

grades of the service. This depends, doubtless, greatly upon the personal equation of the commandant, but not entirely so; the old oppressive system under which *Ascension*, in common with many other ships, suffered some years ago could scarcely exist under present conditions. Now, apparently, little is felt of unpleasant restriction, although the island is under military law, and every thing is done in order and at the sound of the bugle. Rations are served out, of food and water, to every family, so much a head, the amount varying with the supply. As the island is in no sense self-supporting, nearly every thing being imported, provisions are only supplied to merchant-ships in case of necessity, and at almost prohibitory rates. At noon, instead of the town-clock lagging out its twelve strokes, the workmen disperse to their midday spell to the sharp, familiar sound of "eight bells."

The day before we arrived had been most exceptional in the experience of the station. Heavy rain had fallen, as it only knows in the tropics how to fall, for some hours continuously, too rapidly to be absorbed by the porous ashes, which soon suck up any ordinary tropical shower; and the water had rushed down the valley, and swept through the settlement, committing great havoc among their neatly paved streets and squares. The torrent had rushed far out to sea, red with ashes, and had carried with it quantities of cinders and lumps of pumice, some of which were still floating about on the surface.

During our stay we had a pleasant excursion up to *Green Mountain*, where we remained a day or two with *Captain East*. The road from the settlement is very good, winding up a gentle slope for the greater part of the way among the lava ridges. The whole of the lower part of the island is absolutely barren—a waste of stones, with here and there a gnarled cactus-stump and a few solanaceous and portalaceous weeds, which afford scanty food to the guinea-fowl, which, at first introduced from the *Cape Verde Islands*, have become rather numerous