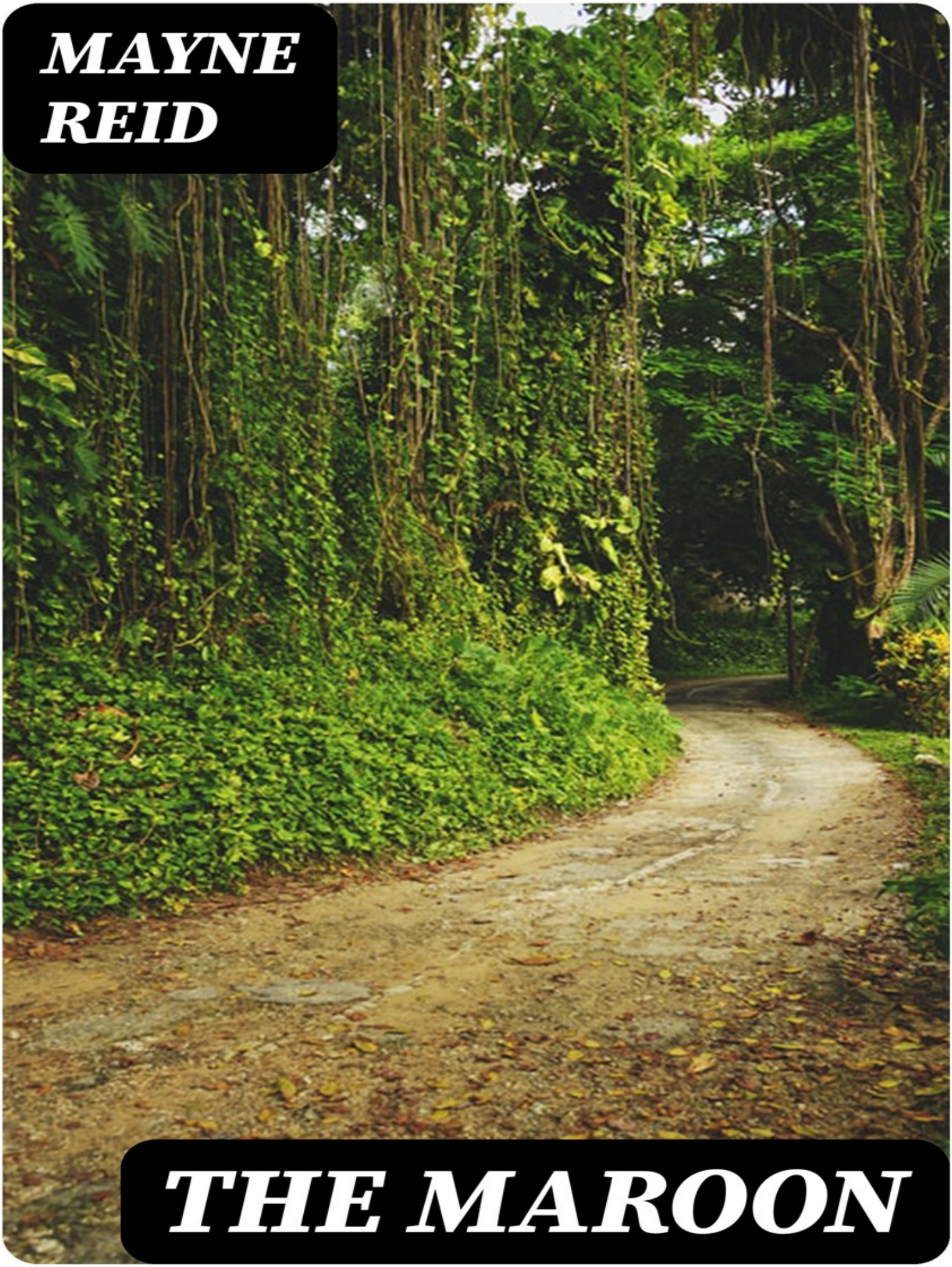
MAYNE REID



THE MAROON

Mayne Reid

The Maroon

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Volume One—Chapter One.

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A Jamaica Sugar Estate.

A sugar estate, and one of the finest in the “land of springs,” is that of “Mount Welcome.”

It is situated about ten miles from Montego Bay, in a broad valley, between two rounded ridges. These ridges, after running parallel for more than a mile, and gradually increasing in elevation, at length converge with an inward sweep—at their point of convergence, rising abruptly into a stupendous hill, that fairly merits the name which it bears upon the estate—*the “mountain*.”

Both the ridges are wooded almost down to their bases; the woods, which consist of shining pimento trees, ending on each side in groves and island copses, pleasantly interspersed over a park-like greensward.

The “great house” or “buff” of the estate stands under the foot of the mountain, just at the point of union between the two ridges—where a natural table or platform, elevated several feet above the level of the valley, had offered a tempting site to the builder.

In architectural style it is not very different from other houses of its kind, the well-known planter’s dwelling of the West Indies. One storey—the lower one, of course—is of strong stone mason-work; the second and only other being simply a wooden “frame” roofed with “shingles.”

The side and end walls of this second story cannot with propriety be termed walls: since most part of them are occupied by a continuous line of Venetian shutters—the “jalousies” of Jamaica.

These impart a singular cage-like appearance to the house, at the same time contributing to its coolness—a quality of primary importance in a tropical climate.

Outside in the front centre a flight of broad stone steps, resting upon arched mason-work, and bordered by strong iron balustrades, conducts to the level of the second storey—the real dwelling-house: since the ground-floor is entirely occupied by store-rooms and other “offices.”

The entrance door is from the landing of the aforesaid *escalier*, and conducts at once into the “hall”—a spacious apartment, of crucifix-shape, running clear across the building from side to side, and end to end. The current of air admitted by the open jalousies, passing constantly through this apartment, renders it at all times delightfully cool; while the lattice-work serves to mellow the glare of light, which, under the sky of the tropics, is almost as disagreeable as the heat. An uncarpeted floor, composed of the hardest sorts of native wood, and subjected to a diurnal polish, contributes to increase the coolness.

This great hall is the principal apartment of the dwelling. It is dining and drawing-room in one—where side-boards and cheffoniers may be seen in juxta-position with lounge chairs, fauteuils, and ottomans—a grand chandelier in the centre extending its branches over all.

The bed-chambers occupy the square spaces to one side of the cross; and these also have their jalousied windows to

admit the air, and exclude, as much as possible, the sultry rays of the sun.

In Mount Welcome House, as in all other country mansions of Jamaica, a stranger would remark a want of correspondence between the dwelling itself and the furniture which it contains. The former might be regarded as slight, and even flimsy. But it is this very character which renders it appropriate to the climate, and hence the absence of substantiality or costliness in the style and materials of the building.

The furniture, on the other hand—the solid tables of mahogany, and other ornamental woods—the shining carved side-boards—the profuse show of silver and cut glass that rests upon them—the elegant couches and chairs—the glittering lamps and candelabras—all combine to prove that the *quasi* meanness of the Jamaica planter's establishment extends no farther than to the walls of his house. If the case be a cheap one, the jewels contained in it are of the costliest kind.

Outside, the great house of Mount Welcome looks grand enough. Its broad façade, in which the deep green of the jalousies contrasts pleasantly with the white of the surrounding walls—the massive stone stairway in front—the wooded mountain sweeping up and forming a background of variegated green—the noble avenue of nearly a mile in length, with its double rows of tamarinds and cocoa-palms, leading up in front from the lower end of the valley—all contribute to produce a picture of almost palatial grandeur.

Nor does a nearer view detract from the splendour of this picture. The platform on which the house is built affords

space for a large garden and shrubbery, extending rearward to the mountain-foot, from which they are separated by a high wall of stone.

The *mountain* is a conspicuous feature of the landscape. Not so much from its height: for there are others of equal elevation near to it; and further off, though still within sight, many still higher. Even the famed “Blue Peak” is visible, towering hundreds of feet above the surrounding summits.

Nor is it conspicuous from being isolated. On the contrary, it is only a spur of that vast elevated chain of hills, that, separated by deep gorge-like valleys, and soaring thousands of feet above the level of the Caribbean Sea, are known as the “Blue Mountains of Jamaica.”

Covering almost the entire area of the island—which is thus broken into an endless succession of gigantic corrugations—Jamaica presents a surface rough and irregular as the crumplings upon a cabbage-leaf; and “land of mountains” would be a title as appropriate as its ancient Indian appellation, “the land of fountains.”

The hill which overlooks the estate of Mount Welcome is less than two thousand feet above sea-level; but what renders it remarkable is the geometrical regularity of its outlines, and, still more, its singularly-shaped summit.

Viewed from the valley below, it presents the appearance of an exact and somewhat acute cone, up to within about fifty yards of its top. There the sloping outline ends—the line on each side thence trending vertically, and abruptly terminating in a square table-top, forty or fifty feet in diameter. In general appearance, this truncated summit is not unlike that of the famed “Cofre di Peroté” of Mexico.

The sloping sides of the mountain are densely wooded, especially that fronting the valley of Mount Welcome—towards which is presented a broad frowning *façade*, thickly clothed with a forest that appears primeval.

Alone at its top is it treeless—bare and bald as the crown of a Franciscan friar. There stands the square coffer-like summit, a mass of solid rock, which repels the approach of the vegetable giants that crowd closely around its base, some of them stretching out their huge arms as if to strangle or embrace it.

One tree alone has succeeded in scaling its steep rampart-like wall. A noble palm—the *areca*—has accomplished this feat, and stands conspicuously upon the table-top, its plumed leaves waving haughtily aloft, like a triumphal banner planted upon the parapet of some conquered castle.

This summit rock presents a singular appearance. Its seamed and scarred surface is mottled with a dark glaze, which during the sunlight, and even under the mellower beams of the moon, gives forth a coruscation, as if the light were reflected from scale armour.

To the denizens of the valley below it is known as the *Jumbé Rock*—a name characteristic of the superstitious ideas attached to it. Though constantly before their eyes, and accessible by an hour’s climbing up the forest path, there is not a negro on the estate of Mount Welcome, nor on any other for miles around, that would venture alone to visit the Jumbé rock; and to most, if not all of them, the top of this mountain is as much of a *terra incognita* as the summit of Chimborazo!

I am speaking of a period more than half a century ago. At that time the terror, that was attached to the Jumbé Rock, did not altogether owe its origin to a mere superstition. It had been partly inspired by the remembrance of a horrid history. The rock had been the scene of an execution, which for cruel and cold-blooded barbarity rather deserves to be called a crime.

That table-summit, like the blood-stained temples of the Moctezumas, had been used as an altar, upon which a human sacrifice had been offered up. Not in times long past, neither by the sanguinary priesthood of Azteca, but by men of white skin and European race—their victim a black and an African.

This incident, illustrating Jamaica justice during the dark days of slavery, deserves to be given in detail.

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The Myal-Man.

In the West Indies, a few years previous to the Emancipation, there was much agitation on the subject of *Obeah-ism*.

The practice of this horrid art had become appallingly common—so common that upon almost every extensive estate in the island there was a “professor” of it; in other words, an “Obeah-man.” “Professor,” though often used in speaking of these charlatans, is not a correct title. To have *professed* it—at least in the hearing of the whites—would have been attended with peril: since it was punishable by the death penalty. *Practitioner* is a more appropriate appellation.

These mysterious doctors were almost always men—very rarely women—and usually natives of Africa. Universally were they persons of advanced age and hideous aspect: the uglier the more successful in the pursuit of their criminal calling.

There was a class of them distinguished as “myal-men,” whose chief distinction consisted in their being able to *restore life to a dead body*.

Such was the belief of their ignorant fellow slaves, who little suspected that the defunct subject had been all the while only dormant, his death-like slumber secretly brought about by the myal-man himself, assisted by a prescription of the branched “calalue”—a species of *caladium*.

I cannot here enter into an explanation of the mysteries of Obi, which are simple enough *when understood*. I have met it in every land where it has been my lot to travel; and although it holds a more conspicuous place in the social life of the savage, it is also found in the bye-lanes of civilisation.

The reader, who may have been mystified about its meaning, will perhaps understand what it is, when I tell him that the *obeah-man* of the West Indies is simply the counterpart of the “medicine man” of the North-American Indians, the “piuche” of the South, the “rain-maker” of the Cape, the “fetish man” of the Guinea coast, and known by as many other titles as there are tribes of uncivilised men.

It is the *first dawning of religion on the soul of the savage*; but even when its malignant spirit has become changed to a purer aspiration after eternal life, it still lingers amidst the haunts of ignorance, its original form almost unaltered—*witchcraft*.

To the statement above made—that on every large plantation there was an obeah-man—the estate of Mount Welcome was no exception. It, too, was blessed, or rather cursed, by a follower of the art, an old Coromantee negro—Chakra by name—a man whose fell and ferocious aspect could not have failed to make him one of the most popular of its practitioners.

Such, to his misfortune, had he become.

He had long been suspected of having poisoned his master, the former owner of the estate, who had made an abrupt and mysterious exit from the world. The fate of this man, however, was not much lamented, as he bore the reputation of being a cruel slave-master. The present

proprietor of Mount Welcome had least reason to regret it: since it gave him possession of an estate he had long coveted.

It was greater chagrin to him, that since entering upon the enjoyment of the property, several of his most valuable slaves had terminated their existence suddenly, and in a manner which could only be accounted for by the supposition that Obi had accomplished their destruction.

Chakra, the myal-man, was suspected of causing their deaths. He was arraigned and brought to trial.

His judges were three—three justices of the neighbourhood—for that number was sufficient to pass the death-sentence upon a slave. The president of the court was the man's own master—Loftus Vaughan, Esquire, proprietor of Mount Welcome, and *custos rotulorum* of the precinct.

The substance of the crime charged against Chakra was "practising the arts of Obi." The charge had no reference to the death of his former master.

The proofs were not very clear; but were deemed sufficiently so by the court to warrant a conviction.

Strange to say that of the three justices, the man's own master—the president of the court—appeared the most anxious to bring the trial to this termination. So anxious indeed, that he used every effort to overrule the opinions of the other two: his superior position as *custos* giving him a certain power of controlling the decision. One of them had actually pronounced in favour of an acquittal; but after a whispering consultation with the custos, he retracted his former opinion, and gave his vote for the verdict.

There was a rumour at the time, that Loftus Vaughan, in this trial, was actuated by meaner motives than either a stern love of justice, or the desire to put down the practice of Obi. There was a whisper abroad of some secrets—family secrets—with which the Coromantee had become acquainted; some strange transaction, of which he was the sole living witness; and of such a character, that even the testimony of a negro would have been an inconvenience; and it was suspected that this, and not obeah-ism, was the crime for which Chakra had to answer with his life.

Whether this was true or not, the Coromantee was condemned to die.

The trial was not more irregular than the mode of execution, which these irresponsible justices thought fit to decree. It was almost as whimsical as it was cruel towards the wretched criminal.

He was to be taken to the top of the Jumbé rock, chained to the palm-tree, and there left to perish!

It may be asked why this singular mode of execution was selected. Why was he not hanged upon the scaffold, or burnt at the stake—a custom not unusual with condemned criminals of his kind?

The answer is easy. As already stated, at this particular period, much unpleasant feeling prevailed on the subject of obeah-ism. In almost every district mysterious deaths had occurred, and were occurring—not only of black slaves, but of white masters, and even mistresses—all attributed to the baneful influence of Obi.

The African demon was ubiquitous, but invisible. Everywhere could be witnessed his skeleton hand upon the

wall, but nowhere himself. It had become necessary to make a conspicuous example of his worshippers. The voice of all planterdom called for it; and the myal-man, Chakra, was selected for that example—in the belief that his fearful fate would terrify the votaries of the vile superstition to their very hearts' core.

The Jumbé rock suggested itself as the most appropriate place for the execution of the Coromantee. The terrors with which the place was already invested—added to those now to be inspired by the fearful form of punishment of which it was to be the scene—would exert a beneficial effect on the superstitious understandings of the slaves, and for ever destroy their belief in Obeah and Obboney.

Under this belief was the myal-man escorted up to the summit of the Jumbé rock; and, like a modern Prometheus, chained there.

No guards were placed near him—none were required to stay by the spot. His chains, and the terror inspired by the act, were deemed sufficient to prevent any interference with his fate.

In a few days, thirst and hunger, aided by the vultures, would perform the final and fatal ceremony—as surely as the rope of the hangman, or the axe of the executioner.

It was long before Loftus Vaughan ascended the mountain to ascertain the fate of the unfortunate negro, his *ci-devant* slave. When, stimulated by curiosity, and, perhaps, a motive still stronger—he, at length, climbed to the top of the Jumbé rock, his hopes and expectations were

alike confirmed. A skeleton, picked clean by the John-crows, hung suspended to the stem of the tree!

A rusty chain, warped around the bones, kept the skeleton in place.

Loftus Vaughan had no inclination to dwell long upon the spot. To him the sight was fearful. One glance, and he hurried away; but far more fearful—far more terrifying—was that which he saw, or fancied he saw, in passing homeward down the forest path—either the ghost of the myal-man, or the man himself!

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A Jamaica Déjeuner.

On a tranquil morning in the fair month of May—fair in Jamaica, as elsewhere on the earth—a large bell ringing in the great hall of Mount Welcome announced the hour of breakfast.

As yet there were no guests around the table, nor in the hall—only the black and coloured domestics, who, to the number of half-a-dozen, had just come up from the kitchen with trays and dishes containing the viands that were to compose the meal.

Though but two chairs were placed by the table—and the disposition of the plates, knives, and forks indicated that it had been set for only that number of guests—the profusion of dishes, thickly covering the snow-white damask cloth, might have led to the belief that a large party was expected.

It was emphatically a *déjeuner à la fourchette*. There were cutlets plain, and with *sauce piquante*, *cavished* fish, *entrées* of devilled fowl and duck, broiled salmon, and the like. These *hors d'oeuvres* were placed around the table, while a cold ham on one dish, and a tongue on another, occupied the centre.

Of "bread kind" there were mealy yams—some mashed with milk and butter, and dished up in shapes—roast plantains, hot rolls, toast, cassada cakes, and sweet potatoes.

But that a splendid silver tea-service, and a large glittering urn were conspicuous, the spread might have

been mistaken for a dinner, rather than the matutinal meal. The hour—nine o’clock a.m.—also precluded the idea of its being dinner.

Whoever were to be the guests at this table, it was intended they should fair sumptuously. So did they every day of their lives; for there was nothing occasional in that morning’s meal. Both the style and the profuseness were of diurnal occurrence—the mode of Jamaica.

Soon after the tones of the bell had ceased to vibrate through the hall, they for whom the summons was intended made their appearance—entering from opposite sides, not together, but one coming in a little before the other.

The first was a gentleman of somewhat over middle age, of a hale complexion, and fall, portly form.

He was dressed in a suit of nankeens—jacket and trousers, both of ample make—the former open in front, and displaying a shirt bosom of finest white linen, the broad plaits of which were uncovered by any vest. A wide turn-down collar was folded back, exhibiting a full development of throat—which, with the broad jaws of ruddy hue, appeared clean and freshly shaven.

From a fob in the waistband of his trousers hung a massive gold chain, with a bunch of seals and watch-keys at one end; while at the other was an immense chronometer watch of the old-fashioned “guinea gold,” with white dial, upon which the black figures were conspicuously painted. The watch itself could be seen; as, on entering, the wearer had drawn it out of its fob with a view of ascertaining whether his servants were punctual to the minute: for the gentleman in question was a very martinet in such matters.

Loftus Vaughan, Esquire, proprietor of Mount Welcome,—Justice of the Peace, and *Custos Rotulorum*,—was the man thus characterised.

After casting a scrutinising glance at the display of viands, and apparently satisfied with what he saw, the master of Mount Welcome seated himself before the table, his face beaming with a smile of pleasant anticipation.

He had scarce taken his seat when a fair apparition appeared entering from the further end of the hall—a young virgin-like creature, looking as fresh and roseate as the first rays of the Aurora.

She was habited in a dress, or rather an undress, of purest white: a morning wrapper of fine lawn, that, fitting closely behind, displayed the waving *contour* of her back. In front, the dress fell in loose folds—scarce, however, concealing the full, bold outlines of her bosom; and then draped gracefully downward, so low as to leave nothing visible but the tips of a pair of tiny satin slippers, alternately showing themselves like white mice as the young girl glided over the polished surface of the floor.

Her throat, full and finely rounded, was encircled with a string of amber beads; and a crimson blossom—the beautiful bell of the Quamoclit—glittered amidst the ample folds of her hair. This, of a rich chestnut colour, was parted on her forehead, and carried in a curving sweep over cheeks that rivalled the radiance of the flower.

It would have required an experienced eye—one well acquainted with the physiological characteristics of race—to have told that that young girl was not of the purest Caucasian blood. And yet the slight undulation of the hair; a

rotund rather than an oval face; eyes of darkest umber, with a light gleaming perpetually in the pupils; a singular picturelike expression in the colouring of the cheeks—were all characteristics, that proclaimed the presence of the *sang-mêlée*.

Slight indeed was the *taint*; and it seems like profanation to employ the phrase, when speaking of a creature so beautifully fair—for beautifully fair was the daughter of Loftus Vaughan. She was his only daughter—the only member of his family: for the proprietor of Mount Welcome was a widower.

On entering the hall, the young girl did not proceed directly to seat herself; but, gliding behind the chair occupied by her father, she flung her arms around his neck, and imprinted a kiss upon his forehead.

It was her usual matutinal salute; and proved that, on that morning they had met for the first time.

Not that it was the first appearance of either: for both had been much earlier abroad—up with the sun, indeed, as is the universal custom in Jamaica.

Mr Vaughan had entered the hall from the front door, and the broad-brimmed Leghorn hat, and cane carried in his hand, told that he had been out for a walk—perhaps to inspect the labour going on at the “works,” or ascertain the progress made in the cultivation of his extensive cane-fields.

His daughter, on the contrary, might have been seen entering the house some half-hour before, in riding costume—hat, habit, and whip—proving that her morning exercise had been taken on horseback.

After saluting her father as described, the young girl took her seat in front of the coffee urn, and commenced performing the duties of the table.

In this she was assisted by a girl apparently of her own age, but of widely-different appearance. Her waiting-maid it was, who, having entered at the same time, had taken her station behind the chair of her mistress.

There was something strikingly peculiar in the aspect of this personage—as well in her figure as in the colour of her skin. She was of that slender classic shape which we find in antique sculptures—like the forms of the Hindoo women known in England as “ayahs” and differing altogether from the negro outline. Her complexion, too, was not that of a negress—still less of a mulatta or quadroon. It was an admixture of black and red, resulting in a chestnut or mahogany colour; which, with the deep damask tincture upon her cheeks, produced an impression not unpleasing.

Nor were the features at all of a negro type. On the contrary, far removed from it. The lips were thin, the face oval, and the nose of an aquiline shape—such features as may be traced on Egyptian sculptured stones, or may be seen in living forms in the lands of the Arab.

Her hair was not woolly, though it differed altogether from the hair of a European. It was straight, and jet-black, yet scarcely reaching to her shoulders. Not that it had been shortened by the scissors: for it appeared to be at its fullest growth; and, hanging, as it did, loosely over her ears, it imparted a youthful appearance to the brown-skinned damsel.

The girl was far from ill-looking; and, to an eye accustomed to her “style,” she may have appeared even handsome. Her elegant shape, exposed by the extreme scantiness of her costume—a sleeveless robe, with a Madras kerchief worn *à la toque* upon her head—her graceful attitudes, which seemed natural to her, either when in motion or standing poised behind the chair of her mistress; the quick glance of her fine, fiery eyes; and the pearl-like whiteness of her teeth; all contributed to make up a picture that was far from commonplace.

This young girl was a slave—the slave *Yola*.

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Two Letters.

Instead of standing in the middle of the floor, the breakfast table had been placed close to the front window—in order that, with the jalousies thrown open, the fresh air might be more freely felt, while at the same time a view could be obtained of the landscape outside. A splendid view it was, comprising the valley with its long palm-shaded avenue, a reach of the Montego river, the roofs and spires of the town, the shipping in the bay and roadstead, the bay itself, and the blue Caribbean beyond.

Striking as was this landscape, Mr Vaughan just then showed no inclination to look upon it. He was too busily occupied with the rich viands upon the table; and when he at length found time to glance over the window-sill, his glance extended no further than to the negro “gang” at work among the canes—to see if his drivers were doing their duty.

The eyes of Miss Vaughan were oftener directed to the outside view. It was at this hour that one of the servants usually returned from Montego Bay, bringing the letters from the post-office. There was nothing in her manner that betrayed any particular anxiety about his arrival; but simply that lively interest which young ladies in all countries feel when expecting the postman—hoping for one of those little letters of twelve sheets with closely-written and crossed lines, most difficult to decipher, and yet to them more interesting than even the pages of the newest novel.

Very soon a dark object, of rudely Centaurean form, appeared coming along the avenue; and, shortly after, an imp-like negro lad upon the back of a rough pony galloped up to the front entrance. This was Quashie—the post-boy, of Mount Welcome.

If Miss Vaughan expected a billet, she was doomed to disappointment. There were only two letters in the bag, with a newspaper; and all three were for the Custos himself.

All bore the English post-mark; and the superscription of one of the letters was by him at once recognised—a pleasant smile stealing over his features as he broke open the seal.

A few moments sufficed to make him master of its contents, when the smile increased to a look of vivid gratification; and, rising from his chair, he paced for some time back and forward, snapping his fingers, and ejaculating, “Good—good! I thought so!”

His daughter regarded this behaviour with surprise. Gravity was her father’s habit, at times amounting to austerity. Such an exhibition of gaiety was rare with Loftus Vaughan.

“Some pleasing news, papa?”

“Yes, you little rogue; very.”

“May I not hear it?”

“Yes—no—no—not yet a while.”

“Papa! It is cruel of you to keep it from me. I promise I shall share your joy.”

“Ah! you will when you hear the news—that is, if you’re not a little simpleton, Kate.”

“I a simpleton, papa? I shall not be called so.”

“Why, you’ll be a simpleton if you don’t be joyful—when you—never mind, child—I’ll tell you all about it by-and-by. Good, good!” continued he, in a state of ecstatic frenzy. “I thought so—I knew he would come.”

“Then you expect some one, papa?”

“I do. Guess who it is!”

“How could I? You know I am unacquainted with your English friends.”

“Not with their names? You have heard their names, and seen letters from some of them?”

“Oh, yes, I often hear you speak of one—Mr Smythje. A very odd name it is! I wouldn’t be called Smythje for the world.”

“Ta, ta, child! Smythje is a very pretty name, especially with Montagu before it. Montagu is magnificent. Besides, Mr Smythje is the owner of Montagu Castle.”

“Oh, papa! how can that make his name sound any better? Is it he whom you expect?”

“Yes, dear. He writes to say that he will come by the next ship—the *Sea Nymph* she is called. She was to sail a week after the letter was written, so that we may look out for his arrival in a few days. Gad! I must prepare for him. You know Montagu Castle is out of repair. He is to be my guest; and, hark you, Catherine!” continued the planter, once more seating himself at the table, and bending towards his daughter, so that his *sotto voce* might not be overheard by the domestics, “*you* must do your best to entertain this young stranger. He is said to be an accomplished gentleman, and I know he is a rich one. It is to my interest to be friendly with him,” added Mr Vaughan, in a still lower

tone of voice, and as if in soliloquy, but loud enough for his daughter to hear what was said.

“Dear papa!” was the reply, “how could I be otherwise than polite to him? If only for your sake—”

“If only for *your own*,” said the father, interrupting her, and accompanying the remark with a sly look and laugh. “But, dear Catherine,” continued he, “we shall find time to talk of this again. I must read the other letter. Who on earth can it be from? Egad! I never saw the writing before.”

The announcement of the projected visit of Mr Montagu Smythje, with the trumpet-like flourish of his many accomplishments—which Kate Vaughan had not now listened to for the first time—appeared to produce in the heart of the young lady no very vivid emotions of pleasure. She received it with perfect indifference, not seeming to care much one way or the other. If there was a balance, it was rather against him: for it so chanced that much of what she had heard in relation to this gentleman was not at all calculated to prepossess her in his favour.

She had heard that he was an exquisite—a fop, in fact—perhaps of all other characters the one most repulsive to a young Creole: for, notwithstanding the natural disposition of these to become enamoured of fine personal appearance, it must be accompanied by certain qualities of mind, if not of the highest morality, or even intellectuality, yet differing altogether from the frivolous accomplishments of mere dandyism.

Nature, that inspires the creole maiden to give her *whole heart away and without any reserve*, has also taught her to

bestow it with judgment. Instinct warns her not to lay her precious offering upon an altar unworthy of the sacrifice.

There was another circumstance calculated to beget within the heart of Kate Vaughan a certain feeling of repulsion towards the lord of Montagu Castle; and that was the conduct of her own father in regard to this matter. From time to time—when speaking of Mr Montagu Smythje—he had made use of certain expressions and innuendoes, which, though couched in ambiguous language, his daughter very easily comprehended.

The heart of woman is quick, as it is subtle, in the understanding of all that relates to the disposal of itself; and this even at the earliest age of maidenhood. It is prone to repel any effort to guide it from its natural inclinings, or rob it of its right to choose.

Mr Vaughan, in his ignorance of these rather recondite truths, was erecting a barrier to his own designs, all the while that he fancied he was successfully clearing the track of presumptive obstructions, and making the path smooth and easy.

At match-making he was likely to prove a bungler: for it was evident that match-making was in his mind.

“Never saw the handwriting before,” said he, in repetition, as he broke open the seal of the second epistle.

If the contents of the first had filled him with joy, those of the second produced an effect directly the opposite.

“’Sdeath!” exclaimed he, crushing the letter, as he finished reading it, and once more nervously springing to his feet. “Dead or living, that ill-starred brother of mine seems as if created to be a curse to me! While alive, always