
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AMONG THE CREOLES.

A LETTER FROM THE WEST INDIES.

I VISITED one of the enclosures where some of the springs are, drawn thither by the vegetation which I could see from the ship it contained. On entering the gate, I passed up a rude walk bordered with guinea-grass, plantains, sugar-cane, young cocoa-trees, &c., until I came to the springs, around which the ground was clear of vegetation, except short grass. This space was occupied by negro washer-women, who pay tenpence a day for the use of the water. They stood ranged down a long bench, on which their tubs were placed, entirely naked above the waist, around which their clothes were tied, but as unconscious as cows, looking up with perfect unconcern as I passed along. I now discovered where the buttons of my shirts and pantaloons were gone, for, after soaping their clothes, I observed that

these women ground them without remorse between two stones, one flat, the other convex. Several little black children, from four to eight years old, (I presume belonging to the women,) were also running about the enclosure, as naked as frogs. I beckoned one of them to me, and first called on him for his letters, which he ran off his tongue very rapidly; next for the Lord's prayer, which he discharged with equal fluency; and lastly, I asked him for a Sunday-school hymn, which he, without the least hesitation, and with perfect gravity, struck up, and though I could not well understand what he sung, I could discover by here and there a word, that it was a genuine hymn. I now gave him a twopence-halfpenny, and some mangoes, and he immediately ran towards his companions,—his little abdominal and other protuberances shaking, as he trotted off, like a calves-foot jelly. This trifling incident amused me greatly. Jaques did not laugh louder when he met the fool in the forest.

Other schools than Sunday schools I had little time to visit. I went, however, to see one of some celebrity, kept by Mr. Symmes and his son, containing between four and five hundred pupils, white and colored. Mr. Symmes confirmed the remark which is often made, that colored children were fully equal to white, in point of intellect. Those under his care gained more than the others, their proportion of prizes at exhibitions, &c. The colored children, on his benches, appeared to be as bright and as clear-spirited as any set of children I ever saw. They were ready and clear in their answers, and I thought contrasted rather favorably with the white children intermingled with them. In the infant school department, he called out a little mulatto fellow, to act as fugler in their exercises, which part he performed with much tact and adroitness. One of these exercises was repeating in concert (the little mulatto asking the questions) the story of the good Samaritan; they all bowing as they pronounced the name of Christ. Few among these colored children had any of that heavy and stupid expression of countenance, so often to be seen in the adult negro. But I believe experience goes to prove that the negro intellect, in most cases, comes to its limits at an early age, and seldom fulfils its early promise. Negro infants seldom have dull, lumpish features; much less often, I think, than those of the whites.

But at the age of, say, from ten to fourteen years, the bright tints, morally and physically speaking, seem to fade out, and symmetry of feature to vanish.

Mr. Symmes was from top to toe a school-master, and his son Robert, a man grown, a right school-master's usher. He was perfectly broken in, seemed to feel a profound reverence for his father, and to live only in the humble hope that he should be enabled to do his will. He was sallow, pale-eyed, and wrinkled, with a face which I think had never known how to smile. "Roby," his father called in an habitually sharp tone of voice, from the opposite end of the room, and Roby, without saying a word, dropped the pencil with which he was assisting a boy in his sum, crossed the room with a noiseless, shambling trot, came close up to his father's desk, and then, in an humble tone, and with a deferential bend, answered, "Sir." "Go bring me such a book, Roby." "Yes, sir," and then with another bend, he broke again into his shambling trot, hurrying to obey. And this scene occurred two or three times during the hour I was in the room. He was the most slave-like being I saw in the island. He should be emancipated by a special act. The twenty million act has not reached his case. It has not restored to life and action his poor shrivelled soul, nor has it even assured him, as it is beginning to assure some of the negroes, that he has a soul which is his own. There was, however, no tyranny in the case, at least none which was considered such by either party. His father seemed to have much regard for him, showed me, with much pride, his ornamental writing, (Roby was the writing master,) and spoke, when he was out of hearing, with some feeling, of his son's declining health. Roby had been born a school-master's usher. He had early been shaped to his father's purposes, and it had no doubt long since been amicably settled between them, that one was to be all-sufficient, and the other nobody. Affection often proves a hardy plant. These two reminded me of ivy taking root on a dry stone wall.

At the diocesan church, where the most wealthy and influential individuals of both races appeared to attend, there were very few negroes, and but little if any mingling of the whites and colored, through the body of the church. The latter chiefly occupied pews near the main entrance, and appeared to be quite as well dressed and fashionable

as the whites. I attended there on the Sunday morning after my arrival, and not knowing the hour of service, went late. When I discovered this, on approaching the door, I lingered for a moment or so, doubting to enter. But directly the beadle, arrayed in robes of black bombazine, with a stick in his hand, came forward, invited me in, and immediately led me up near the pulpit, and shewed me into what is called the magistrate's pew, in which certain municipal officers may, and some of them do sit, and where are also placed respectable strangers. A fine-looking young man was reading the service,—and he read it beautifully too, especially the commandments,—giving the seventh precisely in accordance with Dr. Johnson's instructions to Garrick. 'Thou shalt *not* bear *false* witness against thy neighbor.' This fine reading led me to hope for a fine sermon. But in this I was disappointed. It was a mere jingle of religious common-places and metaphors, so arranged as to form antitheses, and the young man had an antithetical voice,—the high and low tones both good. Sir William Temple says, (in substance,) in his "Observations on the United Provinces," that national habits and peculiarities, however some may suppose them a mere matter of whim, will generally be found, on examination, to have their origin in some necessity of circumstance or situation. And he refers the Pharisaical cleanliness of the Hollanders, of which he gives many amusing instances in his own experience, to the dampness of their climate. They must scrub or grow mouldy. Perhaps the same remark may apply to persons. Whenever you see any one with a slouch in his gait, or who wears out one shoe faster than the other, you will nearly always find, on a close scrutiny, that one shoulder is a little higher, one leg a little longer, or one side, in some way, a little more developed than the other. Now this young man's antithetical voice had, for aught I know, given him antithetical style. However this may be, his sermon consisted in nothing but a continual pairing off together of opposite common-places. "This moment man is so and so; the next, he is so and so. Today, &c., &c.," high key; "tomorrow, &c., &c.," low key. In short it was

"all see-saw, between that and this,
Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss,
And he himself, one vile antithesis."