

DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

ENGRAVED BY SAMUEL DAVIS.

SUMMER AT CHRISTMAS-TIDE.

WITH PICTURES BY GILBERT GAUL.

THE first of next week will be Christmas day, and I am writing this in a temperature of eighty-two degrees, beside an open door which looks out on a mountain-side wooded with a thousand trees the name of not one of which, except the palms, am I familiar with; a soft cloud is breaking in aërial foam on the hilltop. I have just come in from the pasture, where I plucked and ate three or four wild oranges, the sweetest and juiciest in the world; I could have had, had I preferred them, a bunch of wild bananas. This morning I took a bath in a swimming-tank filled with cool water from a mountain spring. I am dressed in the thinnest possible woolen pajamas, and yet the exertion of writing produces a slight perspiration. The room is a

partitioned-off corner of a veranda two of the walls of which are composed of green blinds, through which the afternoon breeze is faintly drawn. I hear the low murmur of the voices of negro women below, where yams are being peeled and fresh coffee (gathered in the plantation hard by) is being pounded. This has been a remarkably cool winter, and I have the certain knowledge that it never has been and never will be, at any time of year, colder than it is now, and am equally well assured that it never has or never will be more than three or four degrees warmer. There is a big jack-buzzard perched on the top of an enormous tree out yonder, and his mate is sailing high aloft on lazy but unwearable pinions, a veritable queen of effortless and inimitable flight. At the other end of the ornithological scale is a humming-bird, a slender, supple, long-tailed, needle-beaked, gleaming jewel of iridescent green feathers and whirring wings, plunging himself in and out of the blossoms of a scarlet-flowered tree, into the cups of which his slender body just fits. The sky is of a warmer and tenderer blue than I have ever seen in the North, and the mighty sunshine which irradiates it and all things below it seems twofold as luminous as ours. And all this, and the infinite other lovely things that I can see and feel but never portray or describe, are not a dream, but an immortal reality to which nothing written, spoken, photographed, or painted can do justice. You cannot believe it, you cannot comprehend it, until you behold it for yourself, live it, and



DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

ALONG THE ROAD.

breathe it. You may read and listen and imagine from one year's end to another, but your first glimpse of the reality will show you that all was in vain. Fancy and hearsay can issue no passport to the enchanted gates of the Caribbean, nor bear the soul across the mystic line.

The English administration of Jamaica is a thing to be thankful for: there are law and order, excellent roads, comfortable houses, adequate police, lawn-tennis and cricket, plenty of manly, companionable English army and navy officers, and a governor who is strong, able, and genial. At the same time it would be folly to maintain that the island

of the sea; here a natural harbor, long and wide, is formed by a breakwater of sand planted with cocoa-palms and terminating on the right extremity in a broader space, on which is visible a little cluster of low buildings. Nothing could be more eloquent of peace and repose than this scene, which nevertheless has been the theater of some of the bloodiest, most dramatic, and most romantic passages of human history, as well as of one of the most terrific natural convulsions ever known. For that little group of houses on the sand-spit was once Port Royal; in that noble harbor once rendezvoused the fleets of



DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

LANDING IN JAMAICA.

ENGRAVED BY S. C. PUTNAM.

is producing a tenth part of the wealth that is latent in the soil and atmosphere, or that most of the wealth that is beginning to make its appearance is due to anything so much as to the American enterprise and capital which are opening up railways and cultivating fruits. Another serious fact, though not necessarily an unwelcome one, is that the island's four thousand square miles contain a population of six hundred thousand persons, twenty-five thousand of whom are white.

I have referred to the view toward the mountain on the north. Turning your head the other way, you may behold a prospect that is historic as well as beautiful. A great plain, six or seven miles in breadth, slopes gradually from the front garden to the shore

the bucaners; there were murders done, treasure was squandered and lost, crimes were perpetrated, vices rampant on a scale never surpassed in the annals of modern history. Here human passions in their most unrestrained and diabolic forms have reigned and raged unchecked; here wealth has achieved its apogee of splendor and wantonness; and here has fallen a retribution, as moralists will call it, sudden, awful, and sweeping beyond the power of thought to reproduce. During two centuries or more, in short, an amount of human energy and vicissitude characterized the history of little Jamaica, and especially of this little corner of it, which would amply have sufficed for an entire continent.

And of it all what traces now remain? The red-tiled roofs of Kingston are so shrouded in the verdure of palms and mangos and plantains as hardly to be visible from our elevation of seven hundred feet; the Port Royal of history is underground, or under water; green plantations and luxuriant shrubbery everywhere clothe the plain and the hills; Nature has turned the red blood of men into sap and leaf and blossom; she has long since forgotten the terrible story that still darkens the pages of the chronicle. We may regard this green oblivion either as a wise hint to us, or as an ironic smile, according to our creed and temperament. For my own part, the knowledge of what has been of horror and calamity only lends a deeper charm to the omnipresent beauty, and bestows that final fascination born of the marriage of what is loveliest and most bounteous in nature with what is most tragic and hideous in humanity.

The light and the heat are the two things that most impress one on first coming to this land. The light is the more impressive of the two: from sunrise to sunset it is omnipresent and constant; the very shadows are luminous,

dark though they appear by contrast. I should say that latitude seventeen was about forty-five million miles nearer the sun than latitude forty. Yet it is a tender, soft, suffused light, not a fierce and hard one. The atmosphere is not so rarefied as that of our own West; one can read here by moonlight, but one cannot read fine print easily. The remote distances of the landscape are melted in an aërial haze instead of being defined with the relentless clearness of a steel-engraving. Nevertheless, the light of the tropics is superlative; it seems to belong to a planet more recently evolved from the parental luminary than ours. So intense and pervasive is it, one would almost say it irradiates the mind as well as the body; it appears to possess a spiritual quality. I had read of blazing tropic suns, of scorching, blistering tropic heats, but I find nothing of the sort. However great the ultimate effect may be, the manner is always gentle, sweet, subtle, soothing; Harbour street in Kingston never shows so savage a temperature as Broadway in New York. But for all that, it will not do to take undue liberties with this soft-spoken climate. After walking a few



DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

ON THE VERANDA.

ENGRAVED BY PETER AITKEN.



DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

AT THE RACES, KINGSTON.

ENGRAVED BY JOHN W. EVANS.

miles along the white, undulating roads, or panting up a steep hillside, nothing could be more delicious than the touch of the northern breeze fanning you as you sit under the shadow of a broad-spreading silk-cotton, nor could anything be more dangerous. You are being fanned by the wings of death. Evaporation is wonderfully rapid; you come in from exercise drenched with perspiration, and before you can make ready for a «rub-down» your skin is already dry. In the North a slight chill may be followed by a slight cold, and that be the end of it; here your chill may turn out the end of everything for you. Moreover, the soil when dampened by rains probably exhales a miasma productive of what we call malarial fever; in Jamaica it occasionally develops into an appallingly ugly and brief disease known as black vomit. On the other hand, if you are rationally cautious, and let liquor of every kind alone, you may walk, or climb, or play tennis, or ride horseback all through the hottest part of the cloudless day, and feel only the better for it at night; in fact, you must take plenty of outdoor exercise in order to be at your best. The way to get ill is to avoid exertion and perspiration, and sit at ease in the shade absorb-

ing cooling drinks. Such people sometimes last two years. Those who pursue the alternative regimen are not surprised to find themselves alive and alert at ninety and upward. Of course it is more difficult to get ill on the higher levels than on the lower ones; but taking the island by long and large, it is one of the healthiest places on the globe.

It was high noon, and a flat calm, when we tied up to our first tropical steamboat pier, which was fashioned after the likeness of the one we had left behind us in the North River seven days before, but the surroundings and peopling of which were so immeasurably different that it seemed like one of those grotesque dreams in which impossibilities are commonplace. Almost everybody was black, and everybody was in a perspiration. Everything was novel; even our old familiar trunks looked unfamiliar circulating in this strange environment. Order came out of the confusion gradually and, as it were, by miracle; but never before in my experience have custom-house officers been so obliging. As to the porters, there were several to each trunk, and there appeared to be as many petticoats as trousers among them. They wanted to be paid; the

individual sum was infinitesimal, but began to loom larger in the aggregate. «What have *you* done?» finally inquired one gentleman of a very persistent applicant. «Oh, I ain't done nothin',» the latter hastened to reply, with an air of virtuous disclaimer. «I's beggin'»

One looks with all one's eyes at one's first tropical town. There were straight streets running parallel with the water-front, and

not unprecedented; but they too, somehow, contrived to appear foreign. Fruit was for sale on every corner and on every woman's head. Hacks dawdled up and down the streets angling for fares, each hackman signaling to you as if he were the very old friend you had been looking for, ready to fulfil all the offices of friendship at the lowest market rates. There was a certain sort of bustle and animation in the scene, and yet



DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

A FRUIT-VENDER.

ENGRAVED BY JOHN W. EVANS.

straight streets crossing them at right angles, with a decided slope waterward, and with streams of water running down each. The houses were two-storied structures, brick, stucco, and wood, with a somewhat rusty aspect, as if lacking paint and varnish. It was Saturday; the sidewalks were thronged, and the roadways no less so; there were negro women in light-colored frocks of calico, with bandanas on their heads, smiling black faces, and round, shining eyes, which could give most significant glances, for there is a universal capacity for flirtation among these jolly damsels. The shop fronts were not imposing or brilliant, and their contents were

there was nothing of the rush, drive, and pre-occupation of America. These people were more of the butterfly temperament; they loved the sun and the warmth, they dressed in bright colors, they fluttered about a good deal; but they were not going anywhere or doing anything in particular. They looked to the right and left, and up and down, instead of only straight ahead as we do; they were all sauntering, or merely standing still and smiling and chatting, with gesticulations. The few white people in the throng looked very white,—not even tanned,—and rather out of place. They were clad unobtrusively in grays and whites, and one discerned them

with some difficulty. It was market-day and steamer-day, and the following week was to be race week, and Christmas was only a little way off; so the gaiety of Kingston was at its height. But there was a lightness about the whole spectacle, an absence of the omnipresent American purpose and responsibility and ironic seriousness,—if I may so call it,—which was vastly refreshing. And then, that sun, that warmth, that illumination, those fronds of palm and giant leaves of banana! The great brown buzzards flapped close overhead, or sat on the ridge-poles of the low houses. The sea glittered to the south like a sheet of milky turquoise, the mountains lifted themselves through the fleece of white and gray clouds to the northward, and it was midwinter all the time! I have not yet, indeed, got over the feeling that this is all some wonderful joke or dream, from which I am bound sooner or later to awaken and open my eyes on a drifting snow-storm. The enchantments of the old magicians were nothing compared with the marvelous spell worked by two dozen or so degrees of latitude.

Finally I found myself in a great, shadowy, roomy hotel, with hard-wood floors and furlongs of veranda, giving on a garden which had run somewhat to seed, but contained several palm-trees, and an assortment of lizards, green and brown, in agreeable confirmation of the propinquity of the equator. Round about this hotel and its environment we wandered till lunch was ready; there were oranges, bananas, and several other fruits which I do not specify only because I am still unable to recollect their names. As to their flavor, I can only say that I do not care much for it as yet; there was one that tasted like butter, and another that had the consistency of cream cheese and the taste of strawberry jam.

On the whole, the flavor of these Southern products strikes the Northern visitor as insipid and too sweet, and makes one understand why Englishmen always hanker after curries and the like sharp condiments in the tropics; but no doubt we are sophisticated and wrong, and ought to like what seems to us insipidity. Meanwhile, the oranges, bananas, and pineapples are all much better here than they ever are after enduring export.

As for the breadfruit and yams, of which we also had specimens, they are a mixture of the potato and the sweet potato, and are less captivating than either. They have almost no taste at all, and I should suppose that one finally would come to regard them

in much the same light as bread, something usefully filling, but without character enough to inspire either loathing or devotion. With the aid of sauces and gravies, however, they go down very well.

The bill of fare included likewise fish which was good, and meat which was not very good: it has to be eaten too soon after killing to have lost its toughness. But one does not expect to eat much meat down here; vegetarians are in their element in the tropics, especially that superior order of them who favor that part of the vegetable kingdom which grows above ground. The countrywomen, who walk fifteen to twenty-five miles a day in the sun, with burdens on their heads which must sometimes weigh not less than fifty pounds, and who are never in the least tired—these ladies, it appears, live on fruit and yams only, and find them all-sufficient diet.

After dinner I went into a barber shop, and submitted myself to the ministrations of an artist there. The shop was at the rear of the little structure which bore the sign; the front part of it, if I remember right, was devoted in part to the sale of tobacco. On three sides of the room were windows protected by wooden gratings painted red and blue; through them I saw bits of intense blue sky and green fronds of palm. On a wall just outside the sash a lizard ran and hopped, and the eternal buzzard alighted on a corner of a roof within my range of vision. Close beside me a young ducky with a countenance of illimitable amiability labored assiduously on an instrument in the nature of a hand-organ; but the works were in full view, and in the opinion of several bystanders seemed to vie in interest with the tunes. This music took the place of the traditional barber's conversation, though that also was abundantly available upon demand, and was, indeed, carried on with much vivacity between the various employees and some visitors who appeared to have come in for that purpose. It sounded like a mixture of Italian and French, and may have been Jamaican popular English, for aught I know. I could not understand it. I accepted all these details as being typically tropical; but, on the other hand, the chair in which I sat was made in Rochester, New York; on the wall were a large lithograph of Brooklyn Bridge and a portrait of President Cleveland. Electricity, too, has got to Kingston, and the wires run through the branches of the mangos and palms. The house in which I have taken up my abode is fitted throughout with electric bells, but I am happy to add

that none of them work. In one of the larger shops, I think, there is an elevator, the only one on the island.

I said just now that the white people look out of place. That fact, so far as I can judge, is the moral of the story here. The island belongs to the colored folk, and the others are gradually being crowded out. The proportion is already about thirty to one against the latter: and while the colored race goes on multiplying, the whites are packing their trunks and moving out. Is this movement to be arrested or not? I doubt whether it will be arrested by the English. Workmen imported from the States do not succeed here; that is, they all die in two years from rum.

The coolies do admirably, but they cannot be the final solution of the problem. Perhaps the best thing we can do is to become colored people ourselves.

Commerce aside, the island is beyond the reach of all competition as a pleasure-resort in winter. The sun is always warm, the nights are always cool, the atmosphere is always healthy, and you can choose your mean temperature to suit yourself: on the higher levels of the mountains you can get that of an English summer, and on the plains it will average eighty or more. The scenery of sea and mountain is, on the whole, the most beautiful in the world; and the price of most things, to our American ideas, is exceedingly cheap.

Julian Hawthorne.

THE SOLITARY WOODSMAN.

WHEN the gray lake-water rushes
Past the dripping alder-bushes,
And the bodeful autumn wind
In the fir-tree weeps and hushes,—

When the air is sharply damp
Round the solitary camp,
And the moose-bush in the thicket
Glimmers like a scarlet lamp,—

When the cornel bunches mellow,
And the birches twinkle yellow,
And the owl across the twilight
Trumpets to his downy fellow,—

When the nut-fed chipmunks romp
Through the maples' crimson pomp,
And the slim viburnum flushes
In the darkness of the swamp,—

When the rowan clusters red,
When the blueberries are dead,
And the shy bear, summer sleekened,
In the bracken makes his bed,—

On a day there comes once more
To the latched and lonely door,
Down the wood-road striding silent,
One who has been here before.

Green spruce branches for his head,
Here he makes his simple bed,
Couching with the sun, and rising
When the dawn is frosty red.

All day long he wanders wide
With the gray moss for his guide,
And his lonely ax-stroke startles
The expectant forest side.

Toward the quiet close of day
Back to camp he takes his way,
And about his sober footsteps
Unafraid the squirrels play.

On his roof the red leaf falls,
At his door the blue-jay calls,
And he hears the wood-mice hurry
Up and down his rough log walls;

Hears the laughter of the loon
Thrill the dying afternoon;
Hears the calling of the moose
Echo to the early moon;

And he hears the partridge drumming,
The belated hornet humming,—
All the faint, prophetic sounds
That foretell the winter's coming.

And the wind about his eaves
Through the chilly night-wet grieves,
And the earth's dumb patience fills him,
Fellow to the falling leaves.

Charles G. D. Roberts.



ON THE WAY TO MARKET.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

A TROPIC CLIMB.

WITH PICTURES BY GILBERT GAUL.

OUR «pen»—for that is what country dwelling-houses are called in the island of Jamaica—stands at the foot of a group of mountains near the eastern end of the island, and overlooks the broad plain which slopes to the town of Kingston, six or seven miles distant, and six or seven hundred feet below us. Beyond Kingston, with its bay and natural breakwater, extend the blue and hazy reaches of the Caribbean Sea southward toward Central America and the equator. The view to the east and west is inclosed by the spurs of the mountain-range plunging down to the shore.

All day long great surges of white and gray cloud break on the summits three or four thousand feet above us, and pour down in vaporous spray into the upper valleys. Often they drift overhead and drop showers upon us, though Kingston just below remains dry. There is seldom a time when the sun is not shining in some part of the land-

scape, even when the rain-drops are pattering sharply on our red-tiled roof; and therefore, if we look northward, we see splendid arcs of rainbow spanning the ravines and resting on the acclivities in that direction. The mountains are for the most part wooded to the top with tropical forest, though here and there are peaks denuded of timber and covered with grass, concerning which I shall have more to say presently.

For every two white persons on the island there are sixty negroes. Many of the latter live in tiny cabins high upon the mountains. Perhaps they choose these sites for their dwellings because land costs next to nothing there; perhaps because the tax-collector seldom cares to climb so high to get so little; or possibly they are attracted thither because the air is fresh and the temperature always comfortably cool at such altitudes, and frequent showers give vigor to their crops. They cultivate little patches of yams,

bananas, and coco (not cocoa nor coca, which are different plants entirely), and on market-days the women put in a basket whatever surplus is not needed for the family consumption, and walk down to Kingston with their baskets on their heads, sell their produce, and walk back again at night with the same springy, tireless step. The few sixpences that they get easily pay their weekly expenses, and leave a good surplus. It is a primitive and healthy life, and superb specimens of smiling ebony womanhood most of these mountain nymphs appear.

After speculating as to their domestic habits and environment for two or three weeks, I resolved to make a journey to the clouds, and see them with my own eyes. So one morning I put on a pair of buckskin moccasins and leather leggings, a flannel shirt, and a straw hat, took a bamboo staff which I had cut in the woods a few days before, and set forth. It happened to be the first day of January, 1894.

At ten o'clock A. M. the sky was cloudless, and the thermometer marked eighty degrees. Crossing the pasture above the house, I entered the forest, and followed a cow-path which presently brought me to a brook.

Already I was beyond sight and sound of civilization. The trees spread their branches overhead and shut out the sun better than any umbrella would have done it. But for the brook I should have been lost at once; for it served both as companion and guide, since it could not help leading me upward and to the neighborhood of whatever habitations the mountain might contain. Along its babbling course, therefore, I pursued my way.

Seen from a distance, these tropic woods look very like our own, save for the peculiar forms of the palms and bananas, and except that the masses of foliage are denser than in the North. As soon as you come to close quarters, however, you find that not a plant, from the gigantic silk-cottonwood to the smallest blade of grass, is identical with those at home.

Parasites of all kinds infest the tropic woods like the twisted cordage of wrecked vessels. There is a sort of silent fierceness about them that is appalling. Often you mistake them for the tree itself which they are devouring, so close and intimate is their fatal embrace. Once I saw a tree dying thus, and a second parasite upon the back of the first, which it was slowly destroying. A common sight is the liana, a vegetable rope, some no thicker than whip-cord, others inches in diameter. They hang straight down from

unknown heights of tall trees, the same size from top to bottom, and of considerable strength. I was climbing down a perpendicular cliff, and had got to a point where there seemed no possibility of descending farther and still less of returning, and was wondering how it would feel to drop forty feet to the bottom of the cliff, when I saw a two-inch rope hanging down at my left hand. It was a liana. I laid hold of it and gave it a tug; it was apparently anchored fast somewhere above, and it certainly reached to the foot of the rock. It was so preternaturally convenient that I felt some suspicion of it; but there was no alternative, and I finally went down it hand under hand like a sailor, and got off safe.

Smaller parasites grow in tufts on the boughs of trees, and are no doubt species of orchid; others, again, are like bunches of grass. Ferns grow in the notches of trunks, and there is a background of lovely mosses everywhere. Upon whatever point you fix your eye, beauty reveals itself beneath beauty, and there is no end of it. There are ferns as large as ordinary trees, and others as tiny and delicate as those which the winter frost draws on our Northern panes. In several places big boles of trees had fallen across the brook, and had in the course of years become the nucleus and nourishment of an exquisite riot of emerald-hued and velvety moss and fern growth; and there were great semicircular fungi as white as milk standing out from the stem, and others hanging from delicate stalks like little silken bags. The patterns and colors of the underlying lichens would make a study for a designer of diaper patterns. Whichever way you look, and in little as well as in large, you are impressed with the evidence of a ceaseless and immeasurable energy of life, never letting go or intermitting, always encroaching and increasing. There is no winter to give pause to the endless development and multiplication; day and night, year in and year out, they go on. Ages ago, centuries hence, it has been, and will be, the same. Mortal existence seems like a shadow amidst vitality such as this.

The brook makes the loudest and the only continuous sound in the forest. Throughout these shadowy regions insects seldom hum, nor do birds sing. The great jack buzzards float overhead in silence. There are no mosquitos at this season to pipe their infinitesimal treble in your ear. The leaves of the trees stand motionless as if in a hothouse. This absence of a breeze is one of the most



ENGRAVED BY J. W. EVANS.

A NATURAL LADDER.

striking characteristics of the tropics. Puffs of wind do pass over us, it is true, during each day; now it is the Southern wind coming up from the Caribbean, now the norther descending from the mountain heights. But neither of them lasts more than a few minutes at a time, and then once more all things stand immobile in the limpid atmosphere. It is no wonder that these months of calm now and again alternate with the mad fury and screaming of the hurricane.

No forests in the world are freer from all forms of animal and vegetable peril than those of Jamaica. The mongoos has long

since utterly exterminated every species of serpent; and though you may occasionally discover a miniature scorpion under a stone, its only desire will be to scuttle away, and if you force it to sting you, the pain and the danger are no greater than from a New England wasp or hornet. On the other hand, there are swarms of fireflies as big as bees, and more beautiful after dusk than anything outside of fairy-land. They come into the rooms, and float about, throwing lovely phosphorescent gleams along the walls and ceilings; or if you stand on the balcony and look out across the lawn, it is lighted all over with their soft elfin fires. But this is a digression.

The bed of the brook zigzagged upward through the ravine, keeping, however, a general direction east and west. It was not so dark in color as our brooks, nor were there weeds in its bed; its hue was a light brown, and it flowed over stones coated with a fine sediment, or in swifter reaches over coarse sand. The water was perfectly transparent, and of an agreeable coolness. It seemed as if there ought to be mountain trout in the deep pools, but I saw none; indeed, the only sign of life was a small dark crab, exactly like those that scuttle over our beaches at low tide, except that the claws of these little creatures were very small. I was surprised to find crabs in fresh water, and picked one out; he was as soft as jelly, though whether this is their normal state I know not.

The crest of the mountain on my right, ascending almost perpendicularly, hid the sun, so that the shade was even deeper than the trees alone could make it. I was in a perspiration, of course,—that is the proper condition of man in this latitude,—but I was not hot. By this time I had reached an altitude where the path threatened to abandon me. The path was a good deal of a phantom at best; if you looked away from it for a moment, you had to look twice before finding it again. It professed to follow the margins of the brook; but every few minutes it crossed the slender stream, resuming its identity at an indeterminate distance up the other side. Occasionally it would proceed directly up the bed of the brook itself, leaping from stone to stone, clambering over fallen tree-trunks or crawling underneath them, edging along an inch of strand on this side or circumventing a pool on that. Then you would arrive at an impossible ascent up a cataract or hopeless chevaux-de-frise of fallen timber. The path had vanished altogether. But just as you were about to retrace your steps and

try back, your eye would light upon a gap in the bank, and there was your path again, appearing like a ghost with the silent invitation, «Here I am, comrade!» So on we went higher and higher, while the stream grew narrower and slighter, and its bed rockier and more precipitous. Glancing upward once in a while, as a gap in the foliage afforded opportunity, I saw that I was beginning to approach the clouds.

Meanwhile, I had been passing groups of plantain and banana, for the most part denuded of fruit or bearing only immature bunches. The grass beneath them was trodden down, doubtless by the feet of stray negroes who had ascended the path before me. But beyond this there had been as yet no sign of human life; the motionless forest, the babbling brook, and the blue glimpses of sky overhead had been my only companions. The bananas might have been plucked a month ago, for aught I could tell. I contrived to knock down one or two green ones with a stone, but found them wholly inedible. Just then I heard the distant barking of a dog. It seemed to come from behind me, and above on the right. I looked in that direction, but could see nothing but spheres and pyramids of green mounting one above another higher and higher. Would the brook never come to a beginning?

A little farther on I came to a standstill. The bed of the stream had narrowed, and the water was rushing down between walls of rock, completely filling the channel, and making walking along it well nigh impossible. The banks on each side were all but perpendicular. I glanced to the right and left, but the phantom path did not reveal itself. Probably I had passed the turning-off place lower down without noticing it. But I was unwilling to turn back; so I made shift to scramble up the bank, holding on by hanging roots and stems until, after an arduous five minutes, I found myself neck-deep in grass, which was not grass at all according to our notions, but a species of reed from five to eight feet tall, and with sharp edges that would cut my fingers if I gave them the chance. These reeds it was that had worn the appearance of short turf when seen from the valleys below, clothing those parts of the mountains which were free of timber. But the timber was much the easier to walk through; for the «grass» impeded the view, clung about the feet, and at the same time did not keep off the sun, which glared down upon my efforts with unrelenting splendor. All I could do was to try to plant each step higher than the

last, and that was not so easy as it sounds. Time passed on; I seemed to make small progress, and I began to get uncomfortably hot. «You have got off your track entirely,» I said to myself. «You would have done better to wade up the bed of the brook; that at least would have been cool, and would probably have brought you nearer your destination.»

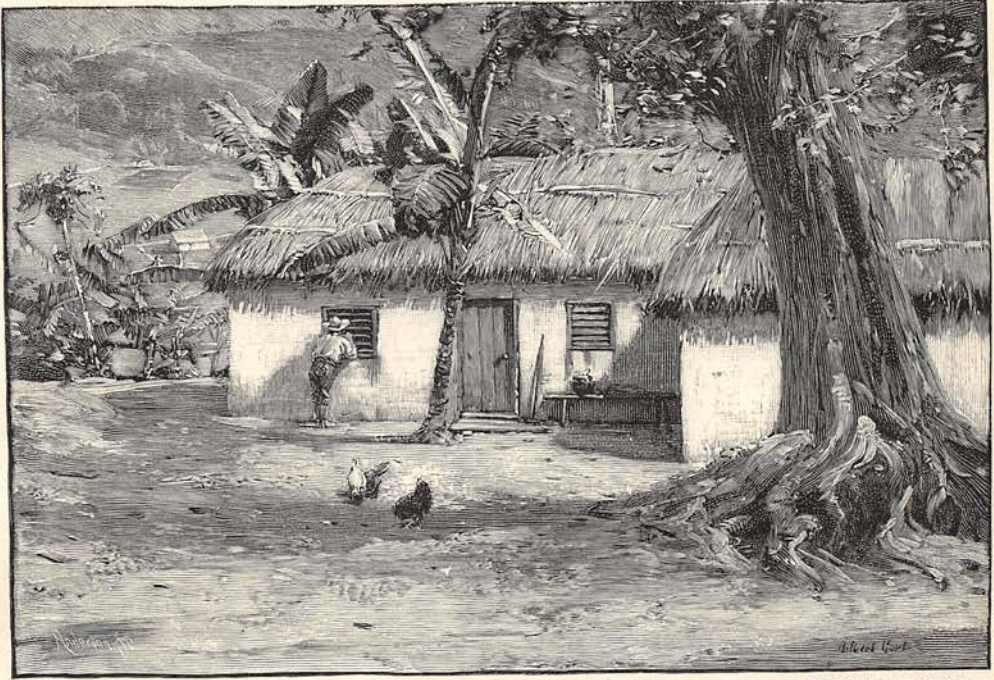
Here I came to a terrace so steep that I was obliged to clamber up it on hands and knees, clutching the tufts of grass, and digging my toes into the soil. After an ardent struggle I landed on the top of it, and then I was surprised.

For there I stood on a well-trodden pathway two yards in width, and bearing traces not only of human feet but of mule-hoofs. In an instant I had dragged myself up from the depths of a trackless wilderness into the midst of comparative civilization. This path was nothing less than a mountain highway, and I must be in the immediate neighborhood of a settlement. In fact, as I stood there I distinctly heard a woman's voice and laugh, followed by the prattle of a child. It seemed to come from above. The road ascended in that direction, and I followed it. In a minute I came to a fork, and chose the left hand. It led me along the brink of a precipitous valley lying between the hill which I had been ascending and another farther to the north. It was all a confusion of lovely vegetation from top to bottom and up again; and now, just beneath me, so that I could have dropped a stone on the door-step two hundred feet down, was the thatched roof of a little cabin. It hung on the side of the valley like a swallow's nest, and would have slipped down the rest of the way had not a fortunate ledge arrested it. I made up my mind to go down there and visit with the inhabitants. A narrow track presently revealed itself, corkscrewing down the face of the descent, so that at every dozen steps my head was passing the level just before occupied by my feet. In a few minutes I got to the shelf on which the cabin stood—a level space thirty or forty feet in width. I approached modestly, on the lookout for some one to whom to introduce myself; but no one appeared.

The cabin was oblong, made of wattle-work covered with clay and whitewashed. With the thatched roof it resembled a miniature copy of one of the cottages of old England. The small windows were protected by wooden slats—there was no glass; the door was closed. When I had satisfied myself that the place was empty, I made bold to look

through the slats. I saw a little square room with a smooth clay floor, a table of dark wood, clean and polished, a few shelves with some chinaware on them, and two rude chairs. This room occupied somewhat more than half of the area covered by the cottage. There

terraces; but there did not seem to be room enough on any of the terraces for a man to stand and work, and I could only suppose that the gardener must hang on by his nails to an upper terrace, and cultivate the one below with his toes.



A JAMAICA HOME.

ENGRAVED BY A. E. ANDERSON.

was a partition on the right, with a partly open door in it. That was all I could see.

Outside the front door there was a bench with a pot standing on it; half a dozen yams lay beside the bench. A very dull and time-worn hoe leaned against the side of the cabin. The space immediately about the cabin was well-trodden clay like the floor inside. Three banana plants—or they may have been plantains—overshadowed the north end of the structure, while the south was protected by a mango-tree.

At first I thought this was the whole garden, but stepping to the edge overlooking the farther declivity into the valley, I discovered a plantation sloping downward at an angle of not less than sixty degrees. Here were the huge leaves of the coco, and an array of poles like our bean-poles with yam-vines curling about them. The poles stood upright, of course, and yet so steep was the pitch of the ground that the tops of them were but a few feet distant from the upper levels. The garden was arranged in a series of narrow

The land up here is doubtless government land, which sells for about fifty cents an acre. If, however, it is measured on the horizontal, such an estate as this must come cheap indeed; for I don't believe the horizontal extent of this plantation, which might have had an area of a quarter of an acre, was more than fifteen or twenty feet. It is a perpendicular region. The most convenient way to operate such holdings would be to rig a derrick to the top, and swing the man with the hoe by a rope in front of his field of labor. He would have to be careful in gathering his produce, lest it should escape his grasp, and roll half a mile down into the depths of the valley.

In addition to the fruits above mentioned, there were a number of coffee-bushes and a little clump of sugar-cane; but in the absence of the proprietors I did not feel at liberty to help myself to anything. But where could the proprietors be? One would expect to find at least a superannuated grandfather or a brace of piccaninnies left behind to receive

company. Had the family perhaps seen me coming, and, fancying I was the tax-collector, concealed themselves in the surrounding shrubbery? I peered this way and that, but nothing was to be seen. It was odd; but there must be other cabins in the neighborhood, and I set forth to explore them.

A short scramble brought me back to the main road, so to call it, and I continued to ascend. At every hundred yards or so a path would branch out to the right or left, following which I would come to a cabin in all respects similar to the one I had first investigated; but to my great perplexity, every one of them was also absolutely empty. Out of all the dozen or fifteen that I stumbled over, not one had a sign of life about it. What could have happened? Had some secret signal to disappear been passed around, and were my movements being watched by eyes to me invisible? I began to feel embarrassed, if not uneasy. There had been a good deal of talk in the local papers lately about obi. Were these vanished people working up a spell with a view to my destruction? The absence of one or two families from the community might have been explained; but that all of them should desert their dwellings at the same time seemed strange, if not ominous. I had ascended an enchanted mountain, whence I should be spirited away, and see home and friends no more.

After all, thought I, these negroes are at bottom an uncivilized race. Christianity and association with the whites have changed their outward aspect only. In their hearts they are still African savages. Their ways are not ours, and we really know nothing about them. In these mountain villages, almost utterly secluded as they are, who can tell what things are done, what religion followed, what purposes formed? The colored folk seem very childlike and amiable; but cannot one smile and smile, and be an ob-man? Suppose, now, continued I to myself, that while you are innocently scrambling about here, lost in the clouds, and out of reach and knowledge of your friends, the inhabitants of these villages should be gathered together in some savage and ominous place, with skulls and toads and caldrons of hell-broth, performing a dire incantation, the object of which is to smite you with an incurable disease or cause you to fall down a precipice and break your neck. Is not such a thing conceivable? Is it not probable? Nay, can there be any other explanation of the emptiness of this entire village of cabins?

It would be clever of you, I added, to make the best of your way out of this neighborhood, and before you venture hither again to cause it to be understood by these people that your object in visiting their fastnesses is in all respects Christian and friendly.

However, I was now apparently so near the top of the mountain that I was loath to retire without having had one glimpse of the magnificent prospect which, in the nature of things, could not but be immediately at hand; besides, I hoped to find a way down shorter than that by which I had ascended, and to do that it was indispensable to see how the land lay. Accordingly I turned to the right, climbed a crooked path like a staircase, and all of a sudden I did discover an outlook over the island of Jamaica such as it was almost worth while to be the object of the wrath of the obi people to see.

I was so high up that almost the whole breadth of the great Liguanea plain was hidden from me, and the nearest object I could see was a large pen about two miles this side of Kingston. That town itself, therefore, seemed to lie almost at my feet; the harbor, capable of containing the fleets of several European powers of the first class, looked like a little pond encircled by a breakwater no thicker than a pencil stroke; the keys outside it were little dots; and beyond arose to an immense height the horizon of the Caribbean, level beyond level melting away from blue to gray, and from gray to aërial mist, finally uniting with the sky in imperceptible gradations of delicious color. Meanwhile, to the right and left the island lay displayed, descending out of heaven into the sea with profiles bold and headlong or undulating and sweet, one exquisite hue after another changing chameleon-like in the limpid distances, steeped in glorious sunshine, enriched with the dreamy shadows of slumbering clouds. The outlines tapered away, headland after headland, point after point, refined to indescribable delicacies of form and color, until solid earth became air, and angels might become men. In the nearer reaches white villas sparkled amidst the greeny purples of the foliage, and brighter spaces showed where sugar-cane grew, while everywhere the pillars and plumes of palm defined themselves against the softly gleaming background. Overhead the zenith was pure blue with a purple depth in it, felt rather than discerned; but lower down, clouds in all imaginable shapes and shades of beauty formed a wondrous phantasmagoria of various light and dark, striv-

ing to outdo the splendor which lay beneath their brooding wings. A thousand feet below me a great bird soared majestic above the sunny slopes of the declivity, and, looking upward, still higher above me floated serene and inapproachable another king of the air, so far immersed in the remoter gulfs of the sky that he was more likely, I thought, to lose the earth altogether than to traverse again the awful spaces that separated him from it.

Could anything human or divine enhance the delight of such a scene as this? Sunshine, shadow, color, lay in silence, tropically calm—the silence of height and space. Hark! what sound was that?

Incredible as it may seem, I fancied I had caught a strain of music. It had rolled forth stately and triumphant, apparently out of the bosom of the very atmosphere about me, bringing with it unaccountable memories of boyhood and of associations immeasurably far from these, and yet uniting in harmony with them. Was it imagination—the glory of things seen seeming to utter itself to the ear? For by what means could mortal music become audible on this breathless summit unless by some miracle of the inner sense? Or had I climbed within range of choirs not of earth, and been visited by the voices of the seraphim and cherubim singing the praises of God, who made this lovely earth and us and them?

No; it was not mortal imagination nor celestial miracle; for now the strain came once more, strong, rich, and joyful, the musical harmony of many voices of men and women uniting in a hearty pæan of worship and thanksgiving. It rose and swelled and sank again, and then, in the succeeding pause, I heard a voice mellow and homely repeating words that seemed familiar, and then the song burst forth anew. Surely I knew that hymn. What son of Christendom knows it not? What reader of the book of life has not, at some period of his career, stood in the midst of the congregation on a Sunday morning, and joined with what fervor was in him in that noble human chant which bids the mortal creature of his hand «praise God, from whom all blessings flow»? Yea, verily; and now I stood here in the tropics, on

the Mount of Vision, and heard Old Hundred sung again, not by angels, but by a score or two of humble, dark-skinned fellow-creatures who had left their little cabins in the ravines and on the hillsides on this New Year's morning, and were gathered together in the Lord's name, and—who shall doubt it?—with his presence in the midst of them. It was a commonplace solution of the mystery of the deserted village and all the rest of it; but somehow or other, it touched a deep and tender place in me, and standing so high above the earth as I did, I felt abashed and humbled. I had been jesting about the obi, and this was the interpretation!

A few more steps brought me within sight of the roof and windows of a neat little church perched upon the very topmost summit of the mountain overlooking the world, and, as I venture to believe, in the near neighborhood of heaven. I stayed awhile, and then turned and clambered hastily down whence I had come; for I did not feel that I could honestly look that little congregation in the face. I had forgotten that New Year's day was Sunday to them, and I had speculated idly and injuriously as to the causes of their abandonment of home and business. I went down, down, through the shadowy ravines and narrow gorges, through the silent congregation of trees and plants, stumbling over fantastic roots and clutched by serpentine creepers. I did not notice them; my mind was on other things. But the murmur of the brook, after long singing unnoticed in my ears, at length penetrated to the channel of my thought, and the discords flowed away on its current. The steepness of the descent abated; I slackened my pace, and strolled at my ease beneath the green corridors and fretted roofs. A bird sang in a bush, a green lizard glanced across a stone, the forest lightened and broke away; and I entered the broad pasture, dotted here and there with sober mangos, and hedged with the prickly leaves of the penguin, from which I had set forth on my journey. It was the first day of the new year, and, thanks to the divinity which shapes our ends and out of idle curiosity brings forth fruits of beneficence, I doubt whether I could have spent the day to better advantage than I did.

Julian Hawthorne.