which he wrung with cruel tortures from Indian folks of old;
Likewise the merchant captains, with hearts as hard as stone,
Who flog men and keelhaul them and starve them to the bone.
Oh! palms grew high in Aves, and fruits that shone like gold,
And the colibris and parrots they were gorgeous to behold,
And the negro maids to Aves from bondage fast did flee
To welcome gallant sailors a sweeping in from sea.

Oh! sweet it was in Aves to hear the landward breeze,
A swing with good tobacco in a net between the trees,
With a negro lass to fan you while you listened to the roar
Of the breakers on the reef outside which never touched the shore.
But Scripture saith an ending to all fine things must be,
So the king's ships sailed on Aves and quite put down were we.
All day we fought like bull dogs, but they burnt the booms at night,
And I fled in a piragua sore wounded from the fight.
Nine days I floated starving, and a negro lass beside,
Till for all I tried to cheer her the poor young thing she died.

But as I lay a gasping a Bristol sail came by,
And brought me home to England here to beg until I die.
And now I'm old and going: I'm sure I can't tell where.
One comfort is, this world's so hard I can't be worse off there.
If I might but be a sea dove, I'd fly across the main
To the pleasant Isle of Aves to look at it once again.

By the side of this imaginative picture of a poor English sea rover, let me place another, an authentic one, of a French *forban* or pirate in the same seas. Kingsley's Aves, or Isle of Birds, is down on the American coast. There is another island of the same name, which was occasionally frequented by the same gentry, about a hundred miles south of Dominica. Père Labat going once from Martinique to Guadaloupe had taken a berth with Captain Daniel, one of the most noted of the French corsairs of the day, for better security. People were not scrupulous in those times, and Labat and Daniel had been long good friends. They were caught in a gale off Dominica, blown away, and carried to Aves, where they found an English merchant ship lying a wreck. Two English ladies from Barbadoes and a dozen other people had escaped on shore. They had sent for help, and a large vessel came for them the day after Daniel's arrival. Of course he made a prize of it. Labat said prayers on board for him before the engagement, and the vessel surrendered after the first shot. The good humour of the party was not disturbed by this incident. The pirates, their prisoners, and the ladies stayed together for a fortnight at Aves, catching turtles and boucanning them, picnicking, and enjoying themselves. Daniel treated the ladies with the utmost politeness, carried them afterwards to St. Thomas's, dismissed them unransomed, sold his prizes, and wound up the whole affair to the satisfaction of every one. Labat relates all this with wonderful humour, and tells, among other things, the following story of Daniel. On some expedition, when he was not so fortunate as to have a priest on board, he was in want of provisions. Being an outlaw he could not furnish himself in an open port. One night he put into the harbour of a small island, called Los Santos, not far from Dominica, where only a few families resided. He sent a boat on shore in the darkness, took the priest and two or three of the chief inhabitants out of their beds, and carried them on board, where he held them as hostages, and then under pretence of compulsion requisitioned the island to send him what he wanted. The priest and his companions were treated meanwhile as guests of distinction. No violence was necessary, for all parties understood one another. While the stores were being collected, Daniel suggested that there was a good opportunity for his crew to hear mass. The priest of Los Santos agreed to say it for them. The sacred vessels &c. were sent for from the church on shore. An awning was rigged over the fore-castle, and an altar set up under it. The men chanted the prayers. The cannon answered the purpose of music. Broad-sides were fired at the first sentence, at the *Exaudiat*, at the *Elevation*, at the *Benediction*, and a fifth at the prayer for the king. The service was wound up by a *Vive le Roi!* A single small accident only had disturbed the ceremony. One of the pirates, at the *Elevation*, being of a profane mind, made an indecent gesture. Daniel rebuked him, and, as the offence was repeated, drew a pistol and blew the man's brains out, saying he would do the same to any one who was disrespectful to the Holy Sacrament. The priest being a little startled, Daniel begged him not to be alarmed; he was only chastising a rascal to teach him his duty. At any rate, as Labat observed, he had effectually prevented the rascal from doing anything of the same kind again. Mass being over, the body was thrown overboard, and priest and congregation went their several ways.

Kingsley's 'At Last' gave Trinidad an additional interest to me, but even he had not prepared me completely for the place which I was to see. It is only when one has seen any object with one's own eyes, that the accounts given by others become recognisable and instructive.

Trinidad is the largest, after Jamaica, of the British West Indian Islands, and the hottest absolutely after none of them. It is square-shaped, and, I suppose, was once a part of South America. The Orinoco river and the ocean currents between them have cut a channel between it and the

mainland, which has expanded into a vast shallow lake known as the Gulf of Paria. The two entrances by which the gulf is approached are narrow and are called *bocas* or mouths – one the Dragon's Mouth, the other the Serpent's. When the Orinoco is in flood, the water is brackish, and the brilliant violet blue of the Caribbean Sea is changed to a dirty yellow; but the harbour which is so formed would hold all the commercial navies of the world, and seems formed by nature to be the depôt one day of an enormous trade.

Trinidad has had its period of romance. Columbus was the first discoverer of it. Raleigh was there afterwards on his expedition in search of his gold mine, and tarred his vessels with pitch out of the famous lake. The island was alternately Spanish and French till Picton took it in 1797, since which time it has remained English. The Carib part of the population has long vanished. The rest of it is a medley of English, French, Spaniards, negroes, and coolies. The English, chiefly migratory, go there to make money and go home with it. The old colonial families have few representatives left, but the island prospers, trade increases, coolies increase, cocoa and coffee plantations and indigo plantations increase. Port of Spain, the capital, grows annually; and even sugar holds its own in spite of low prices, for there is money at the back of it, and a set of people who, being speculative and commercial, are better on a level with the times than the old-fashioned planter aristocracy of the other islands. The soil is of extreme fertility, about a fourth of it under cultivation, the rest natural forest and unappropriated Crown land.

We passed the 'Dragon's Jaws' before daylight. The sun had just risen when we anchored off Port of Spain. We saw before us the usual long line of green hills with mountains behind them; between the hills and the sea was a low, broad, alluvial plain, deposited by an arm of the Orinoco and by the other rivers which run into the gulf. The cocoa-nut palms thrive best on the water's edge. They stretched for miles on either side of us as a fringe to the shore. Where the water was shoal, there were vast swamps of mangrove, the lower branches covered with oysters.

However depressed sugar might be, business could not be stagnant. Ships of all nations lay round us taking in or discharging cargo. I myself formed for the time being part of the cargo of my friend and host Mr. G – , who had brought me to Trinidad, the accomplished son of a brilliant mother, himself a distinguished lawyer and member of the executive council of the island, a charming companion, an invaluable public servant, but with the temperament of a man of genius, half humorous, half melancholy, which does not find itself entirely at home in West Indian surroundings.

On landing we found ourselves in a large foreign-looking town, 'Port of Spain' having been built by French and Spaniards according to their national tendencies, and especially with a view to the temperature, which is that of a forcing house and rarely falls below 80°. The streets are broad and are planted with trees for shade, each house where room permits having a garden of its own, with palms and mangoes and coffee plants and creepers. Of sanitary arrangements there seemed to be none. There is abundance of rain, and the gutters which run down by the footway are flushed almost every day. But they are all open. Dirt of every kind lies about freely, to be washed into them or left to putrefy as fate shall direct. The smell would not be pleasant without the help of that natural scavenger the Johnny crow, a black vulture who roosts on the trees and feeds in the middle of the streets. We passed a dozen of these unclean but useful birds in a fashionable thoroughfare gobbling up chicken entrails and refusing to be disturbed. When gorged they perch in rows upon the roofs. On the ground they are the nastiest to look at of all winged creatures; yet on windy days they presume to soar like their kindred, and when far up might be taken for eagles.

The town has between thirty and forty thousand people living in it, and the rain and Johnny crows between them keep off pestilence. Outside is a large savannah or park, where the villas are of the successful men of business. One of these belonged to my host, a cool airy habitation with open doors and windows, overhanging portico, and rooms into which all the winds might enter, but not the sun. A garden in front was shut off from the savannah by a fence of bananas. At the gate stood as sentinel a cabbage palm a hundred feet high; on the lawn mangoes, oranges, papaws, and bread-

fruit trees, strange to look at, but luxuriantly shady. Before the door was a tree of good dimensions, whose name I have forgotten, the stem and branches of which were hung with orchids which G – had collected in the woods. The borders were blazing with varieties of the single hibiscus, crimson, pink, and fawn colour, the largest that I had ever seen. The average diameter of each single flower was from seven to eight inches. Wind streamed freely through the long sitting room, loaded with the perfume of orange trees; on table and in bookcase the hand and mind visible of a gifted and cultivated man. The particular room assigned to myself would have been equally delightful but that my possession of it was disputed even in daylight by mosquitoes, who for bloodthirsty ferocity had a bad pre-eminence over the worst that I had ever met with elsewhere. I killed one who was at work upon me, and examined him through a glass. Bewick, with the inspiration of genius, had drawn his exact likeness as the devil – a long black stroke for a body, nick for neck, horns on the head, and a beak for a mouth, spindle arms, and longer spindle legs, two pointed wings, and a tail. Line for line there the figure was before me which in the unforgettable tailpiece is driving the thief under the gallows, and I had a melancholy satisfaction in identifying him. I had been warned to be on the look-out for scorpions, centipedes, jiggers, and land crabs, who would bite me if I walked slipperless over the floor in the dark. Of these I met with none, either there or anywhere, but the mosquito of Trinidad is enough by himself. For malice, mockery, and venom of tooth and trumpet, he is without a match in the world.

From mosquitoes, however, one could seek safety in tobacco smoke, or hide behind the lace curtains with which every bed is provided. Otherwise I found every provision to make life pass deliciously. To walk is difficult in a damp steamy temperature hotter during daylight than the hottest forcing house in Kew. I was warned not to exert myself and to take cocktail freely. In the evening I might venture out with the bats and take a drive if I wished in the twilight. Languidly charming as it all was, I could not help asking myself of what use such a possession could be either to England or the English nation. We could not colonise it, could not cultivate it, could not draw a revenue from it. If it prospered commercially the prosperity would be of French and Spaniards, mulattoes and blacks, but scarcely, if at all, of my own countrymen. For here too, as elsewhere, they were growing fewer daily, and those who remained were looking forward to the day when they could be released. If it were not for the honour of the thing, as the Irishman said after being carried in a sedan chair which had no bottom, we might have spared ourselves so unnecessary a conquest.

Beautiful, however, it was beyond dispute. Before sunset a carriage took us round the savannah. Tropical human beings, like tropical birds, are fond of fine colours, especially black human beings, and the park was as brilliant as Kensington Gardens on a Sunday. At nightfall the scene became yet more wonderful; air, grass, and trees being alight with fireflies, each as brilliant as an English glowworm. The palm tree at our own gate stood like a ghostly sentinel clear against the starry sky, a single long dead frond hanging from below the coronet of leaves and clashing against the stem as it was blown to and fro by the night wind, while long-winged bats swept and whistled over our heads.

The commonplace intrudes upon the imaginative. At moments one can fancy that the world is an enchanted place after all, but then comes generally an absurd awakening. On the first night of my arrival, before we went to bed there came an invitation to me to attend a political meeting which was to be held in a few days on the savannah. Trinidad is a purely Crown colony, and has escaped hitherto the introduction of the election virus. The newspapers and certain busy gentlemen in 'Port of Spain' had discovered that they were living under 'a degrading tyranny,' and they demanded a 'constitution.' They did not complain that their affairs had been ill managed. On the contrary, they insisted that they were the most prosperous of the West Indian colonies, and alone had a surplus in their treasury. If this was so, it seemed to me that they had better let well alone. The population, all told, was but 170,000, less by thirty thousand than that of Barbadoes. They were a mixed and motley assemblage of all races and colours, busy each with their own affairs, and never hitherto troubling themselves about politics. But it had pleased the Home Government to set up the beginning of a constitution again in Jamaica, no one knew why, but so it was, and Trinidad did not choose to be behindhand.

The official appointments were valuable, and had been hitherto given away by the Crown. The local popularities very naturally wished to have them for themselves. This was the reality in the thing so far as there was a reality. It was dressed up in the phrases borrowed from the great English masters of the art, about privileges of manhood, moral dignity, the elevating influence of the suffrage, &c., intended for home consumption among the believers in the orthodox Radical faith.

For myself I could but reply to the gentlemen who had sent the invitation, that I was greatly obliged by the compliment, but that I knew too little of their affairs to make my presence of any value to them. As they were doing so well, I did not see myself why they wanted an alteration. Political changes were generally little more than turns of a kaleidoscope; you got a new pattern, but it was made of the same pieces, and things went on much as before. If they wanted political liberty I did not doubt that they would get it if they were loud and persistent enough. Only they must understand that at home we were now a democracy. Any constitution which was granted them would be on the widest basis. The blacks and coolies outnumbered the Europeans by four to one, and perhaps when they had what they asked for they might be less pleased than they expected.

You rise early in the tropics. The first two hours of daylight are the best of the day. My friend drove me round the town in his buggy the next morning. My second duty was to pay my respects to the Governor, Sir William Robinson, who had kindly offered me hospitality, and for which I must present myself to thank him. In Sir William I found one of those happy men whose constitution is superior to climate, who can do a long day's work in his office, play cricket or lawn tennis in the afternoon, and entertain his miscellaneous subjects in the evening with sumptuous hospitality – a vigorous, effective, perhaps ambitious gentleman, with a clear eye to the views of his employers at home on whom his promotion depends – certain to make himself agreeable to them, likely to leave his mark to useful purpose on the colonies over which he presides or may preside hereafter. Here in Trinidad he was learning Spanish in addition to his other linguistic accomplishments, that he might show proper courtesies to Spanish residents and to visitors from South America.

The 'Residence' stands in a fine situation, in large grounds of its own at the foot of the mountains. It has been lately built regardless of expense, for the colony is rich, and likes to do things handsomely. On the lawn, under the windows, stood a tree which was entirely new to me, an enormous ceiba or silk cotton tree, umbrella shaped, fifty yards in diameter, the huge and buttressed trunk throwing out branches so massive that one wondered how any woody fibre could bear the strain of their weight, the boughs twisting in and out till they made a roof over one's head, which was hung with every fantastic variety of parasites.

Vast as the ceibas were which I saw afterwards in other parts of the West Indies, this was the largest. The ceiba is the sacred tree of the negro, the temple of Jumbi the proper home of Obeah. To cut one down is impious. No black in his right mind would wound even the bark. A Jamaica police officer told me that if a ceiba had to be removed, the men who used the axe were well dosed with rum to give them courage to defy the devil.

From Government House we strolled into the adjoining Botanical Gardens. I had long heard of the wonders of these. The reality went beyond description. Plants with which I was familiar as *shrubs* in English conservatories were here expanded into forest giants, with hundreds of others of which we cannot raise even Lilliputian imitations. Let man be what he will, nature in the tropics is always grand. Palms were growing in the greatest luxuriance, of every known species, from the cabbage towering up into the sky to the fan palm of the desert whose fronds are reservoirs of water. Of exogenous trees, the majority were leguminous in some shape or other, forming flowers like a pea or vetch and hanging their seed in pods; yet in shape and foliage they distanced far the most splendid ornaments of an English park. They had Old World names with characters wholly different: cedars which were not conifers, almonds which were no relations to peaches, and gum trees as unlike eucalypti as one tree can be unlike another. Again, you saw forms which you seemed to recognise till some unexpected anomaly startled you out of your mistake. A gigantic Portugal laurel, or what I took for such, was

throwing out a flower direct from the stem like a cactus. Grandest among them all, and happily in full bloom, was the sacred tree of Burmah, the *Amherstia nobilis*, at a distance like a splendid horse-chestnut, with crimson blossoms in pendant bunches, each separate flower in the convolution of its parts exactly counterfeiting a large orchid, with which it has not the faintest affinity, the *Amherstia* being leguminous like the rest.

Underneath, and dispersed among the imperial beauties, were spice trees, orange trees, coffee plants and cocoa, or again, shrubs with special virtues or vices. We had to be careful what we were about, for fruits of fairest appearance were tempting us all round. My companion was preparing to eat something to encourage me to do the same. A gardener stopped him in time. It was *nux vomica*. I was straying along a less frequented path, conscious of a heavy vaporous odour, in which I might have fainted had I remained exposed to it. I was close to a manchineel tree.

Prettiest and freshest were the nutmegs, which had a glen all to themselves and perfumed the surrounding air. In Trinidad and in Grenada I believe the nutmegs are the largest that are known, being from thirty to forty feet high; leaves brilliant green, something like the leaves of an orange, but extremely delicate and thin, folded one over the other, the lowest branches sweeping to the ground till the whole tree forms a natural bower, which is proof against a tropical shower. The fragrance attracts moths and flies; not mosquitoes, who prefer a ranker atmosphere. I saw a pair of butterflies the match of which I do not remember even in any museum, dark blue shot with green like a peacock's neck, and the size of English bats. I asked a black boy to catch me one. 'That sort no let catchee, massa,' he said; and I was penitently glad to hear it.

Among the wonders of the gardens are the vines as they call them, that is, the creepers of various kinds that climb about the other trees. Standing in an open space there was what once had been a mighty 'cedar.' It was now dead, only the trunk and dead branches remaining, and had been murdered by a 'fig' vine which had started from the root, twined itself like a python round the stem, strangled out the natural life, and spreading out in all directions had covered boughs and twigs with a foliage not their own. So far the 'vine' had done no worse than ivy does at home, but there was one feature about it which puzzled me altogether. The lowest of the original branches of the cedar were about twenty feet above our heads. From these in four or five places the parasite had let fall shoots, perhaps an inch in diameter, which descended to within a foot of the ground and then suddenly, without touching that or anything, formed a bight like a rope, went straight up again, caught hold of the branch from which they started, and so hung suspended exactly as an ordinary swing. In three distinctly perfect instances the 'vine' had executed this singular evolution, while at the extremity of one of the longest and tallest branches high up in the air it had made a clean leap of fifteen feet without visible help and had caught hold of another tree adjoining on the same level. These performances were so inexplicable that I conceived that they must have been a freak of the gardener's. I was mistaken. He said that at particular times in the year the fig vine threw out fine tendrils which hung downwards like strings. The strongest among them would lay hold of two or three others and climb up upon them, the rest would die and drop off, while the successful one, having found support for itself above, would remain swinging in the air and thicken and prosper. The leap he explained by the wind. I retained a suspicion that the wind had been assisted by some aspiring energy in the plant itself, so bold it was and so ambitious.

But the wonders of the garden were thrown into the shade by the cottage at the extreme angle of it (the old Government House before the present fabric had been erected), where Kingsley had been the guest of Sir Arthur Gordon. It is a long straggling wooden building with deep verandahs lying in a hollow overshadowed by trees, with views opening out into the savannah through arches formed by clumps of tall bamboos, the canes growing thick in circular masses and shooting up a hundred feet into the air, where they meet and form frames for the landscape, peculiar and even picturesque when there are not too many of them. These bamboos were Kingsley's special delight, as he had never seen the like of them elsewhere. The room in which he wrote is still shown, and the gallery where he walked up and down with his long pipe. His memory is cherished in the island as

of some singular and beautiful presence which still hovers about the scenes which so delighted him in the closing evening of his own life.

It was the dry season, mid-winter, yet raining every day for two or three hours, and when it rains in these countries it means business. When the sky cleared the sun was intolerably hot, and distant expeditions under such conditions suited neither my age nor my health. With cocktail I might have ventured, but to cocktail I could never heartily reconcile myself. Trinidad has one wonder in it, a lake of bitumen some ninety acres in extent, which all travellers are expected to visit, and which few residents care to visit. A black lake is not so beautiful as an ordinary lake. I had no doubt that it existed, for the testimony was unimpeachable. Indeed I was shown an actual specimen of the crystallised pitch itself. I could believe without seeing and without undertaking a tedious journey. I rather sympathised with a noble lord who came to Port of Spain in his yacht, and like myself had the lake impressed upon him. As a middle course between going thither and appearing to slight his friends' recommendations, he said that he would send his steward.

In Trinidad, as everywhere else, my own chief desire was to see the human inhabitants, to learn what they were doing, how they were living, and what they were thinking about, and this could best be done by drives about the town and neighbourhood. The cultivated land is a mere fringe round the edges of the forest. Three-fourths of the soil are untouched. The rivers running out of the mountains have carved out the usual long deep valleys, and spread the bottoms with rich alluvial soil. Here among the wooded slopes are the country houses of the merchants. Here are the cabins of the black peasantry with their cocoa and coffee and orange plantations, which as in Grenada they hold largely as freeholds, reproducing as near as possible the life in Paradise of our first parents, without the consciousness of a want which they are unable to gratify, not compelled to work, for the earth of her own self bears for them all that they need, and ignorant that there is any difference between moral good and evil.

Large sugar estates, of course, there still are, and as the owners have not succeeded in bringing the negroes to work regularly for them,⁵ they have introduced a few thousand Coolies under indentures for five years. These Asiatic importations are very happy in Trinidad; they save money, and many of them do not return home when their time is out, but stay where they are, buy land, or go into trade. They are proud, however, and will not intermarry with the Africans. Few bring their families with them; and women being scanty among them, there arise inconveniences and sometimes serious crimes.

It were to be wished that there was more prospect of the Coolie race becoming permanent than I fear there is. They work excellently. They are picturesque additions to the landscape, as they keep to the bright colours and graceful drapery of India. The grave dignity of their faces contrasts remarkably with the broad, good-humoured, but common features of the African. The black women look with envy at the straight hair of Asia, and twist their unhappy wool into knots and ropes in the vain hope of being mistaken for the purer race; but this is all. The African and the Asiatic will not mix, and the African being the stronger will and must prevail in Trinidad as elsewhere in the West Indies. Out of a total population of 170,000, there are 25,000 whites and mulattoes, 10,000 coolies, the rest negroes. The English part of the Europeans shows no tendency to increase. The English come as birds of passage, and depart when they have made their fortunes. The French and Spaniards may hold on to Trinidad as a home. Our people do not make homes there, and must be looked on as a transient element.

⁵ The negroes in the interior are beginning to cultivate sugar cane in small patches, with common mills to break it up. If the experiment succeeds it may extend.

CHAPTER VII

A Coolie village – Negro freeholds – Waterworks – Pythons – Slavery – Evidence of Lord Rodney – Future of the negroes – Necessity of English rule – The Blue Basin – Black boy and cray fish.

The second morning after my arrival, my host took me to a Coolie village three miles beyond the town. The drive was between spreading cane fields, beneath the shade of bamboos, or under rows of cocoa-nut palms, between the stems of which the sea was gleaming.

Human dwelling places are rarely interesting in the tropics. A roof which will keep the rain out is all that is needed. The more free the passage given to the air under the floor and through the side, the more healthy the habitation; and the houses, when we came among them, seemed merely enlarged packing cases loosely nailed together and raised on stones a foot or two from the ground. The rest of the scene was picturesque enough. The Indian jewellers were sitting cross-legged before their charcoal pans, making silver bracelets and earrings. Brilliant garments, crimson and blue and orange, were hanging to dry on clothes lines. Men were going out to their work, women cooking, children (not many) playing or munching sugar cane, while great mango trees and ceibas spread a cool green roof over all. Like Rachel, the Coolies had brought their gods to their new home. In the centre of the village was a Hindoo temple, made up rudely out of boards with a verandah running round it. The doors were locked. An old man who had charge told us we could not enter; a crowd, suspicious and sullen, gathered about us as we tried to prevail upon him; so we had to content ourselves with the outside, which was gaudily and not unskilfully painted in Indian fashion. There were gods and goddesses in various attitudes; Vishnu fighting with the monkey god, Vishnu with cutlass and shield, the monkey with his tail round one tree while he brandished two others, one in each hand, as clubs. I suppose that we smiled, for our curiosity was resented, and we found it prudent to withdraw.

The Coolies are useful creatures. Without them sugar cultivation in Trinidad and Demerara would cease altogether. They are useful and they are singularly ornamental. Unfortunately they have not the best character with the police. There is little crime among the negroes, who quarrel furiously with their tongues only. The Coolies have the fiercer passions of their Eastern blood. Their women being few are tempted occasionally into infidelities, and would be tempted more often but that a lapse in virtue is so fearfully avenged. A Coolie regards his wife as his property, and if she is unfaithful to him he kills her without the least hesitation. One of the judges told me that he had tried a case of this kind, and could not make the man understand that he had done anything wrong. It is a pity that a closer intermixture between them and the negroes seems so hopeless, for it would solve many difficulties. There is no jealousy. The negro does not regard the Coolie as a competitor and interloper who has come to lower his wages. The Coolie comes to work. The negro does not want to work, and both are satisfied. But if there is no jealousy there is no friendship. The two races are more absolutely apart than the white and the black. The Asiatic insists the more on his superiority in the fear perhaps that if he did not the white might forget it.

Among the sights in the neighbourhood of Port of Spain are the waterworks, extensive basins and reservoirs a few miles off in the hills. We chose a cool afternoon, when the temperature in the shade was not above 86°, and went to look at them. It was my first sight of the interior of the island, and my first distinct acquaintance with the change which had come over the West Indies. Trinidad is not one of our oldest possessions, but we had held it long enough for the old planter civilisation to take root and grow, and our road led us through jungles of flowering shrubs which were running wild over what had been once cultivated estates. Stranger still (for one associates colonial life instinctively with what is new and modern), we came at one place on an avenue of vast trees, at the end of which stood the ruins of a mansion of some great man of the departed order. Great man he must have been, for

there was a gateway half crumbled away on which were his crest and shield in stone, with supporters on either side, like the Baron of Bradwardine's Bears; fallen now like them, but unlike them never, I fear, to be set up again. The Anglo-West Indians, like the English gentry in Ireland, were a fine race of men in their day, and perhaps the improving them off the earth has been a less beneficial process in either case than we are in the habit of supposing.

Entering among the hills we came on their successors. In Trinidad there are 18,000 freeholders, most of them negroes and representatives of the old slaves. Their cabins are spread along the road on either side, overhung with bread-fruit trees, tamarinds, calabash trees, out of which they make their cups and water jugs. The luscious granadilla climbs among the branches; plantains throw their cool shade over the doors; oranges and limes and citrons perfume the air, and droop their boughs under the weight of their golden burdens. There were yams in the gardens and cows in the paddocks, and cocoa bushes loaded with purple or yellow pods. Children played about in swarms, in happy idleness and abundance, with schools, too, at intervals, and an occasional Catholic chapel, for the old religion prevails in Trinidad, never having been disturbed. What form could human life assume more charming than that which we were now looking on? Once more, the earth does not contain any peasantry so well off, so well cared for, so happy, so sleek and contented as the sons and daughters of the emancipated slaves in the English West Indian Islands. Sugar may fail the planter, but cocoa, which each peasant can grow with small effort for himself, does not fail and will not. He may 'better his condition,' if he has any such ambition, without stirring beyond his own ground, and so far, perhaps, his ambition may extend, if it is not turned off upon politics. Even the necessary evils of the tropics are not many or serious. His skin is proof against mosquitoes. There are snakes in Trinidad as there were snakes in Eden. 'Plenty snakes,' said one of them who was at work in his garden, 'plenty snakes, but no bitee.' As to costume, he would prefer the costume of innocence if he was allowed. Clothes in such a climate are superfluous for warmth, and to the minds of the negroes, unconscious as they are of shame, superfluous for decency. European prejudice, however, still passes for something; the women have a love for finery, which would prevent a complete return to African simplicity; and in the islands which are still French, and in those like Trinidad, which the French originally colonised, they dress themselves with real taste. They hide their wool in red or yellow handkerchiefs, gracefully twisted; or perhaps it is not only to conceal the wool. Columbus found the Carib women of the island dressing their hair in the same fashion.⁶

The waterworks, when we reached them, were even more beautiful than we had been taught to expect. A dam has been driven across a perfectly limpid mountain stream; a wide open area has been cleared, levelled, strengthened with masonry, and divided into deep basins and reservoirs, through which the current continually flows. Hedges of hibiscus shine with crimson blossoms. Innumerable humming birds glance to and fro among the trees and shrubs, and gardens and ponds are overhung by magnificent bamboos, which so astonished me by their size that I inquired if their height had been measured. One of them, I was told, had lately fallen, and was found to be 130 feet long. A single drawback only there was to this enchanting spot, and it was again the snakes. There are huge pythons in Trinidad which are supposed to have crossed the straits from the continent. The cool water pools attract them, and they are seen occasionally coiled among the branches of the bamboos. Some washerwomen at work in the stream had been disturbed a few days before our visit by one of these monsters, who had come down to see what they were about. They are harmless, but trying to the nerves. One of the men about the place shot this one, and he told me that he had shot another a short time before asleep in a tree. The keeper of the works was a retired soldier, an Irish-Scot from Limerick, hale, vigorous, and happy as the blacks themselves. He had married one of them – a remarkable exception to an almost universal rule. He did not introduce us, but the dark lady passed

⁶ Traen las cabezas atadas con unos pañuelos labrados hermosos que parecen de lejos de seda y almazarrones.

by us in gorgeous costume, just noticing our presence with a sweep which would have done credit to a duchess.

We made several similar small expeditions into the settled parts of the neighbourhood, seeing always (whatever else we saw) the boundless happiness of the black race. Under the rule of England in these islands the two million of these poor brothers-in-law of ours are the most perfectly contented specimens of the human race to be found upon the planet. Even Schopenhauer, could he have known them, would have admitted that there were some of us who were not hopelessly wretched. If happiness be the satisfaction of every conscious desire, theirs is a condition which admits of no improvement: were they independent, they might quarrel among themselves, and the weaker become the bondmen of the stronger; under the beneficent despotism of the English Government, which knows no difference of colour and permits no oppression, they can sleep, lounge, and laugh away their lives as they please, fearing no danger. If they want money, work and wages are waiting for them. No one can say what may be before them hereafter. The powers which envy human beings too perfect felicity may find ways one day of disturbing the West Indian negro; but so long as the English rule continues, he may be assured of the same tranquil existence.

As life goes he has been a lucky mortal. He was taken away from Dahomey and Ashantee – to be a slave indeed, but a slave to a less cruel master than he would have found at home. He had a bad time of it occasionally, and the plantation whip and the branding irons are not all dreams, yet his owner cared for him at least as much as he cared for his cows and his horses. Kind usage to animals is more economical than barbarity, and Englishmen in the West Indies were rarely inhuman. Lord Rodney says:

'I have been often in all the West India Islands, and I have often made my observations on the treatment of the negro slaves, and can aver that I never knew the least cruelty inflicted on them, but that in general they lived better than the honest day-labouring man in England, without doing a fourth part of his work in a day, and I am fully convinced that the negroes in our islands are better provided for and live better than when in Guinea.'

Rodney, it is true, was a man of facts and was defective in sentiment. Let us suppose him wrong, let us believe the worst horrors of the slave trade or slave usage as fluent tongue of missionary or demagogue has described them, yet nevertheless, when we consider what the lot of common humanity has been and is, we shall be dishonest if we deny that the balance has been more than redressed; and the negroes who were taken away out of Africa, as compared with those who were left at home, were as the 'elect to salvation,' who after a brief purgatory are secured an eternity of blessedness. The one condition is the maintenance of the authority of the English crown. The whites of the islands cannot equitably rule them. They have not shaken off the old traditions. If, for the sake of theory or to shirk responsibility, we force them to govern themselves, the state of Hayti stands as a ghastly example of the condition into which they will then inevitably fall. If we persist, we shall be sinning against light – the clearest light that was ever given in such affairs. The most hardened believers in the regenerating effects of political liberty cannot be completely blind to the ruin which the infliction of it would necessarily bring upon the race for whose interests they pretend particularly to care.

The Pitch Lake I resisted all exhortations to visit, but the days in the forest were delightful – pre-eminently a day which we spent at the 'Blue Basin,' a pool scooped out in the course of ages by a river falling through a mountain gorge; blue, not from any colour in the water, which is purely transparent, but from a peculiar effect of sky reflection through an opening in the overhanging trees. As it was far off, we had to start early and encounter the noonday heat. We had to close the curtains of the carriage to escape the sun, and in losing the sun we shut out the wind. All was well, however, when we turned into the hills. Thenceforward the road followed the bottom of a densely wooded ravine; impenetrable foliage spreading over our heads, and a limpid river flashing along in which our horses cooled their feet and lips as we crossed it again and again. There were the usual cabins and gardens on either side of us, sometimes single, sometimes clustering into villages, and high above them the rocks stood out,

broken into precipices or jutting out into projecting crags, with huge trees starting from the crevices, dead trunks with branching arms clothed scantily with creepers, or living giants with blue or orange-coloured flowers. Mangoes scented the valley with their blossom. Bananas waved their long broad leaves – some flat and unbroken as we know them in conservatories, some split into palm-like fronds which quivered in the breeze. The cocoa pods were ripe or ripening, those which had been gathered being left on the ground in heaps as we see apples in autumn in an English orchard.

We passed a lady on the way who was making sketches and darning the mosquitoes, that were feeding at leisure upon her face and arms. The road failed us at last. We alighted with our waterproofs and luncheon basket. A couple of half-naked boys sprang forward to act as guides and porters – nice little fellows, speaking a French patois for their natural language, but with English enough to earn shillings and amuse the British tourist. With their help we scrambled along a steep slippery path, the river roaring below, till we came to a spot where, the rock being soft, a waterfall had cut out in the course of ages a natural hollow, of which the trees formed the roof, and of which the floor was the pool we had come in search of. The fall itself was perpendicular, and fifty or sixty feet high, the water issuing at the top out of a dark green tunnel among overhanging branches. The sides of the basin were draped with the fronds of gigantic ferns and wild plantains, all in wild luxuriance and dripping with the spray. In clefts above the rocks, large cedars or gum trees had struck their roots and flung out their gnarled and twisted branches, which were hung with ferns; while at the lower end of the pool, where the river left it again, there grew out from among the rocks near the water's edge tall and exquisitely grouped acacias with crimson flowers for leaves.

The place broke on us suddenly as we scrambled round a corner from below. Three young blacks were bathing in the pool, and as we had a lady with us, they were induced, though sullenly and with some difficulty, to return into their scanty garments and depart. Never certainly was there a more inviting spot to swim in, the more so from exciting possibilities of adventure. An English gentleman went to bathe there shortly before our coming. He was on a rock, swaying his body for a plunge, when something caught his eye among the shadows at the bottom. It proved to be a large dead python.

We had not the luck ourselves of falling in with so interesting a beast. Great butterflies and perhaps a humming bird or two were flitting among the leaves as we came up; other signs of life there were none, unless we call life the motion of the plantain leaves, waving in the draughts of air which were eddying round the waterfall. We sat down on stones, or on the trunk of a fallen tree, the mosquitoes mercifully sparing us. We sketched a little, talked a little, ate our sandwiches, and the male part of us lighted our cigars. G – then, to my surprise, produced a fly rod. In the streams in the Antilles, which run out of the mountains, there is a fish in great abundance which they call *mullet*, an inferior trout, but a good substitute where the real thing is not. He runs sometimes to five pounds weight, will take the fly, and is much sought after by those who try to preserve in the tropics the amusements and habits of home. G – had caught many of them in Dominica. If in Dominica, why not in Trinidad?

He put his tackle together, tied up a cast of trout flies, and commenced work. He tried the still water at the lower end of the basin. He crept round the rock and dropped his line into the foam at the foot of the fall. No mullet rose, nor fish of any kind. One of our small boys had looked on with evident impatience. He cried out at last, 'No mullet, but plenty crayfish,' pointing down into the water; and there, following the direction of his finger, we beheld strange grey creatures like cuttle-fish, moving about on the points of their toes, the size of small lobsters. The flies were dismounted, a bare hook was fitted on a fine gut trace, with a split shot or two to sink the line, all trim and excellent. A fresh-water shrimp was caught under a stone for a bait. G – went to work, and the strange things took hold and let themselves be lifted halfway to the surface. But then, somehow, they let go and disappeared.

Our small boy said nothing; but I saw a scornful smite upon his lips. He picked up a thin dry cane, found some twine in the luncheon basket which had tied up our sandwiches, found a pin there also, and bent it, and put a shrimp on it. With a pebble stone for a sinker he started in competition,

and in a minute he had brought out upon the rock the strangest thing in the shape of a fish which I had ever seen in fresh water or salt. It was a true 'crayfish,' *écrevisse*, eight inches long, formed regularly with the thick powerful tail, the sharp serrated snout, the long antennæ, and the spider-like legs of the lobster tribe. As in a crayfish, the claws were represented by the correctly shaped but diminutive substitutes.

When we had done wondering at the prize, we could admire the smile of conscious superiority in the face of the captor. The fine tackle had been beaten, as usual, by the proverbial string and crooked pin, backed by knowledge in the head of a small nigger boy.

CHAPTER VIII

Home Rule in Trinidad – Political aspirations – Nature of the problem – Crown administration – Colonial governors – A Russian apologue – Dinner at Government House – 'The Three Fishers' – Charles Warner – Alternative futures of the colony.

The political demonstration to which I had been invited came off the next day on the savannah. The scene was pretty enough. Black coats and white trousers, bright-coloured dresses and pink parasols, look the same at a distance whether the wearer has a black face or a white one, and the broad meadow was covered over with sparkling groups. Several thousand persons must have attended, not all to hear the oratory, for the occasion had been taken when the Governor was to play close by in a cricket match, and half the crowd had probably collected to see His Excellency at the wicket. Placards had been posted about the town, setting out the purpose of the meeting. Trinidad, as I said, is at present a Crown colony, the executive council and the legislature being equally nominated by the authorities. The popular orators, the newspaper writers, and some of the leading merchants in Port of Spain had discovered, as I said, that they were living under what they called 'a degrading tyranny.' They had no grievances, or none that they alleged, beyond the general one that they had no control over the finance. They very naturally desired that the lucrative Government appointments for which the colony paid should be distributed among themselves. The elective principle had been reintroduced in Jamaica, evidently as a step towards the restoration of the full constitution which had been surrendered and suppressed after the Gordon riots. Trinidad was almost as large as Jamaica, in proportion to the population wealthier and more prosperous, and the people were invited to come together in overwhelming numbers to insist that the 'tyranny' should end. The Home Government in their action about Jamaica had shown a spontaneous readiness to transfer responsibility from themselves to the inhabitants. The promoters of the meeting at Port of Spain may have thought that a little pressure on their part might not be unwelcome as an excuse for further concessions of the same kind. Whether this was so I do not know. At any rate they showed that they were as yet novices in the art of agitation. The language of the placard of invitation was so violent that, in the opinion of the legal authorities, the printer might have been indicted for high treason. The speakers did their best to imitate the fine phrases of the apostles of liberty in Europe, but they succeeded only in caricaturing their absurdities. The proceedings were described at length in the rival newspapers. One gentleman's speech was said to have been so brilliant that every sentence was a 'gem of oratory,' the gem of gems being when he told his hearers that, 'if they went into the thing at all, they should go the entire animal.' All went off good-humouredly. In the Liberal journal the event of the day was spoken of as the most magnificent demonstration in favour of human freedom which had ever been seen in the West Indian Islands. In the Conservative journal it was called a ridiculous *fiasco*, and the people were said to have come together only to admire the Governor's batting, and to laugh at the nonsense which was coming from the platform. Finally, the same journal assured us that, beyond a handful of people who were interested in getting hold of the anticipated spoils of office, no one in the island cared about the matter.

The result, I believe, was some petition or other which would go home and pass as evidence, to minds eager to believe, that Trinidad was rapidly ripening for responsible government, promising relief to an overburdened Secretary for the Colonies, who has more to do than he can attend to, and is pleased with opportunities of gratifying popular sentiment, or of showing off in Parliament the development of colonial institutions. He knows nothing, can know nothing, of the special conditions of our hundred dependencies. He accepts what his representatives in the several colonies choose to tell him; and his representatives, being birds of passage responsible only to their employers at home,

and depending for their promotion on making themselves agreeable, are under irresistible temptations to report what it will please the Secretary of State to hear.

For the Secretary of State, too, is a bird of passage as they are, passing through the Colonial Office on his way to other departments, or holding the seals as part of an administration whose tenure of office grows every year more precarious, which exists only upon popular sentiment, and cannot, and does not try to look forward beyond at furthest the next session of Parliament.

But why, it may be asked, should not Trinidad govern itself as well as Tasmania or New Zealand? Why not Jamaica, why not all the West Indian Islands? I will answer by another question. Do we wish these islands to remain as part of the British Empire? Are they of any use to us, or have we responsibilities connected with them of which we are not entitled to divest ourselves? A government elected by the majority of the people (and no one would think of setting up constitutions on any other basis) reflects from the nature of things the character of the electors. All these islands tend to become partitioned into black peasant proprietaries. In Grenada the process is almost complete. In Trinidad it is rapidly advancing. No one can stop it. No one ought to wish to stop it. But the ownership of freeholds is one thing, and political power is another. The blacks depend for the progress which they may be capable of making on the presence of a white community among them; and although it is undesirable or impossible for the blacks to be ruled by the minority of the white residents, it is equally undesirable and equally impossible that the whites should be ruled by them. The relative numbers of the two races being what they are, responsible government in Trinidad means government by a black parliament and a black ministry. The negro voters might elect, to begin with, their half-caste attorneys or such whites (the most disreputable of their colour) as would court their suffrages. But the black does not love the mulatto, and despises the white man who consents to be his servant. He has no grievances. He is not naturally a politician, and if left alone with his own patch of land, will never trouble himself to look further. But he knows what has happened in St. Domingo. He has heard that his race is already in full possession of the finest of all the islands. If he has any thought or any hopes about the matter, it is that it may be with the rest of them as it has been with St. Domingo, and if you force the power into his hands, you must expect him to use it. Under the constitution which you would set up, whites and blacks may be nominally equal; but from the enormous preponderance of numbers the equality would be only in name, and such English people, at least, as would be really of any value, would refuse to remain in a false and intolerable position. Already the English population of Trinidad is dwindling away under the uncertainties of their future position. Complete the work, set up a constitution with a black prime minister and a black legislature, and they will withdraw of themselves before they are compelled to go. Spaniards and French might be tempted by advantages of trade to remain in Port of Spain, as a few are still to be found in Hayti. They, it is possible, might in time recover and reassert their supremacy. Englishmen have the world open to them, and will prefer lands where they can live under less degrading conditions. In Hayti the black republic allows no white man to hold land in freehold. The blacks elsewhere with the same opportunities will develop the same aspirations.

Do we, or do we not, intend to retain our West Indian Islands under the sovereignty of the Queen? If we are willing to let them go, the question is settled. But we ought to face the alternative. There is but one form of government under which we can retain these colonies with honour and security to ourselves and with advantage to the negroes whom we have placed there – the mode of government which succeeds with us so admirably that it is the world's wonder in the *East Indies*, a success so unique and so extraordinary that it seems the last from which we are willing to take example.

In Natal, where the circumstances are analogous, and where report says that efforts are being also made to force on constitutional independence, I remember suggesting a few years ago that the governor should be allowed to form his own council, and that in selecting the members of it he should go round the colony, observe the farms where the land was well inclosed, the fields clean, the farm

buildings substantial and in good repair; that he should call on the owners of these to be his advisers and assistants. In all Natal he might find a dozen such. They would be unwilling to leave their own business for so thankless a purpose; but they might be induced by good feeling to grant him a few weeks of their time. Under such an administration I imagine Natal would have a happier future before it than it will experience with the boon which is designed for it.

In the West Indies there is indefinite wealth waiting to be developed by intelligence and capital; and men with such resources, both English and American, might be tempted still to settle there, and lead the blacks along with them into more settled manners and higher forms of civilisation. But the future of the blacks, and our own influence over them for good, depend on their being protected from themselves and from the schemers who would take advantage of them. However little may be the share to which the mass of a population be admitted in the government of their country, they are never found hard to manage where they prosper and are justly dealt with. The children of darkness are even easier of control than the children of light. Under an administration formed on the model of that of our Eastern Empire these islands would be peopled in a generation or two with dusky citizens, as proud as the rest of us of the flag under which they will have thriven, and as willing to defend it against any invading enemy as they are now unquestionably indifferent. Partially elected councils, local elected boards, &c., serve only as contrivances to foster discontent and encourage jobbery. They open a rift which time will widen, and which will create for us, on a smaller scale, the conditions which have so troubled us in Ireland, where each concession of popular demands makes the maintenance of the connection more difficult. In the Pacific colonies self-government is a natural right; the colonists are part of ourselves, and have as complete a claim to the management of their own affairs as we have to the management of ours. The less we interfere with them the more heartily they identify themselves with us. But if we choose besides to indulge our ambition with an empire, if we determine to keep attached to our dominion countries which, like the East Indies, have been conquered by the sword, countries, like the West Indies, which, however acquired, are occupied by races enormously outnumbering us, many of whom do not speak our language, are not connected with us by sentiment, and not visibly connected by interest, with whom our own people will not intermarry or hold social intercourse, but keep aloof from, as superior from inferior – to impose on such countries forms of self-government at which we have ourselves but lately arrived, to put it in the power of these overwhelming numbers to shake us off if they please, and to assume that when our real motive has been only to save ourselves trouble they will be warmed into active loyalty by gratitude for the confidence which we pretend to place in them, is to try an experiment which we have not the slightest right to expect to be successful, and which if it fails is fatal.

Once more, if we mean to keep the blacks as British subjects, we are bound to govern them, and to govern them well. If we cannot do it, we had better let them go altogether. And here is the real difficulty. It is not that men competent for such a task cannot be found. Among the public servants of Great Britain there are persons always to be found fit and willing for posts of honour and difficulty if a sincere effort be made to find them. Alas! in times past we have sent persons to rule our Baratarias to whom Sancho Panza was a sage – troublesome members of Parliament, younger brothers of powerful families, impecunious peers; favourites, with backstairs influence, for whom a provision was to be found; colonial clerks, bred in the office, who had been obsequious and useful.

One had hoped that in the new zeal for the colonial connection such appointments would have become impossible for the future, yet a recent incident at the Mauritius has proved that the colonial authorities are still unregenerate. The unfit are still maintained in their places; and then, to prevent the colonies from suffering too severely under their incapacity, we set up the local councils, nominated or elected, to do the work, while the Queen's representative enjoys his salary. Instances of glaring impropriety like that to which I have alluded are of course rare, and among colonial governors there are men of quality so high that we would desire only to see their power equal to it. But so limited is the patronage, on the other hand, which remains to the home administrations, and so heavy the pressure

brought to bear upon them, that there are persons also in these situations of whom it may be said that the less they do, and the less they are enabled to do, the better for the colony over which they preside.

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