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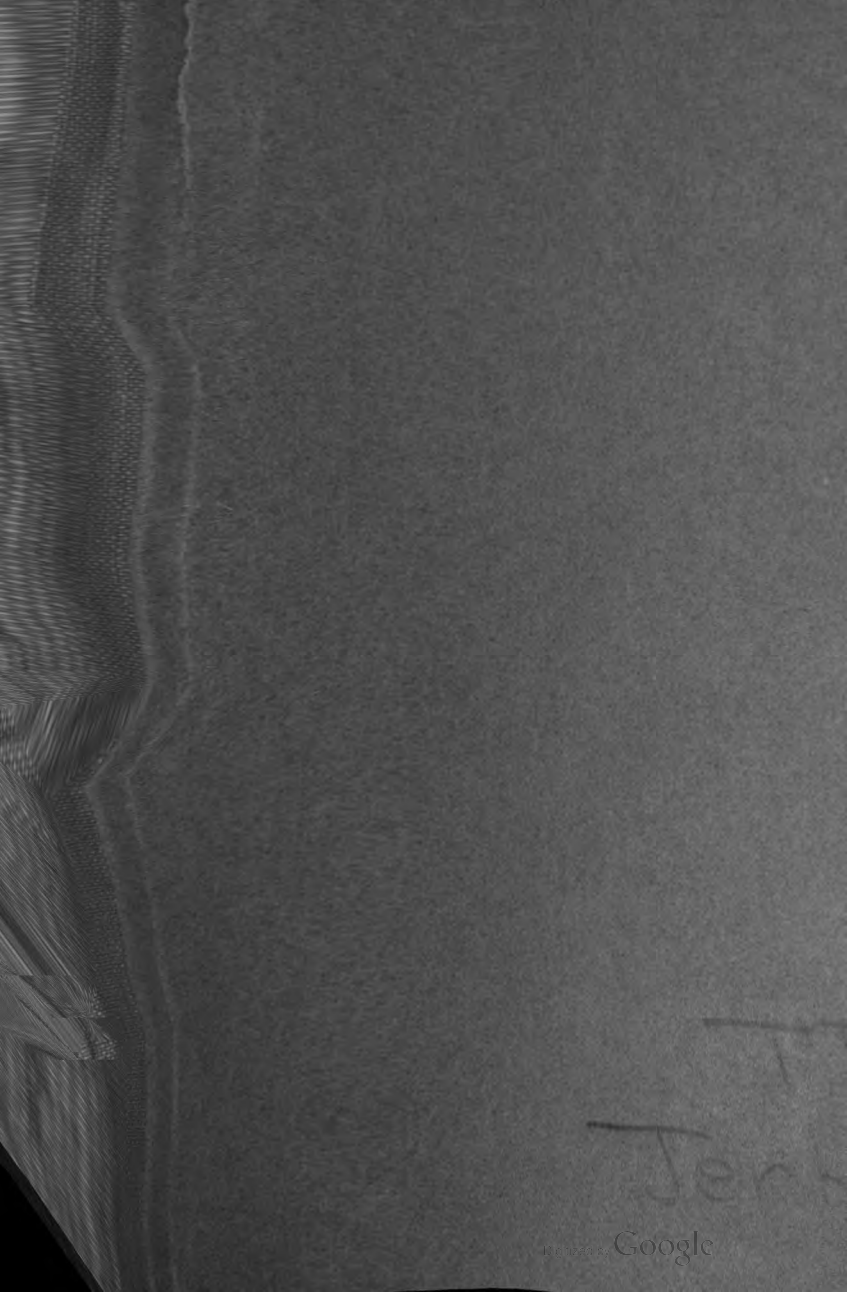
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# The coolie

Edward Jenkins

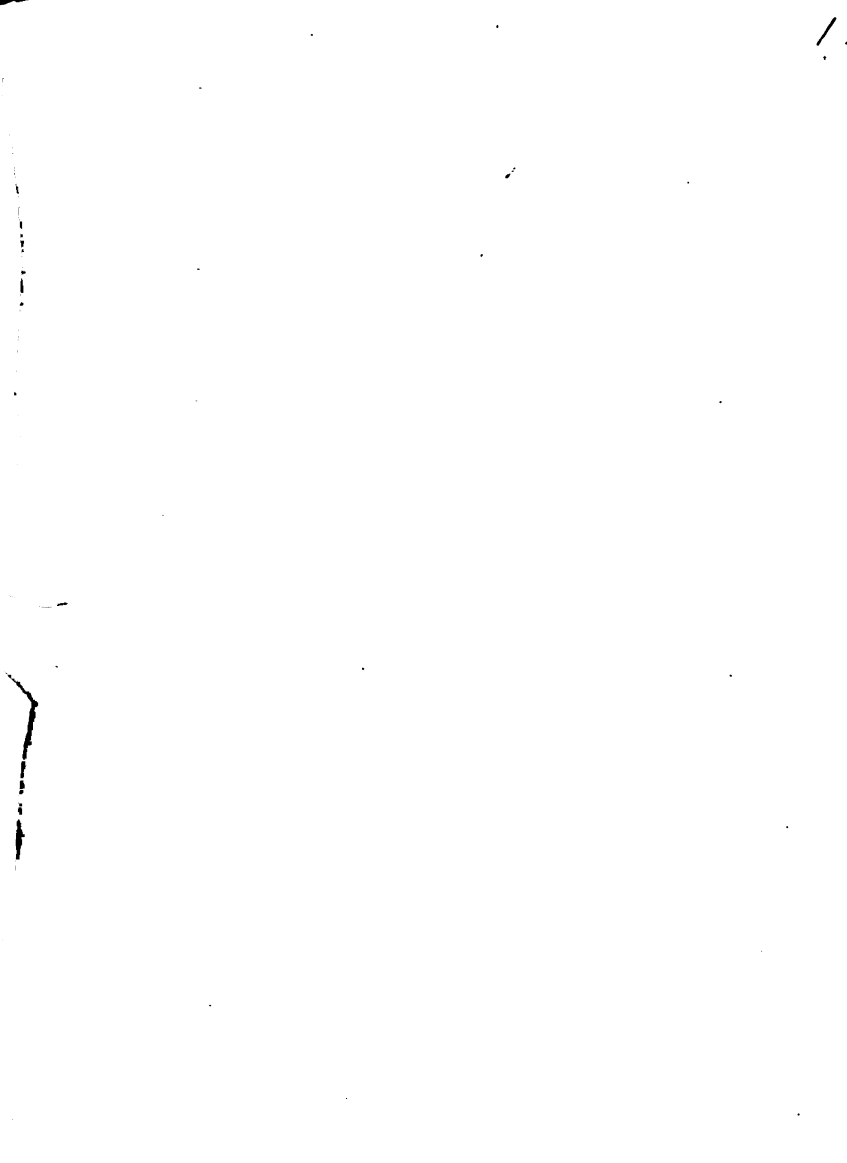












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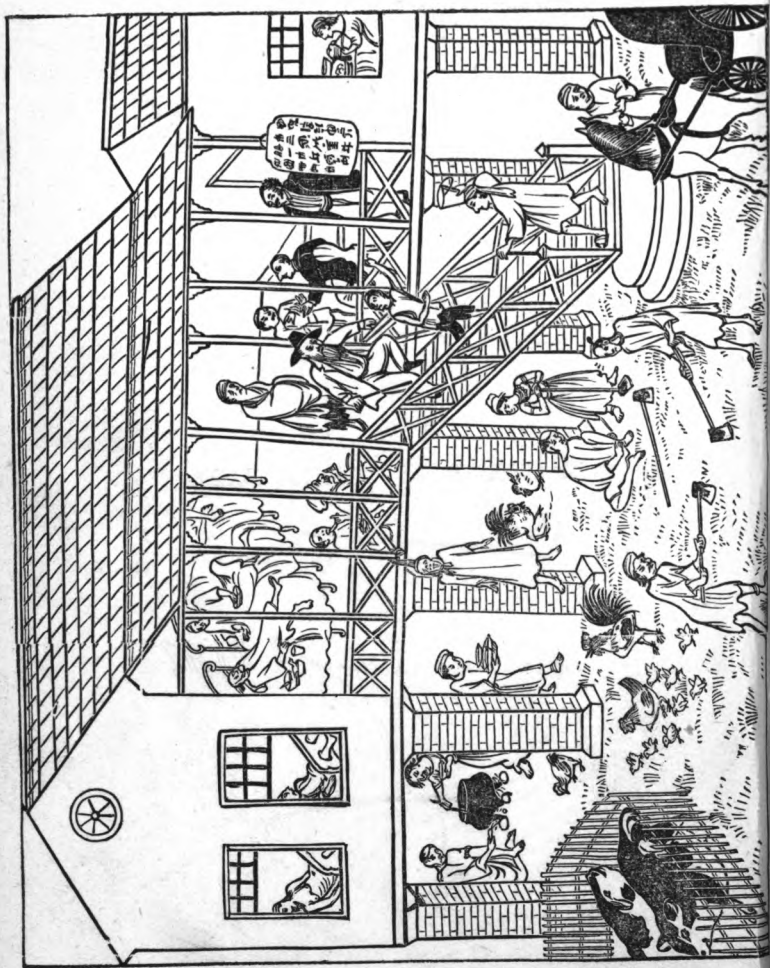
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# THE COOLIE

**His Rights and Wrongs**

**BY THE AUTHOR OF "GINX'S BABY"**

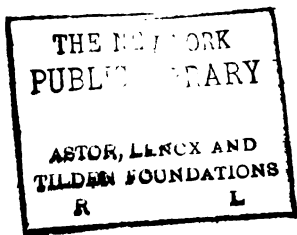
*(Edwards and Jones, 1871)*

**AUTHOR'S EDITION**

**GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS**

**NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET**

**1871** *W*



This edition is the only one published in America with the consent of the author, and from the sale of which he derives any benefit.



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## PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

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**T**HIS edition of "The Coolie" has been expressly prepared for American readers, and has been corrected by the author's own hands. The subject of it is only one branch of a wide and deeply interesting question—one likely to increase in interest with the expanding energies of the Anglo-Saxon race through British and American dominions. Whether in the future of the Southern States, in turning an eye to the labour-fields of the East, some such system as is described in the following pages may come to be adopted, I know not; yet I cannot but feel that many of the facts here related, many of the principles here discussed, and not a little of the general policy here advocated, will prove of interest, if not of use, to philanthropists and politicians in America. It is well that Americans and Englishmen should feel a common interest in all great questions of social polity or of philanthropic



principle. We can no more disregard each other's movements, each other's successes, or each other's blunders, than we can the motions of the earth or the laws of gravitation. Therefore it is that I send out this little book to the readers of America.

As all readers may not care to dip too deeply into the subject, I have restricted the narrative of my journey, and such picturesque facts and incidents as came under my own personal observation, to the First Part, which has been recast, with considerable and important additions, from a series of papers published in *Good Words*. In the Second Part—from Chapter XV.—I discuss the system and the local legislation. This is entirely new. I may add that long as is the Appendix, it will be found to repay a careful perusal.

TEMPLE, LONDON,  
*June 1st, 1871.*

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

**C**OLOUR white and colour brown, Brahmin and Pariah, domineering Anglo-Saxon and supple Asian, master and servant, lord and serf, Government and labourers, Planters and Coolies, these are the parties the controversy about whose relations and interests, mutual or antagonistic, is the subject of this book, as it was the object of my journey to British Guiana. Often has the world seen a similar controversy, the scene shifting with the shifting fortunes of races.

Of no small gravity are the issues to the parties concerned. To the planters, who are staking fortunes upon fresh annual swarmings from the great Indian or Chinese hives—nay, to you also, all sugar-consuming bipeds—the question whether one hundred thousand hogsheads, more or less, shall be yearly extracted from the rich mud-banks that lie between the Essequibo, Demerara, and Corentyn rivers is somewhat personal and serious; is it not? It needs, therefore, only to be said that if Coolie proved impracticable in the controversy, the whole of that vast industry would be endangered, with everything depending on it of capital and energy and commercial progress.

On the other hand, deeply interesting is this question to the Coolie himself and to the philanthropist. A

hundred thousand hogsheads of sugar per annum in the world, more or less, is a tittle compared with the question—Whether the toilers who produce it are wronged and unhappy? Some fifty thousand immigrants, carried by long voyages from their own land and family and race associations, are—of their own free will let it be remembered—bound for a certain number of years to fetch and carry, to work and delve, for any master assigned to them by a Demerara executive; bound under a wonderfully complicated system, with legal balances and checks, devised, some say, to protect them, others say to wrap them in inextricable bonds. How these people endure the change of life, how they are treated, their well-being or misery, and that of their children, have been the subjects of an elaborate inquiry ordered by her Majesty's Government. This inquiry, I venture to say, demands the fairest, keenest, strictest, most instant attention of that Great Mogul the British public.

Some time since, one, assuming to himself the office of Coolies' advocate, represented to the Colonial Secretary their state to be little other than that from which not many years ago the tillers of the same soil were redeemed by our generous fathers. Seduced from India or China by false promises (so he seems to have averred)—not duly notified of the legislation which would affect their relations when they reached the field of labour—assigned without due caution on the part of the executive to the power of unconscientious masters—wronged by the law and against law—daily injured, and unable to obtain redress, because of combinations between unjust magistrates, hireling doctors, and manœuvring planters—dying unrecked and unreckoned (I have tried faithfully thus to sum up this man's charges)—such a fifty thousand British subjects, anywhere existing, would heat the

sympathies of English hearts to boiling-point, and woe worth the Governor and Council, Court of Policy or impolicy, Combined Court or Electors' College, judges, magistrates, doctors, planters, managers, overseers, and "drivers," who should be accomplices in such a state of things! Most certainly this mud-bank question is a heavy matter. One hundred thousand hogsheads of sugar *versus* fifty thousand human souls; your money or their life.

It will be seen that I was selected by two great philanthropic societies to represent the Coolies in this inquiry. I accepted and held their retainer as a counsel, not as a partisan. I not only am not but never was a member of either of the associations. No one can accuse me of prejudice either way when I went to Demerara. On the contrary, I determined to form an unbiassed judgment, and I claim for my opinions the weight due to impartiality.

Besides my own experiences and the evidence adduced at the inquiry, I now have the Report of the Commissioners to fall back upon as at once a source of information and confirmation. It is not possible to exaggerate the value of this Report as a masterly and, long as it is, a concise review of the whole Coolie system. It must have no small influence upon the future policy of the Colonial Office, upon the machinery adopted in India and in various Coolie-worked colonies of the empire, upon the fortunes of peoples whose future is one of the gravest problems of humanity. I cannot wonder that there are philanthropists in England who watch, with a jealousy made alert by former evils, the transportation over immense distances of ignorant and simple people to places where they are subjected to the uncontrolled power of a local plutocracy—a planting community whose interest it naturally is to obtain for the cost of their importation the maximum of profit. It is a

noble zeal which prompts the distant stranger to look after the man whose brotherhood is the only claim to his regard. On the other hand, it is needful not to be generous only to the Coolie, but to be just to his masters; and it is in the earnest desire to have this recognised, to strike an even balance between conflicting opinions, that I write this book. If I may find it difficult—as who would not?—clearly to separate myself from the powerful influences of a labour carried on for some busy months in one behalf, on the other hand, I may appeal confidently to those planter friends, whose kind and manly hospitality made my work endurable, to acquit me at all times of an intentional injustice.

Demerara, of which Georgetown is the capital, is a division or county of British Guiana, a colony lying between Surinam or Dutch Guiana, and Venezuela, on the north-west shoulder of South America. British Guiana is divided into three counties, named respectively after the great rivers which bound or transpire them—Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo.

Next let me state the dimensions of the colony. From the Corentyn river, separating it from Surinam, to the Barima river, which glides between it and Venezuela, extends a coast-line of two hundred and eighty miles, from which line, in towards the Brazils, it stretches three and sometimes four hundred miles or more in breadth. It lies between latitude  $8^{\circ}$  N. and  $3^{\circ} 30'$  S.

Seven days before I set out for Demerara, I had as much idea of visiting the moon; but when the Aborigines Protection Society and the Anti-Slavery Society offered me, as a barrister, a retainer in an investigation concerning for right or wrong near half a hundred thousand souls, I could not hesitate about my duty or be tardy in my movements. So many Coolies and Chinese, imported by and for the purposes of British

enterprise, were living and working for masters in that out-of-the-way colony. They had immigrated under a system approved by the Colonial Office. The Indian Government and that of British Guiana were also parties to it, as regarded the Coolies, and the Chinese Government as regarded its own citizens.

It should be clearly understood that, as I have above hinted, the Coolie question is of far larger dimensions than is implied by the last statement. Other parts of the West Indies, such as Trinidad and Jamaica, have their Coolies, and are eagerly looking for more; and in Mauritius alone over two hundred thousand of these expatriated people demand British protection and care. In the United States of America and in Australasia the movement already commenced for the importation of Eastern labour foreshadows a time when this will be among the greatest of social-political subjects, when the statesman and the economist will alike need to exercise all their astuteness in solving its perpetually-increasing problems.

These immigrants landed in Demerara, almost every one of them, actually or practically under a bond of indenture. By that indenture entered into in their own country with the Guiana Executive, they had agreed generally to serve for five years any master assigned to them by that Executive.

Here, for instance, let me give a paragraph or two of the indenture of my friend and *quondam* host, Lum a Yung. "Made the 16th day of December, in the year of the Christian era, being the 3rd day of the 12th month of the 9th year of the reign of Hiefung according to the Chinese Imperial Calendar." By this document, in bad English and good Chinese side by side, the said Lum a Yung bound himself to "John Gardiner Austin, *Special Agent of the British Government for the regulating and encouragement of Emigration from China to the British West Indies.*"

“1. That the said party of the first part shall and will, so soon as he shall be required, embark on the ship *Dora* now lying at anchor in the harbour of Hong Kong, and bound for the colony of British Guiana, and remain on board the said ship henceforward until she proceeds to sea, and shall then proceed as a passenger on board the said ship to British Guiana, for the purpose of carrying out the stipulations hereinafter contained on the part of the said party of the first part.

“2. That the said party of the first part shall and will from time to time and at all times during the term of five years, to be computed, &c.,—well, faithfully, and diligently, and according to the best of his skill and ability, work and serve as an agricultural labourer, in the said colony according to the provisions hereinafter contained.

“3. That the said party of the first part shall and will work as such labourer as aforesaid for the space of seven hours and a half of each day during the aforesaid term of five years, on such estate as may be pointed out by the Governor of British Guiana, with a reservation of not less than five days to be set apart during each year as holidays at the China New Year by the said Governor, and of every Sabbath day.”

In return for this the “Agent of the British Government” contracted, so long as the immigrant performed his part of the agreement, to cause to be paid to him weekly “the same rate of wages for the same proportionate quantity of work as may from time to time be paid to unindented labourers working on the same plantation,” and to cause to be provided for him house, garden-ground, and medical attendance free of expense.

Here, then, in a few authentic words have we sketched out for us a first outline of the whole scheme of Coolie Immigration—the immigrant’s contract and

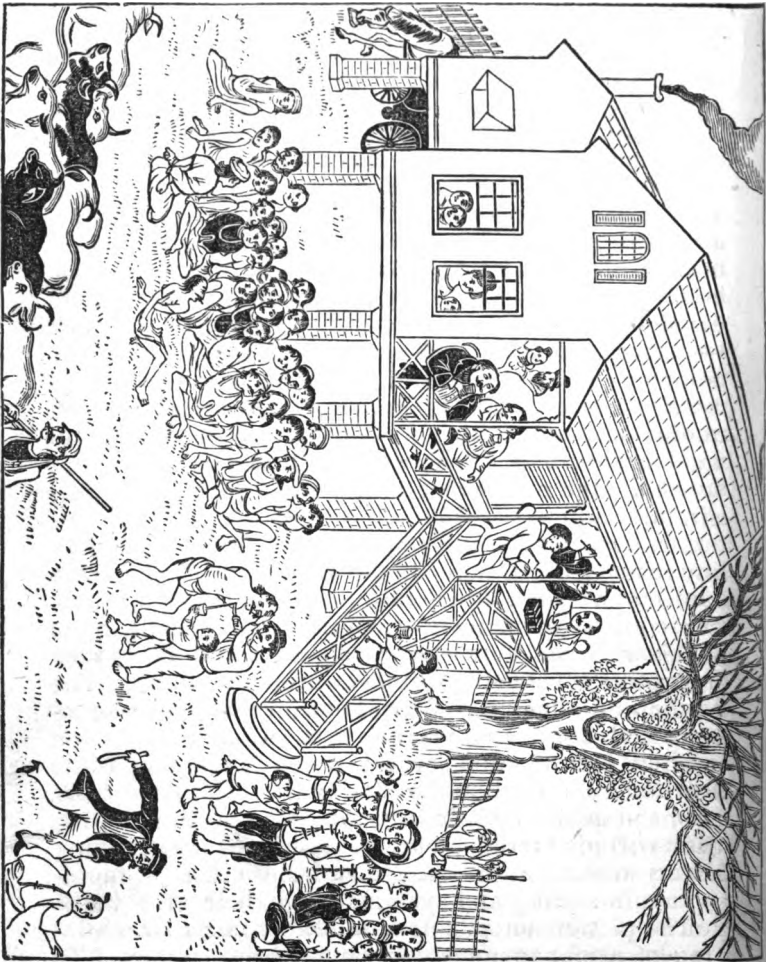
that of his employer—a transport system under direct supervision, through an agent, of the British Government. This contract is, however, to be performed in British Guiana, is affected in many ways by its laws, and is to be enforced in its courts. The laws, therefore, and the character of the persons who administer them, are of first importance to the Coolie. Seven hours and a half a day, six days a week, for two hundred and sixty consecutive weeks, is Lum a Yung's or Ramsahi's contract with an unknown master. Is he idle? Is he sick? Is he ageing and weak? Is he malingering? Or: Is he cheated? Is he maltreated? Is he efficiently doctored—fed with good food when sick—carefully tended in hospital? Some one on the spot is constantly needed of absolute shrewd independence to answer these questions, when occasion requires, authoritatively, yea or nay, in the interest of master or servant. Every one will see in a moment what a vast number of issues may arise out of this singular apprenticeship.

I cannot more readily and succinctly bring before my readers the nature of the issues involved in the late inquiry than by referring them to two woodcuts, copied from caricatures executed and brought to me in Georgetown by a clever Chinese immigrant, who had been a schoolmaster in his own country. The originals—obviously Chinese in style and execution, and I am assured original in their invention—are coloured, and several times larger than the spirited reproduction by the artist. Not only have they the quaint artistic ingenuity of the Chinese, but they will give an idea of the shrewdness and cunning ability which are common to all these Asiatic immigrants in stating and systematizing their grievances.

The picture on p. 8 is a tolerably fair representation of a manager's house on its brick pillars. To the left, at the bottom of the picture, is a free Coolie



THE COOLIE.



driving his cattle. To the right a rural constable is seizing an unhappy pigtail to convey him to the lock-up, being absent, as we see, from the band just above him, with his arms unbound. This indicates that he is trying to avoid the restraints of his indenture, and for this he is liable to punishment. Above him, on the right of the picture, is a group of Chinese, and on the left of the steps a group of Coolies, represented with their arms bound, an emblem of indentureship. They always speak of themselves as "bound" when under indenture. At the foot of the steps, on either side, is a Chinaman and a Coolie, from whose breasts two drivers are drawing blood with a knife, the life fluid being caught by boys in the swizzle-glasses of the colony. A boy is carrying the glasses up the steps to the attorney and the manager, who sit on the left of the verandah, and who are obviously fattening at the expense of the bound people below them. A fat wife and children look out of the windows. Behind, through a break in the wall, are represented the happy and healthy owners in England; to the right, under the tree, through a gap in the fence, are aged Chinese, weeping over their unhappy relatives. In the right-hand corner of the verandah is the payable, with the overseers discussing and arranging stoppages of wages. The smoking chimney of the kitchen and the horse eating his provender seem to be intended to contrast with the scene in front. This, then, gives a picturesquely sentimental and satirical aspect of the grievances likely to arise under the Coolie system.

The picture which forms our frontispiece represents a more specific issue—that upon the point of treatment in hospital. Here we have a hospital, a large, airy building. On the left, through the windows, two men are shown in the stocks. Whether these were used or not upon any estates was an important question in the

inquiry. Next, to the right, are bedsteads, on which lie the patients. The nearest, a Chinaman, is just expiring, spite of the chicken soup—*vide* the chicken in the basin—which has been supplied to him *in extremis*. The question of the actual supply of nourishing food in the hospitals when ordered by the doctors was another point raised by the Commission. Again, in the middle we see two stout immigrants whom the doctor, sitting in the chair, is tenderly treating, while the manager kicks down the steps a meagre wretch, too weak to be worth curing. Another issue—are all the immigrants equally and properly treated in hospital? Look at the stout black nurse standing beside the “diet-list,” whereon is officially inscribed, in Chinese, Indian, and English, the scale of diet, by which any patient who can read may ascertain whether the doctor’s instructions are carried out as regards him or his fellows. Beyond, in the room to the right, is the black man’s favourite, feeding on the dainties and porter ordered for the patients. A clear question raised here—Whether the subordinates do not cheat both their masters and the Coolies? Below we see the doctor’s horse, well fed; to the left, the manager’s pigs, well fed; and about and under the house, crowing and fighting cocks, well fed; while thin wretches hoe the ground, and a desperate Chinaman hangs himself from the verandah. All this is powerfully satirical. And, lastly, we have the black cook issuing the rations, and stirring the chicken broth—the chicken all the while running about safely outside the pot!

These illustrations, then, are curious as embodying in caricature much of the case advanced in the inquiry on behalf of the Coolies, and the proof or disproof of which is so vitally serious to the planters. It is, perhaps, in favour of the latter, before any evidence is produced either way, that an immigrant could

treat the question with such humour—grim though it be. A letter, dated Christmas-day, 1869, was addressed to Earl Granville, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, by Mr. George W. Des Vœux, the Administrator at St. Lucia, who had for five years been a stipendiary magistrate in British Guiana. This letter will be found in the Appendix.\* Lord Granville, after communicating it to the India Office, in March following ordered an inquiry. Sir George Young, Bart., a junior barrister, but a man of distinction for his varied abilities, was appointed a Commissioner, and had gone out to join Mr. Charles Mitchell, of Trinidad, nominated by a direction of the Colonial Office sent to Mr. Gordon, Governor of that island.† I expected to find the Commission at work on my arrival in Georgetown.

\* See Appendix A.

† In the paper in *Good Words* I used language which perhaps may have conveyed the impression that Governor Gordon had some part in this nomination. I do not know that it is of much consequence, but I am authoritatively informed that Mr. Mitchell's appointment was solely that of the Colonial Office, and that Governor Gordon had nothing to do with it.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TERMINI—AND BETWEEN.

“**Y**OU must be at Southampton, sir, to leave by the tender, at half-past eleven to-morrow,” said the clerk in Moorgate Street. Early, therefore, was the rising, and thrilling the family excitement, in order that I might catch the eight-o’clock train. I was going alone beyond seas for indefinite months, into strange regions, with black reputations in health matters, and on business of deep importance. Enough to make the time anxious. And here I am at my door, the cab loaded, the servants—as, God bless ’em! they are wont to do when one goes away from home—tearfully watching to bid me godspeed, when nurse comes down with two bright, curly-haired babes, and I take them in my arms, and over the pink cheeks and dimpling, smiling faces my eyes grow hazy as I give a long embrace.

\* \* \* \* \*

How well I remember the day!—the dull, grey London morning, through which my cab so slowly wended; the only gadabouts—sweep, newsboy, green-grocer’s cart, and men and women hurrying to their work; and here, in Rochester Row, a morning crowd, ah! how unfresh looking! clustered round some object on the pavement, with two policemen preparing a stretcher to carry it. **WHAT?** and **WHITHER?**

This was a Friday morning in June. On the previous Friday, sitting in my chambers, thinking least of such an enterprise, there entered two friends. One said—

“E., will you go to Demerara?”

“What’s the matter? A commission?”

“A commission—but not merely legal : one ordered by Lord Granville to inquire into the Coolie system of British Guiana. A Mr. Des Vœux, who was formerly a stipendiary magistrate there, and is now Administrator at St. Lucia, has written home a despatch, bringing some grave charges against the planters. Two societies, the Aborigines Protection and Anti-Slavery, wish to have the Coolies properly represented by counsel on the Inquiry. Will you go? You must be ready by Thursday.”

Hence, reader, on the succeeding Friday morning I was, as I have described, starting for Southampton, with a home guard of honour to see me safely out of the country. Southampton is a sorry place to leave or to arrive at. Go not down by the latest train, else this is the treatment to which, as a passenger by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company’s vessels, you will be subjected. Your baggage, after suffering much at the hands of the railway porters, is seized upon by a selection of rough persons, possessing go-carts of doubtful capacity. If you imagine that a small solatium to the one who happens to appropriate your parcels will insure their delivery on board the steamer, you are egregiously hopeful. He trots you along a dirty street, and suddenly turns in at a gateway. There he and you are brought up by ten or fifteen other go-carts, with as many groups of passengers. Presently, an individual emerges hastily from a wooden hut, and after examining one vehicle, rushes in again, followed by a number of passengers and porters.

"Porter, what's the matter?"—"Dock dues, sir."—"How much?"—"That depends, sir, on the size and number of the parcels. There's the man who settles it." In about fifteen minutes the man who settles it reaches my indifferent paraphernalia. "Five shillings, sir!"—"Five shillings! What for?" "Dock dues, sir." He looks hard at your pockets to see if you have any chargeable parcel concealed about you.

Having been bled at the entrance of these docks, you proceed, at the peril of your limbs and baggage, and to the discomfort of your corns, to thread your way through goods and railway trucks, for a quarter of a mile or so, until at last you reach a shed. More officials. "Have your baggage measured here, sir." "Take a ticket, sir. My boat's at your service."—"I don't want it; I'm going in the tender."—"They won't let you take your things in the tender, sir; only the little ones." Sure enough I was forced to engage this fellow for three-and-six to take my baggage on board, and pay the porter four shillings besides.

I don't know whether the Royal Mail Steamship Company will care for my opinion in these matters, but I think the few shillings per passenger which it would cost to satisfy the greed of the Dock Company would be well spent in securing the arrival on board their steamers of passengers in a contented frame of mind. 'Tis bad enough at all times to be leaving your own blessed country, without the additional harassment of being fleeced of your money and your temper at the last moment. The Company must permit me to have this growl at them. Saving the propensity of their sailors to rack and ruin your luggage, you are given no other pretence for complaint till you reach your destination.

However, here we are on board the tender. Signs of the West Indies already surround us, in groups of

pale Creole children, attended by black nurses, one or two decidedly brown babies, and several pompous-looking, half-breed gentlemen, trying to look as white as possible. And here are three Scotch deer-hounds in leash, a couple of bull-terriers, and a Skye, ciceroned by a sturdy, short-necked, bull-headed man, his quaint face decorated with a moustache. More of this gentleman anon; but he was soon dubbed the "dog-stealer" by a military wag. We are to have a large representation of the army on board—British and otherwise: the general commanding the forces in the West Indies and family, going to assume his command at Barbadoes; the military secretary and aide-de-camp; two young officers going to Yokohama, *viâ* Panama and San Francisco; here also is a Demerara merchant and planter with his natural and charming impedimenta. Lucky Englishman he who fell in with such good company! The Peruvian army is represented by a colonel of engineers—the Venezuelan, by a general and his aide-de-camp. Nothing could be more amusing or significant than the contrast between the South American and the English general. One a quiet, grave, noble-looking gentleman, with valour and honour written on every lineament; the other a tall, dapper-looking stripling, not unhandsome, dressed as a man would dress for the Paris boulevards, and certainly more like a dancing-master than a martinet. Of him, by the way, a good story eked out on the voyage. He was presented to the late Emperor Napoleon, who asked him "how the war between Paraguay and Venezuela was going on?"—a geographical blunder which even Venezuelan politeness could not refrain from correcting. This general had been summoned home to his distracted country by one of its chronic revolutions, and it was a current joke on board that, until he reached home, he could not tell the name of his



country or its form of government. But I am forestalling the voyage. The *Seine* proved to be a noble vessel—paddle-wheel and steady. This was said to be her last voyage to the West Indies—though she has made several “last voyages” since—economic considerations and the demand for speed compelling the substitution for this sedate ship of one of those drunken, restless, quivering, squirming screws, invented for swiftness and the distraction of weak stomachs. The rage for rapid transit, which is divesting travel of everything but bore and anguish, was about to consign this fine boat—so quiet, so dignified in her motions, so tender of the tenderest feelings—to the conveyance of stores or emigrants—happy emigrants! What she was to me—who on the ocean live the life of a dog—my pen can never express. I have sailed in many ships, but never in one so reasonable in the infliction of the necessary torments of the deep—torments not to be allayed, not to be calmed, not to be conquered by endurance, or diminished by faith, or reduced by brandy-and-water: sorrows ever new, remorseless, never from you while you toss upon the egregious waves.

I have heard people talk of the Atlantic being like a mill-pond. Save me from such a mill-pond! Smooth passages! They called this one a smooth passage; but it was the cruellest hyperbole of compliment to Neptune. Nausea getting up, nausea lying down, nausea on deck, nausea in the cabin, nausea for breakfast, dinner, tea—nauseas multiplied, aggravated, unceasing. Yet she was clean and void of sea smells; and of her captain and first officer (soon to be a captain himself, let me hope) I can only say, if I must go to sea, send me with them. Captain Moir and Mr. Dix should be treasured by the Company—they are infallible favourites with the passengers. What think you of a first officer who is a superior

navigator, a scientific man, a gentleman of literary and classical tastes, who discusses with you the law of meteors, or Lyell's geological speculations, or Darwin's theory, or quotes and analyzes Horace, or reviews with sensible and informed acumen the passing history of his day, or plays a clever game of chess? You do not often encounter such talent even among the superior officers of our marine.

We steamed out to sea. I was an invalid when I went on board, and succumbed to the adversity of motion. After a day or two, however, the lucky weather brought us all on deck—the abject foreigners, the poor French lady who had sat moaning in the cuddy, the stout Dutch dame who, for forty-eight hours, rested her double chin upon her ample bosom in a state of adipose imbecility, ventured up to breathe the softening air. The pretty Hamburg girl, belle of the voyage, whose pink cheek faded for a short time, came forth revived in colour and spirits, and all turned from sour subjective contemplations to seek some objective means of amusement.

A copy of "Lothair" went the rounds, spite of Blackwood's criticism. The young men took to playing "Bull"—a game which consists of attempts to pitch leaden quoits into squares, in defiance of sea-motion—or whiled away the afternoons with whist. At night the piano and violin entertained us with lively airs, to which there was an occasional dance. Did you ever try to dance upon a deck which was continually coming up and slapping your feet? Or we gossiped with each other about every one else and every one else's business. It was useless for any one to try to be mysterious. His name, occupation, destination, characteristics, were ferreted out, and discussed with amusing candour of remark. Stories were largely contributed—many of them "yarns" on the face of them—some of the best by

President P——. No better travelling companion or more thorough and genial fellow to be found in a round-the-world journey: a man of many travels and experiences. This very voyage he is going back to his government under circumstances that are singularly rare. Conducting it, some time back, in a thorough, honest, John Bull way, he excited the hatred of some of his dusky subjects. Accordingly they slipped some arsenic into a bottle of medicine that stood on his dressing-table. Only a powerful constitution saved his life after three doses of this infernal mixture. He had returned home with his family to recover, and was now sent back again by the Colonial Minister for the oddest reason that ever occurred even to such an official. At least, so the joke went. It had been found impossible to detect the perpetrator of the crime which had so nearly touched the president's life; but the cool gentlemen at the Colonial Office, sitting there three or four thousand miles from "Obe" and danger, said it would never do to let the natives imagine they could poison a governor! So my agreeable friend was returning to face his enemies and assert the principle that a president cannot be poisoned. What if they *had* poisoned him?

*A propos* of the president's government, he told us that his council or island parliament legislated in accordance with the personal interests of the majority. If the merchants succeeded in getting the preponderance, they abolished taxation on imports, and laid the burthen on the estates of the planters, who, when their turn came, simply reversed the process. On one occasion there was a proposal to tax donkeys, of which large numbers had been imported into the island for the portorage of produce, a labour usually performed by blacks. One of the legislators—himself a large importer of donkeys—enraged at this proposal, made a speech, concluding thus: "I can

only say, if donkeys are to be taxed, it's time I left the island." A clear case of "Write me down an ass," as a lady friend suggests.

Wonderful, too, were the tales of our friend "the dog-stealer"—no harm meant by the appellation. It is *lucus a non*, for an honest fellow was our Lima friend. He is telling us of his last voyage:—

"Last time I came out—eh? there were three bishops and about twenty ecclesiastics—eh? going to the council. There was great fun—eh? The Archbishop of L—— was one—eh? He was a comfortable little man—eh? He liked well his glass of grog—eh? One Sunday morning there was a service, and he was to preach—eh? I happened to go down to the saloon, and the archbishop and one of the priests—his secretary, eh?—were sitting taking something out of a bottle—eh? I spoke to him, and he said—'This is a most delicious drink; I have never tasted it before.' I said, 'What is it?' 'Whiskey!' 'Oh,' I said, 'whiskey, I know it very well.' They were drinking it neat—eh? I called for another bottle and mixed some for them—eh? and we finished the bottle. You should have seen the archbishop—eh? He could scarcely stand up for the service, and when the time came to give the sermon he had to take hold of the bench and go along so—eh? He could only say a few sentences—eh? He went to his cabin, and we never saw him again during the voyage—eh? The captain was a jolly fellow—big, fat, full of fun; and every morning he used to say to the ecclesiastics (he talked Spanish well), 'Ah! his grace the archbishop, how is he to-day? Is his grace still *mareado*—eh? You know *mareado* is Spanish for *sea-sick*; but then it also means sometimes what you call *tight*—eh?"

Spite of the fine weather, our progress was slow, so that we did not pass Sombrero until a fortnight from the day on which we left Southampton, steaming by

the way close to Terceira, and just sighting Pico. It seemed to my eyes, after the sad sea-sick days which had dragged so heavily, as if these Eden-like Western islands were the better land wherein we ought to stay and gain some solace for our purgatory of the deep. So green, so softened in the haze, basking so sweetly in the sun amid the fair waves, with vineyards and orange groves, and the little white cottages dotting the hillsides, I think if I wished some Rasselas retreat I should seek it in one of these glorious isles of the sea.

St. Thomas is a pretty place, as you steam in between the fair lips of its harbour, and see it rising round the basin formed by the green hills, its red roofs and white walls brightening in the sun. But a few whiffs of its air oppress you. It is a fever furnace by construction. The thick waters of the harbour seem to change but seldom, and a hurricane there ought to be a blessing as a sanitary revolution. I did not land, but watched the busy scene about the ship, and tried to forget the fever heat that came throbbing off the shore. Round the steamer swarmed the Negro boatmen in crafts of fancy names—"Champagne Charlie," "My Eyes' Darling," and the like. They were kept away from the gangways with difficulty; but I observed that a little carbolic acid thrown by the boatswain upon a sturdy black monster produced a striking effect, not only on him, but on the enthusiasm of his rivals. Large lighters laden with coal were soon alongside the *Seine*. Young Negro women, scantily clothed, garments tucked up above the knee, carried the coal into the steamer on their heads in baskets, chattering and singing the while. I have seen few English navvies work so hard or so persistently; but they were paid by the basket. No Negro man I afterwards saw in the West Indies came up to these girls in energy and vigour.

Here we were transferred into a smaller steamer, the *Mersey*. Going on board this vessel, I observed a jolly-looking gentleman in a light coat and a straw hat, whose build was after the lines of Daniel Lambert. This proved to be the captain. Another individual was racked gymnastically on a seat and its back at full length. He was the captain's reverse as to size, and turned out to be the purser. Captain Herbert treated me with great kindness on my way home, and I owe him my gratitude. The purser needs no comment.

For three days we steamed past the wondrous islands, furrowed, ribbed, and riven, lifting up their shaggy heads into the clear sky, while below they nourished here and there in pretty laps an exquisitely bright green vegetation.

The glory of Dominica and of Martinique is indescribable—their luxuriant, savage beauty, their lofty peaks, long jagged defiles, crowded with rich vegetation, and the occasional stretch of vales, smooth with sugar-canes when seen from the water, but no doubt rough enough to the toilers in their marshy furrows. At St. Lucia, where we arrived after midnight, we transhipped into the *Arno*—not a pleasant operation, though a change for the better. I should like some of the directors of the steamship company to send some boxes of crockery by this route for an experiment. A clean ship, pleasant officers, and fair weather conjoined to support our spirits, rather drooping after nearly three weeks of the sea.

At Barbadoes we left most of our passengers, among them my friends the General and Mrs. M., their lively little daughter, and those ever-pleasant, fun-dispensing officers of the staff. After we had seen them off in the large garrison boat, the remnant of us turned morose, and looked rather scurvily at each other for some hours.

At last, on Thursday afternoon, July the 7th, the officers went forward with their glasses to look for the lightship. Hurrah! There she is ten miles off; we shall be in by five o'clock. For fifty miles out we have been cleaving a dirty green liquid, tinged by the mud of the Essequibo, Demerara, perhaps even the Orinoco. Now we are in simple dun ditch-water, and the active nigger on the paddle-box, singing out the fathoms as he casts the lead, informs us that our floating resources are dwindling. Here's the lightship rolling in the swell, and here's the bar whereon we stick fast, but, after several runs at the obstacle, at length cut through into Demerara water. The shore at this short distance looks no more than a long line of low bank with a light palisade of cocoa and cabbage palms marked against the sky. In front we presently see a stretch of sea-wall and some white houses: that is the garrison. Round the corner of the wall and past the lighthouse into a river—the broad, brown river—and at our left reach away the flats, the stellings, the stores and sheds, the low white jalousied houses, over which everywhere the graceful cabbage-palms spread their green wings. This is Georgetown, Demerara. Thermometer 85° Fahr., time five P.M.

## CHAPTER III.

### GEORGETOWN, DEMERARA.

**A** LARGE place, and a busy one. Here is a wide, muddy river, well hampered with shipping, from the beautifully-modelled schooners and sloops of Orinoco to the large iron Coolie vessels of the Forth or the Tyne—alive, too, with small craft. The air was oppressive even in the late afternoon. The tide was out, and had left exposed along the shore, and beneath the stellings or jetties, a fetid, ombreish mud, very suggestive of yellow fever to a fresh and doubting stranger. My friend M. rescued me from the troublesome inquisitiveness of the custom-house officers, and in a short time I was walking up a broad street to the hotel—Beckwith's, said to be the best in the West Indies—three Negroes carrying my traps on their heads. I had landed on a mud-bank as flat as a billiard-table. The wide streets are bisected and intersected by canals and open drains, which strike me unpleasantly. I should have thought worse of it had I known, what I afterwards discovered, that these drains can only be emptied at low water. Yet my first reflection is, that if any one retains health with such surroundings, it is no small evidence of natural stamina. On either side of the streets are two-storied wooden houses, erected on brick pillars, and generally furnished with jalousied



verandahs. Round them, often in rich profusion, are splendid shrubs—the flamboyant, the oleander, the frangipanni—and towering over these the cocoa or cabbage palm, the tamarind, and other tropical trees. So that looking down some of the best streets, the effect, with the smooth, broad canals, fringed with a yard or two of grass, is very pretty—albeit very Dutch. The large amount of land appropriated to streets, gardens, and drainage requires for the population of some thirty thousand people a very extensive area, and the town stretches back from and along the river on a square of three or four miles. As the streets are laid out at right angles, the distances are, like those of Washington, “magnificent.” It was therefore no small comfort to me to discover, the day after my arrival, that Anthony Trollope’s hint about cabs had been taken, and that very decent vehicles could be hired at any time of day for one shilling sterling a quarter of an hour. Horses in the tropics are constructed to go at a uniform rate of speed; hence this arrangement is not so unfair as time contracts in London are apt to be.

Here we are at the hotel. Mine host is as stout and jolly an Englishman as the wolds of Yorkshire ever saw—a cattle farmer too—and mine hostess a kindly English lady, who forthwith recognises in me a big tropical baby, and treats me accordingly with infinite maternal benevolence. Beckwith’s first floor is simply a wide verandah with a couple of large rooms inside it, the principal being devoted to the gentlemen for all purposes but sleeping. I am shown along a passage to a chamber as comfortable as the house contains—“Where Sir George Young slept, sir!”—papered over the boards, the upper part of the partition consisting of open lattice-work. I can hear almost everything that is going on through the house. The heavy heels of the gentleman above me

chronicle his motions ; I can tell to a nicety when he throws off his boots, hangs up his coat, doffs his clothes and casts them on a chair, winds up his watch, and jumps into bed ; nay, in the morning he produces an earthquake when he rubs the Macassar into his hair. I can hear the gentleman who has been to a dinner-party roll along the passage, and pitch head foremost through his door. I can hear him swearing at his shins for knocking against the chairs ; and, should he be taken with the nausea of intoxication, I am forced to accord him an unwilling sympathy. But is not everything as audible in every Demerara dwelling ? With all this, Beckwith's is as comfortable an hotel as heat and Negro servants will admit of in those latitudes.

In half an hour I am seated at dinner at the *table d'hôte*. Looking round curiously—it is rather crowded, being mail-day—I find I am among gentlemen. They are mostly of the Planter kin. They all know who I am, and on what unpleasant business I have come among them ; but they neither stare nor seem to make remark. My neighbour talks genially about the climate, though much engaged in consuming what, out of the tropics, would be an honest couple of dinners to a hearty man. A stranger comes up to me, and offers to introduce me to the club—an old Rugbean, a Cambridge graduate, a travelled man, a gentleman—and afterwards in every way to me a friend was R. T. H., who thus genially tendered kindness to a stranger. A waiter approaches me with a tray and glasses, and says that Mr. C. desires the favour of wine with me. In fact, I am put at my ease immediately. As for impertinent commissions, and busy philanthropists, and troublesome inquiries, and cross-examinations, leave those to the future—sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Meantime, here is a waif cast upon Demerara hospi-

tality, and Demerara hospitality is large-hearted, honest, and genial. Therefore, when I go over to the club, pressing offers of "swizzles" come from all quarters, and I am told that honorary members are, by a rule of the club, forbidden to pay for their "drinks." I cannot say that I avoided swizzles in British Guiana; but I took them cautiously. A swizzle consists of a little water and sugar, a good deal of gin or brandy, and a dessert-spoonful of angostura bitters, into which is thrown some scraped ice, and the whole is rapidly whirled round by a small stick with branchlets of an inch long. When it looks like a cool muddy froth it is taken down without stopping. I should be inclined to back against fever the man who never took a swizzle—though some of the oldest inhabitants have taken them persistently for years. They are seductive and dangerous, with just enough of tonic element to make them plausibly medicinal, just enough of stimulating property to attract one wearied with the incessant heat; but without much vigorous self-control I am convinced that the first is, as a rule, a step to the second, and an appetite for stimulants in such a climate as that is a deadly snare.

The club at Georgetown is, to the gentlemen, its most important institution. It is a huge wooden building, not without architectural pretensions, consisting of two floors—the club-room below, and a concert-room above. In the club-room are three billiard-tables; outside it, on the windward side, a large verandah, with tables for cards. Here, early in the morning, a few old stagers come before breakfast to take their swizzles; and in the afternoon almost every gentleman in the colony, who has nothing to do and is conveniently near, lounges from four to six. There is no charge for the billiard-tables, no high play, and the exercise is just arduous

enough for a thermometer at 80°. I said this was an important institution for gentlemen; the ladies, unfortunately, have nothing to correspond. The huge room up-stairs is rarely used for balls or concerts. The Demerara folk complain loudly of their salaried leaders of society. It is even alleged that, although these receive an allowance for special entertainment, this is but meagrely applied; nay, it has been lately stated with some heat by the "planters' organ," that those who ought to be the heads of every amusement, as well as of graver matters, are more interested in securing a competency for old age than in maintaining the dignity of colonial office. I heard this complaint in other parts of the West Indies, and I fear the representatives of her Majesty in some of these colonies have more reputation for thrift in their own affairs than for ability of administration. I have said that you find yourself, in Georgetown, amongst *gentlemen*—men, some of them well born, some of them well educated—full of ideas of sugar and commerce, yet once of good English or Scotch school and university; shrewd capitalists, but also sagacious observers of public affairs. I was at times almost ashamed to find how much they knew of English contemporary history. This strikes you everywhere in the colonies. It is partly owing to the many good summaries of intelligence which the home or colonial press supplies, and which often descend to minute details without involving the perusal of indifferent reflections or reports; but it is chiefly owing to the lively zest for information which delay and distance breed in English-loving hearts. I am almost beginning to think that England is far dearer to exiled affections than to the cold contents of home.

Near the club is Georgetown Cathedral; that is, the Anglican cathedral. The Roman Catholics also have their cathedral and their bishop. The English cathe-

dral is built in what I should call the Creole-Gothic style: a brick structure of the original design of a West Indian barn, with spasmodic innovations of Gothic in such parts as the doors, windows, and chancel. In front of the latter was an extraordinary Gothic iron skeleton of elaborate workmanship, which constitutes the pulpit. This skeleton was a substitute for a more substantial oaken structure which stood for some years, and one day turned out to have been so catcombed by ants as to promise no further support to the clergy. There are galleries on both sides, and an organ loft and choir at the end. The choir looks picturesque, with its row of surpliced ebonies, woolly-pated and tin-voiced, but hearty withal in their singing and chanting. One thing was peculiarly homelike—the marble memorial tablets, with their hyperbolic eulogies and bad verses. Besides the white aristocracy, great numbers of coloured people attend, the women amazingly gay in their light muslins, brilliant shawls, and fashionable bonnets, while their hair is cruelly straightened and rolled into as near a resemblance to chignons as wool is capable of assuming.

The Presbyterians are powerful in the colony. Besides the number of Scotchmen imported, on account of the superior physique of that race, to be managers and overseers, there is a Dutch element, which naturally attaches itself to Presbyterianism. The State in British Guiana pays all denominations alike. The colony is divided into parishes, and at the time of the division each parish was called upon to designate its own form of religion. Hence some parish churches are Anglican, and others Presbyterian. The principal Presbyterian church of Georgetown is a commodious wooden building, rivalling the cathedral in its style of architecture and appearance. It has a tolerably good choir, and an organ, played by a "Mus. Doc."

of the United States, who is also a musical author, and has composed an extraordinary opera, entitled *Martella*, from which I once heard him sing a "recitative and song of a bandit," of such peculiar and heart-rending ferocity, as to convince me that his very sweet playing in the church was his happiest occupation. There it was refreshing to sit in the Administrator-General's pew, with one's head cooling against a vast ornamental tombstone behind, and listen to the organ sounding finely in the panelled auditorium, while the earnest voices of the people rolled out that quaint old "psawm"—

"Praise God, from earth below,  
Ye dragons and ye deeps :  
Fire, hail, clouds, wind and snow,  
Whom in command he keeps.  
Praise ye His name,  
Hills great and small,  
Trees low and tall,  
Beasts wild and tame," &c. &c.

I was rather dashed to find that the Commissioners were not sitting. On the contrary, their operations were indefinitely postponed, and the two gentlemen had taken advantage of a lucky expedition to the interior to go and view the wonderful Kaitaur Falls, discovered by Mr. Brown. The truth was, that the planters were dissatisfied with the Commissioners. They knew nothing of Sir George Young—small odds to him—and alleged they knew too much about Mr. Charles Mitchell. In fact, they thought the latter far too young and inexperienced. Moreover, they had doubts about his capacity for spelling! They said so plainly and appropriately enough in a deputation to the Governor, begging him to communicate with Lord Granville, and ask for another Commissioner; their organ, the *Colonist*, said so rudely, and with concomitant abuse of little credit to anybody actually or impliedly a party to it. So I was destined to wait six weeks for the new Commissioner.

When, the morning after my arrival, I slowly paced the hot streets under shadow of my umbrella, I marked with wonder the varieties of race, dress, aspect, of the people who thronged the wide business thoroughfare. With Saxon, Teuton, and Celt, in their white adaptation of European costume, there were blackest Africans, or tinted Creoles, or brown and copper Bengalees—the men's little loin-cloths, or *babbas*, leaving unswathed their polished limbs; the women, in slight, brilliant costumes, which set off their lithe figures and supple motions; yellow Chinamen in blue blouse and pigtail, with half-cunning, half-idiotic faces; once the short, staunch, brown figures of the aboriginal Indians (the "Bucks," as they are called), come from the interior to barter, the men, for the nonce, assuming some elementary garb of decency, but the women, with the modesty of innocence, absolutely reduced to no larger garment than the primitive fig-leaf. Was it not a surprise to see such variety within a mile of street? But I was looking specially for my Coolies, and here they were. Not a few of them, well-made, handsome fellows, stepped along with light and vigorous swing, sometimes proudly sporting a shirt, or a white calico robe, or even a coat and trousers. Of the women, many bore the evidences of wealth. A tight-fitting velvet jacket, blue or maroon colour, with a short skirt, and round the bosom, and over the head, in graceful fold, a coloured scarf or muslin veil—and generally some silver or golden ornaments; bangles on the bare legs, bracelets on the brown, well-turned arms, necklets of coins, the English florin being a favourite, earrings massive and numerous. I saw as many as half-a-dozen in as many holes in each ear, and nose-rings of gold, perhaps enriched with a gem. Astride upon the hip, in Hindu fashion, some carried a black-eyed piece of infant nudity, also heavily laden with

silver baubles. I could not refrain from asking myself: "Are these chains? Can these be the wretched objects of avaricious tyranny, or have I landed in the wrong place?" Yet that question did not always press upon me. For not every one of them appeared to have been equally good-fortuned. Nay, many carried little but their dirty babbas—thin, obvious sons of earth-toil, and mayhap of sorrow; a few old and weakening, a few Lazaruses, with lameness, impotence, or ugly sores for dogs to lick. Of the other immigrants, the Chinese were usually broad and even powerful-looking men, not often so indifferent to clothing as the Coolies. Indeed, of the Chinese in Georgetown streets a large proportion were small shopkeepers from the country, busily driving bargains from store to store. It takes a Scotchman to match John Chinaman at shrewd barter,—I don't know whether this was the reason for the number of the Caledonian ilk who served behind the shop counters.

Such, then, were my clients as I saw them the first day in the streets of the capital.

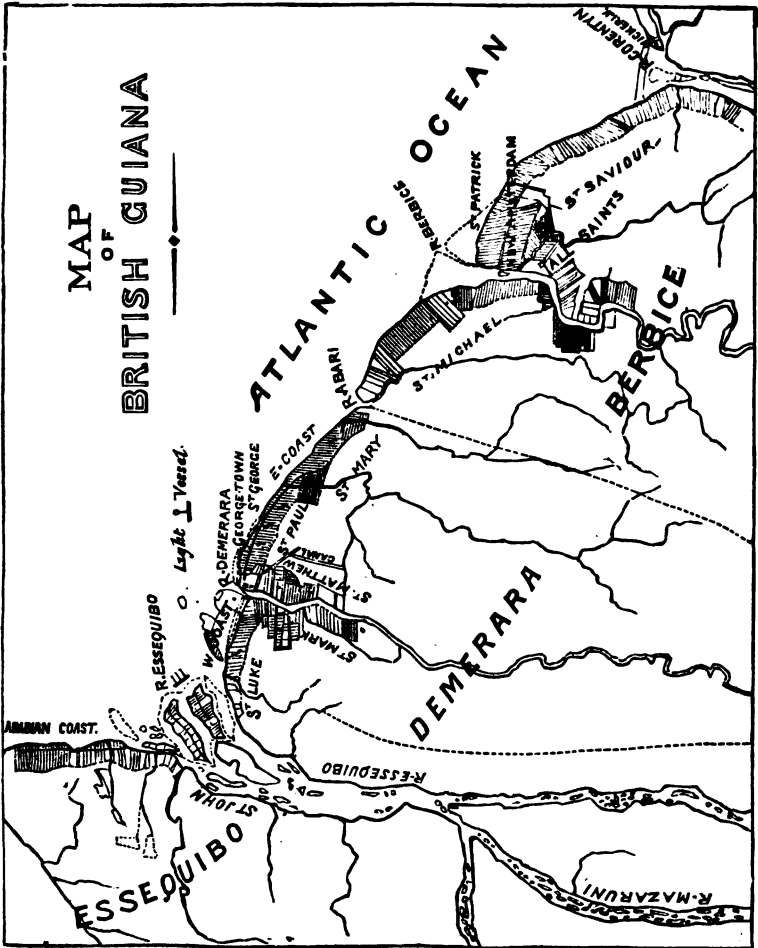


## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ESTATES—WINDSOR FOREST.

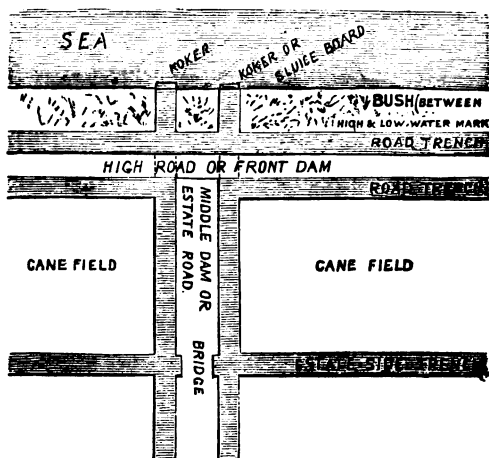
FIVE days after my landing I set out with my friend, R. T. H., to visit Windsor Forest and Haarlem, two estates belonging to the Colonial Company. This company owns a large number of estates in the colony, besides others in Trinidad and elsewhere. Little freshness has early morning in Demerara: the fiery globe sends its horizontal beams along the landscape, striking madly on your face and "knocking you silly," as my ingenious friend the A D C. had expressed it on board the *Arno*.

Windsor Forest was over the river, and some three or four miles down the coast. On reaching the stelling we found that the asthmatic steamer which was to have ferried over ourselves and our "trap" had been obliged to knock off for a few hours, and her substitute—a still more invalid creature—was not yet ready, so we whiled away the time by ascending the lighthouse, an operation which was like climbing up a mammoth red-hot corkscrew in a chimney flue. I never did it again. But here we are at the top, looking far away over the flat country, and this affords me an opportunity of describing the general face of the field on which the Coolie works. If the reader will look at the map, he will see that from the far north-west on the Arabian (more properly Aroe-



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bisce) coast to the extreme south-east, on the river Corentyn, the shores and river-banks are fringed with estates laid out in lines narrow and long. From end to end you would be hard bested to find a hillock, and on the east and west coast, which I could see from the lighthouse, the ocean was walled out by dams. These, called the *front dams*, constitute the high-roads to the estates. They lie between the cultivation and the sea, and the burthen of maintaining them in good order, as public highways, lies upon the adjacent estates. The carking sea is constantly



eating his way into these huge works, so that thousands of pounds have been spent by the Colonial Company alone in resisting his encroachments. As there is no stone within fifty miles, the roads are topped with clay roughly burned into brick. On either side of the dam are broad deep trenches or canals. Into these on the land side, strike, at right angles, the *middle dams* of the estates with their two

long drainage and navigation trenches. The rough diagram on the previous page will give some notion of the relative positions.

The plantations vary in breadth, but I was told there were some as narrow as two hundred rods. Their lines run "back" a prodigious length—four, five, or even six miles to the Savannah; no pleasant meadow, but a great watery swamp, covered with rank yet magnificent vegetation, wilds where man rarely if ever roams, and whence in the rainy season sweeps down a deluge of brown bush-water. Against this incursion the cautious manager erects his *back dam*. The intermediate space of the quadrangle between this and the front dam is crossed at regular intervals by side trenches, cutting the estate into rectangular fields for the canes. These fields again are subdivided by smaller trenches and drains, till the wonderful system brings you at last to a *bed*—a space nine feet wide by thirty-six feet long; and here, with the drainage and drilling to make it comfortably dry, grows the juicy cause of all this labour and of the Coolie question in Demerara. It is said that on one estate alone there are sixty miles of trench-work. No nation but the Dutch would ever have attempted so gigantic a water-system on such a mud-bank as the one stretched out below me. This water-system prevails through the whole colony, and there are many abandoned estates on which you may mark the remains of the Dutchman's marvellous energy to this day. One could not help thinking, as one looked at these traces of the old slave times, how many tears and drops of blood had flown down those still trenches, carrying to the ocean the strength and hopes of thousands of our fellow-men. Now, however, they are chiefly maintained by free labour, the blacks far surpassing the Coolies in the qualifications for this heavy and dexterous clay-cutting. If we

cannot help wondering at the Dutch, neither can we withhold the meed of admiration from our British fellow-countrymen, whose capital and energy are freely spent in works so costly and gigantic. When I looked at the little English community of British Guiana, and compared its numbers with what it was doing, I had no hesitation in according to them the palm among all the vigorous money-makers I have ever seen in any quarter of the world.

But let us look out from the lantern a moment or two longer. East, west, and southward up the river-banks we see the tall chimneys of the sugar-buildings, throwing up into the clear day their jets of smoke. There is Bel-air, Turkeyen, La Pénitence, Ruinveldt, Rome, and Houston, and beyond the river Vriedenhoop, and Versailles, and Malgrétout, the fine palm avenue of Houston springing up into the air. The names of estates, it will be seen, are international. Some are romantic. Bathsheba's Lust, Vryheid's Lust, Beterverwagting, Maria's Pleasure, De Kinderen, all seem tokens of some quaintness in the namers. But you should hear a Chinese try to pronounce some of these names.

Descending the corkscrew, we are in half an hour across the river and driving along the dam. After passing one or two abandoned estates we come to a village, with all the wretched characteristics of Negro habitats in this colony. Small wooden rattle-trap sheds in a dirty yard or rank half-cultivated garden, undrained—a perfect morass in the rainy weather; the men and women sunning themselves on any dry spot, the naked youngsters rolling in their native mud; and, most curious mark of all, a white-frilled or embroidered petticoat and a muslin dress bleaching on some scraggy aloe for next Sunday's chapel. Here and there along the road is a Portuguese shop, more neat and clean than the homes of

its patrons. Opposite we see some estates' houses for the Coolies. They look in this instance bad enough. There is a magistrate living within sight of them, and his hospitable flag waves an invitation to breakfast, but we cannot stay. The houses are all old sheds of wood, and huts of wattled palm. I was repeatedly assured that the Coolies preferred these rude tabernacles of their own construction, with their clay floors, to the best houses you could build them. In one case I was shown one built by a Chinese during Sunday, into which he had moved his family from a wooden cottage, and from which the manager did not like to evict him. The mud about them, however, the fetid lines of drains, so called because the water never runs out of them, are not necessary concomitants of an immigrant's home. Yet here were many lissom, brown younglings, born and bred in these dubious places, running about naked in the sun, or undergoing at their mother's hands the process of cerebral investigation or of anointing with oil. One little bright-eyed imp, with a solitary garment on—a silver dollar suspended by a string round the waist—runs out and cries to us "How dee, Massa?" Happy little Eveling, who even in these quarters is as yet in her garden of Eden!

We are passing cane-fields, and at length turn sharp off the road—no fences or gates here—up an indifferent avenue of tamarinds; seeing on the left the range of immigrants' dwellings, still called the Negro yard; on the right the overseers' house and the hospital; pulling up at length opposite a garden blooming with splendid shrubs and flowers, among which stands the broad-galleried house of the manager. Except the garden, everything on the estate is rough and ready. The bank and trench in front of the Coolie cottages are muddy and unclean—such a state of things as you may see in Ireland or the Highlands of

Scotland, where drainage is casual—*i.e.*, conducted by the housewife's arm straight out of the door or window. I was not asked to visit these houses, but shall be able to describe those of other estates.

Before breakfast we had time to view *the buildings*, the work in which I must describe in detail. They consist of huge sheds protecting the machinery from the weather. On many estates they are new and well built, on others antiquated and rickety; but hurricanes never test British Guianian architecture. So long as the rain keeps out, what matter? We cross the megass yard, at the rainy season a stretch of fine black mud. This stuff is a mixture of soil with the fetid lees from the rum-still. A whiff from it before breakfast tests your stomach sadly. I saw some Creole Africans digging in it for the foundation of a new still-room, and fairly ran away, wondering how they could live in the effluvium for ten minutes. To dispose of the lees is a problem not yet solved in Demerara. Whether they are useful as manure is a disputed question; and the cost of collecting, storing, and distributing over back lands would be very great. In one case, on the estates of the Messrs. Ewing, I saw elaborate preparations made for distributing and utilizing them. I understood that the experiment would cost them nearly £2,000 sterling. Between fear of expense and laziness, the planters have generally suffered the dregs to overspread the large yards of their buildings, impregnating the damp soil with dangerous filth, and dispensing sometimes for miles a nauseous stench. I was told of an instance of the death of several Coolies, unused to the country, through their having been inadvertently quartered in a house too near such a yard. When I mention that one of the finest houses in the colony—that at Houston—has a lees yard to windward of it, no one can in this regard suspect of malicious

cruelty to Coolies persons who are so cruel to themselves.

Long ranges of open sheds at the side of the yard are filled with what look like dried shavings, which bare-legged Coolie women and boys are carrying swiftly in baskets to a row of fires, where men thrust them in with long iron feeders. This is megass. Entering the grinding-room, we see at once what megass is, for here is a huge machine at work. From the shed to the adjacent canal, on an incline, stretches a covered way. A punt-load of canes fresh from the fields is discharging. The canes vary in length from two to five feet, and are one to two inches in diameter. Coolies in the punt lay the canes on a broad traveller, up which they pass slowly, other Coolies meanwhile picking out the defective stalks and trash. At the top they are gripped by two iron rollers, which draw them into their ponderous jaws, and with Titanic force squeeze out the juice, leaving a flattened fibre—megass—to pass out beyond. Coolies receive it in large boxes, and wheel it away to the megass *logie* or shed.

From the sides of the machine runs out the slaty-coloured liquid into a well, whence it is pumped up to clarifiers, which are heated with steam-pipes. Indian and Chinese men, with boy assistants, all reeking with the damp swelter, manage the clarifiers, and when they have prepared the juice, allow it to run down wooden troughs to the copper-wall—a range of brick furnaces, thirty feet or more in length, in which are sunk huge iron hemispheres called “coppers.” We ascend the stage and watch the juice boiling violently, while the naked Chinese deftly sweep away the scum with large flat blades of wood. Hot work, my masters! All this boiling is produced by the burning megass, which we saw the women carrying just now.



Up into the pitch of the shed rises the shining dome of the vacuum-pan, whither the syrup is pumped from the copper-wall, and where it is boiled again. Re-descending to the floor, we find the result in a tank of thick brown matter. Take up an inch on your finger, you see among the molasses the sugar crystals. Sleek and swarthy Chinamen fill their wooden troughs here, and empty them into the centrifugals—a row of hollow drums, which, revolving rapidly, drive the crystals to the side of the drum and the molasses through its sieve-like lining, until the pure white sugar is left there clinging to the side like a snow-drift. Other workmen empty the drums and convey the contents to the sifting-room, where—shall I tell it?—I saw a couple of naked fellows walking about in the piled-up sweetness as they worked the sifter. Our sugar is now ready for its huge hogsheads. I need not follow the molasses to its cisterns, or the dregs to the rum-still. The very sweepings of the floors are made available. A bottle of the stuff from which fine rum is made, if hung up alongside the article, would preach a temperance sermon to many a stomach. Lastly, we visit the steam-engine and boilers, all of best Scotch or English make, the fires fed from numerous hogsheads of coal lying about the yard. The Negroes, and occasionally the Chinese, make good engineers.


Altogether from sixty to eighty people may be at work in the buildings. It is hard sustained labour. How many hours? Mr. Russell, the planter of planters, said in his evidence, twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours. Many Coolies afterwards complained to me of long hours in the buildings—twenty or even twenty-four, they said, at a stretch. But the statement must be taken subject to the fact that most of the work done in the buildings is done by task, and not paid for by time. The gist of their complaint

to me was that they had no extra pay for it. Mr. Russell, on the other hand, stated that on his estates they had. It may be found that a good deal depends on the pressure for "grinding." If the estate has enough labourers, the gangs can be relieved; if not, the same people may at times be forced to go on. Canes get sour if not soon ground after cutting, so that there is a temptation to push to the utmost. But let us look at home. A London printer told me that some of his men worked forty-eight and sixty hours at a stretch. I cannot help thinking that a little trades-unionism brought to bear in a legitimate way on the permission of such suicides as that would be a healthy thing. To me it is no palliation to say that the labourer is paid for his extra work. You cannot pay a man for exhausted tides of life, and shorter years, and a premature old age. Surely, whether it is sugar or instruction, mankind must stand by and wait for it while the purveyors take their needed rest. Nay, we the public are taking terrible lessons about this sort of thing in the results of the long hours on our railways.

This hospital I will not describe, as I visited larger ones thereafter. I saw a few wretched invalids, male and female, squatting in Indian fashion on their haunches in the verandah, and others fever-stricken on the beds. It was airy and in good order.

Breakfast! Anthony Trollope was not too enthusiastic about Demerara breakfasts—they are right noble meals. My host was a powerful Scotchman, and peculiarly interested in the Commission. There were Coolies nursing nice grudges against him. Of this I was ignorant as I sat at the board groaning with its hospitality. It required some nerve after a meal like that to go out into the mid-day sunshine and get on a stubborn mule to perform the feat technically called "going back," that is, up the middle

walk to the back dam through the cultivation. Mule and I established proper relations fortunately; for the air was that of an oven, the glare that of a furnace. I was wet through in a moment in the exercise of mounting, and had not my hack permitted me to carry an umbrella over my head, would not, I verily believe, have survived the trial.

Along the dam, three mules in file. Here first are Coolies leading the mules which drag the deeply-laden punts down the canals to the factory. Their babbas are toil-stained, and their brown skins, dotted with mud, look dry in the terrible heat. Some wear old turbans or caps, some face the sun with no covering but their thick black hair. They salute us gravely as we pass. The middle walk is muddy, full of holes, with constant breaks for the rickety wooden bridges this shape  over the cross trenches, and encumbered by the rapidly-growing weeds. My mule and umbrella agree; but I am an undistributed middle. Down the trench comes a Coolie wading to his breast, dragging a load of floating brushwood for his home fire. The sun flames upon the water and glints over his slippery limbs. Next an Indian woman, choosing the same damp causeway, who, with pretty modesty, dips up to the neck in the brown water, and watches us soberly with her great black eyes.

We have been passing fields of young cane, and the light gangs, consisting of women and weakly men, are weeding among them. I have explained that a bed is a space about nine feet by thirty-six. Through this again lengthwise run shelving drains, dividing it into spaces. The canes are planted along these in what are called cane-holes. On one side is a clean bank, on the other a trash-bank. You may take the field, therefore, to be reduced to three-foot spaces. Mr. Russell, in his evidence, showed how

this simplified calculation for wages or expenses. "The fields are always laid out in three-foot spaces, and to those who understand decimals, it is a nice way of calculating work. There are one hundred such beds to an acre, so if you pay one cent for each bed, it amounts to one dollar an acre; eight cents per bed, to eight dollars an acre." The young canes may be two or three feet high. The weeders hoe out the weeds from the nine-foot space, and lay them on a three-foot space adjoining. Weeds in British Guiana are incredible plagues—vicious, pertinacious, domineering, Bismarckian, tolerant of no other vegetation beside them, growing out and up and over everything with German rankness and rapidity. The work is done generally by the task. A man or woman agrees with the overseer to do one or more openings for a sum certain. An opening is the number of nine by thirty-six feet spaces across the field—that is, twelve of those beds taken in a straight line. At this work, a new immigrant working steadily might make, on a good estate, one shilling sterling in about six hours; or supposing him to work from six A.M. till twelve noon every day but Sunday—and few will do more than five days' work—his earnings would be six shillings a week. But a large proportion cannot even make that. When we come to consider the Immigration Law we shall find that the minimum of work required from him is five tasks of one shilling in value, or five shillings' worth per week.

A couple of miles back we come across the cane-cutters. They are the strongest Coolies on the estate, or more frequently African Creoles. They also take their work by the opening. At each end of the opening runs the canal, and our cutter must pile his canes on the bank ready for the punts. Stripped to a rag, he takes his cutlass, a peculiar weapon in one piece, and cutting off the cane near the ground, trims away

the long leaves and head. This head forms the plant or seedling to supply again the fields from which it is cut, or new land brought into cultivation. The leaf-trimmings, called *trash*, are gathered up by the weeding gang, and laid on the bank alongside the cane-holes. There it dries and rots, and is then buried in the middle of the trash-bank as manure. When he has cut one hundred canes, the cutter, gathering them into a bundle weighing perhaps a hundred pounds, carries them on his head to the canal. If he is cutting in the middle beds, he has to cross and recross five beds, and the intermediate drains to the water and back again. No wonder he streams with the sweat of toil. At such work as this a strong man may make, it was said, two or three guilders or more a day. A guilder is 1s. 4d. Some of the Coolies were magnificent men. Their tall figures, deep broad chests, and moulded limbs, showed that they, at all events, could show good fight to want. Several had been Sepoys in India. A few of such men I saw elsewhere engaged in another operation, trench-digging. The subsoil is like the London blue clay. Digging out a trench seven feet deep and twelve or fifteen wide, you see a dozen mud-spattered fellows, with convex shovels like long scoops, having handles six feet in length. Standing firmly on his feet, every muscle in tension, the labourer drives the scoop into the clay by the action of his arms and shoulders, lightly throwing it twenty feet or so out of the trench. Good hands are fond of this work, and earn a dollar a day at it.

We went all the way to the back dam, tiring of the endless rows of canes, albeit a splendid cultivation, round to Haarlem estate, down its middle walk, and, after seven miles of it, my face and brain on fire, I was glad to get under the cover of the trap, and drive rapidly against the air.

## CHAPTER V.

### SCHOON ORD.

ON the 19th of July I accompanied Mr. Black, of the firm of Samuel Barber and Co., to visit Schoon Ord, on the west bank of the Demerara river. This is one of the finest properties in the colony. Crossing once more to the Pouderoyen stelling, we diverged to the left instead of the right, driving past other plantations, and through two or three freehold villages occupied by blacks and Portuguese. The contrast presented on opposite sides of the road was remarkable, and is worthy the attention of those who make the Negro's cause specially their own. The Portuguese, mostly from Madeira and other islands, are as acclimatised as any of white blood can be—so much so that they can work in the sun, and their little children sustain its fiery rays bareheaded. But the Creole Africans are perfectly acclimatised. This is the *beau idéal* of a climate for them. In it they thrive, are muscular and well-conditioned. If there was in them any corresponding energy, they could of themselves double the production of British Guiana, and enhance their own position. There must be at least seventy thousand of them distributed through the colony, many living on small freeholds purchased after the apprenticeship. On these they squat, listless about anything but a full stomach and an occasional

gala dress, working, when necessity impels them to it, three days or even less a week, suspicious always about the price of their labour. Wherefore should they work? The plantain and the yam supply their wants: with the mango and various other fruits they help out their table, and the trenches everywhere yield abundance of fish. You may find such people in the environs of Georgetown; but I am referring more particularly to the straggling villages in the country. There was such a village on our right, consisting of dirty, tumble-down structures, surrounded by rank vegetation, around and amid which we could see men, or women, or children, stretched in what seemed to be a perpetual siesta. On our left better and brighter houses, with cultivation about them, and the evidences of trade or thrifty activity, marked the homes of the Portuguese.\*

Here is Schoon Ord. Turning out of the road, we pass a neat house pointed out as the doctor's—for this great estate boasts its resident physician. The manager's house stands behind a handsome garden, wherein the bread-fruit, lime, orange, papau, banana, cocoa-nut and cabbage palms rise above splendid shrubs and flowers. We were welcomed by the manager, Mr. Arnold, a man hale and well on in life—thirty years in the colony, and only two months away! The capitalist who owns this estate had, with great pluck and persistence, and spite of doubtful nodding of colonial wiseacres, expended on its development an immense sum, sunk in buildings and vacuum-pans, in centrifugals, in multitubular and Cornish boilers, in tramways, and in Coolie houses; but sunk to some purpose, for I was told that last year the estate netted an earl's income. And Schoon Ord has only 1,200 acres in cultivation.

\* In Appendix B there will be found an interesting account of the various labour-classes of British Guiana, extracted from the Commissioners' Report.

I did not wish to "go back" again; I had enough of that at Windsor Forest. We went through the buildings—few, if any, so large and complete in every way are to be seen in British Guiana, and even then new machinery was being erected to double the manufacturing power; but I need not describe again the interior of a sugar-house. Coming out of the factory, a surprise awaited me. There stood a long line of little children, of each sex and every shade of brown, from the delicate tint of the Madrassee to the ebony polish of the hill tribes. I looked at them carefully as they grinned a welcome, nothing to obstruct a clear survey of their figures. Most were sleek, well formed, and many handsome—the delicately-carved nostrils and little pouting lips, the well-rounded, finely-proportioned limbs, and the healthy elasticity of motion, suggesting a higher caste than I knew them to belong to. Some of the smallest chits wore silver bands on wrists and ankles, or a necklet of small coins. They called off their numbers in English, and then gave three cheers for the strange buckra gentleman. Thirty rows of teeth were shining at once, and sixty small arms waving lightly as they went away, some of them holding out their hands and crying, "How dee, Massa?" The sight did one good.

In the middle of its own field was the hospital. When I say field, do not picture to yourself a grass compound, but a surface of damp soil, not very level. The building resembled the other hospitals of the colony—as our Chinese artist has represented them—two-storied, with wide galleries and open jalousies, allowing the air to play freely through. The lower ward was for men, the upper for women. A good English barn with a pine floor would give a fair idea of the interior. The beds were arranged in rows, and were simply constructed of painted wood;



the mattresses and pillows stuffed with the cheap but sweet and soft dried leaves of the banana. To prove their quality, the officious nurse forced open a pillow and held it to my nose! The latrines are placed at the end of a covered passage, but so indolent are the patients that it is difficult to enforce the use of them. The men were lying or sitting listlessly on the beds—several with ulcers, often aggravated by the lazy or filthy habits of the patient. The Hindu is not generally strong in skin or bone. A man who had been a temporary sick-nurse in one of the hospitals told me that as an overseer he had sometimes given way to his wrath so far as to knock down a labourer, but at two *post-mortems* had an opportunity of comparing the skull and ribs of a Negro and a Coolie. He was so startled at the difference—at the comparative weakness of the latter—that he never ran the risk of manslaughter again. As in India, so in Demerara, a very common cause of death is ruptured spleen, sometimes from comparatively slight shocks or excitement. Instead of being an excuse for its frequent occurrence, this susceptibility should be rather a reason for extra carefulness of treatment. Slight abrasions received in the field are difficult to heal in an Indian, and managers accuse the people of irritating their sores in order to escape work. On this ground stocks were kept in some of the hospitals—not at Schoon Ord certainly. Not to speak without book, I transcribe the evidence of the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, Dr. Shier:—"I have observed stocks, but not in all hospitals. They were forbidden very recently. When the present hospital system came in force there were already hospitals throughout the colony. They had existed under the old *regime*, and the stocks were in them, or at least in many of them. On the very first inspection I made, I discovered some of these stocks, and the matter was reported to the Executive, But

on an attempt being made to remove these stocks by the Executive, some of the medical men intimated to the Governor that they were essentially necessary in hospitals in the treatment of patients. The Governor, not wishing to interfere with the medical men in their practice, did not order their removal, but made it a condition of using them that it should only be done by the medical attendant, and by an order in the case-book. I may state that during the years I had visited these estates I have very seldom indeed found a case in which they had been used. A case, however, occurred about two years ago where an overseer in the absence of the manager, and without authority, placed an immigrant in the stocks. The result was that the manager lost his situation. It was on Plantation Affiance, Essequibo. In these stocks there was something peculiar. They had never been in the hospital before. They had been introduced. I only saw them once in the Court of Justice. I had never seen them on the estate. The apertures in the stocks appeared to be more elevated than in any I had ever seen, and the consequence was that unless the person confined in them had been placed in a chair, it would have been almost impossible to put him in. It was not done under pretence of treatment—I believe by way of punishment. The subject is one which has given a *very considerable* amount of *uneasiness* (?) to the Executive at all times; and on the very last occasion of its coming to the notice of the government they were suppressed entirely.” The case here referred to occurred but a short time previous to my arrival in the colony. A Dr. Duffey had improperly confined in the stocks a woman named Putea; and Dr. Shier’s naïve remark on this was, “When this case occurred, where a medical man had actually applied them to an improper use, *his Excellency said it was time they should be removed!*” It is no unfair comment on this, that

“his Excellency” and his Excellency’s predecessor were a long time coming to this conclusion, after the exhibition of the “something peculiar” stocks of Plantation Affiance in a court of justice. The Commission have made a dry and caustic report on the stocks, to which I shall have occasion hereafter to allude.

A diet list in English, Hindu, and Chinese is hung up in the hospital, designating certain scales of diet. Over each bed the doctor chalks the prescription and the diet, so that any patient who can read can check the administration of food and medicine. At Schoon Ord, doubtless, the patients receive good rations; but, as our Chinese satirist has hinted, there are estates on which that is a moot question.

We next reach the Negro-yard. To this place I always looked as affording the most trustworthy indication of the spirit of a manager towards his workpeople. Good houses and enforced cleanliness about them would show that he looked upon them as brother beings, not as mere brutish hinds. At Schoon Ord new ranges of cottages were in course of erection on a plan suggested by Dr. Shier. There were rows of well-built wooden sheds a single story high, each house consisting of one room, which reaches to the pitch of the roof. They are set upon clay floors, raised about a foot or eighteen inches above the soil, to protect the inmates from the ground-damp. The provision for ventilation is good, but *that* the coloured races abhor. On the hottest night, as I observed both in Demerara and Barbadoes, half-a-dozen, crowding into such a room, will close tightly both doors and shutters. If, like the European houses of the colony, these immigrant dwellings are raised on pillars or double-storied, they are rife with quarrels and dirt. The Chinese will utilise the under space as a pig-pen, or, taking up a board in the floor, convert the under part into a general

cesspool. Or the upper-story people disturb the placidity of their lower neighbours by presenting them with uncalled-for surprises, either through the cracks of the floor or the open windows. This led Dr. Shier to devise the dwellings I have described, which are now generally adopted when new ones are required, but a large number of the old barracks still remain throughout the colony.

The back-roof of the ranges at Schoon Ord jutted out a few feet, enabling the women to use the shade for kitchen purposes. Here they had neatly-moulded clay fire-places for their pots. Along the verandah we could see the women preparing their food—some triturating the rice, and others boiling it in pots. I stepped into one of the rooms—closed and dark, the floor cleaned with chunam. A dirty piece of calico was hung up as a screen to divide the room into two parts. The furniture is a rough seat, a simple rickety bamboo cot, a few clothes hanging against the partition, some sticks and implements, a few pots, and a wood engraving from some penny weekly, Mr. Spurgeon, the Duke of Wellington, or President Lincoln—I forget which, and certainly the inmates did not know or care. Not a place you or I would like to stay in long; but give the Coolie twice the money he earns, and it is doubtful if he would desire a better home. Let him have rice, a little curry, some oil to anoint himself withal—cover his wife with silver ornaments, and dress her in a gala dress—invest his own person, when off work, with a clean white babba and a gay cap or muslin turban, or, better still, a bright scarlet uniform of some extinguished regiment—and your Coolie will not thank you for a furnished house. At least, that was the impression I gathered. It seemed to me the Chinese were much more anxious to have comfortable homes, and their ideas of living were far in advance of Indian notions.

Along the ranges are trenches. In scarcely any

*THE COOLIE.*

estate I visited were these properly drained and cleaned. The unconquerable flatness of the ground presents great difficulties; but zeal and a single Coolie told off to the labour might keep the surroundings of the yard more neat and healthy—would, I am



certain, save in the better condition of the people all the cost of the work.

Several of the women were laden with silver—so much so as to excite my wonder that it did not impede their usefulness. Three or four rings of solid silver, as thick as one's little finger, rattling round their ankles, must have tried their endurance. One

rather handsome woman wore large bangles, several heavy armlets, two necklets of rod silver, one or two more composed of silver coins, gold rings in her ears and nose, and several on her fingers!

"Well, how dee?"

"How dee, Massa?"

"Very rich," said the manager, at which she laughed softly. She was flattered by our examination of her ornaments.

"She has a lot of cows, and plenty money in the savings-bank. How many cow?"

She held up seven fingers.

"She pays a man to take care of them. How many dollar in bank?"

She shrugged her shoulders. She did not care to tell that.

I believe some man lived with her as her reputed husband, perhaps the cowherd aforesaid, but her wealth was probably acquired at the price of her honour. Hitherto not the least serious defect in the Coolie system, as I shall have occasion in discussing it to show, has been the deficiency of women. Efforts have latterly been made to remedy this, and the proportion of women to men is now nearly forty per cent.\*

There are still at Schoon Ord several houses of the old two-storied type, which, judged by a European standard, would be considered questionably fit for human beings. But you may see as bad, or worse, in Ireland, and some Scotch Highlanders revel in no better.

Round the Chinese quarter were attempts at gardening. Women were working up the ground with hearty good-will. They wear the blue cotton costume of their country, and their hair is as elaborately unnatural in its contortions as that of

\* 10,000 women to 29,000 is the proportion stated by the Commissioners.

any English belle. Under a shed of one of the houses was a sturdy Chinaman, amusing himself with the ladies of his family. He was not disconcerted by the manager's gentle hint.

"Ah! no gone to work to-day, Ching-ching?"

"No. No think work."

To complete the view of this estate I may add a statement of the numbers at work, and the wages paid and earned on it, placed at my disposal by its frank and able proprietor in London, to whom I am indebted, not only for much information, but for great kindness shown me by his influence in British Guiana. He says—"The number of indentured immigrants at Schoon Ord at the time of your visit was—

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
Indian Coolies . . . . .	272	116	62	450
Chinese . . . . .	114	2	2	118
Africans . . . . .	2	0	0	2
Total . . . . .	388	118	64	570

"The numbers at work on Friday of each of the four weeks in August were—

	Buildings.	Field.	Hospital.	Off.
Friday 5th . . . . .	76	450	19	25
„ 12th . . . . .	76	439	19	36
„ 19th . . . . .	70	450	24	26
„ 26th . . . . .	36	456	34	44

"The numbers of unindentured people at work, Coolies, Chinese, Portuguese, Creoles, Barbadians, &c., including mechanics, &c., porters, *in fact, all classes*—

August 5th . . . . .	756
„ . . . . .	764
„ . . . . .	780
„ . . . . .	759

(The totals, therefore, at work would be 1,282, 1,279, 1,300, 1,251.)

"The wages paid in the month of August were

\$8,014.61, or equal to £1,669 1s. 2d. Of this sum the immigrant received about \$2,400, or say £500. You are aware that extensive works were going on at the buildings, so that mechanics, such as carpenters, engineers, and masons, were drawing large sums weekly, and in this way the Coolies appear to earn less. I find, however, that Mr. Russell's evidence as to the rough estimate of Coolie earnings is about what we do at Schoon Ord. On the week 29th October of the present year (1870) the earnings amounted to \$590.18. This sum divided by 570 would give an average of \$1.04, or 4s. 4d. per week, which divided by 6 days would be 17 cents per day for every soul on the estate, so that my people are doing well. Mr. Russell says he usually divides the total earnings of the Coolies by the total number of souls, and this by the number of working days. If they only earn 10 cents they are doing badly; if 12 cents they are doing middling; if 14 cents they are doing fairly; if over that they are doing well.\*

I paid my next visit to the handsome properties of Montrose, Better Hope, and Vryheid's Lust, respect-

\* My correspondent apportions the earnings thus:—  
(\$590.18 earned in one week by 515 indentured immigrants.)

210 men averaging \$1.50 per week . . . . .	\$315
137       "               1.20       "       . . . . .	164.40
29 in hospital, <i>nil</i> .	
12 absent on leave or deserting, <i>nil</i> .	

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388 men.

70 women averaging \$1 . . . . .	70
34       "               \$0.72 . . . . .	24.48
6 in hospital, <i>nil</i> .	
8 nursing and missing, <i>nil</i> .	

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118 women.

36 girls and children about buildings, total .	16.30
28 infants, <i>nil</i> .	

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\$590.18



ing which I need only add a few notes. In these the resident attorney is employing his great agricultural skill in improving the method of cultivation by subsoil drainage and steam-ploughing. Bricks and pipes are manufactured and burned on the estate. As we turned up the middle dam of Montrose, the large wet fields on either side, grass-grown and partly overrun with low bush, seemed alive with cattle. These lands had been invaded by the sea, and were unfit for canes, so that the proprietors permitted the Coolies to pasture their cows upon them. Many of them were valuable, and in fine condition. The immigrants will pay eighty or a hundred dollars for a cow, and tend it with the utmost care. I have seen an Indian woman diligently picking out the *ticks* from the animal's hair with one hand, while she softly smoothed the skin with the other. The steam-ploughing is done by an engine stationed in a punt, getting its fulcrum from the bank of the canal on which it floats. At the other end of the field to be ploughed is a movable anchor, with a steel pulley, in which works a wire rope. This rope winds over a drum in the punt, and to it is attached a powerful plough. As the rope is wound upon the drum, it pulls the shear through the stiff clay soil with resistless force. A clever Negro alternately held the stilts, or rode on one to balance the machine, occasionally, at an obstacle, getting a "cropper," which seemed to give him no trouble.

As we drove along the coast from Better Hope, we passed a huge village. It consists of a number of freehold sheds built by Negroes and free Coolies—miserable places enough some of them. Here are four thousand inhabitants, yet not half-a-dozen work on the adjacent plantations. They either go five or six miles up the coast to show their independence of the neighbouring managers, or do not work at all:

plantains and bread-fruit grow at the back of the village with little trouble. They love to fish in the morning, and lie with full stomachs watching the slow wings of Time. There is an Anglican church here, the rector of which tries hard to wake the people from their apathy. Not long since, he succeeded in getting a draining-engine erected to keep the village free from water. The koker, or sluice-board, on the shore gave way, and the water, breaking through the bank, soon surrounded the houses. Mr. McG. told me that he went down on the morning after the occurrence, and found a couple of hundred blacks, who had been turned out of their houses by the flood, sitting on the bank eyeing the inundation.

“What you sit there for? Get up, and go into the trench and bank it up.”

“Oh, massa, who pay us for doing it? Want dollar a day for work like dat.”

They were unwilling to purchase the luxury of safety without the additional incentive of wages. The condition and characteristics of these people set before me a problem almost as terrible and quite as insoluble as that of the Irish peasant.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GOVERNMENT, GOVERNORS, AND GOVERNING CLASSES.

**M**R. TROLLOPE'S description of the government of British Guiana as a mild despotism tempered by sugar, would be more correct if altered to—a mild despotism of sugar. Sugar is the ambition, means, and end of nearly everything done in the colony. It gives aim to the energy of the trader, animates the talent of the lawyer, prompts the research and skill of the doctor, and sweetens the tongues as well as the palates of the clergy. Little else is cultivated for exportation. Cotton and cacao have, if any, only a miserable footing. There are plantain-grounds and cattle-farms (some of the latter very extensive), a few coffee and cocoa-nut plantations, and a considerable quantity of timber is exported; but most of the wealth and business of the country is concentrated in the one hundred and fifty-three sugar plantations. In the flourishing slavery times British Guiana produced large quantities of cotton and coffee. The return in 1820 of cotton was 4,536,741 lbs., and of coffee 8,673,120 lbs. Of cacao the same year there were 113,956 lbs. In the apprenticeship years 1835—1838 more than a hundred million pounds of sugar were produced; last year (1870) the exports of the colony were—

Sugar . . . . .	94,944 hhd.
Rum . . . . .	20,716 puncheons.
Molasses . . . . .	17,606 casks.
Timber . . . . .	153,127 cubic feet.
Cotton . . . . .	103 bales.
Shingles . . . . .	6,221,225
Cocoa-nuts . . . . .	28,062*

From this it will be seen that sugar is the monopolizing interest, and necessarily occupies nearly all the estates.

These plantations are owned and managed almost entirely by Europeans, and chiefly by men of British origin. In 1861 the population of British Guiana was 155,917, of whom 1,482 were natives of Europe and 147 of North America. Although there are influential Creole Europeans, I cannot be far wrong in saying that in the hands of a small proportion of these 1,629 people, or their equivalent in 1870, are centred the real power and wealth of the colony. Taking the one hundred and fifty sugar plantations, we may soon trace to a certainty the number of persons in whom that power resides.† There are many absentee

\* Report of the Commissioners, &c., par. 938—941.

† The Commissioners say in their Report, par. 269—70: "There are in British Guiana at present 153 sugar estates, according to the Directory of 1870, more or less under cultivation. Unions of two or more of these, under one management, and with one set of machinery and buildings, where adjacent estates have come into the possession of the same proprietors, have reduced the number practically to 136. Of these about 20 are only very partially cultivated, and 2 or 3 have but quite recently resumed into cultivation. Upon 123 sugar estates are there indentured immigrants; and also upon one plantain estate, making 124 in all; and there are besides a few of the half-abandoned estates which are partially worked with free Coolies.

"About one-tenth only of the whole, that is to say, 14 or 15, have the proprietor or part proprietor residing on them and managing them. 85 are entirely owned by proprietors not resident in the colony; the remaining 35 or 36 are, at least partially, owned by colonists who are either merchants, estate attorneys, or in some cases managers of other estates. Among the non-resident proprietors the largest holder is the Colonial Company, with nine large estates; Messrs. Daniells, of Bristol, also own 9; and Messrs. James Ewing and Co., Messrs. Sandbach, Parker, and Co., Messrs.

proprietors, British and Dutch. For them persons act in the colony, overlooking and supplying the estates. These persons are called attorneys. To live upon, direct, and cultivate each estate, a manager is appointed, acting in some cases also as the attorney. Under him are generally from five to eight overseers, who were formerly for the most part selected in the colony, but are now principally brought from England or Scotland. Under the overseers are black or Coolie "drivers," to take charge of the gangs. We see at once that, allowing the utmost margin, the total of attorneys, managers, and overseers of estates will not be great, and the number of those of British extraction will be even more limited. On looking over the list, it appears that about 240

Bosanquet, Curtis, and Co., and other West Indian houses, either by themselves or their partners individually, hold a large portion of the remainder. Perhaps 40 out of the 85 estates, owned entirely out of the colony, are in the hands of such merchants, and these include nearly all the largest, finest, and best cultivated of the whole.

"The extent to which these same houses hold mortgages upon the remaining estates cannot of course be guessed; but the tendency of estates in general is evidently to fall into their hands; and for reasons hereafter to be explained, this process is likely for the present to continue. The resident proprietors have, moreover, all purchased, not inherited, their estates; and since there does not seem to be any strong feeling even among English owners in favour of treating a sugar estate as a family property, by dividing it to a single heir, a thing, moreover, which could not be effected under the Dutch colonial law, except by an application of the doctrine of election; and since a sugar estate will never bear partition, the death of the proprietor is often followed by a sale.

"In this way most of the old families have disappeared which were formerly associated with this place. Only one estate remains in the possession of a Dutch gentleman, the single relic of the times before the cession; six or seven exhibit well-known English family names; but upon the whole the aspect and future of the tenure of land throughout the colony is not territorial, aristocratic, patriarchal, or feudal, but simply and exclusively commercial; whatever elements of natural or artificial beauty, whatever traces of refined leisure may formerly have surrounded the planters' houses, have vanished; even the tropical luxury for which it was so famous has, to a great extent, disappeared; and in its place utility, economy, and the latest appliances of scientific farming and manufacture now constitute the chief future of a thriving sugar estate."

firms and individuals are either owners, attorneys, or managers of all the estates in the colony. Of the estates, 106 or thereabouts are under the care of 35 attorneys. Some of the attorneys have an enormous responsibility. I find, for instance—

Mr. James Stuart, attorney or co-attorney of	. . .	13 estates.
Mr. McCalman } " Colonial Co." }	" "	of . . . 21 "
Mr. Garnett	" "	of . . . 21 "
Mr. Russell—		

—but Mr. Russell shall describe himself on oath.

Question by the Commissioners: You are the manager of Leonora, with other adjoining estates?

A. I do not know whether you can call me manager. I have charge of those estates, but I have managers under me with full salaries.

Q. You are also attorney for several estates, are you not?

A. I am.

Q. Do you consider yourself as attorney for Leonora?

A. I am.

Q. What are the duties of attorneys?

A. The duties of an attorney are to pay periodical visits to the estates, to inspect the cultivation and manufacturing departments, and in town to examine all the weekly reports coming in from the estates.

Q. Does the attorney appoint the officers on the estates?

A. He appoints the manager, but generally the manager appoints his own overseers. I may mention that on the Colonial Company's estates a great many young men are sent out indentured from home, and they are placed on the estates either by myself or by my co-attorneys.

Q. You are one of the attorneys for the Colonial Company's estates?

A. I am.

Q. What are the estates for which you are attorney?

A. Well, to begin with, Hampton Court, on the Arabian coast. I am at present also acting for Anna Regina as planting attorney. I then come across to the west coast, where I am attorney and part proprietor of Plantation Tuschen de Vrienden. The next estate on the west coast of which I am attorney is Plantation De Willem; then Zeeburg, Leonora, and Anna Catherina. They are combined in one estate. You may call it one very large estate, making about 3,000 hogsheads of sugar, where my residence is. I have two managers, and each receives a salary of 2,000 dollars per year to conduct the field work and manufacturing department.

Q. Are these all?

A. The next estate is Windsor Forest, on the same coast, and Haarlem. These two estates join each other; you may almost call them one; they soon will be one combined estate. We then go up the river to Plantation Farm and Peter's Hall, on the east bank of Demerara river; then to Plantation Success, on the east coast, and La Bonne Intention; of that estate also I am part proprietor. That embraces my duties in Demerara and Essequibo. I pay two half-yearly visits, and oftener if I can find time, to the Colonial Company's estate in Berbice, which consists of Plantations Friends, Mara, and Ma Retraite, on the Berbice river, and Plantation Albion, on the Corentyn coast. I also inspect a mortgaged estate, Goldstone Hall, on the Canje Creek, and I have paid one visit to an estate which is slightly indebted to the agency of the company here, called Waterloo, in Leguan. Those are all.

Q. How long have you been in the country?

A. I have been in active service here ever since

1847, with the exception of a visit of six months which I paid to my native country in 1865, two months in 1868, and two months in 1869, when I travelled through the West Indian Islands.

*Q.* All that time you have been employed upon estates?

*A.* Yes, I commenced my career on Plantation Friends, on the Berbice river; and from there I went to Plantation Diamond, on the Demerara river.

*Q.* As what?

*A.* As an overseer. I commenced as an overseer, that is to say, I commenced my career here as an overseer. I had done something before I came here.

*Q.* And from that you have risen to the important situations you now hold?

*A.* Yes, if they may be considered so.

One of the ablest men in the colony, Mr. Russell's talent and energy have made him a very sugar-king.

It appears that there are, in round numbers, about one hundred managers who are not proprietors, and about thirty-six proprietors who are neither managers nor attorneys. At the extreme I take it, then, that  $35 + 100 + 25 = 160$  people and firms on the spot may be said practically—though there are some wealthy men of business not bound up with sugar—to have the interests of the colony in their own hands, to be the main employers of labour, the main patrons of the professions; and that of these the thirty-five attorneys and a few proprietors constitute a kind of local aristocracy, with the monopoly of social and political power.

To this state of things an important balance theoretically exists in the peculiar form of the government. The Governor, as her Majesty's representative, is the embodiment of executive power. The legislature, called the Court of Policy, consists of ten persons. Five are government officials, namely,



the Governor, the Attorney-General, the Government Secretary, the Receiver-General, and the Auditor-General. To procure the other five, resort is had to a College of Electors. This is a relic of Dutch times, the College of "Keysers," and consists of seven persons elected *for life* by a constituency qualified by property. This qualification is an annual income of £125. Persons of every nationality and pursuit are included in the constituency. The total number of voters in 1865 was 907. Upon a vacancy in the legislature, the College of Electors send up two names to that court, which thereupon selects one to fill the post. The Court of Policy sits sometimes publicly, but may and does hold secret sessions.

Is it possible for one gravely to criticise such a legislature as this—governing 155,000 persons? It takes one's liberal breath away! Even the limited cream of popular representation is filtered through that colander with seven holes, the College of Electors for life!

Theoretically, I say, the Executive has a heavy balance against the five elected members in its influence over its own nominees, the official members. But of these some may—as I conceive, most improperly—be attorneys or planters, as is the case with the present Auditor-General. Without any imputation that the power thus concentrated into the hands of one interest is actually abused, an impartial spectator is apt to conclude that a legislature so framed will be a subject of much suspicion. This, although men, not of the planting interest, have been and are members of the legislature. The least possible reflection against it is a very strong one, namely, that in the main it will only represent and discuss one side of all public questions. Its most well-meant paternal kindnesses may be misapprehended by the objects of them. Thus I found in Demerara evi-

dences of a strong under-current against the planting influence. Persons of all classes, professions, and hues, when they could speak to me confidentially, expressed a dissatisfied feeling on the relative strength of the sugar party and the popular element. In the case of the Portuguese, numbering some 25,000, and the aboriginal Indians, this took the form of strong representations to me upon the injustice of the legislation and the imperfect administration of the laws.

This brings me to an important question already foreshadowed. The counter-check to the dominance of sugar on behalf of all other interests—including that of the Coolie—is the Governor. His responsibility is enormous. He is a modified little autocrat in power—if he chooses or dares to use it. If he does not use it, he may be simply a tool. If he abuses it, he is a dangerous weapon. Probably the same may to some degree be said of most of our West Indian colonies. At all events, in British Guiana the quality of the Executive is a matter of immense moment, as well to the energetic and wealthy planters as to the vast community of powerless and unrepresented races. Hence the responsibility thrown on the Home Colonial Minister of selecting her Majesty's representative is very grave. A Governor ought to be a man of ripe experience, of high social and intellectual position, and of very firm character. He should be strong enough to have the full confidence of the Colonial Office, and to hold his own against a whole community on any point of policy, while sufficiently liberal and genial in his tastes to assume the leadership of society. A man who does this will more than any other be appreciated even by the planters themselves. The post in British Guiana is a good one. The salary is £5,000 sterling a year, with perquisites, and a very handsome sum for "entertainments." Are

there no talented peers, no junior statesmen, no retired judges, no experienced and able military officers, willing to accept such a position for five years?—and why should such important governments as some of those in the West Indies be confided to political adventurers or dried officials? The British Guianians, as one of the richest and most enterprising communities attached to the Crown, are entitled to ask this question, and to have a specific reply. How, for instance, came Mr. Francis Hincks, a Canadian politician, of whose political career it were better not to venture on a retrospect, to be appointed Governor of Barbadoes, and then of British Guiana? An able, astute, scheming, uncompromising, terribly energetic Scotch-Irishman from the dangerous neighbourhood of Belfast, endued with semi-absolute power, and incontinently pitched into a community like that of British Guiana, could scarcely fail to produce a pyrotechnic commotion in the blaze and sparkle of which fingers would be burned, and perhaps some persons totally annihilated. Again, what a commentary on the past administration of colonial affairs is the fact that in one case an appointment to the post of Governor was made by a pure mistake of the noble Duke then Secretary of State for the Colonies! The interest of these colonies, and of the empire, demands that more serious attention should be given to the quality of their Governors. It is an insult to them, as it is a wrong to ourselves, to burthen them with the expense of an inefficient Executive. I carefully guard myself from being supposed to reflect on appointments to our greater colonies.

How much springs from ignorant or indifferent administration of our colonial affairs! What blunders, what misunderstandings, what bitterness, what wrongs have disturbed nearly every colony of the British Crown under our present system! Even in George-

town I heard the threat from a high official that the United States would be their refuge from the impolicy—not of Britain and her people, their hearts are true I would fain believe—but of our administrators.

An instance of legislative pliability is included in the Report of the Commissioners:—“An odd clause in a recent ordinance attracted our notice, to the effect that any charge under the Immigration Ordinances might be laid before any stipendiary justice of the peace in the colony. That is to say, apparently, if a manager objected to have his cause tried by any particular magistrate, he might carry his immigrant elsewhere. After this provision had a good deal perplexed us, and caused us to ask questions of the magistrates as to its working, without finding that it was even put in practice, its history was volunteered by the Solicitor-General. It seems to have been a piece of hand-to-mouth legislation. An influential manager had happened to lay his charge against a deserter in the wrong court, and was cast accordingly. A clause was thereupon in hot haste stuck (*sic!*) into the Immigration Ordinance then before the legislature, to guard suitors against the effects of their own carelessness, by the help of a device which might have worked the most intolerable oppressions. Even within the limits of a magistrate's regular work great hardship may be inflicted upon the labouring man, by postponements or adjournments, if he has to come far; but to carry the case against him into another district would be nothing short of tyranny. We are given to understand that the clause has never been acted on, and earnestly hope it never may be.”

The Commissioners have failed to animadvert on the state of official morality in the society where such an incident could occur. The accident of a disappoint-

ment to an "influential" manager in pursuing his ordinary remedy in a court of justice leads to the *sticking* in hot haste into an ordinance then passing the legislature of a clause, regardless of justice and capable of working "intolerable oppressions." This must have been done by concert in the Court of Policy. The persons who did it were few in number, but they must have embraced some at least of the government officials in the legislature. The Governor cannot exonerate himself from at least inadvertence in permitting legislation to occur on so light and one-sided a pretext. Where was the Attorney-General, bound to look equally after the interests of all classes as her Majesty's servant, and the proper person to intervene to prevent such a legislative scandal?

In alluding hereafter to the office of Immigration Agent-General, I shall have occasion to show how a former Governor assumed the power to make an order which virtually repealed a proviso in an existing ordinance. By a stroke of his pen he thus seriously modified the functions of a high official, and changed the relations of the whole immigrant class to the courts of justice. Had this order been of an opposite character, there can be little doubt that it would not long have stood; but as it ran current with the wishes of the governing class, it seems to have met with no protest except from the individual chiefly concerned. These cases are indicative of the effects of a preponderating influence unchecked by a firm Executive. Not one of them could have occurred had the Governor taken a firm stand against them. The shrewdest of the planter class themselves would admit that a continuance or extension of such anomalous proceedings would in the end lead to evils as injurious to themselves as they are now injurious to others, and it was no small satisfaction to me to

hear them expressing a strong desire that the head of the Executive should be a man of great nerve and firmness.

One other peculiarity of the Guianian Government remains to be noticed. In all financial matters the Court of Policy is assisted by the College of Financial Representatives, numbering six, elected in the same way as the keyzers,\* and holding office for two years. Thus the Combined Court, consisting of sixteen members, has the important control of the revenue and taxation. The financial court being so constituted, we turn with some curiosity to ascertain how the revenue is raised. The question is the more vital because the expense of immigration lies not alone on the planters, but is shared by the whole community. Of the cost of the system, roughly speaking, one-third is paid by the government, and two-thirds by the planter, in proportion to the number of his indentures. That one-third, however, does not represent the whole charge upon the community. The salary of the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, the cost of district gaols expressly erected and maintained for Coolies, and a considerable proportion of the police expenses, must in fairness be attributed to immigration. According to the Commissioners these items alone amount since 1859 to \$65,985, the dollar being 4s. 2d. The ground on which the general community is asked to contribute to these expenses is that it is every way benefited by the results of the importation of labour. Yet a lazy Negro who lived contentedly under his own pumpkin-vine and papau-tree might well question his interest in the introduction of these formidable competitors!

To the subordinate community generally, the taxation most important is, of course, that of food. How

\* The total number of electors in the colony in 1865 was 907. (Bennett's Guiana, p. 7.)

is food taxed in British Guiana? I take my answer from the tariff.

	s.	d.
Bread, biscuit, &c., per 100 lbs. . . . .	2	1 stg
Cornmeal and oatmeal . . . . .	1	0½ "
Dried fish . . . . .	2	1 "
Wheat flour, per barrel (196 lbs.) . . . . .	4	2 "
Rice, per 100 lbs. . . . .	1	0½ "
Pork, per brl. 200 lbs. . . . .	12	6 "

This is a direct and heavy impost on the food consumers. It is due to truth to say that these are little, if at all, above the duties on the same articles in other West Indian colonies.\* What of the planters' importations?

	s.	d.
Coals, per hogshead . . . . .	1	0 stg.
"    ton . . . . .	1	6 "
Lime, per pun. . . . .	1	0½ "

Sugar exported pays no duty; and the following things are exempt from taxation:—

Machinery employed in mining or in the manufacture of raw materials of the colony.

Manures.

Steam draining engines and steam ploughs.

\* From prices current kindly forwarded to me by Mr. Barr, the duties in December, 1870, in other places were as follows:—

	FLOUR. per bushel.	FISH. per 100 lbs.	RICE. per 100 lbs.	PORK. per barrel.
Jamaica .	8.0	3.6	3.0	15.0
Barbadoes .	3.6	0.2	0.5	8.4
Trinidad .	5.0	1.0	2.0	8.4
Demerara .	4.2	2.1	2.1	12.6

It has also been pointed out to me that on the principle of *ad valorem* duty, the planter pays relatively as high as the ordinary consumer. "A barrel of flour in Baltimore is worth \$6—duty \$1, or 16 per cent. on cost. A ton of coal costs \$6.6—duty 1s. 6d., or 22 per cent. Contents of a puncheon of lime is value for 7s.—duty 1s. 1½d., or 15 per cent." These must be very favourable purchases, however, for the planter, and cannot be accepted as an average of value. And whatever may be said as to the *ad valorem* duties, the unequal incidence of the weight of taxation is plain enough.

The Combined Court exercises for the colony in its present condition a power over the salaries of officials, which appears to need in some instances a modification. Some at least of the latter, especially those appointed from England, should be assured an inflexible salary by the Colonial Minister. It is evidently unfair that work to be done by persons representing the authority of the Home Government, as well as engaged in the interests of the colony, should be exposed to the vacillating antipathies or partialities of the local powers. To this must be added the fact that the possibility of such a danger may affect the balance even of an independent mind.

I have spoken with great freedom on the constitution and society of British Guiana as it appeared to my wondering eyes; in duty bound nothing to extenuate, as by gratitude urged to set down nought in malice. It is plain that in the colony itself there are many men of liberal opinions who would be glad to assist in freeing their political constitution, could they see their way to placing any confidence in the Creole Africans. The failure of the experiment of free government in Jamaica is a signal instance in favour of continuing the present constitution; but there are differences in the conditions of the two colonies, which need to be taken into account. British Guiana is wealthier, more full of energy, and perhaps of intelligence. It ought to be able to show considerable progress in the education of the blacks. Moreover, it has a great community of Portuguese now permanently absorbed in it. These people are in the anomalous position of foreign subjects, and, with very rare exceptions, have no representation even in the constituency. Yet they seem to be well qualified to take some part in the government; and, indeed, declare themselves at present to be suffering from the effects of class legislation. It would be



well if by some arrangement these admirable citizens—or some portion of them—now constituting, as they do, ninety per cent. of the shopkeeping community, could be brought within the privileges of British-Guianian free-citizenship, and be called upon to share its burthens. They would constitute a compact body of conservative defence against any tendencies to outbreak among the labouring classes, while, on the other hand, their numbers and property would form a barrier to the unconscious or attempted domination of a higher class. This, I venture to suggest, with a limited addition to the constituency of blacks or coloured people,—whose qualifications might be required to be both of property and education,—while establishing society on a broader, would also place it on a safer basis. Classes and race jealousies, sure to arise in such circumstances as those that now exist, would be removed, and the educational effect on the people themselves would be of the highest value. At all events, it is clear that some power must be erected in the colony to cope with the preponderating force of the planters, the possession of which is an insensible yet powerful temptation to them. In offering these criticisms I am not writing *against them*, but in the general interest of colonial well-being and good government.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ESTATES, MANAGEMENT, STAFF, AND EXPENSES.

I HAVE already referred to the manner in which the sugar estates of British Guiana are owned—that is, some by resident proprietors, others by absentees. The absentees are represented by local agents, named attorneys, who are generally not only the guardians of the estate's progress, but also its principal merchants both ways—selling its produce and providing its supplies. Moreover, they are not infrequently the mortgagees.\*

The attorney holds the proxies for his proprietor, and votes on his behalf in the various elections. Hence my deductions in the last chapter as to the governing class are not without great significance to the Coolie and every other class in the colony. For to these attorneys the next class of the community—omitting for the present the professions—is wholly subject; that is, the class of estate managers. Every plantation has its manager—a man with grave responsibilities, as he must of necessity, for the interest of his employer, be a man of varied abilities and experience. The Commissioners have admirably summed up the duties of this office.† “He is of course a practical planter, whether he first came out

\* Report of the Commissioners, ¶ 270. Ante, note, pp. 60, 61.

† Report, ¶ 271, 272.

under indenture from Scotland as an overseer, or migrated to better himself from Barbadoes, or arrived in the colony from some other port, to seek his living, rather than to make his fortune: he has spent all his life since among the sugar-canes. He is not merely a scientific farmer on a large scale, in a country where farming has inherited from its Dutch founders the necessity and benefits of a vast system of water engineering, and where the advantages of a tropical climate and fertility are almost counterbalanced by the tropical violence of the elements; he must not only have in common with other large producers a sufficient knowledge of trade to be able to watch prices and appreciate the views of market; but he is a manufacturer as well, with a singularly beautiful and delicate process to conduct, and with machinery worked by from one to half-a-dozen steam engines to control. Among British possessions the colony of Guiana produces the largest portion of the celebrated vacuum-pan sugar; and all the estates in the colony, whose proprietors can muster or borrow the money, are, since the last modification of the sugar duties in England, fast ordering out vacuum-pans, and converting their machinery. Not but what the old-fashioned common-process sugar-making alike required care and extraordinary assiduity in the manufacturer—that is, the manager—who has to get delicate operations of boiling, tempering, and clarifying accurately performed by half-skilled workmen of heterogeneous races, where one mistake may prove fatal to the whole. The peculiar characteristic of the sugar industry, which has hitherto prevented the separation of manufacture from agriculture—namely, that the canes must be crushed when cut, and the liquor boiled upon the spot, or at least without a day's unnecessary delay—adds enormously to his difficulties. All the parts of his machinery—the

cane-crusher, the clarifiers, the copper wall, and the centrifugals—must work evenly together, or time, which is money, will be wasted, the fuel consumed; the dried ‘megass,’ or the refuse of the squeezed canes, must be protected from the weather—that is, from the rains of Demerara—and stored in sufficient quantity for the furnaces. A single break-down of the machinery may destroy the returns of much labour and expenditure; a single misunderstanding with the labourers may make the whole profit of a month’s labour vanish on the spot.

“When to this is added the task of controlling, humouring, and acting earthly providence to some hundreds of labourers of different races, of different kinds and degrees of civilisation—the Creole task-gang, independent, punctilious, contracting on equal terms, as much for the sale of their labour as for the earning of wages; the Chinese, silent, observant, and capricious, ready to hang himself or desert at a moment’s notice for reasons inappreciable to a European; the Coolie, indolent to a fault, though generally amenable, with terrible drawbacks of revengefulness and untruthfulness—and when the business of an estate has to be carried on somehow, as is too often the case, with but a scanty margin of annual profit for mistakes, between a chronic complaint to the Immigration Office of insufficient wages on the one hand, and a peremptory order of retrenchment from the attorney on the other, it will become evident that two conclusions at least must be drawn as to managers by those who would gain a correct idea of the position of their indentured labourers. First, they cannot possibly, as a class, or in any numbers, be either stupid or resourceless in difficulties, or indifferent to suffering, or malevolent, or cruel; secondly, the welfare of the Asiatic immigrants bound over to service to an employer in such a position, weighed

down with such difficulties and responsibilities, ought not to be intrusted without supervision to his sole sagacity and care."

The manager is the person with whom the Coolie has directly to do. I have heard of instances in which immigrants have appealed to the attorney, but they are rare. The manager prosecutes, and in the very few cases in which Coolies are plaintiffs he is defendant; yet, in dealing with estates, or points arising out of the immigration ordinances, the Executive appear to recognise a divided responsibility, and to resort sometimes to the manager and sometimes to the attorney. In one or two instances, on large estates, the manager has a deputy-manager under him, but generally the next person to a manager on the staff of the estate is the overseer. The overseer directly superintends certain "gangs" in field or building work. He has to be early on horseback, laying out his hands upon his portion of the estate, and through the day he overlooks the weeding, planting, digging, takes account in his field-book of the people at work, noting whether they are in the field or absent, with the amount of money they earn in the day; and in the evening ascertains from the hospital book whether any of his gang have the excuse of sickness for absence from work. His book then presents a record of the day's labour, which, after examination and certification by the manager, is transferred to the "pay-list" and signed by him. From this document, also called the *muster-roll book*, is taken the evidence of wages due, as well as the proof in the magistrate's court of the absence or presence of the immigrant on any given day.\* Six or eight overseers may be found on an estate. In former times they were principally coloured, but the

\* A beautiful instance of the manufacture of evidence by an amateur legislative hand!

partiality for young Englishmen or Scotchmen is increasing. When once they are acclimatised they are not only more trustworthy but more vigorous than the Creoles. I saw many of these young men apparently suffering from the tremendous exposure and the abominable climate, but others seemed to endure the long hours in the hot sun without inconvenience.

Under the overseers are foremen (or, more correctly, *drivers*, for I had an idea that the former term was a clever euphemism invented by Mr. Russell for the benefit of the Commissioners. I never heard the word used except in his evidence), who are the immediate supervisors of each gang. They watch the work, take note of its quality, and probably keep the labourers up to duty. They are always of the black, or Coolie, or Chinese race, and their relations to the labourers give rise to the greatest of the difficulties that occur on estates. The blacks are inclined to selfishness, domineering, cheating, and favouritism; they are naturally prejudiced against the Coolie, as an interloper of another and physically weaker race. They are not governed by principle. Their greed or their passion may lead them—and often does lead them—to perpetrate criminal injustice in the pursuit of it. Hence these are the persons on the estate's staff which need the firmest restraint and watchfulness on the part of managers and overseers.

For the buildings is required an engineer, generally a Scotchman or an Englishman, though one of the ablest engineers in the colony is a coloured gentleman. He may have the machinery of two or three estates under his care, and is generally equal to any emergency arising out of the accidents liable constantly to occur to the complicated and beautiful machinery used in the vacuum-pan process. Very clever sub-engineers are found among the blacks and

Chinese. To these we must add the book-keeper and the hospital staff, consisting of the doctor, head sick-nurse, under-nurses, and cook.

We may now turn to the constitution of the estate forces. The number of labourers on single estates varies from one or two hundred up to a thousand. At *Leonora* the total number of immigrants was 683. Perhaps one-third, or even half as many more, of the Creole blacks work on such an estate, but not doing on the average more than three days' work a week. The available forces then will be marshalled in gangs for the various objects of the work. The strongest will form the "shovel gang," or "cane-cutting gang" in crop time; the less able will constitute the "weeding gang;" there will be also a "building gang;" and these gangs again will be subdivided, for ease of management and purposes of calculation, into the "Creole gangs," the "Coolie gangs," the "light gang" of weakly men, women, and children, who may be seen working in the megass yard. In the buildings will be found from 90 to 150 at work; the rest are distributed over the fields, if not in the hospital or skulking.

Such is the constitution of an estate's staff, and of its labour force. I have already described the nature of the work to be performed by this great community, which lives by itself, is shut in with itself, must find its news and its amusement, as well as its task, out of itself. Take a large factory in Manchester, or Birmingham, or Belfast, build a wall round it, shut in its workpeople from all intercourse, save at rare intervals, with the outside world, keep them in absolute heathen ignorance, and get all the work you can out of them, treat them not unkindly, leave their social habits and relations to themselves, as matters not concerning you who make the money from their labour, and you would have constituted a little com-

munity resembling, in no small degree, a sugar-estate village in British Guiana.

I should now give an idea of the enterprise and cost contributed by the planters to the vast manufacturing venture implied by all I have described. It is needful to remind ourselves of this that we may be the more cautious against doing him any injustice in considering the system on which his fortune depends. One of the friends who, during my sojourn in the colony, showed me the most generous and unvarying kindness, though himself a great planter and deeply concerned in the immigration of Coolies, showed me the books of a fine estate which was being rapidly worked up to the producing standard; and also furnished me with an abstract from them, with permission to use it as I deemed fit. I cannot do better justice to the position of the planters, nor could I find a neater expression of their views, than is contained in a letter which my friend wrote in sending me these notes.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“According to promise, I now send you extracts from the books of plantation . . . showing the working account of that estate for six years ending Dec. 31, 1869; also a memorandum of what I expect the result will turn out for the present year.

“You will observe that the amount of money sunk has been considerable. At the same time I cannot exactly call it a ‘Loss,’ as the estate has been materially improved during the period; but I think that the figures show that ‘Labour’ has had its full share (if not much over) the value of the products of the soil. You will also notice that as the estate expanded the amount of money expended under this head materially increased, having risen from \$17,485.03 in 1864 to \$45,328.68 in 1869.



“The sheet contains a memorandum of acres of cane cut each year, and the quantity of sugar, &c., made; and the result over the series of years shows a return which I do not think can be exceeded in the colony. And when I also bring to your notice that the estate has been under the control of a planter of high reputation, who resides in the immediate neighbourhood, and is directly interested in the results, I think that bad management can scarcely be given as the reason that so far no revenue has accrued.

“The figures show what an expenditure of capital is required to develop a sugar estate, even to a moderate extent, as . . . is comparatively only a small estate.

“The probable results for 1870 will likely give some return for the outlay, but I may note that they are based on the sugar bringing present value, and this is high rather than otherwise, and a fall of one penny or half-penny per lb. (which is quite on the cards) would give a very different result from what I anticipate, which would lessen the value of the crop some \$13,000, and instead of a profit would again leave a considerable loss.

“You will notice that the acreage cut in 1864 was 190 acres, and we expect to reap 377 acres for the present crop; and when I mention that 1,200 acres of land are available, I think that you will agree with me that with so much in hand there is not any fear that any increase in our working population would act detrimentally to the interest of the labourers now in the colony, or rather in the neighbourhood of this particular property; and I may name that most estates in this and other districts are very similarly situated.

“The information given is at your service, and I hope may be useful.”

By the account thus kindly furnished it appears that, beginning at the first year, 1864, the expense account and produce account were relatively as follows:—

1864.

EXPENSES.		PRODUCE.	
Immigration dues . . . . .	\$2,948.62	Acres cut, 190.	
Salaries, supplies, fuel, hospital, &c. . . . .	16,737.97	Crop—373 hhds. sugar, 242 casks molasses . . . . .	\$30,279.08
LABOUR ACCOUNT . . . . .	17,485.03	Loss for 1864 . . . . .	9,531.99
Interest . . . . .	2,639.45		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$39,811.07		\$39,811.07

1865.

Immigration dues . . . . .	\$2,744.66	Acres cut, 232.	
Salaries, &c. . . . .	27,987.99	Crop—546 hhds. sugar, 42 brls. do., 59 puns. rum, 294 casks mo- lasses . . . . .	\$50,366.59
LABOUR ACCOUNT . . . . .	19,873.96	Loss for 1865 . . . . .	3,212.16
Interest . . . . .	2,972.14		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$53,578.75		\$53,578.75

1866.

Immigration dues . . . . .	\$3,300.83	Acres cut, 296.	
Salaries, &c. . . . .	38,575.84	Crop—495 hhds. sugar, 7 brls. do., 81 puns. rum, 253 casks mo- lasses . . . . .	\$44,484.26
LABOUR ACCOUNT . . . . .	21,189.13	Loss for 1866 . . . . .	21,702.45
Interest . . . . .	3,090.91		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$66,186.71		\$66,186.71

1867.

Immigration dues . . . . .	\$3,177.79	Acres cut, 226.	
Salaries, &c. . . . .	22,649.07	Crop—520 hhds. sugar, 166 puns. rum, 356 casks molasses . . . . .	\$48,368.80
LABOUR ACCOUNT . . . . .	22,861.99	Loss for 1867 . . . . .	4,015.04
Interest . . . . .	3,694.99		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$52,383.84		\$52,383.84

1868.

Immigration dues . . . . .	\$3,038.81	Acres cut, 300.	
Salaries, &c. . . . .	30,215.55	Crop—714 hhds. sugar, 11 tces. do., 138 puns. rum, 377 casks mo- lasses . . . . .	\$71,269.04
LABOUR ACCOUNT . . . . .	33,563.01		
Interest . . . . .	3,407.88		
Profit for 1868 . . . . .	1,043.79		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$71,269.04		\$71,269.04

G

1869.		
Immigration dues . . . . .	\$3,926.91	Acres cut, 353.
Salaries, &c. . . . .	55,542.15	Crop—761 hhds. sugar,
LABOUR ACCOUNT . . . . .	45,328.68	313 brls. do., 45 tces.
Interest . . . . .	4,063.98	melado, 69 puns. rum,
		356 casks molasses.
		Estimated value . . . . .
		Loss estimated for 1869
	<u>\$107,861.72</u>	<u>\$92,237.44</u> <u>15,624.28</u>
		<u>\$107,861.72</u>

## SUMMARY.

Loss for year 1864 . . . . .	\$9,531.99
„ 1865 . . . . .	3,212.16
„ 1866 . . . . .	21,702.45
„ 1867 . . . . .	4,015.04
„ 1869 . . . . .	15,624.28
	<u>\$54,085.92</u>
Less profit for 1868 . . . . .	<u>1,043.79</u>
	<u>\$53,042.13 or</u> <u>£11,050 8s. 10d.</u>

In the aggregate it will be seen that the expenses exceeded the profits during the six years by \$53,042.13, or £11,050 8s. 10d.; and a fair idea may be formed of the amount of capital that must be sunk, and the time that must elapse, even under favourable circumstances, before the capitalist begins to get any returns. My correspondent points out that his hope of profits depends on the extension of the cultivation, and that again on the further supply of Coolies. No one can be surprised if the slightest hint of such a catastrophe as the stoppage of Immigration excites the blood of men with so much at stake.

## CHAPTER VIII.

IMMIGRATION ORGANISATION IN INDIA AND  
BRITISH GUIANA.

**N**EXT to the constitution and working of the estates, I may now naturally turn the reader's glance upon the machinery and process of immigration. An interesting account of the origin and progress of this movement in British Guiana is given in the Commissioners' Report, and will be found in the Appendix.\* By that it will be seen that as early as 1838 a ship-load of immigrants was introduced into Demerara from Calcutta. From that time onwards the luckless planters, as they found their crops dwindling, their emancipated blacks shirking all labour, and bankruptcy staring them in the face, looked longingly towards those exhaustless Asiatic sources of labour-supply—China and India. Portuguese had been introduced in large numbers on the failure of the vine in Madeira, but the "mortality was appalling to the community that had invited them." Barbadians and free Africans were tried without success. Up to 1845-6 so much as £378,830 had been expended by the colony in immigration efforts with hardly any good results, and with an amount of suffering to the poor creatures concerned which it were better now to bury from human memory.

\* See Appendix C.

The Commissioners, referring to the time from which the prosperity of the colony dates, have remarked upon two points of differing but interesting significance. "It is a singular fact, well worthy the notice of economists, that the fall of the old proprietary, and the consequent transmutation of colonial agriculture into a business entirely commercial and speculative, by the loss of the traditional sentiment which attaches to old family estates, was contemporaneous with the first signs of recuperative energy in the sugar industry. Mr. Kelly dates in 1848 the first pause in its downward career; in 1851—the two dates just covering the transition period in question—the first symptoms of its revival. One cause of the revival was the timely and judicious assistance at this time voted by Parliament to the West India interest. Of the sums permitted to be raised under Parliament on guarantee, £250,000 was the share apportioned to British Guiana, and it was decided by the Colonial Government to expend £50,000 of this upon a railway, and the rest in reviving the East Indian immigration."

This latter point is worthy the special attention of those who look upon our colonies as a useless appendage or an unendurable burthen. The timely aid given by a government then conscious of imperial duties, as it was animated by imperial pride—two feelings which of late seem to have been subject to the anæsthetic of a false political economy—while it did not rob the British tax-payer of a solitary farthing, has been over and over again handsomely reciprocated by British Guiana. While a Financial Reform Association—so called—by statistics unfairly used, by representations of the expense that his affection costs him, excites the animosity of the British tax-payer against his natural brethren of the present, his most hopeful allies of the future, let me ask him to consider for a moment the following

facts. A rough estimate has been made of the amount of duties levied on the produce of British Guiana imported into Great Britain, under the fiscal regulations of the Home Government, even at the reduced rates of duties in 1866. These are—

On 90,000 hhds. sugar . . . . .	£676,000
30,000 puns. rum . . . . .	1,769,000
15,000 casks molasses . . . . .	26,200
	£2,471,200

subject to deductions for what may be re-exported from Great Britain. In 1861 the colony cost the British Government £40,000; and yet in face of the above figures “financial reformers” will argue that we were being robbed to pay for people four thousand miles off. While they print an elaborate pamphlet to show what duties are levied on British manufactures, and protest against the injustice of it, they say nothing whatever of the levy of duty on British Guianian sugars, for instance, by the Home Government. In addition to the English shipping and labour employed and benefited by this great trade, there is the corresponding export from Great Britain by and on behalf of the British Guianian houses. In 1861 the average annual consumption of British goods amounted to the sum of £5 6s. 8d. per head. In 1864 the sum per head was £5 11s.\* This by the way.

Through the history of the course of legislation in India and British Guiana I do not propose to carry the reader. It will be sufficient to review the arrangements by which at this time Indians are converted into immigrants.

This legislation was in 1864 embodied—principally by the great industry, ability, and experience of Mr. James Crosby, the Immigration Agent-General, and

\* British Guiana Directory, 1870.

every way as honourable and upright an officer as the colony contains—in an ordinance designated “Number 4 of 1864.” I do not speak of the ordinance with as much unmixed admiration as of its compiler; for not only was it rather complicated, verbose, and untechnical in its original draft, but, its author alleges, was still more violently distorted from concinnity by the treatment it endured at the hands of the legislature. By a singular omission the head of the Immigration Department is not a member of the Court of Policy. When one considers the dominance given in that body to one interest, this omission is, until it is rectified, clearly fatal to any claim that may be advanced by the planters to the sympathies of the British Government or British public. Even this would afford but a limited redress of the inequality, but it would at least give to some representative of the Coolie’s rights a voice in the legislation that concerns him. The exceedingly earnest language of the Commissioners on this point will need to be kept in view by those to whom it is addressed, and those who have pledged themselves to vindicate the Coolie’s interests.

“The mishaps which have attended the work of legislation in immigration matters, of which many clauses in the Acts of 1864 and 1868 are conspicuous monuments, might all have been averted, and probably would have been, if the official whose duty it was to carry them into execution had had a voice in the discussions which preceded their enactment. It appears likely that legislation will still be necessary to remove the more flagrant of the anomalies which exist, if not to introduce novel provisions for the improvement of the system; but the experience of past legislation would leave us hopeless of any approximation to completeness in the work, if it were to be conducted in the hap-hazard way of former

times. The present Agent-General tells us that he drew the ordinance of 1864; the present Acting Agent-General made the first draft of the ordinance of 1868; but in both cases they refuse to recognise their offspring, ill-treated as it was in their absence by the legislature, without their having any opportunity of explaining it, or of bringing the modifications so effected into harmony with the whole.

“In another respect, we think it expedient that the Immigration Agent-General should have a seat in the Court of Policy. He would represent in his official capacity the interests of a very large section of the population who are at present necessarily excluded from direct representation in the legislature. The weakest side of the constitution of British Guiana is confessed to be the exclusiveness by which direct representation is confined to one interest, the most powerful in the colony, although certainly the most capable; and any small modification which would tend, although indirectly, to diversify the constituent elements ought to be thankfully welcomed, both by the public and the predominant interest itself. There are, as we have endeavoured to show, special reasons in the nature of his work for allowing the Agent-General a large discretionary action before calling in the interposition of the Executive in person. To these we desire to add, that in any future nomination to the office, it will be simply impossible to secure the services of an official qualified to perform its duties so long as his functions are limited, as at present, to the merest routine work, and the expansion into letters of minutes written by the Governor. Such duties might be satisfactorily performed by a head clerk without any particular standing; but this is not all that has to be provided for. Personal qualities of a higher order, though of a kind happily not rare among our fellow-countrymen, are required in the



official to whom 50,000 expatriated Asiatics are looking for watchful protection and guidance. Powers also of considerable magnitude must be frankly intrusted to him if he is to have any personal influence for good."

In this ordinance are provisions for the erection of an Immigration Department, with its Agent-General, sub-immigration agents, clerks, and interpreters in the colony—its Emigration Agents "to superintend the emigration of labourers from any of the ports of the East Indies, China, or elsewhere," to the colony, with their staff; and lastly, its Medical Inspector of Estates Hospitals.

I will briefly review the position and work of these officials. There is the Emigration Agent in India, with a salary of £1,000 sterling a year, and a capitation allowance of three shillings on immigrants sent by him and arriving in the colony. This latter allowance was granted as an incentive to the agent to send a proper class of people, for undoubtedly before 1862 some of the unhappy creatures shipped by the gentleman who then drew his £1,000 a year were unfit for any good purpose. They died like sheep, or suffered from diseases worse than death. The injustice to the planters was manifest and great.

The Government of India also supervises the emigration of its subjects, and curiously enough it came out before the Commission that the capitation grant was contrary to an Indian act.\* The Commissioners say (par. 202): "We presume from this that the Government of India is no more aware that the Emigration Agent is still paid by capitation allowance, in addition to his salary, than the Immigration Agent-General in the colony was found to be of the provisions in the act against it!" However, it seems to have had the effect of stopping the careless supply

\* 13 of 1864, s. 12.

of inefficient Coolies. A Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta is appointed to perform on behalf of his government the work which his name implies.

Mr. Crosby, in reply to a question, "Have you had any correspondence with the Protector of Emigrants?" said, "None other than merely a letter announcing 'I have sent such and such papers.' When I have made any comments upon any circumstances I have never had the gratification of receiving any reply. I have frequently hinted at matters which I have thought might be improved, but he has never condescended to reply."

Worse than the man who sends you an insolent answer—which at least admits you to be worth his indignation—is the man who never condescends to reply. He stands upon a rock, and is as imperturbable to busy reformers as his basis. But I had scarcely thought it possible that in this age, when the rigid insolence of place has had its back so thoroughly broken, there existed even among the fossil remains of permanent officialism a specimen of the civil servant who never condescends to reply. Now that the Secretary of State for India has had his attention drawn to this singular officer, he may perhaps find room for him among the curiosities of the India Museum.

It will be seen at once how important both to the commercial interests of the planter and the humane interest of the philanthropist is the part to be played in the Coolie system by the emigration staff in India. Unwise selection of people, who are either of weak frames, sufferers from disease, or are not fitted for agricultural labour, will not only prove a loss to the employer, but an increase of sorrow to themselves. Among the Chinese immigrants I found people who had been doctors, schoolmasters, and the like, and Mr. Crosby stated that on inquiry he had found the

immigrants from China to have belonged to as many as one hundred and fifty occupations—one returning himself as “a professed gambler.” The Commissioners examined personally some immigrants by a ship called the *Medea*, with this result:—“Out of *thirty* adult immigrants, only *thirteen* were agricultural labourers, who, with one lime-burner, one cowherd, three peons, and a sweeper, made the list of those accustomed to outdoor labour; the remaining *fourteen* were priests, weavers, scribes, shoemakers, beggars, and so forth. It is to this circumstance that a great deal of the discontent upon estates is due; the immigrants on arrival find they have to do work to which they have never been accustomed; they get disheartened, and soon find their way into the estates’ hospitals.”\*

The effect of vigorous remonstrance by the Demerara authorities has been to induce greater care in the Indian agents—care to secure a better class of immigrants. But the whole of the case in British Guiana, as presented at the inquiry, must be reviewed subject to the consideration that a large number of the early inefficient importations still survive. The difficulty of deciding in the case of these poor people whether indolence or feebleness was the real cause of neglect to work, has all along been insuperable to the colonial administration.

The recruiting agents in India are obliged to take out a license. Their business is to visit the country districts, and represent to the natives the advantages of immigration. Now, what is it that they represent? The planter’s answer will be, that whatever the recruiting agent says, the actual contract is there in black and white—such a contract as Lum-a-Yung’s in my first chapter—to show the terms on which the immigrant left his native land. But then the inden-

\* See Appendix D for a description of the method of passing, and remarks on recruiting.

tures with Indians are executed in Demerara. Moreover, on the other hand, the Coolies complained to me frequently that they had been deceived by the agents in India. Accordingly, a certificate was produced to me by a Coolie, and by me handed to the Commission, with a wages column, in which it was **stated that wages in the colony were from ten annas (1s. 3d.) to two rupees (4s.) per diem for agricultural labour.** On a Chinese indenture before me as I write is a note as follows :—

“Resolution of the Governor and Court of Policy of British Guiana—‘That the immigrant should be guaranteed full employment, on adequate wages, paid weekly, with a house rent free, with medical attendance, medicine, food, and hospital accommodation when sick; and that it should be explained to them that a man can earn easily from two to four shillings, women from one to two shillings, and children eightpence per diem, and that a full supply of food for a man can be bought for eightpence per diem.’” The indenture was made in 1863.

Let us, therefore, take only that of which there is indubitable evidence, namely, that the above statements were made by the recruiting agent. If it should turn out that only a strong man can earn two to four shillings a day, and that one shilling or one and threepence is the usual average pay, what remedy would Tan-a-Leung or Achattu have against the government of British Guiana or against his employers? None whatever. When he arrives there he finds himself to be subject to a law which overrides his certificate, and he must either sit down content or—look out for shot-drill. In such a case his only appeal would be to the British people and Government. Let us see Mr. Crosby’s opinion upon this point :—

Q. 2500. Might I ask whether you would not

consider that certificate a sort of contract with the immigrants made out of this colony ?

A. I consider it was upon this representation that they came to this colony. It is a statement made by the magistrate in India to the immigrant, when he is taken before the magistrate, under Act 16 of 1864, by the recruiter ; because this is presented to the Protector of Immigrants on his arrival in Calcutta.

Q. This is the representation made to the immigrant on which he comes here ?

A. Yes. Ten annas, I believe, is 1s. 3d.

Q. In this colony it would not be considered as a contract, because such contracts are rendered invalid by legislation ? Is it not so ?

A. *There is no contract, in fact, made in India with the Indian immigrant.*

Q. None acknowledged in this colony ?

A. None.

Q. It may be a question whether this is not a contract in India ?

A. This is not looked upon as a contract. It is not presented to us. We know nothing about it in point of fact. I believe it to be very seldom that they possess them on their arrival. I dare say many are very careless of them, but some preserve them with great care.

Q. Then in answer to my question whether this could be recognised as a contract in this colony, you would say certainly not ?

A. Certainly not.

On the statement in the Chinese indentures the Commissioners report : " Now, although an able-bodied Negro can earn from three to four shillings by from nine to ten hours of work in the field, it is well known that a Chinaman cannot ; moreover, the Negro does not ' easily ' earn it, but earns it by a good steady day's work. It is hardly fair to compare the

Negro and the Chinaman where heavy field work is required ; for the Negro is physically far superior to the class of Chinese who have emigrated to this colony. The Chinese complained that they had been deceived in this respect, for on arrival they found they could not earn the wages they had been led to believe they could." As to the Indian certificates they say : " A more serious matter is the statement of wages inserted in the certificate without note or comment, but required by the Indian Act to be specified as that 'agreed upon between the immigrants and the recruiter.' The rate is entered as from ten annas to two rupees, no difference being made in this particular between the certificates given to males and females. We shall hereafter examine into the rates of wages really earned, and show plainly that the effect of this statement can only be to mislead and deceive those to whom it is made.

"The copies from the registers kept by the Protector and resident magistrates, which are given to the immigrants, and by them considered as a contract, may not indeed be held binding by the colonial law, but are none the less direct pledges of the faith of the community. This is another, and we are sorry to say a still continuing instance of that carelessness as to the acts of their agents abroad, which we have had occasion to notice in the case of the Chinese. Were it not that we have a confident expectation that the calling public attention to it will cause the immediate stoppage of this abuse, we could not look forward with any satisfaction to the continuance of immigration from India."

Another representation was made to me by the Coolies. They declared that they were never informed that penal sanctions were attached to their contract. They said the prison was not mentioned to them. If this should prove to be so, it would be im-

possible to overrate' the injustice of inflicting this punishment upon defaulters for their breach of the labour laws. This can only be definitely ascertained by an inquiry in India, which should at once be set on foot. To secure that due notice of the terms of contract is given to the Coolie, the provisions of the ordinance more immediately affecting him should be translated into his language, and read to him by the magistrate at the time of recruiting.\*

The agents, after taking the recruits before a magistrate, who *visés* the certificate, send them on to the depôt at Calcutta, where they await shipment. Here they are examined by the agent, by the surgeon-superintendent, and depôt surgeon, and passed. The method of passage was the subject of investigation by order of the Demerara Executive in February, 1870, when a Dr. Crane, the surgeon-superintendent of the *Sophia Joachim*, stated :†—

“The official inspection took place on Saturday, the 11th September. The people were collected on the ground-floor of the brick buildings. They passed out individually through the back verandah in which Dr. Palmer and myself were sitting at a small table. As each person came to the table he presented his certificate, and a native—I think the ‘native doctor’ of the British Guiana depôt—inquired of the man his name and father’s name, and if they corresponded with the ticket it was handed to Dr. Palmer to sign, who thereupon affixed his signature and handed it to me for my signature, which I declined to attach, as I found it impossible, from the rapidity of

\* There is ground for believing that even more serious abuses exist in the Indian management than were brought to the notice of the Commissioners. In a pamphlet recently printed with the rather sensational title “The New Slavery,” Mr. Beaumont reprints from the *Madras Times* an account which, if true, proves a state of things simply atrocious and unendurable. See Appendix E.

† Pars. 196, 197.

the examination, to refer to the notes which I had taken at my previous inspection at the depôt, as to the condition of such individuals as I considered likely to be unfit for embarkation. I then stated that I would afterwards examine the people myself, and compare them and the certificates with my notes, and sign the tickets of those that I approved. Dr. Palmer said emphatically that it would take a great deal of time. I stated that it would not be necessary for him to remain during such examination. I contented myself, as directed by Dr. Palmer, with stopping such people as manifestly required, in my opinion, a more rigid inspection. When an individual was objected to, and Dr. Palmer and I had concurred that he was not fit for embarkation, the certificate was handed to me to record the fact and the reasons; but while I was engaged in doing so, other people were being rapidly passed without my having any opportunity of noticing them, and in this manner the inspection was continued until finished. I think about two hours were occupied in this examination. I then requested the Baboo to collect the people again for my own official inspection, having no confidence in the examination which had just taken place. While the people were being collected, the Baboo, accompanied with a clerk from the British Guiana depôt, returned, when I was informed by them that there was no time for such an inspection, as the certificates of the people were required immediately for making out the list of immigrants for embarkation. I then said that I would look over the certificates, and select from them the certificates of those of whom I had made notes on my previous inspection. This I did; and out of forty-one of whom I had made notes I found but one-half, of whom I passed fourteen for another inspection. Of these fourteen three died. This concluded the inspection."



Adhar Chander Doss, the surgeon-superintendent of the *Shand*, gives similar testimony:—

“At the time of the embarkation, Dr. Partridge, the inspecting surgeon of the emigrants, passed them in my presence. On my pointing to some of them as looking very sick, he replied that a little good feeding and sea air would bring them round. On my appointment, no reason had been assigned for my hasty appointment.” There is no question that the Indian system is rotten, and that its continuance on its present basis must lead to an early outbreak of public indignation in England. The Government can have no excuse for postponing investigation, and the immediate adoption of remedial measures.

From the depôt the immigrants embark, a general register being made out of their names and ages. A surgeon accompanies each vessel, who makes a return of deaths and sickness. During last year sixteen ship-loads of immigrants reached Georgetown from India.

As these ships enter the Demerara river they come under the control of the Immigration Department. This consists of an Immigration Agent-General, with a salary of £1,000 sterling per annum, three sub-agents, one of whom acts as a chief clerk, two clerks, and four interpreters.

Here we return to the Ordinance. By section 33 it is provided that, on the arrival in Georgetown of an immigrant ship, the Immigration Agent-General and the Health Officer of the port shall forthwith go on board, and ascertain by personal inspection whether the provisions of the “Chinese Passengers Act, 1855,” or the “Passengers Act, 1855,” have been complied with. They are bound then to “personally muster and carefully inspect the immigrants, and determine when necessary (?) their ages, and more especially the ages of all minor and infant immigrants;

and shall separate such as, in their opinion, are not able-bodied labourers, and not physically capable of performing service as agricultural labourers, from those who are," and then report upon the result.

The immigrants are then allotted to estates by the Immigration Agent-General, under the Governor's direction, in proportion to the numbers applied for by the proprietors. They do not see their future master—they have nothing to say in the matter of their allotment; but, by section 37, the Agent-General is enjoined to take care that children under the age of fifteen years *are not separated from their parents, natural guardians, or protectors, and that relatives are so allotted as to accompany each other, and that even friends are not separated unless unavoidable.* The employer obtaining a receipt for the allotment fees from the Colonial Receiver-General, produces it to the Immigration Agent, who then "orders them to be delivered to the said employer." This is suggestive of the transfer of a flock of sheep, and the whole transaction needs, in every detail, the most delicate, keen, cautious humanity and tact. In no carping spirit let me point this out to every one interested—to the Colonial Office, that it may watch with anxiety the appointments of the officials both in India and the colony; to the planters, that they may, in their own favour, take care that the men selected for this, I may almost say, terribly responsible post shall be conspicuous for integrity and humaneness. For it is a critical point of the system, that any part of it depends so much upon the character of the individuals who administer it—that according as these are trustworthy or the reverse, it may work well or ill. In Mr. Crosby the system had a man whose character and position were a pledge of his integrity; and his successor should be as earnest a philanthropist, as thorough a gentleman. It may be a question, too, whether he should not be

selected from without the colony. Nay, in my opinion it is no question ; for no man in the colony who would accept it is fit for that particular post.

Shall we pause a moment and regard a flock of these strangers as they pass through the streets of Georgetown on the way to their estate? Can we possibly enter into their feelings? Coming from their Asiatic homes, with their notions of Asiatic life, with the very air and mystery of that life hanging about them; simple in their knowledge, though cunning enough in apprehension, they curiously scan the new country to which, with vague and ignorant faith in some good to be won by it, they are voluntarily exiles! I can conceive of nothing more touching to a humane sympathy than this situation, and I am happy to believe that it *does* strike chords in the hearts of some managers, and that in a kindly way efforts are made to mitigate its uncouthness. Mr. Russell, in answer to a question (5388) respecting the acclimatisation of the Coolie, thus describes the treatment of fresh immigrants at Leonora estate:—"I may tell you the rule I have established in respect to Leonora. The people are received in the hospital from the ship; they remain there on full rations for three or four days; they receive a supply of soap and cocoa-nut oil to clean themselves and their clothes; then a good many of them draft themselves out to go and live with people who hail from the same village in India. The balance are allotted houses on the estate, separate houses for themselves. After working for four or five days, chopping grass about the 'buildings,' they are allowed to select their own implement to work with, whether to become shovelmen or weeders. Those who go to shovel-work, there is a steady old hand goes with them to trim their tools, to get their shovels and cutlasses sharpened, to get the handles made smooth, so that they will not blister their hands, and

he looks after them and assists them to learn their work. They are found in full rations; every man gets his rations before he goes out in the morning; they are given to them as to ordinary patients in the hospital. I hand in a bundle of orders on the estate's store for the provisions that are supplied to a gang of twenty-five to twenty-nine—sometimes a few go into the hospital, and then, perhaps, there would be only twenty-five. They go off the list by degrees, and till then food is supplied them like ordinary patients in the hospital. At the end of six weeks I give them notice that so many have to be put on their own hook entirely. The weaker are allowed to continue a week or two longer. Some of them never get off the pension-list; two or three become permanent pensioners, and are always either in the hospital or working about the yards and grounds. My experience in a great number of yards leads me to suppose this to be the best plan. I have dieted on many systems, but I find that the best; it leaves the people in good heart. At the end of the six weeks they get their money to start on their own hook. The best batch I ever had arrived in the month of May, when the water was coming over the back dam: they went on the second day to work, and when the roll was called, at the end of five years, every one but one answered to his name; that one was a girl who died of pulmonary consumption, which she had when she came. They came by the *Clarendon*."

## CHAPTER IX.

### COOLIE STRIKES AND POINTS OF LAW.

**B**Y the steamer succeeding that in which I had reached Demerara came Mr. Des Vœux. The news of our arrival spread among the immigrants with wonderful celerity. One of the most mysterious things in the East is the rapidity with which reports are circulated, and certainly the Coolies in British Guiana managed to convey information from estate to estate with puzzling promptitude. They had previously been in an uneasy condition. Mr. Des Vœux stated that his letter to Lord Granville originated in the fear of a general rising excited in his mind by the report of a riot at Leonora. This riot occurred on the 2nd of August, 1869. A dispute had arisen about three weeks previously between the manager and a gang of Coolies with reference to some unfinished work. Out of the dispute resulted a case before the magistrate, who decided against the immigrants. Upon this, after some preliminary commotion, they mutinied and beat the deputy-manager very severely. A body of police, armed with Enfield rifles, were called out to stop the disturbance. The Coolies, however, were fool-hardy enough to face them with no other weapons but sticks and stones. In the use of the stick, a long, strengthful, and smooth piece of Hackia-wood, they are very expert, so that

in the simple matter of fencing—as they far outnumbered the police—they were able to hold their ground. Providentially the commissary in charge of them did not permit his men to fire, or a massacre might have occurred with results to the colony and the immigration system both serious and far-reaching.

This *emeute* produced alarm in the European community, and general excitement among the immigrants. The Governor appealed to the officer in command of the forces at Barbadoes to be ready to assist the Executive in case of a rising. An armed addition was immediately made to the police force, under the command of the gallant Inspector-General of Police, who carries into his hot work preternatural activity, combined with a pleasant *bon-homme* which makes him a general favourite in the colony. His office is an important one, the salary amounting to £1,000 a year. I think his semi-military forces, with the exception of the officer, consisted entirely of blacks, some of whom had been privates in West India regiments. They used frequently to be turned out to parade in Georgetown streets, dressed in a neat uniform, their white puggies framing in their ebony faces, a band of fifers preceding them; in front of that a motley collection of Negro dancers of both sexes, and at the head of his men, on a necessarily capacious steed, the stalwart General. As I used to watch this strange procession, and saw the fiery sun gleaming along the polished barrels of the rifles, I could not resist an uncomfortable questioning whether the system really required this sort of argument to adapt it to the reasons of those whom it chiefly concerned. But it was a satisfaction to know that the commander of the band was a man of thorough good sense, great kindness of heart, and endued with that bravery

which can afford to be cautious. Some of his commissaries appear to be of the same mettle. An incident well worth relating was told me respecting one of them. His station embraced the long jetty or stelling which runs out into the river at Pouderoyen, opposite Georgetown. He was one morning informed that two or three hundred Coolies on one of the estates had struck, and were coming down to the stelling armed with their cutlasses and sticks, intending to force a passage by the steamer to town. With four Negro policemen he waited at the stelling end, determined to prevent their crossing. The Coolies, finding their passage opposed, came on furiously, and the commissary's men began to flinch. Without arms he placed himself before his blacks, directing them to support him. He loudly warned back the approaching line, but the front ones, pressed on by those in the rear, were brought within the reach of his arm, and these he forthwith knocked down. There is a wonderful power in an Englishman's eye and voice and arm! Before that solitary man's front these impulsive Asiatics quailed and held back; yet, advancing slowly, they forced the officer and his supporters gradually to give way to the end of the pier where the steamer was waiting. The Negroes jumped on board, and the captain called out that he had the hose ready with boiling water; but M., shouting in reply, "Let go and push off," knocked down the eager Indian next to him, laid hold of the two posts on either side the gangway to stop the rush that was immediately made, and held his own till the steamer was clear. Then he faced the disappointed Coolies, and ordered them back to the shore police-station. There he made them pile their tools, and induced them to return quietly to their estate. Such an incident, if you can get the hero for it, is worth more than a hundred

riflemen and the terrible witness of dead bodies to the might of the Executive. I was told that the Coolies always afterwards held Mr. M. in high respect.

“Massa De Voo” now became the subject of rather painful and troublesome appeals. Going one day to his house, which was situated in an open field near the garrison, I found the road and garden occupied by about three hundred Indians, most of them squatting on their hams in that peculiar fashion which, if not the envy, is the wonder of Europeans. They had their hoes, shovels, and cutlasses, and were covered with the dingy marks of toil. A dispute had occurred with the manager of their estate, whereupon they had struck, and come down at once to ask Mr. Des Vœux to help them. Accordingly the ringleaders, who could speak the strange lingo which they call English, were lining the steps of the house and occupying its gallery. Each one had his own story of some wrong or hardship, the truth of which it was impossible for us to ascertain. We could only take notes of their imperfectly-expressed complaints, either to hand to the Commissioners, or for me to use in suggesting questions for examination. If they were deceiving us, and no doubt some of them were, they did it admirably.

“O massa, plees, massa, help Coolie. Manahee too bad, massa, starve um, beat um, chuck um, *so*. Massa stop um wagee, take um wife. Coolie live too bad, massa: too hard work, too little money, too little food.”

“Go tell magistrate.”

“O massa, no good go mahitee. Mahitee know manahee—go manahee’s house—eat um breakfas—come court—no good Coolie go court—mahitee friend manahee: always for manahee, no for Coolie.”

It was a curious thing, that of the great number of



Coolies whom I saw, I do not remember one who expressed the least confidence in the administration of justice. Had it not been that they came down from all parts of the colony, and evidently without any previous understanding with each other, I should have suspected this extraordinary unanimity to have been the result of conspiracy. But it was too widespread for a general arrangement to have been practicable. I did not jump from this to the conclusion in my own mind that justice in British Guiana was not only blind, but deaf of one ear, but I was satisfied that the immigrants themselves were possessed with that notion. The opinion I thus formed has been confirmed by the Commissioners. They speak of it as an "unquestionable and most important fact that the Coolies do consider the relations of the magistrates with the managers too intimate, and have no confidence in their impartial administration of justice." I wish that the Commissioners had reflected upon this fact with more emphasis, as I shall take occasion hereafter to show they might properly have done. In looking about to account for this feeling, two or three circumstances—in themselves trivial and innocent enough—gave a clue to the reason for it. Some of the magistrates' courts are at a distance from their homes, and always near the estates from which the cases come. There are no hotels. The only decent houses are those of the managers. They are hospitable, and glad to have at table an entertaining guest. So that, as the Coolies said, the magistrate breakfasted, dined, or lunched with the man who was either the chief prosecutor or the defendant in nearly all the cases before the court. The quick minds of the Asiatics instantly fasten on this; and when they find the magistrate deciding in favour of the manager, they put down the breakfast and the decision as cause and effect. The purest administration of jus-

tice could not dissipate such a suspicion as that, nor, to be candid, afford to overlook it. And in dealing with Asiatics we must needs use some tact to disarm Asiatic prejudices. Dr. Shier, the Medical Inspector, felt this so strongly, that he made it a rule never to accept a manager's hospitality, and travelled about British Guiana like a "casual," swinging his hammock in police-stations or chapels. The Commissioners themselves, in the course of their proceedings, when they swooped down on estates in an irregular raid, never partook of the refreshment hospitably offered them. Besides, it is not clear that preliminary consultation on a case does not occasionally take place. An instance cropped up in the evidence, and, as the witness was one of the leading planters, has a significant interest. A magistrate had come down to the manager's house before attending a court in which the cases of a large number of immigrants against that manager were to be heard. The manager, in his testimony before the Commission, said he considered the question raised by these cases so important, that he had resolved to appeal if the decision was against him. I now make a brief excerpt from his evidence, and leave the reader to form his own opinion:—

"I had also seven or eight cases against the immigrants for disobedience, which Mr. — (the magistrate) advised *me to withdraw, and wait until the other case was reviewed. He was under the impression that Mr. Crosby (the Immigration Agent-General) would carry it to the Review Court; so was I, and under that impression I withdrew the charges.*" I at once suggested to the Commissioners: "Will you ask the witness where Mr. — would give that advice—to withdraw the charges against the Coolies? Would it be in court?" ANSWER: "*He gave it to me out of court.*" What would be thought in England of a

magistrate who privately discussed the probabilities of a case on which he was about to adjudicate, with one of the parties, and gave him advice as to the course of procedure best fitted for his interest? The *naïveté* with which the witness related this incident was an evidence of the thoughtlessness on such points which was prevalent in the colony.

Our waiting batch of Coolies originated one of the most interesting inquiries before the Commission. Neither Mr. Des Vœux nor I was in a position to offer any mediation, which from us would properly have been resented by the manager. We therefore referred the Coolies to the Immigration Office. Six or seven were selected by the gang, and went to lay a formal complaint before "Crosby Office." This simple proceeding raised a grave legal question. Under the Immigrant Laws, a Coolie absenting himself from work, or found without a pass a certain distance from his plantation, was liable to a penalty, or could be arrested by any policeman. By a later ordinance an exception to these enactments was made in favour of Coolies who "had absented themselves on reasonable grounds, to complain to the Immigration Agent-General." Therefore, whenever Coolies came to Mr. Des Vœux or to me, as they repeatedly did in large bodies, we referred them to the Immigration Office as the proper place of complaint. Then, if their complaint proved to be on reasonable grounds, it appeared by the law they ought to have been exempted from penalty for their absence. The half-dozen Coolies in the present instance went to the acting Immigration Agent-General and stated their grievance, upon which he wrote a letter to the manager of their estate certifying to this fact, and I believe stating that they were entitled to protection. A few mornings after some of them turned up at Des Vœux's in great distress.

The whole embassy, if I rightly remember, had been picked out by the manager as ringleaders, and summoned to the magistrate's court for absence from work. I ought to say that the manager acted under the direction of my friend Mr. McG., the attorney of the estate, as good-hearted a Scotchman as ever lived, who gave the order under the belief that the law was with him, and on the ground that these large demonstrations were likely to imperil the peace of the colony. It was not expedient for me to appear in the local courts on behalf of the immigrants, but Mr. Des Vœux offered to provide them with a local counsel to conduct their case before the magistrate. Accordingly a Creole advocate went down to Plaisance Police Court, about seven miles from Georgetown. When I mention that the ordinary fee for such a brief to a barrister or attorney is forty dollars, an idea may be formed of the slight chance a Coolie generally has of obtaining legal assistance. The advocate raised the defence that the immigrants had been absent, on reasonable grounds, to complain to the Immigration Agent-General. There was no question about the case in point of law, but the magistrate took time to consider ; and when I drove down to the next court, where I found the hapless defendants waiting in some trepidation, I had the satisfaction of hearing him read a written judgment, explaining the law, and dismissing their summonses.

I shall refer to this judgment hereafter, but the reader may ask what there was extraordinary in this? In itself it was a mere decision of a legal point, but its bearing on the general method of administering the Immigration laws was rather significant. This act had been in operation for two years. There was no room for doubt that during that period immigrants had frequently absented themselves from their estates to complain at the Immigration Office, yet no magis-

trate in the colony, so far as we could discover and so far as the Immigration Agents knew, had ever given a similar decision. The point had clearly been taken by the Coolies, and had been overruled by the magistrates. Soon after the ordinance was passed, there is a record that some Coolies relied on this defence in vain. I cannot ascertain at this moment whether it was before the same sagacious magistrate, who so shrewdly discovered the correct law in the prospect of an impending Commission. The Commissioners say: "A party of immigrants came to Georgetown to complain, and were sent back in charge of the police. Four were selected by the rest as spokesmen, and invited to attend the next day, and received a pass from the Immigration Agent-General for that purpose. Their complaints were found groundless, but in the meantime the manager took out a summons against five of them, including one of the delegates, who immediately petitioned the Governor as follows:—

"The manager has sworn that he would summons the whole lot who went to complain, and we beg to state that, as your Excellency is aware, the same is contrary to the last clause of section 12 of Ordinance 9 of 1868, and your Petitioners humbly pray that your Excellency will give them order to the magistrate of said district so that the said cases may be immediately *squashed*!"

"*They were convicted all the same, and imprisoned for three weeks. In the meantime the correspondence went on briskly, and the Governor directed them to be pardoned at once, just after the expiration of their term of imprisonment.*"\* It is utter nonsense, I would frankly say, for a society in which such anomalies occur to attempt, on the menace of investigation, to play the part of injured innocents. It does them more harm than good. This and other instances led me to the conclusion that a provision should be made to afford free legal assist-

\* Report, &c., par. 491.

ance to the Coolies in all cases of importance. The inordinate expense of law in British Guiana, the intricacy of many questions arising out of the Immigration Ordinances, and his indifferent knowledge of English, throw the balances in a court of justice heavily against the Coolie. Were a certain sum placed at the disposal of the Immigration Agent-General for securing legal advice at his discretion, or were a sufficient number of legal practitioners appointed in the various districts to be protectors of immigrants, and to render free assistance in such cases as seemed reasonably to require it, a long step would be taken towards allaying Coolie prejudices and suspicions. A similar suggestion was made by Mr. Yewens, an experienced clerk to one of the magistrates, who was examined before the Commission.

But the question thus raised not only affected the magistrates, it touched the police. The ordinance afforded protection to the Coolie *en route* for that haven, "Crosby Office." Before the decision, the police did not appear to have regarded the proviso, if indeed it was known to them. Immigrants were constantly stopped and sent home, though occasionally forwarded to the office. After the decision the Inspector-General ordered the police to accompany to the office persons who desired to go there to complain. The right is a valuable one, and should be jealously guarded by the Governor and the Immigration Agents. But it ought to be restricted within reasonable bounds. Striking in large gangs and forsaking work for a long tramp to town is as injurious to the interest of the Coolies as of their masters, and ought to be strictly forbidden. Two or three at most would in all cases be sufficient to represent a grievance at the office. The difficulty suggested by the immigrants was that the messengers became marked men, and were likely to be

persecuted, whereas if all came down together the danger was distributed. But I think all these difficulties would give way, and more general content ensue, if facilities were afforded to these poor people to vent their grievances, both by frequent visits of the sub-agents to the estates, and by establishing district agencies of the Immigration Office, where complaints should be received. At first this would give considerable trouble to the employers; but as the Coolies began to discover the uselessness of carrying trifling or untrue stories to the agents, they would settle down more quietly, and the planter would reap the benefit of a more liberal policy. They are like a lot of children, and half the tact of managing consists in humouring them.

I ought to mention a happy trait in these particular immigrants. Not long after the case was decided in their favour they came down to Des Vœux and offered to repay the money he had given them to secure the advocate. They had made it up among themselves by a general subscription, because they "did not want massa to lose the money for them."

One Sunday morning, about the time when Georgetown streets were swarming with polished ebony faces and startling mischances of colours *en route* for the Cathedral, Mr. Des Vœux came over to me in a hurry to say that he had been sent for to meet a band of Coolies on the other side of the river. A couple of hundred had come down the shore dam during the night, bearing a dead body which they wished to show to him. There seemed to be nothing for it but to go, and before long four sturdy blacks were pulling us away for Pouderoyen from the police stelling. We arrived just as the magistrate who had opened the inquest and adjourned it was going away. A *post-mortem* had been held, and the body required to be buried immediately. The crowd was a crowd to look

at—men and women, with children in arms, all dusty, toil-worn creatures—and I did inspect it sadly. Twelve miles had they come, in solemn procession, through the still, dark, hot night, like “John Brown’s soul marching on!” bearing with them their ghastly burthen. And the reason of it? On the afternoon of the day before, the dead man, who was employed about the manager’s stables, had, in altercation with a black horse-keeper, been struck and killed. I have already mentioned how easily the Indians die under punishment or the influence of their own rage. The Coolies on the estate collected in some excitement, and their story was, that when the manager heard of it he had said, “Ah! another foul chicken dead;” and had ordered the sick-nurse to inject some spirits into the body, in order that it might appear at the inquest that the deceased had been drunk. Upon this the Coolies seized the body, and placing it on a bamboo couch, brought it down to “Massa De Voo.” This was their story, afterwards totally denied at the inquest by the manager himself, who was at the time ill in bed, and by others who saw the whole occurrence. On a fair review of the matter, I think decidedly the probabilities were against the truth of the Coolie narrative, and that this was one of the noteworthy instances of a suspicion excited perhaps by some incautious word or act, upon which they had founded a plausible and ingenious story, one which all the cross-examination in the world would hardly have shaken.

Herein lies the very root of the difficulty in administering justice for them. The Indians will concoct a story; witness after witness will state and adhere to it with rigid fidelity; yet again and again they will be incontestably refuted. What a puzzling position for a magistrate, who knows the common propensity of the people, and who has to balance between



numbers of half-credible Indian witnesses and one or two white or black men! It is a natural sequence that sometimes when the Hindoo tells the truth he is hardly believed even by his best friend. Indeed, Mr. Des Vœux told me of cases which had come before him in which he had been convinced that Coolies, having a perfectly good case, but being conscious of their own bad reputation, had suborned black men to swear to the same facts with themselves. Frequently the magistrate is thrown back upon the formula which, as I have heard, used to be applied by a celebrated judge in Bombay:—"Forty witnesses have sworn to certain facts, and on the other side eighty have sworn to facts directly contrary. I am therefore forced wholly to discard the evidence, and to base my decision on a review of the probabilities." Yet this weakness in Coolie morals need not lead a judge to lay down the hard-and-fast rule that one white man's evidence is better than that of many Hindus. It should make him all the more diligent in sifting and comparing such undeniable facts in the evidence as tend to throw light upon the likelihood of the truth or untruth of the rest. But I have been forgetting the crowd which, now that the excitement had been worn out of them by their long tramp, and the doctor had given evidence that their "mattie" (mate) had died of "ruptured spleen," and the magistrate had assured them justice should be done, were standing awkwardly waiting for the burial before they went away. We must needs see the body, which lay under the police-station covered with a piece of calico. The poor son of toil lay silent and stiff and stark. Surgeons' incisions down the front and along the side had been neatly sewed up. Upon the face and open glassy eyes there was fixed in death the last glance of mingled pain and hatred. "He was a well-made man," said the commissary

coolly, as he threw the light sheet over it again, and, just as he said so, a loud, deep peal of thunder shook the sky above us, recalling to me with solemn distinctness that whatever the play or paralysis of right may be below, there is above a fixed tribunal, where an inevitable and exact justice shall be meted out to rich and poor, to strong and weak alike. After a few words of encouragement and reassurance, we went home, I, for one, carrying in my mind a never-to-be-forgotten scene.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CHINESE SETTLEMENT.

ONE tide—some forty miles or so—up the Demerara river is a settlement of free Chinese. During the reign of Governor Hincks, and, I was told, chiefly on the suggestion of Mr. Des Vœux, a tract of land on the Camoudi Creek was assigned for the habitation of Chinese Coolies whose indentures had expired. These poor people, unable, because they lacked the means, to return to their own country, had attracted the sympathy of Mr. Des Vœux, who conceived the idea of settling them on free allotments of land. In the exercise of their usual industry and ingenuity he hoped that they would attain to some better condition than could be purchased by the scanty wages of labour. There can be no question about the policy of such a movement. To open to the Coolie the prospect of a permanent land settlement after he had worked out his indentures, must be the only principle on which immigration can be allowed to continue. The matter was taken up by the Governor and the Court of Policy, and a large number, most of them Christians, were removed to the creek, under the leadership of an evangelist named O Tye Kim. The place was satirically named Hopetown—the word “Hope” being the name of an admiral.

They were placed in a locality where, during the

first rainy season, they were flooded out. Yet in the end they succeeded in clearing and cultivating a range of some extent. From a very able paper, prepared by a local committee, to preface the catalogue of contributions from British Guiana to the Paris Universal Exhibition, I transcribe an account, no less important than interesting, as, allowing for the amount of exaggeration inherently natural to exhibition puffs, it embodies the planters' opinion of the settlement in 1867 :—

“The inhabitants have cleared about five miles on the banks of the river and its tributary creeks; they have erected dwellings in uninterrupted succession along the clearing; they have built forty ovens, at a cost of sixty dollars each, for burning charcoal, and have succeeded in reducing the price of that indispensable commodity thirty per cent. The trade had previously been monopolised by the Madeirans, who burn their charcoal in pits. The ovens are considered to be a decided improvement. The settlers have, moreover, planted ginger, sweet potatoes, plantains, and other vegetable products. They have pigs valued at one thousand dollars; they have planted one hundred and fifty acres in rice, calculated to yield six hundred bags valued at nine dollars each; the population is one hundred and seventy, of whom forty are Christians; they are well fed, well clothed, and comfortable; they have had but one death; on the other hand, there has been but one birth. They have erected a temporary chapel and school-house, of neat construction, as might be expected from them. They possess three large punts besides bateaux, and they keep up a constant trading intercourse with the capital. The Report concludes with this significant fact: there has been as yet no case brought before the magistrate. [It is just possible it would have been more correct to say, ‘there has been no magistrate

brought before a case,' for the place is very secluded.] The settlement has been in existence little more than two years, and has had to contend with many difficulties."

So long as O Tye Kim remained with the people, he exercised over them a very beneficial influence. But in a weak moment he made a serious moral slip, and, finding exposure inevitable, absconded. I heard of him again the other day from a well-known Chinese missionary, who told me he had since seen him in China, whither he had gone, after a residence in the United States, and had engaged in some illegal scheme of emigration to that country. Mr. O Tye Kim evidently needs that the eye of Bret Harte, or at least of "Bill Nye," should be fixed upon him. At the time of my visit to Demerara, the settlement was not in favour with the planters. The rosy hues of exhibition times had departed, and charcoal tints had supervened. When I inquired about it, they shrugged their shoulders, and said it was "a mistake." From their point of view a mistake it undoubtedly was. It secluded a number of available labourers; and the natural policy of the British Guianian Government is as far as possible to place labourers in such a position as that they shall be obliged to work. It afforded an asylum to deserters from the estates. Moreover, instead of devoting themselves, as had been hoped, to the production of food or staples, the Chinese had taken to charcoal-burning, a manufacture which they perform with unrivalled skill.

Des Vœux had not seen these people for some time, and I was desirous of conversing with persons who were freed from the restraints of indentureship; we accordingly arranged an expedition to the creek.

On the 17th of August we drove down to the Chinese wharf, where Des Vœux's invaluable coal-black Sam awaited us with the luggage. We were

to take the only highway available—the water. Our vehicle was a long Portuguese boat, over the middle of which was built a “tent,” or cabin, capable of holding eight or ten persons. Our crew consisted of a captain and six swarthy Africans. A young fellow, with a hopelessly flat physiognomy, accompanied us as interpreter. The “Chinese stelling” is the agency of the Chinese settlement. Hither they send their products for sale. A large quantity of charcoal was stored under the shed, four or five naked Chinamen preparing it for delivery. In the shop at the entrance was a bench for opium-smoking, on which lay a couple of fellows idiotised by the poison. Noontide—hot beyond describing. “Where’s the ice?” Not come?—we must wait for *that*. In a quarter of an hour we have it, and swaddle it lovingly in soft, thick blankets. We get away by one; over the stelling and under the heated shelter, the yellow water glaring around us. “Ready? Give way all.” The heavy sweeps tumble into the water, our crew fall into a quiet swing, carrying us out past the ships and schooners and barges, then alongside the muddy banks with fringing brushwood, or where the tall, strong moco-moco weed palisades the front. Soon we are out of sight of houses, and only get glimpses here and there of sugar buildings or an estate stelling. Broad, and smooth, and level is the river—silent, with scarcely a boat to be seen. Here and there upon the mud stalks the white ibis. The sun glistens on the reeking limbs of the oarsmen and flames ceaselessly about us, while we try to forget him in talk of England, or in chess, or in some grateful, cooling drink served by the imperturbable Sam. So we go on, mile after mile, hour after hour, the banks never rising more than a few feet above the stream, the imperious vegetation bordering our view, and subduing far unseen and illimitable

areas. So—till evening begins to draw in, and the river has narrowed to about half a mile. Here is the entrance to the creek—some twenty yards wide, a glistening current of coffee-coloured water—that strange ebonised “bush-water,” which silently plays here like powerful, glancing muscles on a brown arm, and anon curls and eddies round us like the smiles on a Negro’s face. On the left as we go in are high trees and a foliage fuller and richer than any I had seen; on the right, for awhile bush, then clearing and Chinese huts. The creek is deep, with a strong current, and many a cunning wind, making the passage for our heavy boat rather ticklish, especially as we have no keel to steady us. As we entered the creek it began to grow dark. The gloom was grand, enlivened only by the gleaming of the Stygian water; the great trees bent over us in grotesque attitudes, our oars plashing softly, and the little, flat-nosed interpreter vociferating from the roof in hope of rousing the inhabitants. At length he succeeds. To his shrill nasal responds a deep frog-tone, as from a man who has no palate, and we hear the inhabitants waking the echoes a long way up the bank. Four miles farther we arrive at the rude stelling of our intended host, Lum-a-Yung. The vocal exercise of our interpreter was here a study; but it resulted in the approach of a small lamp and some men and women. Cautiously footing it along the round trunks, a gentle hand guiding me through the darkness, I find myself, after a devious walk, at a house-door, inside which steps my conductor, and then, holding out his hand, says, “Welcome, sir,” like any born gentleman anywhere else. I enter a better house than I have seen inhabited by any immigrant in the colony. A spacious room, with hard earth floor, lofty pitched roof built of a strong timber frame, with bamboo slots nailed on, half an inch apart, and neatly

thatched with the leaves of the Eta-palm. Two rooms are partitioned off from the main one by screens as light as the outer walls. Spite of the airiness of these, a peculiar acrid smell affected me, which I was afterwards able to resolve into the elementary effluvia of opium, tobacco, fire, and the live stock in the corner, not to mention an open drain that circumvented the house. But we are weary, and not particular. Forth came our hostess Moonshee, who has turned out of bed to receive us—a little, quaint-faced, yellow woman, showing ever so much teeth, and such an abnormal quantity of gums! And here are the host's brother and his wife and wife's sister; the wife, a Chinese Mrs. Conrady—no single feature uglier or prettier than the rest. I wished I could glorify them or forget their masks—they were all so gentle and so kind! In five minutes our hammocks had been slung by deft hands from beam to beam, and, my mosquito-net rigged, I rolled in, to wait for dinner. For Sam is already at work: witness the glowing charcoal out there in the kitchen-shed. A cackling protest indicates that Lum-a-Yung is sacrificing two chickens to the Chinese god of hospitality. Another petroleum lamp is lit, a table set, my bathing-sheet is pressed into service as a table-cloth, and in half an hour we are eating, off Worcester ware, broiled chicken, Cambridge sausages, Cincinnati ham, and drinking iced beer and St. Lucia coffee—the ice from Wenham Lake, the beer from Burton, the hosts from China, and the two white men, whose race has made this wondrous conjunction possible, swinging there in aboriginal South American hammocks. Was not that worth a thought?

After dinner and a little talk our friends disappeared to their sleeping-places, whence came occasional tokens of parental and infantile discrepancy. Des Vœux and I lay awake playing chess



and conversing. The heat was trying, the smell obnoxious, the fleas were sharp, those fowls within a few feet of me mighty uneasy, the dog and cat would not agree, every now and then a bat or a huge beetle hurtled against the light bamboo. I almost wished for the nonce the Aborigines' Protection Society were out to look after their own business.

Early in the morning many Chinese began to come in from the village, and soon filled the room. We occupied our hammocks, round which they ranged themselves. Their demeanour was free but polite, beyond that of any labourers I have ever seen. They bowed or shook hands, cordially welcoming my companion. When any part of our conversation was not comprehended by any one of them, a touch elicited an explanation in a low tone from some cleverer neighbour. If a hasty young scamp rushed noisily into the house, a quick hand was clapped over his mouth, and silence or ejection was enforced with ridiculous solemnity. We asked them first about their life at the settlement. They unanimously complained that they had not received, as they were led to expect, assurances of their property in the land, and that the privilege originally accorded to them of cutting wood for charcoal free along their own side of the stream was now denied to them. They were shrewdly suspicious; attributing this to the fact that an official, a member of the Court of Policy, owned the land on the other side of the creek, whence they were now obliged to obtain the wood, paying him a royalty. They knew all about the Commission, and were eagerly looking for some beneficial result from its labours—an expectation I grieved to be forced to stifle. They evidently desired to be sent back to their own country. Some assured us that this had been promised to them in China at the time of enlistment,

though it was contrary to the terms authorised by the colony. One man, who had been many years absent from China, told us he had left a wife and children there in the expectation of returning to them. He had never heard of them since. As this was translated to us others nodded their heads, in confirmation from their own experience. To me this was inexpressibly sad.

Selecting the most intelligent, we asked him to "tell his story." There was instant silence in the crowd, and they listened eagerly as sentence after sentence was transposed into English by the interpreter.

"In my own country I was a schoolmaster. I was well taught. I heard that people were going to Demerary, and I was asked to go. Agent told me it was a nice place—many of my countrymen were going: over there they had plenty of work to do—plenty money—would get rich: food was found at first, and a doctor if we were sick, and good wages. I was told the work was garden work. I thought that meant like our gardening in China. I did not think it was like the hard work in sugar-field here. I was told, if I came, I could soon get good pay as schoolmaster, and I hired as schoolmaster. There were others like me who came in the ship. There was a doctor, some schoolmasters, some tailors, and other people who were not labourers in the fields, and who all thought they were going to work at their own trades.\* When we got to Georgetown we were taken out of the ship and sent to sugar estate. At first they gave us food and rooms in houses. The rooms were dirty and not nice. Then they told us to work in the fields. We did not like it, but we had to do it. If we did not work

\* I can scarcely believe *this* is true, though I fear the recruiting agents don't stand on trifles.

we were brought before magistrate and fined or sent to prison. It was very hard for us. Some became sick. We could not earn enough to buy food from week to week. We had part of our bounty, but that was soon done. Some had given so much money to friends in China, and the manager wished us to pay it back, and took it from our wages. We could not bear it any longer, so we struck and came to Georgetown. We went to the attorney—he told us we were wrong and must go back. The police took us to carry us to the steamer, and several jumped into the water. They were taken out, and we went to Mr. ——. He spoke kindly to us, and sent us home, and after that they did not take our money every week. It was always very hard work. Several of my friends hung themselves because they were starving. When I was free I came up here. I want to go back to my own country.”

There was general sympathy with this sentiment. 'Tis a very simple, uneventful story on paper, yet not without its interest to any man who loves his kind. A mere skeleton of a life, to be filled out, or at least covered in, by a daily experience of plodding toil, of petty interests and vexations, of monotonous circumstances, broken now and then by a few days in hospital—all in a strange land. You may see here how, without active cruelty, with a careful and even honest attention to the legal responsibilities of his relation to the labourer on the part of the employer, there may yet be felt a wanting something to fill up the balance of equity, and its consequent mutuality of good-will. This immigrant relation should not only be looked upon as one of pure contract; if anything, it is more like that of the ancient patriarchal times—like that of Abraham and his servants. No legal adjustments can make it a happy one unless there is conjoined with them, on the side of the employer, a

spirit of generosity and of half-parental kindness. There was a gentleman in Demerara of whom it was said that he had rarely if ever brought an immigrant into court. The Commissioners speak markedly of the superior independent bearing of his Coolies. Mr. Clementson's name deserves honourable mention. A number of such men would infuse into Guianian society a spirit which I should conceive to be more effectual than any law. This might be fostered by an able and genial Governor, and by a body of local officials who were, like the chivalry of old, *sans peur et sans reproche*.

At noon I walked some distance through the settlement. The gardens and the cultivation about most of the houses were neatly kept, the houses were generally good and clean, the charcoal furnaces admirably made, and all in operation. My conclusion was that the Chinese I saw were better off than those on the estates. I was informed, however, that the whole village was not so flourishing, that indeed in some parts there was much distress. The dreadful heat forbade a lengthened investigation. I give the opinion with reserve, but it seemed to me the experiment has not been fairly carried out, and that if fairly carried out in a more convenient locality it would be more successful. The Commissioners also visited the place, and speak favourably of the scheme of land settlement, not only in this case, but as a general matter of policy, though they are doubtful about the locality. These Chinese, they say, "are somewhat too far from Georgetown, and, in consequence, from the support of civilising associations and rules; but that of itself would not lead us to despair of the future of Hopetown, if some means could be devised to give them a better chance as cultivators."

After listening all day to strange stories, we took advantage of the tide towards midnight, and bidding

good-bye to our generous host and hostess, whom I shall ever gratefully remember, we pushed off into the gloom—sweeping down the rapid and tortuous stream, with no small risk, till we reached the safe bosom of the calmer river. Though the thermometer was 75° or so, we were obliged to wrap up to keep off a chill; nevertheless symptoms of the wretched fever of the colony drove me next afternoon to the doctor.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A CATTLE FARM.

**D**URING the first week in August, the skies meanwhile weeping fiercely several times every twenty-four hours, I accompanied a party, by the invitation of its hospitable and ever-pleasant agent, Mr. Godfrey, to the Drill Farm. A favourite trip is this to such gentlemen of the colony as are lucky enough to be on good terms with my host. The Drill Farm is a great cattle farm, situated some distance from Georgetown, towards Berbice, and, as one of the exceptional industries of British Guiana, a brief description may not be unwelcome.

Up at six, and soon after rattling along with R. T. H. to the railway station. For Demerara has a railway some fourteen or fifteen miles long, running past a few villages to the creek of Mahaica. Our party soon collects; more are to be picked up further on. The "cars" are not much larger than those which run on city tramways, and of similar construction; that is, with the seats along the side and on the top for those who can bear the sun. As it is early, we chose the open air. We are soon shrieking and bumping across the flat country, the only engineering difficulties having arisen out of the necessity for wooden bridges over the canals, as they occur every hundred yards or so. Our engineer and stokers are

blacks—reckless imps enough—and certainly, had I not known there was soft marsh on either side of the way, I should have felt some nervousness as our vehicle swung and oscillated over the badly-laid road. What salamanders those drivers must be! Our progress was enlivened by continual whistling to warn off parties of Coolies or Negroes, who found this the shortest and most agreeable way to Georgetown, the hair-breadth escapes of some of these at the bridges giving us an amount of excitement calculated to allay the sense of danger to ourselves.

At Victoria village, on the little platform, beamed on us from under his puggery the cheery face of the Inspector-General of Police. He was not waiting to arrest us, but was there with Mr. M., the stipendiary magistrate of the district, to lead us into temptation. The young Wesleyan minister on the roof looked at us curiously when we were solemnly summoned into the "waiting-room," and the door was closed. A brisk Negro then produced a bucket of ice, an American ice "pitcher," and the materials for a gigantic "swizzle," which the practised hand of the Inspector-General, wielding his implement—the swizzle-stick—with greater skill than he ever wielded his general's staff, soon turned out frosty and frothy, sputtering and trembling to get into one's mouth. All this was going on regardless of the passengers or the time-table. The guard, who put his head and his watch in at the door in a remonstrating attitude, was forthwith collared and experimented upon with the same delicious medicine. This was the morning refresher, not a little needful, since we should not reach our breakfast until eleven o'clock.

Mahaica is a wide creek of deep, black water; near it one of the Coolie gaols, from which the prisoners are sent out in gangs to work on the estates. Our horses and traps were extracted from the train amid a

tumult of water—there called “a tropical shower”—and we commenced a long drive, mostly through a country of abandoned estates; the tokens of Dutch industry, or rather of Negro labour and Dutch tyranny, still remaining in the intersecting lines of trenches. We were in the police-waggon—*absit omen!*—a huge basket of provisions nearly crowding us out, and our beloved Inspector-General doing his best to break the springs with that transcendental British solidity of his. Alternately we passed wild bush and stretches of a mile or two of swampy grass, the cattle standing in the water and eating the tops off. In a couple of hours we reached our destination, a pretty garden, well laid out, and—rare decoration in these latitudes—an iron gate, which, being opened, permits us to drive 'neath flowering trees to the wooden house, paintless, but vast and comfortable. Up the steps we find a wide gallery furnished as a sitting-room and dining-room, in fact *the* place to live all day, lounging in the basket-chairs or swinging in the hammocks. The Drill Farm is a bachelor establishment, and only occasionally invaded by such parties as ours. The *abundon* is perfect. You eat, drink, and sleep when you like. The ingenuity of the host and that ceaselessly restless Inspector-General are exercised in providing some fresh surprise of delicacy or cooling drink every hour. Anon, we issue forth in the now glaring sun, with guns under arm, in search of alligators or plover.

In the early morning—not to say anything of the night, for Drill Farm mosquitoes make the most of their very rare chances—a tremendous shouting and lowing filled the woods about the house, indicating that the “driving-in” was in progress. The cattle are permitted to roam wild through marsh and wood to feed themselves during the week, and are driven in by their keepers on a certain day to be counted.



Here they come, converging from all parts, crackling through the forest, plunging through the marshes, galloping along the roads, the closing ring of men and boys deeply or sharply calling, the cattle uttering their complaints in bovine bass or treble. One was forced to turn out in spite of himself. When I ran down to the yard, a mass of black mud surrounded by a stout fence, I found it full of excited animals, leaping, lowing, and struggling; fine English-bred cows or bulls, beside the lapped and hunch-backed Indians, the wild breeds of Orinoco, or powerful descendants of Western Prairies. Presently some bars were dropped, and the manager, standing on the fence with pencil and book, cleverly counted the masses as they rushed tumultuously by, nearly a thousand having been driven into the pen that morning from one portion of the farm. The cattle of Demerara are a credit to the colony. They afford good beef—for the tropics, and the trade in them to Coolies is enormous. Great care and enterprise are exhibited on some of the farms in securing good breeds, and doubtless with pecuniary results not unsatisfactory to the proprietors.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE COMMISSION AND SOME OF ITS CONCOMITANTS.

**A**FTER a delay of six weeks, Mr. W. E. Frere, the third member of the Commission, arrived in Georgetown. By the previous steamer had also arrived the Advocate-General of Bengal, Mr. Cowie, retained by the planters in London, with a fabulous fee, to represent them on the inquiry. Let me say here how much both truth and good feeling were assisted, and how fortunate was every one concerned, in an accession to the *personnel* of the investigation so thoroughly high-minded and gentlemanly. The Government was now in a position to constitute the Commission. For though it had been ordered by Lord Granville, it was, in form, an inquiry on behalf of the Colonial Executive.

An act already existed conferring on the Commissioners the powers usually accorded in the colony to special commissions appointed by the Governor, but enduing them with very inadequate and clumsy means of enforcing their demands on refractory witnesses. The right given by the colonial act to prosecute or sue such persons before the Superior Court, which was empowered to punish them by fine, was clearly illusory in its constraint on wealthy planters. The Commissioners very firmly insisted on receiving additional powers: the Court of Policy was therefore summoned on Thursday, August 25th, and in one

day passed through all its stages a bill conferring those powers on the Commission.

In the afternoon, a *Gazette Extraordinary* so called—not that I wish any one to presume the *Royal Gazette*, in its usual issues, is not an extraordinary affair—announced the formal opening of the Commission on the following day. It contained also another proclamation, relative to Mr. Cowie and myself, in effect desiring all persons to take notice that we had turned up in the colony with the alleged determination of appearing before the Commission in behalf of certain persons, but assuring all persons whatsoever that we had no official connection with it. This unprecedented production, I was given to understand, was one of those specimens of weak elasticity sometimes exhibited by the ministry at home. A member of Parliament had asked a question in the House relative to the retainer by the planters of the Bengal Government official in a capacity that might seem hostile to the Coolies. The Colonial Office, which was at least aware of Mr. Cowie's journey, pressed between the philanthropists and the West India Committee, both with powerful representatives in Parliament, hit upon the expedient of publishing a disclaimer of Mr. Cowie's official relation to the business. I, respecting whom no such question could arise, had the honour to be coupled in the proclamation with my learned and agreeable friend, in order, I suppose, to ease off the awkwardness of the advertisement. If I acted as a "buffer" to any one's feelings, it is a use of me which I cannot resent. I wish, however, our rulers would act always on principle, and not by spasms.

On the 26th, at twelve o'clock, Georgetown, ever hot enough, had worked itself up to a climax of anxious heat. The vast but ungainly "Public Buildings" were the centre of converging excitement.

Whites, drabs, browns, and yellows—merchants, lawyers, doctor, splanters—were collecting, while Negroes and a few Coolies lounged without, or formed a closely-packed source of caloric and other consequences within. The Commission sat in the Supreme Court, a reasonably large rectangular room, with arrangements similar to those of an English court of justice. On the bench were the Commissioners: below it sat the secretary of the Commission, Mr. Davis, a young gentleman, native of the colony, who has deservedly received from the Commissioners in their Report very high commendation. The temper of the colony may be judged of by the treatment experienced by this gentleman, who was bold and honourable enough to be independent. He was one of the many persons attacked by the scurrilous writer "Fair Play," to whom I have previously alluded. My colleague, Mr. Carbery, a young but rising barrister in the colony, who did good service after my departure, and deserves honour and gratitude from all interested in the Coolie, afterwards endeavoured to unmask, by proceedings in the Superior Court, a person whom he designated on oath as the author, without any repudiation by the person referred to—a principal attorney in the colony. Mr. Davis's conduct on the Commission is now regarded in the colonial community as a barrier to his success; but no doubt the Home Government will take care that he does not suffer by his independence. I may mention another instance significant of the tone of public opinion—and this I conceive to be infinitely more important in considering the Coolie system than any legal and administrative regulations; for unless these are sustained by the feeling and opinion of a community, their effectiveness will always be matter of uncertainty. I had great difficulty in obtaining any person to act as a

clerk, or in any way to assist me. One coloured person who was bold enough to offer his assistance turned out to have been a compulsory visitor to Massaruni, the penal settlement! At length I was fortunate in finding an Englishman, newly arrived, and perhaps unduly careless of consequences; for he was repeatedly warned by managers and others that *he was ruining his prospects in British Guiana*. To these matters I allude, because they are of that subtle and intangible nature that no Commission could lay hold of, and yet are more telling than many facts. A society the governing portion of which is endued with a temper so inflexible, can blame only itself if injustice is sometimes done to its goodness. One cannot but think that instances such as these are not confined to the special cases named, or to a subordinate class of society. The spirit they indicate must show itself on many occasions, and through all grades of the community—must, indeed, restrain the free action or expression of opinion of any but the few who are absolutely independent. This to my own mind was the worst evidence presented against the planting community, taking it in the general—I carefully guard myself from implicating many of its individuals—and it is because I think it the worst that I refer to it. The prevalence of an influence like this may, nay must, clog the wheels of government, thwart the administration of justice, and disturb the moral equilibrium of many fine minds. Could an ingenuous and generous spirit be transfused by those of my planter friends who possess it through their brother classes of British Guiana, I, for one, should feel more confidence in that influence alone, than in all the checks and counter-checks of an elaborate legal system. Unhappily, the hostile attitude too often assumed by those who, in the generous heat of philanthropy, criticise the proceed-

ings of such a society as that of British Guiana, contribute to hold together, not only in common action but in common spirit, men of markedly dissimilar culture, taste, and feeling. The noblest humaneness, let us ever strive to remember, is not the most suspicious or the hastiest to form adverse opinions.

The Commission was opened in due form. Mr. Cowie asked leave to appear not so much in the character of an advocate as of a disinterested searcher for the truth. My own declaration was similar, and the Commissioners then announced that we and all others were free to suggest any questions or facts likely to assist them, but that they were the inquirers, and could not recognise any one as an advocate. On the succeeding day they began to take the evidence of Mr. Des Vœux. The first sessions were exciting, but always conducted with a dignity and decorum equal to that of the most august courts I have ever seen.

The examination of Mr. Des Vœux, whose letter to Lord Granville had given rise to the inquiry, proved to be of a very unsatisfactory character. Though some of his charges were wide in their range, and others specific, he was unable to verify the former from any but vaguely-expressed remembrances, while the latter proved to have been incorrectly stated, or not always to warrant the conclusions drawn from them. In fact, Mr. Des Vœux had written a very long and serious letter, with the honestest of intentions, but with the least business-like of performance. According to his own account, it was done, upon the spur of a report which led him to fear the colony to be in danger, without notes, memoranda, or documents whereby he could verify his statements. He considered himself, by the circumstances, justified in relying on his general remembrance of the conclusions formed by him in the course of five years'

experience in the colony. That he had, to a considerable extent, read the state of its society aright is proved by the Report; that he was justified in expressing them in the definite, exaggerated, and formal manner in which he wrote to Lord Granville, hardly admits of argument. Yet I think that this was for critics and not for Commissioners to consider, and in the Report before me the severe animadversions on Mr. Des Vœux's conduct would appear to be beyond the proper sphere of their duty, and to have been more appropriate from a Colonial Minister reflecting on the issue of the inquiry, than coming from the persons appointed to inquire and report. When they speak, for instance, in this manner, are they not commenting needlessly on the witness, instead of confining their judgments to his evidence? "Before proceeding to consider the system, we must express a decided opinion that Mr. Des Vœux was ill-advised in bringing, under any circumstances, a series of charges so vague, so sweeping, and so little admitting of satisfactory proof, as those which we have hitherto discussed. Although we agree with him in believing some of the most important of the facts which he has adduced to prove them, yet in order to substantiate them fully more was required; and we consider that in default of surer knowledge and wider information he was personally not entitled to bring them. *It was never required or expected of him* (?) that he should, as he expresses it, 'prove by his own evidence the whole of his case;' but *it was incumbent on him* to produce sufficient evidence to excuse at least, if not to justify, all the imputations and insinuations of which his letter is full." Such remarks as these I could myself have written with both truth and propriety, any friend of the planters might fairly have argued, or a Secretary of State have indignantly affirmed; but the Commissioners seemed to me in this particular to

have travelled out of their sphere. With this difficulty in my mind it would be dishonest in me not to express it. Mr. Des Vœux, as they state, explained to the Commissioners that in writing this letter he did not expect to be called upon to prove it by his own evidence, though he was prepared, were time and opportunity given him, to substantiate it from evidence existing in the colony. The opportunity was denied him previously to the opening of the Commission. An application to the Governor to permit him to examine certain records was refused, exactly as a similar application by the planters' committee was rejected. This and a very serious accident to his spine which befell him but a short time before the inquiry, unquestionably rendered him unfit to appear to support his long indictment, and it was an unfortunate fact for the truth that so much had been, by his own previous policy, made to depend on his own knowledge and precision of statement. For both these proved imperfect.

Still it is due to Mr. Des Vœux to say that on one or two points absolute justice does not seem to have been done him in the Report; but the discussion of this must be postponed to my review, at a later stage, of the Coolie system in Guiana.

After him a large number of witnesses came forward, the principal being the Immigration Agent-General and sub-agent, the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, Mr. Oliver, of the planters' committee, to produce a series of most elaborate and costly statistics, Portuguese merchants, magistrates, barristers, doctors, &c., &c. Wherever evidence had been given implicating any person, he was permitted if he pleased to clear himself on oath. The whole of the public evidence was published, in very handsome form, and with admirable correctness, by the *Colonist*, their very skilful reporter and sub-editor having taken it down



in shorthand. From this evidence I only excerpt the amusing episode of the Coolie Hulloman, or Hooni-maun, which the reader may take *cum grano*. Fortunately most of the Coolie examinations are unreported.

Hulloman, a Coolie, examined.

*The President*—Is your name Hulloman?—Yes, sir. What religion are you, a Christian?—A Hindoo.

*Mr. Cowie*—Then, if I might be allowed to suggest, he should be solemnly affirmed.

*The President*—Is that how he would be sworn here by the law?

*Mr. Cowie*—The Solicitor-General tells me Hindoo witnesses are generally asked how they would prefer to be sworn.

*The President*—Will you be satisfied with my interpretation?

*Mr. Russell*—If I may be permitted, he has been my driver for a number of years, and speaks English nearly as well as I can.

The witness was then sworn with a glass of water, which he declared to be his oath.

*Sir George Young*—When did you come here?—This country, sir?

*Sir George Young*—Yes.

*Hulloman*—Twenty-one years ago; past one-and-twenty years.

*Sir George Young*—You came out to work on plantation?—Yes; I came out to Anna Regina, in Capoey.

You were indentured there?—That time I came I was indentured for six months.

Why were you there only six months?—The estate “broke,” and all the Coolies went away.

Where did you go then?—I have been about Capoey, working all about, sir.

Did you indenture again?—No, sir.

You got to be a driver, where was that first?—First under Mr. — at —, on the West Coast. I left Capoey to go to —.

How long did you stay at —?—Something like eleven years; nine or ten years. I cannot tell exactly, but I lived there very long, sir.

Were you a driver all that time?—Sometimes I worked in the field with the task gang.

When you first went to —, did you go as foreman or driver?—No, no; working task gang among the village blacks; then the manager took me to be driver to the Coolie gang.

How long were you a driver?—It may be some fourteen or fifteen years since I began driving.

When you left —, where did you go?—I had one and a half years in town then.

And after that?—Under Mr. McCalman, at Farm.

Were you a driver then?—Yes.

For how long?—About one and a half years, something like that.

How long is it since you came away from Farm?—I worked one year and three months at Peters' Hall.

And after Peters' Hall?—I came into town, and stayed six months.

What was the next estate you went to?—Windsor Forest, Mr. Cameron's place.

And after that?—I have been at Plantation Blankenburg, with another Mr. Cameron.

Are you at Blankenburg now?—No, sir; I am back in town.

Did you go to any estate since you were at Blankenburg?—No, sir; that was the last.

So you have been at Anna Regina, at Leonora, at Farm, at Peters' Hall, at Windsor Forest, and at Blankenburg, all those estates?—Yes.

Which did you like best of all those estates?—I

worked for Mr. — long time; he had an overseer named Mr. —. He came and told me one afternoon in the house, manager want me; manager treat me very bad, say Mr. Crosby come, I must take bounty.

I asked you which estate of all those you liked best?—Every one estate is going bad, I was beginning to tell all serious. I liked —, but at last I was obliged to go; manager treat me bad. Next morning Mr. — himself met me, and asked me to take the bounty money, and stop on the estate. I said, “No; the estate no good; one day absent you carry me to the magistrate and put me in gaol; me no want bounty money now.” I worked my full week; next week I asked manager to give me leave to take a little walk to Berbice; I wanted to go to Berbice. He said he would, but must have somebody in my place before he give me a pass. At that time I took one Coolie named Ram Lall, and put him in my place. I told manager I had put a man in my place, and the manager gave me a pass to go to Berbice. When I came back from Berbice, I heard Mr. Crosby had given bounty money and gone back; so I go to my room. Next morning I go to the manager, who say, “Well, Mr. Hoonimaun, my friend, have you come back?” and I said, “Yes.”

*The President*—Is your name Hoonimaun?—Yes. Manager say, “Me keep two shops, one on the estate, and one in the village. And me keep cows. Where you get all these things?” I say, “Me worked, get them that way.” He say, “Oh yes, me know your tricks, me soon learn your other tricks.” So the manager called a constable named Louis, and he carried me to the police-station, and before Mr. Daly, the magistrate at Stewartville.

Well, and then what happened?—One day and one night I was there, and the next day at three o'clock

Mr. Daly loosed me on bail. At the very same time me pay my money down, Mr. — come in, and he say, "My God, you go loose that man! You not right to let the man loose." And Mr. Daly say, "Well, I cannot help it now." So I go in my house, and I see all my shop broken up; me ask the people who did it, but they no tell me anything; me ask my wife, but she not know who do so; she was in her room. So I come to town to the lawyer the same day, and I fetch a barrister. Me hire barrister and a carriage, but Mr. — did not come to the court when I appear in the court.

I.—Will you ask him what fee he paid?—Me paid Mr. — \$30 for the fee, and \$5 for the waggon. I come into court with Mr. —, and Mr. Daly say, "You must come in court next week, go now." So next week again, I go to Stewartville Court. Me no see barrister, me no see manager; both me no see. So me stop until the court over. Then me go close to Mr. Daly, and me say, "Mr. Daly, you no call my case, sir." Mr. Daly tell me, manager no come to the court; very heavy charge against me; rob the estate. Next court, manager come, and will send me to Massaruni. So I come into town to barrister, to tell me why he no come; and he say, "You must go to Mr. Daly, and get your bail money; the case is dropped against you. Manager no make out case. So me go to the magistrate, and me tell him he give me bail money; barrister say manager got no proof, case dropped. But Mr. Daly tell me he cannot give me the money because manager have good case against me next week, and so long he could not give me the money. Then me say, "You magistrate, you must make manager give me the money." Mr. Daly say, "Mr. — very good man; he might have you locked up, because you rob the estate; but he no go against you."

Well, did you get the money at last?—Yes.

How much money did you get?—\$50. I gave \$50 bail.

And Mr. Daly did not send you to Massaruni?—No. Manager say, "Take your things off the estate, and go away." Well, me no place to go to, no things to take.

Why did you leave ——?—Me left P——, and me go to ——.

Why did you leave ——?—The summer before last, or something like that.

But why?—The manager and me quarrel, sir.

What was your quarrel with the manager about? Don't tell a long story; make it as short as you can.—Very well, sir. One Saturday, about three o'clock, manager came to my house, and he ask me, "Driver, have you not seen the hog-minder?" So I ran out and call people, and they call the hog-minder. I ask why he not mind hogs; and the hog-minder say, "Me got nine bitts last week, and the manager say, 'Send to the missy.'" So me ask him what he send for.

*The President*—I don't want all you said and he said; tell us what happened.—Missy make cassava bread, and plantation hog-minder say, "Me no got half a bitt to buy nothing;" so I tell manager, and the manager give me one blow on the breast, and me fall down, sir—me fall down, sir; and my head get cut here, sir (pointing to the back of it).

*The President*—Never mind your head; I suppose it is healed by this time.—Then the manager got hold of me by the neck, and threw me down again, and told me to be off the estate.

And you left the estate?—Yes.

Did you bring any charge against the manager?—Me come to town, and me see barrister.

Did you lodge a complaint against the manager?—Yes; me bring him up, and me had barrister, sir.

What happened? Was the manager punished or not?—No; manager begged that the case should not be taken on, and barrister consent to satisfaction; and the manager gave \$40.

Did you get the \$40?—I got something like \$40. I cannot remember how much I got of it. I had to pay lawyer.

And you dropped the case?—Yes, sir; and he drove me away from the estate.

If I heard one, I heard five or six hundred of such stories as that.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### COOLIE PETITIONS.

**B**ESIDES the many deputations of Coolies from the estates, all persons who were in any way connected with the Commission became the suffering recipients of many letters and petitions. Some of these in Chinese I still possess, written on all sorts of paper—brown, straw, candle-box, cartridge, &c., one on a tiny slip of scarlet torn off a wall or cut from a book. The woes contained in such documents were naturally unfathomable to me, but I sent them to the Commission, on whose application the government interpreter translated them into English. Asiatic ingenuity and craft were sometimes plainly written between the lines, and although some of them may have been based on facts, the Commissioners found on testing them that many were built upon fiction. We were not, however, let off with Chinese unreadables; a *cacoethes scribendi* seized upon a large number of black persons in different villages, who, possessing a poor smattering of education, and an uncouth power of writing, ply a trade as village secretaries or “lawyers.” These fellows unmercifully fleeced the ignorant Coolie, pocketing his dollars for writing down stories, the least obnoxious part of which was that they were ungrammatical. It was plain upon the face of some of these documents that the writer had

supplied not only the ink but the *fringe*, perhaps, indeed, the whole of the matter. One of these epistles now lies before me, and is so open a piece of Black and Coolie hypocrisy, yet so plausible, that I transcribe it, spelling, punctuation, and all.

## PETITION.

To the Commissioners of Inquiry : Your Commissioners we give God the Glory, Who pitied the Children of Israel in their house of bondage, and sent Moses for their deliverance. So the same God send you Commissioners to deliver us here from out of the house of bondage. We we[re] brought into this Colony by our planters. From the [year] 1845. By thousand From the land that is ful of Hindoos Superstitions and Mahomedanism in[to] a land of lights as it's called. But we were thrown in pastures like beasts in total darkness by our managers on the estates. they use no means to educate our children. they give us no religious teaching but help to harden us and make us ten times worse by their evil example of Sabbath breaking and more that. And not only so but compeled many of us on Sabbath to do their various works Instead of stopping us from it. And while some of them in the house of God their chinese and Coolie in the fields working. Not many days ago in the month of October 1870 on the New Amsterdam district on a Sabbath morning while the manager in the house of God. Several Coolie and Chinese was in the field working—this is always the case on most of the estates—So Your Commissioners our body and soul both are in suffering circumstance. All this sinfulness going on Because our managers keeps us in darkness. they are few Schools on the estates but useless. Because those whom the managers put to teach our children have no feeling and they will not spend even a half hour good to teache our little ones. And the managers themselves never put a foot there to inquire from the teachers to know how old they are. So the children going to School for many months and years. but they could not tell A from B.—they make laws to punish us when we absent from their services —But no one takes notice of our souls matters. O what will be the results in the day of Judgment. when the many thousand of the Asiatic shall arise up against those that holds the light of the Gospel from them. Whilst our Lord say Go ye and preach the Gospel and to all nations Why our managers and others should keep it back—In conclusion your Commissioners. When you return to England we beg you in Christ's stead to mention about our miseries especially concerning the many thou sand perishing souls—the Lord be with you—

Your Commissioners

(Signed)

Your Obedient Servant

I shall not give the names of these earnest Protestants. The appeal to Christian sympathies in this



paper is shamelessly dishonest; yet, from all one knows, is there not likely to be both truth and acuteness in some of the suggestive reflections on the religious inconsistencies of Englishmen? I should like to take some of those who decry the efficiency of missionary work among the heathen to the spot where, side by side with the zealous teachings and pure living of the evangelists, are openly enacted the vicious and unjust practices of men who go by the name of Christians.

Our poor friends who propounded this remonstrance to "Your Commissioners" may themselves have been guilty of cant and deceit therein; yet its rough sentences contain matter worth pondering by Christian and unchristian Britons.

The reference in this document to the schools is not quite correct. Where schools exist—namely, on such places as Schoon Ord and the Messrs. Ewing's estates of Better Hope, Vryhied's Lust, &c.—the managers take great interest in them. The Commissioners report the existence on the estates of a very small number of schools. Great difficulty is alleged to occur in enforcing attendance. In the school at Better Hope I found a neat-looking coloured mistress engaged with about fifteen children of various shades and sizes. She told me that when they would attend they did very well. Their copy-books bore comparison with those of many a home school, though I fear they did not take away much from such elaborate maxims as I found one little fellow writing: "A censorious disposition is a disadvantage to its owner"—a hint, perhaps, that when he grew up he was not to be sinfully unreasonable in criticising the hospital supplies.

Here is another brief letter, selected out of many:—

TO GEO. WM. DES VOEUX ESQ. &amp;C.

Sir, I have to Inform you that the treatment I receive in the Hospital of Plantation — is this I went in the sick house about this three weeks ago and now last night the China nurse beat me very much and I then tell it to the head sick nurse he said that he do not care nothing about it that the China nurse should have beat me then more After then he took the light and burn[t] my head in the morning I went and complain to the manager He said to me he do not care one — about the matter and that If the nurse did even kill me he is nothing to do with my affair. I therefore think hard of this matter to see that If any person ill use me and I complain to my employer and then no satisfaction give to me

I am Your  
Obedient servant

his  
DOS MAHOMMED X  
mark

Every one will be sensible of the ignorantly clever way in which Dos Mahommed manages to mingle his facts and arguments together; the burning with the candle, and the dramatic addition of the manager's oath, all cunningly contrived to add probability to his story. I soon found out that most of the Coolies were clever enough to utilise the swearing propensities of my countrymen, for the purpose of enhancing the effects of their narrations, and that they were shrewdly intimate with the national forms and occasions of this national weakness.

One more, which any one acquainted with the people will recognise to be in true African-Creole style:—

MY DEAR SIR,

Although matters are now to the Height whether to hold or break. Yet stiel we are in no way better treated even now the judges are on their seat trying to put down wrong and robbery. Who are we now to make our complaints to but to you. You who stands up in our behalf. To complain to the Magistrates where is the Justice we will receive at his hands on the Bench when he is a faithful friend and a Bottle Companion to the very Manager we have a complaint against for bad treatment and keeping our wages. To complain to the sub-immigration agent there we are again. When we see him receiving such Hospitality to any amount in *Hennessy's* or *Renault's* very best. We say then we have but one resource to resort to, and that is in the Magistrate's Clerk who we think will file our charges and complaints right and set them before the Magistrate, but

Ⓘ

Oh lack-a-day! we are deeper down in the ditch than ever when it turns out that the very Manager we are then charging with bad treatment to us is son-in-law to the Magistrates Clerk. The complaints will be laid aside or hid away, and we will be told to come to-morrow, and when to-morrow comes, not to-day. Come next week, and so we are put off until the case is lost into oblivion for ever. How then can we get our rights up here when—things are in this state. At plantation ——— Coast.

Hoping you will lay this in Evedience before the three judges,  
I remain

Your

Ob Servants

three of Villagers & four Coolie immigrants.

Since I have wrote I have heard that the same practice is carried on at the West Coast, the Managers entertains the Magistrates, and the Doctors freely gives them plenty to eat and drink, so that everything must be in the Managers favour look well to these true statements my dear good sir, don't think them anything like lies or from a malicious feeling but they are written to shew you and others who have not the opportunity to see and know what things are going on between Managers, Magistrates, and Doctors. Could you but only transform yourself into a bird with wings and fly up here you will then see our just cause of complaint, in mercy to us try and do us some Good. I think you will see at your door about a hundred of us on Monday By the Train.

I believe I did see a good many on the Monday by train, but fortunately I was not called upon to transform myself into a bird with wings, and fly up to the spot in question.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PENAL SETTLEMENT.

THE only remaining condition of the Coolie as yet unpictured by me is his penal life. For offences against the Immigration Ordinances he is—under a new system—committed not to gaol, but to a district reformatory. On entering this, tasks are assigned to him proportioned to the number of days for which he has been committed. These tasks he must complete before he is liberated, so that it is quite possible a man committed for fourteen days may be six weeks in prison. The tasks are assigned on the adjacent estates, to which the prisoners are taken in gangs by the prison superintendents. I need not again describe this sort of hard labour. The *criminals*, as distinguished from the offending labourers, are consigned to Georgetown Gaol if imprisoned but a short time, and if convicted of serious offences to the penal settlement on the Massaruni, a branch of the Essequibo. This, by the courtesy of the planters' committee, which I desire hereby to acknowledge with much gratitude, I had an opportunity of seeing a few days before I left the colony. A hint thrown out at one of the parting dinners given to the two advocates was at once taken up by my oft-mentioned friend, the Inspector-General of Police. It is impossible to limit his abilities: for drilling a regiment, keeping a whole

country in subjection, discovering a murder, catching a thief, playing a game of billiards or whist, shooting a plover, inventing new "drinks" or scientifically concocting old ones, conceiving and purveying a dinner, and, finally, doing it the utmost justice, commend me to my friend, the aforesaid "General." In twenty-four hours, the planters' committee having confided the arrangements to his hands, he had a steamer ready for us handsomely stocked with—well, I would rather not schedule the variety and extent of our resources; and at five o'clock in the morning, Mr. Cowie, an English officer from the garrison, the "General," and myself, started in luxurious fashion for Massaruni, the "penal settlement." Slowly we steamed along the low shore of the West Coast for twenty miles, through the uncomfortable swell, to where the broad, smooth estuary of the Essequibo opened its mouth towards us, with two or three islands dotting the glassy surface. So broad and smooth the river, with the banks so low, one almost fancied it was flowing down in and among the graceful trees that reared their light, feathery heads against the pure sky. The sun was fierce enough as we panted along on the wide, silent, unpeopled water, rarely seeing a bird, only now and then catching glimpses of Negro huts, or Buck stations, on the low, yellow sands; steaming sometimes close to the shore, for the river is deep, and detecting on the banks splendid specimens of ferns and other plants. Thus we throbbled along in the quivering air, some thirty miles, till at length we saw timber-ships loading for England, and then an island at a fork in the river, where the Massaruni sleepily joins the larger stream. In the distance we had seen a blue line of hills, perhaps one or two hundred feet high, a refreshing variation in the flat scenery. As we turned into the Massaruni river, we could discern a slight elevation, which may pass for a hill in these

regions; on it some buildings with a flag flying at the staff. This was the Penal Settlement, an island chosen for its conformation as a place at once secure and healthy, used, indeed, by some of the "first families" in the days of the then vivacious and hospitable governor, Captain Kerr—since, alas! deceased—as a sanatorium. Hither, once a month, certain Commissioners came in their steamer, and, not seldom, with some good company, to make a disagreeable business pleasant. We were soon alongside the wharf, a sergeant bringing down a file of policemen to guard against surprise, and Captain Kerr himself, pistol in belt, there, to bid us welcome. Any Christian was welcome to the solitary family in that sequestered place. I was cheered by a sight of the first rock I had seen in the colony, from which the convicts were quarrying granite. When we had walked up the only incline available within fifty miles of Georgetown, we found ourselves at the end of cool avenues of fine mahogany trees, under and about which was the green grass; and puffing up an indifferent hill, which absurdly tested our unaccustomed legs, we reached the large house devoted to the Governor of the colony and the Commissioners when they visit the island. It is a good house, but so rarely occupied as to be in bad order. Behind it were the strong stone walls of the gaol, an extensive and well-built fortification. Further on were police buildings and the residences of the governor and the chaplain. Captain Kerr was not only a brave and determined officer, but a man of taste and a botanist. Visitors to Kew may see some of the specimens of his discoveries in the woods of Guiana. The island exhibited his taste. Every advantage was taken of the position to beautify it with the plants of the colony; while, at the burying-ground, he had, with the assistance of neat-handed Chinese convicts, laid

out an elaborate and ingenious garden, terraced and ornamented with cement vases and walls, where grew many species of the English rose and other home flowers. In some instances the loving attention of the exile was shown by the care with which some English plants peculiarly open to the ravages of ants were tended, the legs of the stands that supported them being placed in jars kept constantly filled with water. Sad as were the memorials about and above which these flowers flourished, their homelike beauty seemed to quicken one's longings and hopes for the land of which they told.

In the evening there was a service in the chapel of the gaol. I slipped into the governor's pew, and there, below and beside me, were the collected criminals of British Guiana—some murderers in fact, though not in law, some thieves, some clever and daring cheats, and some ringleaders in estates' riots, sent here to expiate their two or three hours' vicious excitement by a seven years' punishment. All in loose canvas suits, with their numbers printed on the back. Two or three whites, dark Negroes and Quadroons, little Coolies, with their quick, black eyes darting about in uneasy resentment, or the stolid and repulsive features of "the heathen Chinees," certainly of the Bret Harte stamp. A curious little chapel, to which the incumbent and ingenious convicts had attempted to give some sort of ornament; his own part of it, by the way, being of a ritualistic character, too tawdry to be worth his while in that situation. Some of the men—there are no women—followed the prayers and joined in the singing; most remained stolidly impassive. I will not criticise the service further than to say that it seems to me a painful thing if the minister of such a congregation cannot speak to them from his own heart some words of humane and earnest appeal, and should deem it con-

sistent with his duty to resort to the tame expedient of reading from a book a children's paraphrase of Hebrew history, done in the inert and stupid style assumed by too many of the pedants who undertake to dilute the Bible for infant minds. Yet the service was impressive, when one looked round on the hundred or so of unhappy criminals, many of whom seemed to be interested in its simple celebration.

The buildings resembled in most particulars those of an English gaol; the long carefully-cleaned corridors, the doors piercing the thick walls, and leading into small cells, to occupy which in that climate must be a penalty indeed. All except the most refractory are, however, taken out during the day, and employed in various ways about the island. Sometimes they escape, but they cannot go far through the trackless woods, and are brought back by the Indians. They have before now risen and attacked their gaolers, the deceased governor having once been nearly killed in a sudden assault. It must have been altogether a melancholy place for such a man to live in. I wonder whether it was that which had induced in him and his family so earnest an affection for flowers, and birds, and animals, as some relief from the sickening monotony of an ever-present crime, and danger, and loneliness?

After a twelve hours' residence, we bid adieu to the pleasantest-looking place in Guiana, our engines pulsating, as we went, with strange and prolonged distinctness, over the silent water.

Three or four days after, Mr. Cowie and I were prepared for a longer and more welcome journey. I am bound to say that twelve weeks or so of Demerara life had amply satisfied my curiosity and tested my physical patience. Its flat and monotonous landscape, its hot and humid air, its warm waterspouts, its trenches simmering in the tropic sun, its mos-



quitoes, born, bred, and fed with relentless and multiplied persistency, its prickly heat making your bath a purgatory, your nights a martyrdom, its land-breeze like the warm breath of steam-engines, its sea-breeze like the baneful activity of a furnace, its fever days and nights, and its everlasting sugar—had reduced my temper to a state which I should not care just now to analyse. Yet how much there was to keep you up! The untiring hospitality, the genial kindness of the ladies, the honest *bonhommie* of the other sex; the dinners, with their coaxing appeals to a debilitated British appetite, their ducklings and peas, their roast beef and plum pudding, their American cod-fish, English salmon, peaches, apples, and pears, and all the delicacies of the latest ice-ship; the “crab-backs,” unknown dainty to any but a Demerarian, worth the voyage alone to taste; the “iguana,” that tender and delicious lizard, whose too susceptible skin when alive is converted into an essence when dead such as rarely challenges a mortal mouth; the milk punch, the chilled champagnes, the frothing swizzles—who, with such a *menu* before him, could cast an envious reflection on the comparatively indifferent ills of that shocking habitat of his fellow-beings? As I stood in the late evening, leaning over the taffrail of the *Mersey*, after many kind “good-byes” from kindly lips, and through the dim, hot night just traced the uneventful outlines of Georgetown, left by me for ever I now trust and then fondly hoped; as I felt the feverish glow of its wind and the heavy oppression of its air; as I thought of its hospitality, and recalled its tortures and its dangers—I was reminded vividly of an epigram attributed to one of the Canadian Commissioners who, not long ago, visited the same shore: “The motto of this place seems to be, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*”

## PART II.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE COLONIAL EMPLOYER AND THE INDIAN ORGANISATION.

I NOW purpose to review the Coolie immigration system of British Guiana, as its outlines have been clearly ascertained by the late inquiry. Unquestionably no such authoritative and complete investigation of the system in British Colonies has yet been made; while the increasing tendency to resort to the crowded territories of India and China to supply the deficiencies of labour, on the part both of our colonists and of the United States, opens up in the future possibilities so vague, so vast, so portentous, that this latest and most authentic contribution to the question must have an intense interest for every statesmanlike and Christian philanthropist.

I should first point out that there are two methods of Coolie immigration, which arise out of different circumstances, are conducted under differing conditions, and need to be discussed independently of each other. One I may term *Natural Immigration*, the other *Artificial Immigration*.

The natural immigration is such an immigration as has taken place into California and other parts of the United States, where, prompted by the greed for gold or the energy of trade, vast numbers of persons have, at their own expense, and under little if any supervision, transferred themselves, of their own free will, to a promising field of labour. Such immigration as this can only arise out of some unusual circumstances, such as a discovery of gold or the existence of a sudden and extensive demand for labour in some place conveniently near to the labourer. It may, however, call for very serious attention on the part of a legislator. Its incidents and results, if it is a movement of any importance, may give rise to grave social difficulties. The transport of weak and ignorant people to a strange land, the representations by which they are induced to leave their own country, the provisions for their safe and healthy transit, the arrangement for their reception on arrival, their distribution through their adopted country, the proportion of the sexes, their relations to the people among whom they are to live, must all excite in any government concerned the most anxious solicitude. Such are the problems now agitating the United States.

But if natural immigration forces itself upon the attention of the statesman and the philanthropist, an artificial system of immigration—conducted by an elaborate machinery and involving relations and duties of a special and anomalous kind—cannot but cause the deepest anxiety to any government on which rests the responsibility of its working. In this case the position of the relative parties is reversed. Instead of the immigrant seeking the employer, the employer seeks the immigrant; instead of voluntary and independent transportation, the immigrant is recruited before he leaves his native land, has bound himself to go to the place designated by the contractor,

travels at the expense of the employer, and cannot on landing exercise any discretion as to the nature and locality of his labour. This system therefore on the face of it demands more careful investigation and is more exposed to criticism than the natural immigration first alluded to. In considering a system so anomalous, we are bound to ask whether it is necessary? What ends are answered by it that cannot be attained in any other way? And whether the attainment of these ends counterbalances any inherent evils which may be discovered in the system? Such are the questions to which the succeeding chapters are designed to supply the materials for an answer.

I have already sufficiently described the social, political, and physical circumstances of an immigrant in British Guiana to enable the reader to apprehend the issues hereinafter raised. Politically, we have ascertained, the Coolie is *nil*; he has no voice, nor the shadow of a voice, in the government of British Guiana. Socially he is not only a labourer, he is a bondsman—using the word in no invidious sense—he is not free to come and go, to work and rest, as he pleases.

Now there are several points of special interest, the natural order of which would be as follows, but which I shall discuss in different order:—

1. There is the original contract, the parties to it, and the method of making it.
2. There is the transfer to the seat of labour, which has been previously described.
3. There are the laws at the seat of labour.
4. There is the machinery for enforcing these checks and sanctions.
5. There is the condition of the Coolie in his indentureship—1, in relation to himself; 2, in his relation to his masters.

Before I add to what I have already said about the arrangement for collecting Coolies in India, I ought to indicate with precision who are *the parties* that set this vast immigration machinery in motion. The very able chapter of the late Report, in which the Commissioners review the history of immigration to Guiana, will be found at length in the Appendix.\* Here it needs only to be said that from the time of the apprenticeship which succeeded the abolition of slavery, the energetic planting community of British Guiana exhausted its arts in attempting to introduce substitutes for those labourers whom freedom and indolence had withdrawn from the market. Africans, Barbadians, Portuguese, Chinese, Coolies, were successively and alternately tried, under arrangements prescribed, varied, and improved from time to time by pressure from the Colonial Office. From the outset there was † “a struggle between the colony and the Home Government as to the conditions upon which an immigration was to be conducted, and the manner in which the scale of it was to be fixed from year to year. With the immigration question was mixed up, to the great hindrance of a speedy settlement, the inveterate colonial controversy about the renewal of the Civil List. The object of the Home Government at this time was to secure that the amount to be expended on immigration should be regulated by the Governor, before whom the interests of all classes were on an equal footing, rather than by the Combined Court, a quasi-representative body, which reflects only the views of the landed proprietors or planters. It was desired by this means to retain in the hands of the Governor the power of at any time putting a complete stop to immigration, in case any conditions thought necessary to secure the welfare of the immigrant should not be complied with: in

† Report, &c., ¶ 89, p. 38.

\* Appendix C.

particular, the maximum number to be introduced in any one year, and the ports from which immigration was to be allowed, were reserved as points in the discretion of the Governor. The efforts of the colonists were directed in part against this governmental control of the expenditure, but even more strenuously to obtain immigration without limit as to the places from which the immigrants should come. Africa was still the field from which most was expected; and India began to assume the first place only when it was found that the Home Government was unalterably determined not to allow its efforts to suppress the slave trade to be neutralised by permitting labourers to be recruited upon African soil."

This struggle as to "the conditions on which such an immigration should be conducted," has existed and ever will continue between the planters, eager for the means of acquiring wealth, and the British Government, not unmindful, let us hope, of the importance of encouraging enterprise in any part of the British dominions, yet, as a powerful and comparatively partial outsider, bound to see that justice shall be done to those who are the instruments of profit. It is the intervention of this supreme authority in the Coolie immigration to the British colonies which renders the system unique; and which, moreover, in its present terms, is the only possible basis whereon any wise and philanthropic patriot would admit that immigration should continue. It is by this power alone that supply can be judiciously regulated to demand, or provisions for the safety and comfort of the labourer be enforced.

How far at present this supreme authority may be efficiently doing its work will probably appear to the reader of these chapters to be a question. In some colonies, by the help of efficient administrators—as in the case of Sir Peter Grant, at Jamaica, and Mr. Arthur

Gordon, at Trinidad—the Colonial Office has probably been able to bring the system into reasonable approximation to soundness. In Guiana, the wealthiest of all the colonies, strong in a constitution which confers considerable power on the planters, there has been more difficulty in moulding the system into a satisfactory shape. Mr. Beaumont, lately Chief Justice of British Guiana, and a member of its Government, very neatly describes the situation: “If the planters cannot dispense with the system of government (in the colony), they can at any time bring its machinery to a dead lock. And as the Governor must keep things quiet in Downing Street, the oligarchy must keep things quiet in Parliament, and the Colonial Minister must satisfy the West India Committee, the result is that fusion of forces, practically irresponsible, which has been so well described as ‘despotism tempered by sugar.’” That there is too much truth in all this is shown by the results of the recent investigation. The Immigration Ordinance of 1864 alone is an evidence, were any needed, of perfunctory criticism at the Colonial Office.

However, it is clear that the persons immediately interested in Coolie immigration are the planters, and it would seem to a superficial observer that on them should the entire expenses of the system fall. But in British Guiana it is held that the whole community is a gainer by the results of immigration. The movement is therefore conducted by the Colonial Executive, on behalf, theoretically, not of any class, but of the whole community; and its expenses are met by a general contribution in the following rather complicated manner:—“An aggregate total is formed by adding the expenses of administration, that is, of the Immigration Office in the colony and the agencies abroad; of recruiting with advances for transport

\* Report, &c., ¶ 109, p. 43.

and maintenance of the emigrants up to the time of embarkation; of passage money; of medical care and sustenance at sea; the costs of return passage, claimed by those who have been ten years in the colony; and a sum representing the amount of bounties paid by planters to immigrants entitled to such back passages, if they are willing to postpone their return, and enter upon another five years' term of service; this last item is merely credited to the expense side of the account, and debited *per contra*, so as to swell the total on each side. One-third of this total—that is, one-third of the expenses of immigration proper, plus one-third of this last paper item—is defrayed out of the general revenue; another sum, consisting of the duties levied on estates' supplies, has hitherto been handed over by the colony to the fund, and considered as a part of the planters' contribution; the rest is paid by them in the form of a contract duty on allotments, which was at first fixed at \$50 for Indians, and \$80 for Chinese, and intended originally to cover the cost in each case of the passage money. To this is added certain special duties on re-indentures, which have varied from time to time, and in fact have been levied in most years of late to cover deficiencies on the planters' side of the account, as it was found to be falling into arrear; and which have, since last year, become a permanent feature in the account.

“There is also an insignificant sum levied from Coolies, by way of fees for replacing lost certificates, and for the registration of marriages. Lastly, there is the *per contra* entry of bounty money paid by planters to immigrants above noticed, which is entered merely as a matter of account, but with the result of increasing considerably the amount of the colonial subsidy.”

In addition to its third and the amount re-credited



to the planters for the re-indenture money, which I think a very questionable piece of financial fairness, the colony incidentally makes a further ascertainable contribution of \$65,985.31 for the expenses of the Medical Inspector of Estates Hospitals, repairs to the Immigration Office and Coolie district gaols, besides the additional burthen of maintaining the large police force necessitated by the immigration. I have already shown how that "one section of the community," which, say the Commissioners, is the wealthiest and most powerful, and, moreover, which, in fact, absorbs all the representative element in the government, "regulates the taxation." It imposes on necessities of life a heavy duty, partly, no doubt, because this is the only way in such a community open to a financial secretary of distributing the burthens of government over all classes, unless, indeed, a graduated poll-tax were resorted to. Hence, between his actual contribution to the immigration and the unequal incidence of the taxation on the planter and himself, the colonial tax-payer may well grumble that so much of the colonial success is due to his unwilling contributions. The Commissioners have pointed out with some force that so long as the extension of cultivation keeps pace with the immigration, that extension—which means extension of the capital which employs labour—is advantageous to the general community. They point out also that the contribution of the community to the immigration, and the consequent recognition of its interest in the matter, give it a control of the movement which the imposition of the whole cost upon the planters might seriously affect. But on what ground is it possible to defend a financial system framed by the planting interest, in which exaggerated contributions are levied on the community for the maintenance of the Coolie system and for general purposes, while that interest reduces

its contributions to the exchequer, both for the cost of the system by which it flourishes and for its own importations? It seems to me this is making the rest of the colony express its gratitude for the favour of a governing class with a vengeance.

The Commissioners acknowledgedly speak on this matter with reserve. Their reasons above given are far from conclusive. When a colony was dragged down to the lowest depths, and almost all hope appeared to have died out of it, it may have been a good economic move to levy from its people generally the means of introducing a new element which should change the features of things. But when that has been once done, and those primarily benefited have begun to enrich themselves by the use of the new agent, are the people properly called upon to contribute any longer? Immigration has ceased to be a necessity of any life at all; it is now an established system, and an artificial demand for increased numbers is kept up by artificial, it may be unbased, expansion. This expansion speculatively or carelessly continued might lead to a crisis and to the most deplorable consequences. It is clear that the temptation to speculative planting will be greater under the present plan than if the whole of the expense were imposed on the planters. Nay, in this latter arrangement should we not have one pledge of a more careful selection in India, and of greater care of the emigrant in Demerara? Mr. Oliver at the head of one of the greatest planting houses in the colony, owners of estates, agents of absentees, merchants, shippers—declared on oath before the Commission that the general profits of the planters during the last three years have not reached *three per cent. per annum on the capital employed*. These years have been the most signally successful years of the after-slavery sugar production, and it is needless to say that, if this be

true, not another Coolie should be permitted to leave the shores of India for British Guiana until the sugar interest is in a more satisfactory condition. With an artificial forcing system, with increasing supplies of labour, with vast changes in machinery, and an enormous expenditure, if this is the net result, will it be safe to count upon a good future for the Coolie? An explanation should be at once demanded of this extraordinary statement—one pregnant with the gravest possibilities. To stay, or at all events to reduce, the chances of this "unhealthy forcing," as the Commissioners term it, the most obvious plan is to lay the cost of immigration proper on the planters, leaving to the colony the ample burthen of maintaining order and good government in the anomalous state of society created by it.

It appears, then, that the agents in India are agents, not of any section, but of the whole community of British Guiana, which assumes theoretically the responsibility of its agents' acts; that, in fact, however, the greater part of that community having no representative whatever in the government, this agency is, in reality, an agency only of the planters, and subordinately of the English Government. Having considered the parties, we come to the original contract in India, and the method of making it.

I have said that artificial immigration arises out of the necessities of the employer. He must look out his man, and offer sufficient inducements to lure him away from home and friends to a strange land and an unknown fortune. The government of the country in which this search is pursued has very much to say about it. Its duty clearly is to see that by this delicate operation its subject is not cajoled, or misled as to the nature of his contract, its terms, its sanctions, or the conditions of the field on which it is to be executed. For here is an agent going in and out

among its population, seeking to withdraw them for years from its protection. The Chinese Government recognised this duty, and made the emigration of its people a subject of treaty. The Indian Government, in a similar way, of course subject to the Imperial Government, has also accepted the responsibility of keeping a rein on this movement. For the present, the impracticable conditions imposed by the Chinese have virtually stopped Chinese immigration to the West Indies—one condition especially being viewed by the planters as of crucial hardship, namely, that of paying the cost of the return passage at the end of five years. The planters have calculated that with the expenses of agencies, of bounties to the recruits, of passage and temporary keep, of hospitals, and so forth—they cannot, in five years, recoup themselves sufficiently out of the average labourer. This is specially the case in British Guiana, where acclimatisation both of Chinese and Coolies is a protracted operation.\*

Discarding the Chinese emigration, and confining the view to Coolie immigration from India, it at once appears that the British Government and people are immediately interested *and responsible* in every branch of the Coolie system. The transference is of our own subjects from one part of our dominions to the other—as much so as if we were to permit English farmers to indenture Irish people in thousands, and use them as Coolies. We cannot escape responsibility in supervising the initiation of the contract, any more than in superintending its performance. Both take place within our own jurisdiction, with our own subjects. In a former chapter I described with some particularity the agency for recruiting and forwarding the emigrants from India. These agencies have been established as the result of much thought and correspondence on the part of the Colonial Office, the Indian Government, and various Colonial Execu-

tives. If any one will take the trouble to consider the number of colonies taking or requiring emigrants, the various agencies, the various laws and their intricacy, he will be convinced that in this single department that office has a task considerably beyond its present ability to perform well. It is an enormous business. I have heard that a sanguine official once expressed in Parliament his admiration of the beauty and perfection of the system of that office; but I fear that while the head of the official ostrich was in the sand, curious and not very complimentary spectators were passing their remarks on the scandalous exposure of his body. At all events, it is perfectly certain that very few independent colonists, honestly speaking their mind, would concur in this egregious assumption. The Colonial Office has not the force at its disposal to attend properly to half its business, admitting it to have within its ranks the practical ability or the appropriate colonial representation to regulate it.

The recruiters are engaged and sent out by the *Colonial Emigration Agent*, acting under the Indian Acts 13 of 1864 and 6 of 1869. They are further licensed by the Indian Government official to whom I have before alluded, called the Protector of Immigrants, at Calcutta. The recruiter's license must have been countersigned by the resident magistrate of the district in which he works.\* I had placed in my hand by an immigrant in Georgetown a sort of advertisement or circular purporting to have issued from the colonial agent, with a statement as to the character of the country, work, and wages, and a promise to the immigrant, if I remember rightly, of land for gardens. This paper I produced before the Commission, and asked the Immigration Agent-General to verify; but he said he had never seen a

\* Report, &c., ¶ 185.

similar one, and was unaware of its issue. Though there is no reasonable doubt that the circular was an authentic one, distributed by the recruiters in India, it was quite properly rejected by the Commissioners as not sufficiently verified for their purposes. Now these representations are of the utmost consequence, and the colony, through its agent, is directly responsible for them. Exaggerated statements in print, or made by the recruiters, mislead the ignorant Coolies, and lay the basis for that permanent sense of wrong, which makes a resentful labourer, with the danger of corresponding harshness and oppression in enforcing another view of the contract. The action of these recruiters, therefore, needs careful watching on the part of the Indian Government; and after their work is done, and the Coolie has been separated from them—nay, even up to the time of embarkation—perfect freedom of choice should be insured to the recruits. Better no crop of sweetness than one bred of discontent and deceit.

The temptation to these recruiters, who can hardly be exempt from some of the characteristics of the Hindu, has repeatedly proved too great to be resisted. Persons of poor physique, of the basest moral stain, suffering from leprosy or other diseases, have successfully passed under the supervision of all the persons whom I have mentioned—the recruiter, the magistrate, the colonial agent, Protector of Immigrants, doctors—and have reached Georgetown in a state which proved their disabilities to have been chronic. When this appears, we cannot be sanguine as to the carefulness with which the Coolie's mind is made to appreciate his contract and its prospects. A very gross case has recently come to light in India—I trust an unusual one; but the fact that an attempt at kidnapping was made does not speak well for the Indian agencies.\*

\* See Appendix E.

So much for the recruiter *per se*. Now as to his authoritative representations. The recruiter takes his people before the resident magistrate of his district to be registered. Copies of the register, stating age, sex, caste, former occupation, and the rate of wages in the colony, are given to the immigrant, and duplicates are forwarded to the colonial agent. "In these certificates the emigrants are almost invariably entered as agriculturists, whether that has been their former occupation or not. Their caste, which appears side by side with this description, directly belies it."\* Hence many tears, troubles to managers from incapables, sorrows to the incapables themselves, to whom Spartan drowning or hanging were a better fate than to have contracted to do what they cannot do with the alternative of shot-drill.

The wages heretofore stated in the certificate—which, by the way, is *not admitted in the colony to be a contract*, though taken to be so by the Indian Act, but regarded merely as a representation—are now proved without doubt to be excessive. Yet "the Governor and Court of Policy of British Guiana" authoritatively pledge themselves to these rates.

Again, a complaint frequently made to me by the immigrants was, that until they arrived in Guiana they had no idea whatever of penal consequences to result from their breach of contract. No doubt they are cunning and fraudulent. They would like to take their bounty money and get their free passage and do no labour; but they ought surely to know that if they wilfully fail the prison is their resource. Why not give them a proper form of contract, epitomising its conditions and honestly informing the recruit of the incidents to which he is subjecting himself? You say: He would not come. Then what right have you to bring him? As for the *land*, which is temptingly

\* Report, &c., ¶ 187, 189.

held out to innocent, greedy ears, it is acknowledged to be a farce.

The Protector of Immigrants in Calcutta should be instructed to examine, and perhaps to countersign, the forms of certificates issued to the recruiters; and should also hold at least annual communication with the Immigration Agent of each colony to demand an official statement as to the current rates of wages.\*

Thus, to sum up, there are three important matters arising out of the Indian organisation:—1. The physical quality and the occupation of the recruit. 2. The representations actually made to the Coolie by the recruiters. 3. The representations not made to him at the time of making the contract. On all these points the organisation fails, and immediate, trenchant remedy is required.

The recruiter forwards his recruit to the depôt on the Hooghly, where the immigrants are rationed and examined, as before described.

At this examination the three crucial points above specified should be finally settled. A careful medical inspection of the people by European doctors, representing the colony and the Indian Government, should be made, and the unhealthy be rigidly excluded. *Secondly*, the Protector of Immigrants, or some other trustworthy person, should examine each recruit separately, and explain to him or her, in native language, the outlines of the contract, its sanctions, and the rate of wages. *Thirdly*, the kind of labour and the consequences of a breach of contract should be distinctly made known.

It is possible that fewer immigrants would come,

\* By the Ordinance of 1843 (British Guiana) the Agent-General was called on to prepare once in every quarter, or as often as the Governor should appoint, a statement of the average rate of wages and of the advantages generally afforded by employers in the colony, for transmission to all places which were ports of government emigration, and to all the collecting agents of the colony.—Report, &c., ¶ 115.



but they would be of a better class, and such a class would materially reduce the necessity of an expensive and minute organisation to watch their interests. The bounty must always prove a great temptation to these people, and if the facts affirmed by the planters are true, the returning immigrants must always be the best recruiters for the colony.

To this question, then, it now becomes the duty of the Home and Indian Governments to give their attention. I for one should not demand or hope for a perfect system, but cannot be content with one so far from tolerable as that which now prevails in India.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE AND ITS CHIEF.

THE Immigration Office in the colony is the next organisation connected with the Coolie system which demands examination. With this the Coolie first comes in contact on landing in the colony, from this primarily takes his orders, to it must from time to time look as his protector, friend, and guide. To the childlike Asiatic it stands *in loco parentis*. One who has not seen something of its working would with difficulty conceive of the responsibility and labour of this office. With between forty and fifty thousand wards in the colony, distributed over the one hundred and fifty estates spread along the sea-shores and river banks for hundreds of miles; with the names, ages, estates, &c., of every one of them to be kept duly registered; with four or five thousand additional per annum arriving to be disembarked, identified, allotted, registered; with semi-annual visits to be paid to every estate, and re-indentures of immigrants whose time has expired to be granted; with constant apparitions of discontented individuals, and occasional irruptions of large bands on strike; with investigations to be made into complaints either of officials or of the labourers—this office may now be said to be second to none in the colony in amount of the work to be done, as it certainly is second to none in importance,

It is needless here to review the history of the Immigration Department in British Guiana, one probably similar to that of other immigrant-receiving colonies, and changed and adapted from time to time to the exigencies of the service. In the earlier days there was less need of officials, and less for them to do. The Immigration Agent-General was himself able to make half-yearly visits to all the estates in order to re-indenture and receive complaints. At that time his travelling expenses and those of his interpreter were paid by the colony, in addition to his salary of \$3,360 per annum. "An addition was made to his prescribed duty in 1860. The Immigration Agent was to call upon the immigrants whose indentures were within six months of their expiration, to state whether they wished to re-indenture on the same estate or to change their employer, or to commute their service out and out. The competition among employers for acclimatised and skilled labourers now began to make itself felt in the number of transfers of service which the office had to superintend. A complicated system of payments and repayments was necessary, and much extra difficulty was experienced owing to the policy adopted by the office in endeavouring to check these transfers, by which it was permitted to any immigrant to retract his intention of effecting a transfer, although he had previously obtained the consent of his new employer, at any time before the new indenture of service could be actually signed by the new employer in person. This led to re-indentures and 're-re-indentures' innumerable, and at last the situation became one of intolerable perplexity. Managers not inclined to quarrel openly with each other, quarrelled with the Immigration Agents, who were in this matter merely ministers of their own pleasure; and the Agent-General assures us that the 'demoralisation' among

the planters and (as we should hardly have expected) among the immigrants was so great, that it became absolutely necessary to put a stop to commutations altogether. It seems hard to call that demoralisation in the labourers which was, after all, merely a taking of their labour to the best market."

The real history of the office, and the most interesting, is that of the administration of the present Immigration Agent-General, Mr. Crosby; and if I give a brief *résumé* of this history as related by himself and the Commissioners, some of the extraordinary circumstances connected with it will be found worth the examination. When Mr. Crosby was appointed in 1858, after having been for a short time a stipendiary magistrate in the colony, he was to all intents and purposes a Protector of Immigrants. He visited the estates twice a year; he inspected them, the law conferring on him the right of entry; he entertained complaints; he preferred informations on behalf of immigrants before the magistrates. "I had in effect almost entire control of the Immigration Department, that is to say, I exercised under all circumstances my own discretion, subject of course to the approbation or disapprobation of the Governor. If a difficulty arose I consulted him, and if occasionally his acquiescence and authority were necessary under the (existing) act, I applied to him; but otherwise I was completely at the head of an important department." Two sub-agents, so called, who practically acted as clerks, were at that time appointed, one of whom, formerly a schoolmaster, has latterly on occasions acted in Mr. Crosby's absence as the Agent-General. As the business of the office increased, and with it the duties of the Agent-General, it became necessary to re-distribute the work. By successive ordinances certain important registers were required to be kept. A register of married

heathen immigrants introduced into the colony; a register of marriages of heathen immigrants in the colony, whereof the Agent-General's certificate was made evidence; a register of births and deaths; a register of immigrants sent to the Colonial Office for treatment; a register of the certificates of the Coolies for industrial service; and copies of returns from public prisons, &c. By these registers Mr. Crosby's object was to be able at any moment to account for any immigrant who had landed in the colony, by showing him to be dead, or on an estate, or in a public institution—a clear matter of necessity where the range of country and seclusion of estates might admit of occurrences irregular or nefarious.

The Agent-General took the superintendence of these important registers, as also of the landing of immigrants and the large amount of business, both concerning planters and Coolies, that required to be attended to at head-quarters. To the sub-agents was now assigned the duty of making the half-yearly visits, and provision was made for the payment of their expenses. They were persons of less individual weight as well as of less official authority than the Immigration Agent-General, a man whose inflexible nature and high sense of duty may very likely have made him a troublesome visitor. He retained the power of making extraordinary visits to the estates on special occasions; but the planters took care to clip his wings by withdrawing any provision for the expenses of travelling—expenses in British Guiana incredibly great—on such special complaints. The Commissioners say: "It was most unfortunate that no definite arrangement was made for defraying the expenses of these extraordinary visits. If it was considered that the increase in the Agent-General's fixed salary was to cover them, we have seen that it was impossible for the Agent-General

to understand it in that sense. From time to time a very large increase in the number of complaints has called for a considerable expenditure in these investigations, and it cannot have been expected that the Agent-General should defray out of his own limited salary a charge so heavy and so fluctuating. The result has been, that the investigations in outlying districts have almost always been committed to the sub-agents, whose travelling expenses were provided for, which is the more to be regretted, inasmuch as it has thrown the Agent-General into the background as a peace-maker, an office (particularly in the case of Asiatics) it is important should be filled by a man of independent authority, and also because it has excluded Mr. Crosby from the exercise of functions for which he seems to have been peculiarly fitted. In three or four instances during the last six years, such investigations have been held by himself in person, and have been more fruitful than others in suggestions for the prevention or settlement of similar complaints in future. That at Bel Air, in 1864, appears to us to be a good model of patient and impartial inquiry."\*

Under the Consolidated Immigration Ordinance, the duties and powers of the Agent-General were defined with some precision. He might "at any time enter into and upon any plantation on which immigrants might be employed, and inspect the state and condition and general treatment of the immigrants, and the state and condition of dwelling-houses and hospital accommodation, and inquire into any complaint" of employer against immigrants and conversely, and make a report to the Governor.† He might also prefer a complaint before a magistrate on behalf of an immigrant, when the immigrant was not

\* Report, ¶ 135, p. 49.

† Ordinance 4, 1864, sec. 97.

provided by his employer with sufficient work to enable him to earn a just amount of wages in terms of his contract, which complaint, if successful, is to be reported by the justice to the Governor, who *may* thereupon order the indenture to be cancelled.\* By another section it is provided in these words: †—

“If it shall at any time appear to the Immigration Agent-General that any immigrant has not been paid the wages due to him, or has suffered in any way any ill-usage, or has not enjoyed or been deprived of (*sic*) any of the privileges, advantages, immunities, and comforts (*sic*) intended to be secured to him by the provisions of this ordinance, &c.; or has been treated in any way contrary to the provisions of this or any such ordinance; the Immigration Agent-General may prosecute an inquiry in respect to any such matters as aforesaid; and the Immigration Agent-General may either before or after such inquiry lay an information or make a complaint in his own name or in the name of any such immigrant as he may think fit, against the employer of such immigrant or any other person,” &c. But by an oversight there appears to be no penalty affixed to any offences not coming within other laws of the colony, the result of which is that in cases where wages are withheld, the magistrates do not feel authorised to apply a summary remedy.‡

These provisions conferred on the Immigration Agent-General powers of the highest consequence to the Coolie, since by them, if he were a man of independent spirit, he could set in motion all the forces of the law and the Executive to obtain justice for his Coolie wards. It will surprise any reader attached to constitutional usages to learn that the whole of these powers were practically withdrawn from the Agent-

\* Ordinance 4, 1864, sec. 98.

† Ordinance 4, 1864, sec. 99.

‡ Report, &c., ¶ 137.

General, not by a repealing ordinance, but by a stroke of the Governor's pen!

"The history of Mr. Crosby's relations to Sir Francis Hincks was a continued diminution of his (right of) initiative, until, from being the head of an important State department, he had become a sort of chief clerk in an office directed in its minutest details by the Governor in person."

So say the Commissioners; and doubtless the history of the relations of Sir Francis Hincks to the colony, could it be written in its bare facts and consequences, would be one of very remarkable interest. The Commissioners do not go on—as they might well have done—to probe the motives, real and apparent, which urged Mr. Hincks to take so autocratic a course. His duty to the Office which had appointed him, as well as to abstract justice and humanity, was clearly to uphold to the utmost that power which alone checked the absolute power of the planters, yet he thought fit to assume to himself, as the head of the Executive, the discretion of carrying out or holding in abeyance some of the most important duties or sanctions of a great department. Only the authority of the Commissioners could have unburned the records of this odd proceeding, and I give the result in their own words:\*

"This prohibition was communicated to Mr. Crosby in a letter from the Government Secretary, written by the Governor's orders, upon the occasion of a correspondence arising in reference to another case, in which the conduct of a stipendiary magistrate was impugned, of which an extract is subjoined:—

"There is, however, a question of a more general nature suggested by this correspondence, namely, how far it is desirable that you should, as Immigration Agent-General, institute legal proceedings on

\* Report, ¶ 143—147, 152, 153.



behalf of immigrants, and conduct them in your professional character as a barrister-at-law.

“The Governor has naturally considered this branch of the subject, and recognises to the fullest extent the zeal you have displayed and the anxiety you have manifested to discharge your duty to the Government and to the immigrants whose interests are so especially committed to its protection. His Excellency has, nevertheless, arrived at the conclusion that it will be preferable for you, in future, to submit all cases in which you may think official interference called for, for the consideration of the Executive, by whom they will be laid before the responsible legal advisers of the Crown; and if they should be of opinion that the circumstances are such as to require it, the necessary steps will be taken to secure the object you have in view, by providing for the appearance of counsel in all cases where the circumstances may seem to require it.”

“Mr. Crosby evidently considered this prohibition to apply rather to the manner, than to the act, of conducting a prosecution; for, on the 3rd of February, 1865, he again appeared in court as prosecutor in a case against two overseers, for assaulting a Chinese immigrant on Plantation Wales. The case was dismissed; but the overseers had previously been discharged from the plantation. The expenses and cost of suit to the Agent-General amounted to \$5.94.

“This case was followed by another communication, as follows:—

“3 February, 1865.

“SIR,

“I am directed by the Governor to acquaint you that his attention has been called to a statement in the newspapers of your appearing before Mr. Stipendiary Magistrate Plummer, in your official capacity, as his Excellency infers, to prosecute a

complaint on behalf of an immigrant, under the provisions of sec. 99 of Ordinance 4 of 1864.

“It is his Excellency’s opinion that it is undesirable for the Immigration Agent-General to appear as prosecutor, except under special circumstances; and the object of my letter, No. 1,800, of the 23rd December last, to which I request your reference, was to signify to you the Governor’s wish that, before acting under the clause in question, you should acquaint me, for his consideration, with the grounds on which you consider interposition necessary.

“Not having received any reply to that communication, his Excellency assumed that you would be guided in your future proceedings by the view of the Executive; but he has reason to believe that in a similar case you brought an appeal before the Supreme Court of Review, without any such previous consultation as his Excellency had hoped you would have adopted.

“He cannot, therefore, but fear that a difference of opinion exists between the Executive Government and yourself as to the extent of your powers under the ordinance, and he has thought it expedient to afford you this further opportunity of explaining your views upon the subject.

“I am, Sir

“Your most obedient servant,  
(Signed)

“WM. WALKER,

“Gov. Secretary.”

“This letter not unnaturally produced an answer of some length, in which Mr. Crosby endeavoured to show the inconvenience of the method of proceeding now enjoined upon him.

“A third communication followed, in which the Governor laid down more fully than before the extent to which he wished to be consulted in immigration











JUN 28 1934



