

THE MAIN TEXT OF THIS BOOK

Continues after this Section.

SOME HISTORY ABOUT THIS BOOK

Alison Charles (nee Stewart/Stuart) Carmichael (~1792 - 1885), novelist:

Scottish novelist Alison Charles Carmichael (also known as Alison &/or Alison Charles Stewart/Stuart) wrote two books of some popularity, about her living for some years in the West Indies, on the islands of St. Vincent and Trinidad. In that period, her households were owners of slaves. Her first book in particular, is considered by some to have been controversial on two counts. Firstly, she was considered to have been a pro-slavery supporter; and secondly, by advancing the date of the book's publication to 1833, when she changed her publisher for one who would publish on an earlier date, she was considered a pro-slavery lobbyist for the West Indian Plantation faction within the British government. Her book arrived at the time of the debates in the British Parliament which was then considering the Abolition of Slavery in its Caribbean Colonies. Carmichael however, was also receiving support by dint of the fact of being a scarce, rising, Scottish, woman novelist.

Some of her Works:

- *Domestic Manners and Social Customs of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies; Two Volumes; (1833)*
- *Tales of a Grandmother; (1841)*

John Wilson Carmichael (1775 - 1850), land & slave owner:

The British 53rd (Shropshire) Regiment was deployed to the West Indies between 1795 to 1802. It served on St Vincent, Trinidad and St Lucia. During the time of the capitulation of Spanish Trinidad to the British in 1797, one John Wilson Carmichael, of Jersey, served as a Lieutenant in the 53rd. It is presumed that he went back to England with his unit but returned to St. Vincen in 1807. Here he likely met and married his first wife Margaret Ann Falside; the family having three children; Stephen, Isabella Anne & Margaretta Jane.

He is noted to have returned to England around 1812/13; and his wife Margaret died in 1814. He would then marry Alison Charles Stewart/Stuart, the budding Scottish novelist in 1815 and then had two more daughters, Mary Erskine & Alison Johanna. He would return to his estate Mousebank, in St. Vincent with the family in 1820. The Mousebank estate is reported to have housed in ownership 78 slaves. The family would stay there for around 3 years. After a couple of exploratory visits to underdeveloped Trinidad during that period; Carmichael would sell out in St. Vincent and transfer his family in 1822, together with some 22 slaves, to occupy Laurel Hill estate; a village next to Tacarigua, one of the first four land grants or Missions set up by the Spanish encomienda system in Trinidad in 1645. The family would remain there for another 2 years before returning to England. A larger estate owner named William Milne-Home, who occupied the estate land adjacent to the Laurel Hill estate, would some years later rename the whole area Five Rivers; the name that recognises the place today.

SOME HISTORY ABOUT THIS BOOK (*Continued*)

General notes:

Mrs. Alison C. Carmichael came from a wealthy Scottish family; her father owned lease to a quarry and stoneworks at Callilou in Fifeshire, Scotland, which supplied stone to many British colonies; the freestone from which built the Royal Gaol in Port of Spain, Trinidad. John W. Carmichael, being a landowner of a cane-sugar plantation in the West Indies, was also comparatively wealthy. On their arrival in Trinidad in 1822, they were initially housed and entertained by Ashton Warner, an acquaintance made earlier in Edinburgh, Scotland, who was Chief Justice of Trinidad during the governorship of Sir Ralph Woodford (1813 - 1828). Woodford also made the time to personally show the newcomers around the relatively new Capitol of Trinidad, Port of Spain. So they were indeed from a privileged class within the Colony.

Where we hold aside for the moment the discussion of the injustices of slavery, as for a different place than the here and now; we focus instead on one aspect of this wealth that affected Alison C. Carmichael's writings. Her writings indicate her to have had the privilege of being well educated and very well read. She often quotes from learned scientific Journals of the day aspects of medicine, botany, zoology and geology, and statistics from the colonies, to make a point. To seek access to those documents indicates an innate inquisitiveness on her part. Carmichael's maternal grandfather was the abolitionist Church of Scotland Minister Dr John Erskine, who presided for most of his life at both the New and Old Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh; and is described as a Scottish theologian and Calvinist; part of the Protestant Reform Church. From her writings, Carmichael appears to have remained within that church and appears a staunch Protestant. Her writing is intelligent, but not frivolous, and shows an empathy towards those around her. She was indeed a perceptive observer of her environment.

References:

- John Wilson Carmichael; Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery UCL
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/29088>
- 'Warmly Recommended by Miss Edgeworth': Alison Charles Carmichael, Maria Edgeworth and Slavery in the Caribbean; Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies; Author: Matthew Lee (Independent scholar, UK)
<https://jiss.aberdeenunipress.org/article/id/351/>
- Making Tacarigua a better scene; Trinidad and Tobago News Blog; Dr Selwyn R. Cudjoe, June 16, 2024
<https://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?p=56063>
- The Warners; The Caribbean History Archives; Gerard A. Besson - Caribbean Historian
<https://caribbeanhistoryarchives.blogspot.com/2011/11/warners.html>

About this limited Edited Copy – v04:

This PDF file of the limited subject text from the book: *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro population of the West Indies. By Mrs. Carmichael. 1833.* has been compiled from processing the images of this subject text posted on the Angelo Bissessarsingh's Virtual Museum of Trinidad and Tobago FaceBook site, by member Neil Yip Choy. The editor is thankful to Mr. Yip Choy for his valuable contribution, from a rare document, to the historical records, about Trinidad and Tobago, here being compiled.

The subject text is presented “as seen & as spelt” in the original document; with very, very, few exceptions as where a name may have been misrepresented to our present historical understand and a correction made; or an explanation offered; and always made within square brackets, thus: [abc]. The word ‘formatting’ however, has been changed by modern process to fit on ‘letter size’ pages.

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Accessible Web editions of the book - *Domestic Manners; Vol. I & II*

From the (Digital) INTERNET ARCHIVE:

Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro population of the West Indies by Mrs. Carmichael. 1833.

Vol. I

https://archive.org/details/b29328731_0001/page/n5/mode/2up

Vol. II

https://archive.org/details/b29328731_0002/page/n5/mode/2up

Mr. Neil Yip Choy's notes:

In posting his images of the subject text; which has appeared in 6 batches for the present SubSet;
Mr. Yip Choy commented;

Part 1

29th July 2024

I was requested to post the contents of a very old book I acquired, published in 1833 before the abolition of slavery in Trinidad. It's a tough read in 2024, 190 years after Emancipation, with it's racist language and attitudes of the period, but if you can put that aside, the book gives us a first hand account of life in Trinidad almost 200 years ago. It's a narrative, not a history book, and a rare glimpse of a time long ago... This is the first chapter of Vol 2. Volume 1 covers Mrs Carmichael's time in St Vincent, hence the chapter numbering. I will post future chapters if requested.

Part 2

30th July 2024

Chapter XIV (14) of Mrs Carmichael's account of Trinidad in the 1830s.

Part 3

30th July 2024 @ 12:12TT

Chapter XV of Mrs Carmichael's book covers the general institutions of Trinidad, and a bit on the Pitch Lake. It seems to have been a very well ordered and run colony, with a population of only 40,873, including 20 people from the Great Qing Dynasty, or China as it is known today. That surprised me as I'd always assumed that the Chinese in Trinidad had arrived sometime around the first arrivals of people from India more than a decade later.

Part 4

7th August 2024 @ 06:33 TT

Chapter XVII today. Mrs Carmichael settles down at the Laurel-Hill estate. Observations, the day to day life on the estate, mosquitoes and sandflies, (still a menace, I can sympathise), life in the days before refrigeration, the bygone days of yore, when God was front and center in the lives or people, (wish it was so today). I particularly like the end of the chapter with it's description of how the West Indies was formed. Enjoy.

Part 5

12 August 2024 @ 17:22 TT

Domestic Manners continues today with the subject of children. It's heartbreaking to think of children, condemned from birth, to being slaves. Mrs Carmichael makes it all sound very normal, five year olds out picking vines, and doing general yardwork...and...when they're a little older...they get a hoe, all their own for more serious work. It's all downhill from there. Really nice.

Again, apologies for the page sequencing. Facebook doesn't make these things easy. The pages are all numbered, so you can figure out where to start and end. Cheers.

Part 6

24 August 2024 @ 14:32 TT

Chapter XIX of Domestic Matters. A lot of discussion about food. Some discussion about how things are bought, sold and bartered. Slaves could make money by working on Sundays and their time off growing produce to sell to the plantation. At that time also there were still several different currencies in use simultaneously, British pounds, shillings and Spanish dollars. Again, it's a bit of a tough read, the subservience of people having to kowtow under the yoke of slavery, the adult/ignorant child dynamic Mrs Carmichael likes to use, and the archaic and racially offensive language. That being said, the value of a book like this is that it is NOT a history book, but a narrative that puts you right THERE with the people living at Laurel Hill, and makes you a witness to the lives of people almost 200 years ago.

eEd tobagojo@gmail.com 20240827

Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro population of the West Indies.
By Mrs. Carmichael. 1833.

DOMESTIC MANNERS
AND
SOCIAL CONDITION
OF THE
WHITE, COLOURED, AND NEGRO
POPULATION
OF THE
WEST INDIES.

By MRS. CARMICHAEL,
FIVE YEARS A RESIDENT IN ST. VINCENT AND TRINIDAD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

LONDON:
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND CO.
AVE-MARIA LANE.

1833.

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[32] WEST INDIES.

CHAPTER XIV.

Preparations for removing to Trinidad — Conduct of the negroes — Voyage — Approach — Negro expectations — Arrival — Views — Port au Spain — Public walk — Population — Visit to the negroes at Laurel-Hill — Black ants — Valley of Maraval — Magnificent scenery of the tropics — Visit to the markets — Price of provisions; and enumeration of vegetables and fruits.

After having been resident during some years in St. Vincent, Mr. C. paid a visit to the island of Trinidad. He had been there, for a few days, some months before; and had returned with a very favourable opinion of the island. His second visit confirmed his first impressions; and he came at last to the resolution of removing from St. Vincent to that colony.

[33] One of the first steps was, to ascertain whether our people would like to accompany us or not. The proposal was no sooner made to them, than they instantly seemed, not only willing, but delighted at the prospect of a change. Their master told them, that if any of them preferred remaining, they had only to say so; and he would give them a paper, — a written permission from the master, for them to go round among the estates, and find a new master for themselves. This is the universal practice with the master; and the negro never finds any difficulty in suiting himself with a new master. The higher the value put upon the negro, the higher does he hold his head, as it is a proof that he is a good character; and I know of no more common reproach from a good to a bad negro, than the expression, “You dare tell me so, you! what you worth; you sell to-morrow, massa get noting for you, you no worth that!” and they conclude by biting off a little bit of the right-hand thumb-nail, and spitting it out with a toss of the head: by this [34] they mean in plain English, — you are so unprofitable a servant to your master, that you are not worth the paring of a nail.

One domestic negro alone wished to remain, as his wife, for the time being, was not a negro belonging to us; nor if she had, would she have liked going to Trinidad; at least so she said. This domestic was transferred to another member of our family, and filled the same situation there as he had done with us. He was neither a good servant, nor a good character, though not wanting in cleanliness or intelligence; but so exceedingly cruel to his fellow servants, that I was not sorry for his determination.

One request was made by all the other negroes, and that was a most reasonable one — that J., who was a run-away and a notorious thief, should be left behind. Mr. C. said, to try them, “but what shall I say to J.?” “Say massa — say noting at all; just leave him; he be one wild nigger — he ’ll go to the woods.” But B., the domestic who was to remain, said, [35] “Oh no! massa, I’ll soon manage him; I’ll tell him the snake so big and so plenty in Trinidad, they would eat him up if he went to the mountains, and so he’ll be glad to be left in St. Vincent.” The others said — “Well, any way, so he

don't go, and shame us; massa, you know we all great sinner, but we try be good niggers to you, massa, and no bring you to shame in a strange place. Massa, I. is one great tief: he no tief a little ting, but go 'bout all the plantations and tief as impudent as one monkey."

Their master could not but allow the truth of this statement; and it was promised that I. should be left to get another master; and that they should be neither disgraced nor annoyed by such a comrade.

All was now bustle and preparation among them; smart dresses making, &c., and the excitement was alike felt by old and young. Many went out, by permission, to the country to take leave of old friends, and some old friends came to see them; but there was no [36] appearance of regret in any one instance in leaving old scenes and old faces. The negroes had heard a great deal of the fertility of Trinidad by B., who had been there with his master, and who allowed that Trinidad negroes had it in their power to get on fast in money-making. I do not doubt that this report made a strong impression upon them; but independently of any incentive of this kind, negroes are uncommonly fond of change; and shew less feeling in parting from their old friends, and the scenes of their early youth, than Europeans generally shew and feel.

Although the society of St. Vincent was not very congenial to my taste; yet there were some individuals from whom I could not separate without feeling deeply. Independent of those to whom I was connected by the nearest ties, there were others who had shewn us great and unaffected hospitality upon our arrival, and whose kind offices of friendship had never relaxed. I also regretted leaving St. Vincent without having been able to see every part of [37] the island; and particularly without having ascended the *Souffriere*. But those who endeavour, however imperfectly, to do their duty to their family, and instruct their domestics, will find very little opportunity for excursions of pleasure in the West Indies. In point of fact, although I was five years and six months altogether there, I never found it possible to devote any one whole day to the gratification of mere curiosity. The fatigue of ascending the *Souffriere* is very great in so hot a climate. My husband's eldest daughter accomplished the ascent at the expense of losing nearly the whole of the skin of her face and neck. The party by whom she was accompanied, rode part of the way upon mules, after which they were obliged to scramble up as they could — slipping and sliding — now holding on by the brushwood, and when that failed, creeping upon all fours. 'The exertion, however, was amply rewarded by the magnificent prospect from the summit. Her feelings of awe, too, were probably increased by the recollections of her very early [38] childhood, as she had witnessed the awful irruption of the volcano in 1812. Frequent slight shocks of earthquakes had, before that event, alarmed the inhabitants; but they were, nevertheless, not at all prepared for the awful scene of horror and devastation which then took place. The sound of the explosions was terrific: they were heard distinctly in the island of Grenada, where the militia were drawn out, on the supposition that the French were coming to attack them. Baron Humboldt says, the sound of the explosions was "heard at a distance equal to that between Mount Vesuvius and Paris." The whole fruit and vegetables of the northern part of the island were destroyed, — while the country was covered with grey sand and ashes, in some places to the depth of several feet. The canes were levelled to the ground — immense forest-trees nearly denuded of their branches; the trunks standing erect, smoking and charred. The stones propelled from the mouth of the crater, were thrown in the

form of a parabola — striking the [39] opposite side of the trees from the mountain, lodging in what branches remained, and often in the solid trunk.

All the orange and lemon tribe suffered especially: and even when I left St. Vincent, so long after these events, I had never seen a fine full-grown orange tree; nor a lime that was superior in height to a middle-sized lauristinus shrub in Europe. Limes and oranges were then almost all imported from the neighbouring islands. One of the last places I visited with regret, was the Botanic Garden of St. Vincent. Not that as a botanic garden it had any longer a claim to attention; but as a perfectly beautiful spot. In the days of the late Dr. Anderson, it must have been a delightful spot to the lover of botany. Government, whether wisely or not I cannot say, refused to keep up the expenses of it; and at the time I allude to, it was occupied as a sort of retreat from the heat of Kingstown, by Sir Charles Brisbane, the then governor of the island. I had been invited to a very large party [40] there the previous day, which I had declined going to, as Mr. C. was absent; and his excellency next day offered to ride up with me, — as I preferred a quiet day for a lounge in the garden, and turning over some excellent botanical books, which had been so profitably studied by their former possessor.

The house at the Botanic Garden could never have been very good, but it was now scarcely habitable; and Sir C. Brisbane described to me, with all his comic powers, the ludicrous scene the evening before, when those who danced had to keep a sharp look-out, that they did not fall through the holes of the flooring into the cellar underneath.

We had fixed the middle of August for our departure to Trinidad, and embarked with all our family, save my husband's youngest daughter, who had married Pemberton Hobson, Esq., now Attorney-General of St. Vincent. About eleven in the morning we set sail, in the sloop Ariel. The negroes had all slept on board, so that no delay took place; and we left the shore imme- [41] diately, with a fine strong breeze in our favour. The Ariel was an excellent vessel, and her captain a very skilful man, — well acquainted with the currents of the Charibbean sea. As to the accommodation, it was as good as such vessels usually possess. There was a row of berths on each side, which a moderate sized person could roll himself into, and remain coiled up; so that at least there was no chance of being tossed about in bed. I remained on deck long enough to see the shore of St. Vincent gradually fade away, and become at length undistinguishable, without a hope or prospect of ever beholding it again; and I should not wish it to be supposed that I could thus lose sight for ever of a spot, which had been a home for years, and where, with all its faults, there was much to regret, without feeling some of that heaviness of heart, which even the prospect of new, and I hoped, more prosperous scenes, could not altogether remove. Sea sickness, however, soon mastered us all; if I except one of our family, who remained on deck almost the [42] whole night, enjoying the sport of the sailors, catching fish, and salting it for the market at Port of Spain. I could hear their animated exclamations the livelong night, as they caught another and another king-fish.

We had some negroes of our own on board who were sailors, — fine spirited fellows: one of them enacted the part of nurse to the ladies; and he far surpassed all the female stewards | ever met with in that capacity. In the first place he had that best of all qualifications, a pair of excellent sea legs; in the second place, he had shortly before been very seriously ill, and his young massa had nursed and cured him; and he was now brimful of gratitude. He made very strong grog; and when I ventured to

remonstrate, he said, “Neber mind misses, it no make you tipsy now; you sick too much.” Then he broiled salt fish; and went round the berths insisting upon our eating, with a world of gaiety and good humour, — half sorry for us, and half laughing, — proud of his own superior abilities at sea, and no less so of [43] his young massa, who he said “was fit to be a gemmen sailor, he go about so.”

At last, Trinidad was announced to be in sight. Although very sick, I was extremely anxious to catch the earliest glimpse of the island which was to be our future home. With the aid of my negro nurse, and his infallible recipe for sea sickness — a sprig of salt beef, broiled fire hot with capsicum, and sprinkled with lemon juice — I contrived to place myself on deck. Our other negroes now began to grope their way upon deck; and salt fish and grog soon produced a happy change upon them. The joke and the laugh went round; and they rallied each other upon the comical figure they had cut during the paroxysms of sea sickness.

The island of Trinidad is about ninety miles long and fifty broad; but it has never been very accurately surveyed. This island derives its name from the three mountains which are discerned, at the distance of thirteen leagues, to the south east: they are of considerable height, compared with any other ground in the [44] neighbourhood, and consequently are conspicuous. They are of the secondary formation. The island was discovered by Columbus, in his third voyage to the new world, in 1498. In March 1595, Trinidad was visited by Sir Walter Raleigh, who, after reducing the defences of the island, took possession of it in the name of his sovereign. Trinidad was taken by the French in 1676; and in 1797 it was recovered by the British, under General Sir Ralph Abercrombie; and added to England by the treaty of Amiens.

Considerable knowledge of the currents is required, to make the island of Trinidad: for otherwise, vessels are liable to be swept by the current to the Spanish Main. There is a very strong current from the south-east — in the strait between the south coast of the island, and the continent of South America; through which it sets into the Gulf of Paria. Another current sets along the north coast, tending to the south, on the south-east coast of Cumana or Paria. I need scarcely say, that these con-[45] flicting currents occasion a constant agitation of the sea. It was from these circumstances that Columbus named the passages through which these currents set — Boccas de Drago, or Dragons’ Mouths. We had the advantage of both wind and current; and entered the Bocca Grande, passing close to the small island of Chacachacarro. There are other channels; the Bocca de Navios, or Ship’s Passage: the Bocca de Huevos, or Egg Passage; and the Bocca de Monos, or Ape’s Passage. As we entered the Bocca del Drago, the scene became exceedingly animated and beautiful; the Gulf of Paria being studded with small islands, rising perpendicularly out of the water; and which might, from the fine verdure which covers them, be well called emerald isles. This gulf is as smooth as glass, but muddy, as it is at all times, particularly during the rainy season which had now set in; the water is then of a dirty reddish hue, occasioned by the waters of the great river Oronoco, which enters the Atlantic, by many mouths, opposite to the island of Trinidad.

[46] We now neared the land, so that the houses and cultivation became visible; and as every minute the objects we gazed upon assumed more and more distinctness, our people were as much interested as we were; and when at length the amazingly fine plantain trees, and rich provision-grounds

caught their eye, there was one simultaneous burst of joy, and “tank you, massa, bring me to so fine a country; me be good nigger to you all the days of our life, for bringing us here.”

“Fine easy sailing here,” said sailor Tom, as he surveyed the smooth gulf of Paria, where he looked forward to the commencement of a new era in his nautical life.

One elderly negro woman, of great natural intelligence, — a native African, seemed if possible more delighted than any of them. I asked her if this was at all like her own country? “Me own country misses? no no; me own country shew noting like dat—’t is better den the Charaib country.” This was the greatest possible compliment a St. Vincent negro could pay to Trinidad; for they consider justly, that [47] the Charaib country of St. Vincent is the land of milk and honey.

The next question was, “Massa, can you shew us the plantation a we go to?” This was impossible; but they were quite satisfied when massa assured them that Laurel-Hill produced as fine provisions as any they now saw; and that there was plenty of land for them; — “and massa, we’ll see massa W. and misses too.” In fact they resembled a band of children, set out on a party of pleasure after being released from school, whose loquacity knows no bounds.

How fervently do I wish that those who passed the Act forbidding the removal of negroes from a worn-out island to a fertile and abundant one, could have witnessed the scene I did that day; nor was it a scene of highly excited expectations, to be speedily destroyed by a reality; on the contrary, time only made all our people the more thankful for the removal from an estate in St. Vincent, where the soil was so very inferior to the rich productive island of Trinidad.

[48] In the midst of all the noise and boisterous fun of the negroes, I could hardly look so quietly as I could have wished, upon the beautiful panorama around us. The coast of South America was quite distinct; and the beauty of the little islands in the Gulf was heightened by the rich foliage of the trees, — all of them of the freshest green, in consequence of the rains.

The outline of Trinidad, however, does not in my opinion at all equal St. Vincent; which, in the bolder features, far surpasses it. Yet it is not wanting in beauty; and those who have ever looked at the print of Loch Lomond, in Dr. Garnett’s Tour through Scotland, may form some idea of the *toute ensemble* in miniature of the Gulf of Paria.

About five, p.m., we anchored off *Port d’Espagne*, or Port of Spain, as it is usually called. The town is low, so that on ship-board we could see nothing of it. The Harbour-Master immediately came on board, and being satisfied that we had all been vaccinated, gave [49] us permission to land — a permission which in Trinidad is necessary. A young gentleman, resident at the house of the late Chief Judge, soon came off in a boat, and took all our family on shore, where we found Mr. Warner’s carriage in waiting for us, to convey us up to Belmont — a short distance from Port of Spain. The sight of a nice English carriage, with servants whose appearance and address bespoke something very different from St. Vincent, was the first thing that struck me as indicative of a more polished state of society than that which I had left behind. The contrast soon became still stronger, as we drove through a town particularly clean, and as regularly built as the new town of Edinburgh. It was now past six; and in that

climate the transition from the brightest day to night is almost immediate; and childish as it may seem, the gas lights, and the appearance of good, well-lighted shops, quite put us all in spirits. Our young Spanish friend took great pleasure, as we drove along, in calling our attention to the different objects [50] likely to please us; and he seemed, as he well might be, proud to shew us how well-regulated a town Port of Spain was, compared with Kingstown in St. Vincent. Nevertheless, as Cowper says, "God made the country, and man the town;" and town, however beautiful, could never give birth to such feelings as I experienced, when I first saw the Charaib country of St. Vincent, with its lofty volcanic mountains.

We had a steep pull up to Belmont, the residence of the Chief Justice. The very first glimpse I caught of Mr. Warner, impressed me with the most delightful presentiment of the happiness it must be to live under the roof of one, whose every feature bore the impress of worth and amiable feeling. Mrs. Warner I had formerly had the happiness of knowing in Scotland; and I need scarcely say, how pleased we were to find that the promise we had made in Edinburgh, to meet if possible in Trinidad, had not proved to be a dream. There was a happy meeting too of the little children; who, [51] though they at first looked strange to each other, soon made the house resound with their joyous bursts of laughter and mirth.

Belmont-house was old, and required repairing, but it was nevertheless far superior to any thing I had seen in the West Indies. It was surrounded by a neat and tasteful shrubbery, with those beautiful clematuses so abundant in the West Indies. The open rafters of the roof, and many other singular *et ceteras* about the house, would have seemed strange enough to me, had I not been already pretty familiar with these peculiarities, by my residence in St. Vincent. Mr. C. was anxious that our people should be landed and sent to Laurel-Hill. Immediately after breakfast next morning therefore our young Spanish friend accompanied him for this purpose. I was not present, but I understood that they were all happy and cheerful, and delighted that they were about to see their new plantation.

Arrangements had been made in Trinidad, previous to the arrival of our people, and all [52] the old settled negroes, many of whom had spare room, received the new comers with great willingness and hospitality. I had now leisure to survey the view from Belmont, which was truly magnificent. The elevations behind the house were sufficient to confer great beauty, though not sublimity, upon the landscape; but the magnificence of the wood, — the gigantic size, and broad foliage of the trees which filled the valleys and clothed the hills, gave a new and striking character to the scene. From one of the windows there was an extensive view of the coast of South America, and of the calm and emerald-studded gulf that bathes these tropical climes. St. Anne's, the residence of his excellency Sir KR. J. Woodford, the then governor of Trinidad, was a pretty object, too, as seen from Belmont. It lay rather in a low situation, in the valley of St. Anne's; but those who understand these matters better than I do, consider such a situation in Trinidad superior in point of health to one more elevated; which, it is said, catches the floating miasma during [53] the rainy season. There is a drive, an *alameda*, at Port of Spain, called the great and lesser circle, and which might be called the Hyde Park of Trinidad. All new comers are conducted there; and there we, of course, repaired during the evening after our arrival, as soon as the heat had somewhat abated. This promenade originated, and was planned and executed by Sir Ralph Woodford; whose public spirit knew no bounds, where the good of the colony or comfort of the

inhabitants was concerned. Here we found all the population of the town and its environs enjoying themselves; and here one may, at all times, have a *coup d'œil* [glimpse] of the singularly varied and many-coloured population of this colony; which, from its long connexion with Spain, its vicinity to the South American continent, and its extensive foreign trade, can boast a more varied population than most of the British West India colonies. I had no idea that I should see so great a number of private carriages, and of equestrians. The carriages [54] were full of ladies, and were all open: and most of the females, I should have remarked, were well dressed. Many of them, indeed, had a good deal of style in their appearance.

Nothing is more striking to a stranger in Trinidad than the extreme regularity with which all public business is conducted, and the excellent regulations in force, in all that regards the internal economy of the colony: and this example has had its influence on the society generally, where it always seemed to me that the uses and economy of time were most thoroughly understood. I hesitate not to ascribe these results to the influence and example of Sir Ralph Woodford, than whom no man ever existed better qualified for the government of a colony.

It is a thousand pities that the governors of colonies should not be more frequently taken from civil and legal offices, rather than from the army and navy: those are most honourable professions; but it ought to be recollected, that the first principle inculcated in each of them is [55] absolute obedience: and as the young officer rises in rank, he learns by degrees to exercise absolute command. Right or wrong, *to obey* is the first duty of a soldier; and such an education seems little fitted to produce, in after life, a sufficiently deliberative character for a civil governor.

A few days after our arrival in Trinidad, we went to Laurel-Hill, to see the negroes. They were already at work, and quite in spirits; quizzing the Trinidad husbandry as far inferior to St. Vincent. A great ball had been given by the Laurel-Hill negroes, as a compliment to the St. Vincent people; and the young black Trinidad dandies were sporting their best clothes and address, to gain the smiles and the favours of the young St. Vincent belles. I was informed, the only alloy in this grand gala, was the envy excited in the breasts of the young Trinidad negresses; who felt not a little annoyed at seeing the St. Vincent new comers preferred to them as partners. It is a trite saying, that human nature is everywhere alike; and no- [56] where is that truth more often forced upon our observation than in living among a negro population.

Of the many novelties of Trinidad, the black ants are among the soonest to make themselves known; and among the least agreeable of acquaintances. It was but the first night of our arrival that as Mr. C, was stepping into bed, he was attacked by an innumerable host of these small black ants: and in the course of a few minutes he was covered from head to foot. Upon examining the bed, it was full of them—the floor and walls of the house were completely covered; and in a state of desperation from their stings, Mr. C. was obliged to leave the chamber to the enemy, and fly undressed, to some rooms erected at a short distance from where Mr. W. was sleeping. Here it was not until after a fierce and long encounter that the enemy was forced to retreat for that night.

These ants are small, and in colour very black: their bite is attended with considerable [57] irritation. Besides this small ant, there is a larger kind, still more unceremonious and more formidable

as visitors. The large ants think nothing of taking forcible possession of a whole house, and fairly driving out its inmates.

On my first arrival in Trinidad, before settling on the estate, I took advantage of the interval! to see something of the country, and had soon explored most of the charming valleys that lie within the reach of an excursion from Port of Spain. The valley of Diego Martin is exceedingly beautiful, and within an easy drive of the town. It is throughout well cultivated; and studded with the residences of the planters, and with negro houses in abundance. Diego Martin is, however, far inferior to the valley of Maraval: a beautiful and most crystal stream runs through it — a most agreeable neighbourhood in a tropical climate. Groves of fruit trees, laden with their treasures; and forest trees of noble growth, cover all the banks and ridges; while the elegant cocoa-nut branches waving in the light breeze, like gigantic ostrich [58] feathers, and shewing at times, underneath, their silvery tent, contrast finely with the darker foliage around, and with the deep sky of a tropical climate.

I found Maraval not only cool, but absolutely cold, — so completely were the sun's rays excluded from it. But it was a damp unpleasant cold, there was a sensation of chilliness induced, that made you feel, not only that the sun's rays were then absent from the valley, but that the sun had never shone there. I should doubt, with all its beauty, whether Maraval would be a desirable place to live in. Vegetation is here gigantic. This too was my first introduction to a real grove of noble orange trees. The oranges were hanging on the boughs, as thickly clustering as any apples I have ever seen. They were of a pale pea-green; and my first impulse was to pull down a bough of the tree to help myself, but little did I know who were the inmates of that tree. Before almost I was conscious of touching an orange, I was covered from head to foot with chasseur ants. There was but one [59] remedy: Mrs. Warner called one of the men servants, who tore hastily some switches from the brushwood; and I was obliged to submit to rather a rough scourging. I was shockingly stung; and moreover, many of the insects continued their assaults all the way home. The ant is black, and about the fourth of an inch long.

Shortly after my arrival in Trinidad, I paid a visit to the market of Port of Spain. The early morning hour is the most favourable for visiting it; and the following details, are the results of that, and of many subsequent visits. The butcher market is exceedingly neat and commodious; but the market for fish excels in convenience, beauty, and regularity, anything of the sort I ever saw: when I say that it is even far superior to that of Peters' Port, in the island of Guernsey, I pay it only a fair compliment. The tide comes in every day, and washes the whole site: in fact the market is held over the sea, the slabs are all of marble, the scales and weights accurately clean; and the prices are under wise and strict regulations. [60] The supply is abundant, and for the West Indies not unreasonable.

But before going into details regarding the market, it will be better to mention the current coin of Trinidad, and its value in sterling money. — The Spanish gold doubloon, a very handsome coin, is worth 8*l.* currency; sixteen dollars. The gold joe is worth 3*l.* 6*s.* currency, and values from 1*l.* 10*s.* to 1*l.* 17*s.* sterling; but it is seldom worth more than 1*l.* 10*s.* sterling, varying of course according to the rate of exchange. The Spanish round dollar values ten shillings currency: about four shillings and sixpence sterling, or four shillings and fourpence, according to the exchange. The ring dollar has a circular piece of silver punched out of the middle; the piece taken out is of the value of one shilling

currency; so that the ring dollar is nine shillings currency — being one shilling currency less in value than the round or Spanish dollar. There are also Spanish half, and quarter dollars. The silver bit piece is worth about fourpence sterling; and a half [61] bit piece of silver, twopence. This was the smallest current coin in Trinidad, while I was there; no copper being then in use. To one arriving from St. Vincent, the beef of Trinidad is quite a treat; nevertheless, Trinidad beef would cut a sorry figure in any English, or even Scotch market. The mutton and lamb of Port of Spain, I thought inferior in point of flavour to that of St. Vincent.

I am not able to say certainly what is the price of beef, mutton, and lamb, in Port of Spain; for I cannot find any note in my possession of the exact price per lb. My house-keeping did not begin until I left Belmont; and at Laurel-Hill we were thoroughly supplied from the negroes' stock, and from our own; so that I only once sent to market in the space of twenty months; and then the charge was made for the round of beef, without mentioning the number of lbs. But I think beef, mutton, and lamb, sold for from three to four and four bits and a half per lb. of sixteen ounces. In every thing else, I can state the exact price, from a [62] reference to my accounts, having kept a daily detail of every article of expenditure.

Pork, of superior quality, was bought, either in the market, or in the country from the negroes belonging to the different estates, at two bits per lb. A fowl, ready for use, at six shillings and sixpence currency. There was a law by which it was optional to purchase live poultry by weight, if one so inclined. But the negroes so deceived by feeding the fowl previous to weighing, that I preferred paying the price I mention, and getting a good article. The Peons, that is, the free native Spaniards, rear multitudes of lean poultry; and they do not play the same tricks in selling them by weight that the negroes do. They also sell lean turkeys in the same way. Their fowls are usually of the value of four shillings and six-pence or five shillings, currency; and turkeys about 1*l.* 5*s.* A chicken is sold for a quarter dollar; but if fat and fit for use, a chicken is worth from half a ring dollar to three-quarters, according to its size. Five round dollars is the [63] common price of a fat turkey: a pair of fat ducks, three dollars. A fat goose, three dollars to four, according as they may be plentiful or scarce in the island. A pork head, according to the size, from a cut dollar to half a dollar for a very sound one. The feet, half a cut dollar. But these are the favourite pieces with the negro, and they seldom part with them.

King fish, or tazac, is reckoned the best fish in Trinidad; it is excellent; — handsome to the sight, and resembles a salmon in size. Grouper or vielle, is also very good, but harder, and is best stewed: cod-fish or morne, snapper in poisson, rouge, tong, congor eel or canouver, all sell at one shilling and sixpence currency per lb., and every other description of small fish at one bit. Few of these, however, are very good. Shark and cat-fish are prohibited being sold.

Eggs sell at three for a bit; and when scarce I have known them half a bit each. Salt butter, when sold by the pound in Port of Spain market, is three quarters to sometimes a Spanish dollar per lb. I never saw or heard of fresh butter for sale.

[64] It would be impossible to enumerate the prices of the vegetables and fruits; but as a general remark it may be stated, that a tolerably sized dish of any common vegetable in season, is never under

two bits; and that the rarer vegetables are dearer. English peas cost a round dollar for a small dish. A fine large pine in season may be had for from two to three or four bits. A large shaddock the same. Forbidden fruit, half a bit each; oranges, two to three bits per dozen. The other fruits are all cheap; excepting sappidilloes and the prickly pear. This pear, from its peculiarly cool pulp, is a great favourite, and is very wholesome; and with sappidilloes, are sold about three for a bit.

The guava of Trinidad is very inferior to that of St. Vincent; besides, it is hardly possible to get one quite free from worms. The custard apple also is subject to this defect. The Trinidad mango abounds everywhere; but I saw none to compare with those of the Botanic Garden in St. Vincent. The Trinidad orange [65] is however, most delicious; as are also many of the plums — all indigenous to the island. Were grafting tried, I am convinced the fruit would be much improved; the stone is at present uniformly too large in proportion to the pulp. The following is a pretty accurate calendar of the fruits of Trinidad for the year. January, produces sappidilloes, pomegranates, sour sops, plantains, bananas, papas or papaws. The vegetables are — okros, capsicums of all kinds, which indeed are common every month in the year, — cocoa nuts, which are seldom used but for cakes and puddings, ground down pigeon or angola peas, sweet potatoes, yams of different sorts, and tancias. February — the vegetable called chicon or christophine comes in, which is already described in a former part of this work. In March, grenadilloes are added to the former list. April — Java plums, mangoes, mamm-sapoetas, pines of several varieties, the Otaheite gooseberry, Jamaica plums, cerasees, and bread fruit. May adds to the list, water lemons and cashew apples. [66] June is much the same in its productions; pigeon peas are, however, nearly out of season. In July the avacado pear comes in; it is also known by the name of the alligator pear — or subaltern's butter, from its inside resembling very yellow fresh butter, both in consistence and colour. In August the only new fruit is the yellow hog plum: the other fruits in season are the mamme-sapotas and avacado pears. September produces sugar and custard apples, sea- side grapes, and plenty of Portuguese yams. The fruits and vegetables of October are nearly the same as September; and the only difference in November is the bread fruit being ripe again. December brings in guavas; and that most excellent and useful production, sorrel. This plant has a succulent stalk, and grows from three to four feet high. There is a blossom, not unlike the common English columbine. There are two varieties, white and red. The blossoms, when slightly fermented, produce a delightful beverage, or stewed with sugar make tarts or jam. All the orange and lemon tribe; shad- [67] docks and forbidden fruit; plantains and bananas, may be had every month in the year; but they abound most from April to September. Mountain cabbage is always in season, and is a most delicious vegetable. In showery weather, English peas will always do well; but the marrow-fat pea does not suit the climate so well as the different species of dwarf peas; particularly that kind known in England by the name of the early nimble tailor. Carrots, turnips, and English cabbage are very scarce and dear; and have a stunted look. Asparagus thrives pretty well; and I believe sometimes may be had at market; also artichokes, Jerusalem artichokes, the love-apple or tomata, and the two edible species of the egg plant — the one of which is a greenish white, the other a purple; they are sold in Trinidad under the name of the boulangois.

Cucumbers, melons, and gourds of all kinds are abundant and cheap. Lettuce, radishes, and cress, are not so good as in England, and are dearer. Onions will not grow to any tole- [68] rable size; plenty come from Madeira, but they are expensive. Parsley and celery are also dear and scarce. All the

legumes of the country are excellent, abundant, and cheap, particularly the Lima bean. Milk is a quarter dollar a quart bottle.

Besides all these natural productions displayed for sale in the market, a great variety of cakes and pastry is always exhibited, but it is not inviting; ginger beer, mobee, and orgeat are always plentiful, and generally excellent.

To the youthful appetite, the Trinidad market is very attractive: for there are numerous bottles of comfits, sweetmeats of all kinds, and coloured papers of comforts, which all little Trinidad masters and misses know well, under the name of dragee. There are no seats for the sellers of fruit, vegetables, or other wares — some bring a chair or a stool; but many are seated on the grass, in the open area where the market is held. The first time I walked through the market of Port of Spain, it struck me as a very animated scene. The gaudy and many- [69] coloured handkerchiefs, on the heads of the coloured and negro women, gave great life to the picture; and the diversity of tongues spoken, bewildered as much as it astonished me. There might be heard, the languages and dialects of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Spaniards, Dutch, Germans, Italians, Chinese, and Turks. The natives of Britain and Spain predominate, and next the French, — a sufficiently motley population, without reckoning the coloured and negro population, free or slave, African, Indian, or creole.

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Note: Pagination numbers shown [nn]; begin at the TOP of each page. eEd.

[70] WEST INDIES.

CHAPTER XV.

Public institutions and buildings — Education and seminaries—Island militia — Churches — Courts of law and public bodies — Shopping — Excellent police regulations — Caranage — The pitch lake.

Before settling on our estate, we devoted a few mornings to an inspection of Port of Spain, its public buildings, institutions, &c. We were accompanied by Sir Ralph Woodford and Chief Justice Warner in our preregrinations. His Excellency called my attention to the beauty of freestone, with which the gaol is built, adding “it comes from the county of Fife.” I felt as I can hardly describe, when I learned that it was even from my father’s quarry at Callilou in Fifeshire [Scotland, Great Britain. *eEd.*]: It seemed like meeting an old friend.

[71] The prisoners in the gaol were all exceedingly clean, and quite as comfortable as prisoners ought to be: and there was, what would render it no temptation to commit crime in order to get free lodging and clothing, — a tread mill; and all prisoners in health worked at it, according to their age and strength. His excellency, Mr. Warner, My. C., and another of our party, tried the effect of it. The exertion seemed to be fearful; they did not prolong their dance above a minute or two, and even with this it produced profuse perspiration. It may well be doubted whether this punishment be judicious in a tropical climate. There was not many prisoners in gaol; and the colony was then prospering, in the best sense of the word. The working population, whether free or otherwise, seemed contented, and wonderfully industrious; if we take into account their constitutional dislike to labour. Still there was even then, a general complaint that free labourers could not be induced to work above a day or two with regularity.

[72] While we remained at Belmont, before settling at Laurel, there was a good deal of visiting and gaiety; and among other visitors at Belmont, I was particularly pleased by a Spanish gentleman, Don Antonio Gomez. I am not quite certain, but I rather think I was told he was a native of the Spanish Main, I mention this gentleman, from the circumstance of our having entered into conversation concerning the Caraccas; and because he was the sole instance of any one, with whom I ever conversed upon the subject of making sugar by free labour, who expressed the least hope upon the subject. He did not speak like an enthusiast; but like an extremely liberal well-informed man, hoping that at some future period this most desirable object might be effected. I knew Mr. Gomez to be a Roman Catholic; and I cannot help mentioning, as a proof of that gentleman’s liberality, that he had a son at Harrow school. Mr. Gomez had travelled through England and Scotland with Sir Ralph Woodford, and he had not forgotten the beauties of Dunkeld, and the [73] clearness of the Scotch rivers and brooks. His hospitable reception at the late Duke of Athol’s, he spoke of with great pleasure; and perhaps if this ever meets the eye of Mr. Gomez, he may feel some satisfaction in knowing, that when I was at Castle-

Mona, Isle of Mann, in 1830, his name was not forgotten by the excellent members of the Athol family then resident there.

The national school of Trinidad is, among other places, well worth a visit. We were unfortunate in the time we visited it; — the children were just about being dismissed, and many of the junior classes had broken up. But we heard several boys, from six to eight, read English with great propriety; and their writing and ciphering were admirable for their age. This establishment promised very fair indeed, and I believe it has gone on well ever since. The pupils amounted to neatly 180: upwards of 100 could write.

There are in Trinidad several seminaries for the education of young gentlemen and ladies; [74] and more than one of a highly respectable character: there are also good private teachers — in particular, a professor of music, M. Wiames, who has great musical genius, and whose style must be said to be brilliant. Such schools and such teachers are a great blessing to those who cannot send their children to Europe for education; and I heard that several young ladies, who had been wholly educated in Trinidad, were considered, in point of both the useful and agreeable, quite equal to those who had been in Europe. While upon this subject, I may mention that I had demonstration of the proficiency of Trinidad taught musicians. In the evening, at Government-house, where we had dined (and where by the by I did not, as in St. Vincent, see the wine bottles disappear through the windows; but where, on the contrary, every thing was in excellent style), I listened to some most masterly vocal performances; particularly the choicest morsels of the Italian masters, by a lady who had been wholly taught in Trinidad.

[75] There was some talk of a militia review, while we were at Belmont; but the provokingly showery weather prevented the show; which was regretted, I dare say, as much by those who would have made the show, as by those who would have seen it. But although I did not witness the militia *en masse*, I saw them frequently *en detail*; and must not therefore omit telling what excellent, well-disciplined troops they are, as I have been told, — and also naming the different corps, just to give the reader some idea of the formidable strength of the militia force in this colony. There are, then: — the royal Trinidad light dragoons — St. Anne's hussars — royal Trinidad artillery — royal Trinidad battalion — loyal Trinidad battalion — sea fencibles — royal invalid corps — military artificers' company — Diego Martin's chasseurs' and infantry — Caranage battalion, first and second division — St. Joseph's light cavalry — loyal Trinidad light infantry battalion — Arima pioneer company — St. Joseph's invalids — first and second battalions Couva and Point-[á]-Pierre [76] — North Na[p]arima cavalry and infantry — Savanna rangers — South Na[p]arima cavalry and infantry. Every colonist is liable to serve in the militia. There are heavy fines for nonattendance; and a third offence renders the individual, if a private, liable to a trial before a regimental court martial; and this court martial has the power to pass sentence of fine and imprisonment, not exceeding 10*l.* currency, and forty-eight hours' confinement. Should a fourth offence occur, any private so offending, is liable upon the conviction of a court martial to be expelled from the colony — his conduct being considered inimical to the regulations established for its security and good order.

The Cabildo, or body of magistrates, are a public body of great importance in Trinidad. Their powers are very extensive; they have the management of the funds of the colony, and of all regulations

relative to internal taxation. No money can be granted, for any purpose whatever, without their consent. The governor for the time being is the president. There are two [77] *alcaldes* — a perpetual *regidor* — seven elective *regidores* — an acting executor — a *syndic procurator* — a protector of slaves, and a secretary and registrar, with a treasurer. There is also the commissary of population, and surveyor generals' department.

There is one Protestant Episcopalian church in Port of Spain, with a rector, and assisting officiating minister. The Roman Catholic church is under the jurisdiction of a vicar apostolic. The Right Reverend the Bishop of Gerren was bishop when I was in Trinidad, and I have not heard that there has been any change. The vice-patron is his excellency the governor for the time being. There is also an ecclesiastical judge and curate of Port of Spain, and a sacristan mayor. There are Catholic curates also, who officiate at four different stations in the island. How is it that the Protestant episcopalian church of England has not given like practical evidence of a desire to carry the knowledge of the pure Gospel to the negro population of Trinidad? Had she done her [78] duty to her colonies, conscientiously, in this respect, the field would not have been occupied by ignorant, illiberal missionaries; and had such men never found a footing in our colonies, and the religion of the Bible been zealously disseminated, civilization among all ranks would have spread with a sure and steady pace. Emancipation would then have crept on silently and surely; for when the mind of man is sufficiently advanced to enjoy freedom, no law can keep him a slave. All classes of the community, under such circumstances, progress alike; so that there is no violent tearing up of any system — no putting in hazard the lives of thousands, and the stability of property — nothing to endanger the possession of the colony by the mother country. But I have not yet finished my enumeration of public men, public buildings, and public institutions; for when I remove to Laurel-Hill, I shall find too much occupation on the estate and with the negroes, to find leisure to return to these matters.

[79] There is a civil, and also a militia medical board at Port of Spain; a vaccine institution; a committee for schools; and a committee for building Catholic churches. There is an establishment, too, at Bando Vest, for the manufacture of cocoa-nut oil, The law department consists of the Tribunal of the Royal Audiencia; the Tribunal of Appeal of Civil Jurisdiction; Tribunal of Appeal of Criminal Jurisdiction, — in all of which the governor *pro tempore*, is judge. There are two other tribunals, — one for the recovery of debts due to the royal treasury, and another as judge of crown lands. There is a court for the trial of civil matters, called a Complaint Court, — the Vice-Admiralty Court, — court for the trial of criminal prosecutions, and a court of criminal inquiry. When I was in Trinidad there were nine licensed advocates practicing at the bar; and I believe they have since increased in number. These are all professional men of good education; and some with talents that would do honour to them in any country. Dr. Llanos and Dr. Garcia, I [80] heard always spoken of as men of sterling ability; — they are natives of Spain. Of the English barristers, Mr. Edward Jackson enjoyed the highest reputation. There were only seven solicitors, besides public notaries, — a marvelously small allowance, certainly. Let me not omit to name, as a most useful body, the committee for the improvement of roads; and really, the recollection of the roads in St. Vincent made one bless this department.

Trinidad is divided into thirty-two divisions, or quarters, as they are there called. Every quarter has a commandant; and the town. of St. Joseph's has one distinct from the quarter of St. Joseph's.

These commandants had originally powers similar to an English justice of peace. In 1825, however, their powers were greatly increased, by an order in council from Great Britain, and the duties were thus rendered very difficult and fatiguing; occupying the time of those discharging them, almost to the exclusion of private business. But the chief hardship consisted in being compelled to [81] accept office, if appointed by the colonial government: nor was there any remuneration, — not even an allowance for stationary.

There were also twelve licensed physicians three or four of whom were from Edinburgh, and others with continental diplomas. No man can practise without a license, which he pays for: an examination for which, if he is well educated, he has nothing to fear; and if not, the population have reason to thank government for preserving them from that most dangerous of all impostors — an ignorant and uneducated medical practitioner. There were eleven licensed surgeons, — subject to the same laws as the physicians. Several of the physicians had also a surgeon's diploma, to enable them to practise in either branch of their profession. There were four licensed apothecaries, and the same number of druggists. No empiric could gain a footing in Trinidad. Bakers, also, are licensed. The price of bread is regulated according to the price of the barrel of American flour. Bread is tolerably good, but dearer than in England.

[82] We were now upon the eve of quitting the hospitable abode of Chief Justice Warner, to settle at Laurel-Hill; and a few days previous I was employed in the necessary toil of shopping. Money is a bulky commodity in that country, where dollars form the easiest medium of exchange; for it is sometimes troublesome to get change for a doubloon. We accordingly had a stout handkerchief full of dollars, tied up and laid in the bottom of the carriage. The shops were substantial and good: and the shopkeepers, whether English, Spanish, or French, invariably civil and obliging. Clothing of every description I found cheaper than in St. Vincent; but very dear compared to England. Cotton goods at least twice the price, — a fact rather inconsistent with the over production and glut of the foreign markets, of which we hear so much.

Right glad I was when we reached Belmont, at nearly six p.m. Although we had rested in the court-house, and actually ate cakes and oranges, and other good things, in so grave a [83] place, yet, to move at all in so hot a day, was fatiguing. Fahrenheit's thermometer was 96° in the shade at noon, and usually ranged from 88° to 98°. In the morning, early, we had it as low as 80°, and in the evening sometimes so low as 79°. Undoubtedly Port of Spain must be considered one of the hottest of towns. How the judges and lawyers could breathe in a crowded court, with so low a roof, too, is astonishing. 'This day, which we chanced to select for shopping, was intolerable, — for there was not a breath of air; and an atmosphere in a tropical climate, and not a breeze to agitate it, is stifling. But, notwithstanding the heat, I was not displeased with the day's occupation. I saw many things I had not seen before, — many streets, some old and some new, and all were alike peculiarly clean. No new houses are allowed to be built, otherwise than on a plan laid down by government; the consequence of which is, a neatness and uniformity not to be surpassed anywhere. Brunswick Square, in which Trinity Church is built, was [84] not then quite finished; but it promised to be a fine square.

Every person in Port of Spain is by law obliged to sweep and keep perfectly clean the whole front of their houses, or lot of ground, and every drain is daily washed and kept clear. Every house,

too, is obliged to be furnished with a barrel of water in case of fire, and there is a heavy penalty for any one who transgresses these regulations. There are two places where the whole sweepings, &c. of the town are ordered to be deposited; so that no nuisance of any description ever meets the eye. No swine, or goats, are allowed to be seen, either in the town or suburbs: any person, whether free or not, is permitted to kill the animal, if found at large within those bounds. The person who kills a hog, is entitled to cut off, instanter, and carry away the head; but half an hour is allowed for the owner to claim the body: meanwhile the slayer, generally a negro, is seen watching at a convenient distance, and no sooner is the half-hour expired, than he pounces [85] on the body of the pig, and drags it away with him, which he is entitled by usage to do. Dogs are under the same law as to the right of killing; besides a fine of 10*l*, currency upon the owner. Every owner of a dog must have it licensed: and it must be secured, during the day, with a collar round its neck, with its owner's name: by neglect of this, a penalty is incurred of 25*l*. currency.

With such excellent laws, not only made but enforced, it is not to be wondered at that strangers are struck by the general aspect of Port of Spain.

We were now in the middle of the rainy season: I heard of no fevers — no sickness, beyond what must always exist in such a population, which, by the census taken ten years ago, was — whites, 3,341; coloured, 13,392; Indians, 893; slave population, 23,227; Chinese, 20; — making in all, a population of 40,873. Since that period, however, the population has doubtless changed much, both in its aggregate and detail. I may here state, that I never recollect [86] of any five years and a half passing in Europe without some epidemic sufficiently general to excite alarm; but in all that time I neither saw nor heard anything of the kind in either St. Vincent or Trinidad. The opening up of new land in the neighbourhood of swamps, must always be prejudicial to the constitution in any country; and doubly so in a tropical climate: but when the land is cleared, and the industry of man and civilization are actively at work, I have every reason to think a tropical climate as healthy as any other. Some prudence is requisite, as to exposure to the sun, and dews at night; but the prudence necessary, in a cold climate, as regards cold, and sudden changes of temperature, are quite as trying and frequent; although we think less of those risks in England, because our early habits make us accustomed to them.

We drove out one day towards the Caranage; where the Spaniards burnt their fleet, when the British landed under General Sir Ralph Abercrombie in 1797. It is a low, swampy spot; [87] and no European could live there. There were huts here and there, occupied by free negroes, who cultivate vegetables for market; and strange to say, I was informed that their health does not suffer in the least from the miasma, although one hut in particular I remarked was erected almost in a marsh. I know not how long before this a white family, who had lost nearly their all by misfortune, and who had no home to shelter them, offered to rent a house which had been built long ago, and was considered untenable from the miasma by which it was surrounded. They were to have it for a mere trifle; and as house-rent is ruinously expensive in the West Indies, they were fain to risk even their health, rather than rent an abode they could not honestly see their way in paying for. There was a gentleman, his wife, and two or three children. His wife was attacked in a few days after they went to the spot, and in a week or two he was the sole survivor: broken-hearted before, and doubly so now, he died a few days afterwards. We passed the house; it was shut [88] up, and all was ruin, and rank dark green vegetation around. I

saw one or two rather poor-looking coloured people straggling about; but they did not appear unhealthy.

I need scarcely tell the reader that the Pitch Lake is one of the most curious objects in Trinidad. The usual plan is to go down the Gulf of Paria, thirty miles, to Point La Braye. This headland is about eighty feet above the level of the sea; and about two miles in length and breadth. My daughter paid a visit to the pitch lake, and made some drawings of it; but as the journal of a learned doctor cannot but be more valuable than the diary of a young lady, I shall make no apology for transcribing the short notice of this phenomenon by Dr. Nugent, of the island of Antigua. — “We landed on the southern side of Point La Braye, at the plantation of M. Vessigny. As the boat drew near the shore, I was struck with the appearance of a rocky bluff, or small promontory of a reddish brown colour, very different from the pitch which I had expected to find on the whole [89] shore. Upon examining this spot, I found it composed of a substance corresponding to the percelain jasper — generally of a red colour where it had been exposed to the weather, but of light slate blue in the interior. It is a very hard stone, with a conchoidal fracture — some degree of lustre, and is perfectly opaque, even at the edges. In some places, from the action of the air, it was of a reddish or yellowish brown; and an earthy appearance. We ascended the hill, which was entirely composed of this rock, up to the plantation; where we procured a negro guide, who conducted us through a wood about three quarters of a mile. We now perceived a strong sulphurous and pitchy smell, like that of burning coal, and soon after had a view of the lake, which at first sight seemed to be an expanse of still water, frequently interrupted by clumps of dwarf trees and islets of rushes and shrubs; but upon a nearer approach we found it to be in reality an extensive plain of mineral pitch, with frequent crevices, and chasms filled with water, The [90] singularity of the scene was altogether so great, that it was some time before I could recover from my surprise so as to investigate it minutely. The surface of the lake is of the colour of ashes, and at this season was not polished or smooth so as to be slippery: the hardness or consistence was such as to bear any weight; and it was not adhesive, though it partially received the impression of the foot; it bore us without any tremulous motion whatever, and several head of cattle were browsing on it in perfect security. In the dry season, however, the surface is much more yielding, and must be in a state approaching to fluidity, as is shewn by pieces of recent wood and other substances being enveloped in it. Even large branches of trees which were a foot above the level, had in some way become enveloped in the bituminous matter. The interstices are very numerous, ramifying and joining in every direction; and in the wet season being filled with water, present the only obstacle to walking over the surface. These cavities are generally deep in proportion to [91] their width; some being only a few inches in depth, others several feet, and many almost unfathomable: the water in them is good, and uncontaminated by the pitch; the people of the neighbourhood derive their supply from this source, and refresh themselves by bathing in it. Fish we caught there, particularly a very good species of mullet. The arrangement of the chasms is very singular: the sides, which of course are formed of the pitch, are invariably shelving from the surface, so as nearly to meet at the bottom, but then they bulge out toward each other, with a considerable degree of convexity. This may be supposed to arise from the tendency in the pitch slowly to coalesce, whenever softened by the intensity of the sun’s rays. These crevices are known occasionally to close up entirely, and we saw many seams from this cause. How these crevices originate it may not be so easy to explain. One of our party suggested that the whole mass of pitch might be supported by the water which made its way through accidental rents, but

in the [92] solid state it is of greater specific gravity than water, for several solid bits thrown into one of the pools immediately sunk.

“The lake (I call it so because I think the common name appropriate enough) contains many islets covered with long grass and shrubs, which are the haunts of birds of the most beautiful plumage, as the pools are of snipe and plover. Alligators are also said to abound here, but it was not our lot to encounter any of these animals.

“It is not easy to state the precise extent of this great collection of pitch, the line between it and the neighbouring soil is not always well defined, and indeed it appears to form the sub-stratum of the surrounding tract of land. We may say, however, that it is bounded on the north and west sides by the sea, on the south by the rocky eminence of porcelain jasper before mentioned, and on the east by the usual argillaceous soil of the country: the main body may perhaps be estimated at three miles in circumference; the depth cannot be ascertained, [93] and no subjacent rock or soil can be discovered. Where the bitumen is slightly covered by soil, there are plantations of cassara (or cassada, as it is frequently spelt), plantains, and pine apples; the last of which grow with luxuriance and attain to great perfection. There are three or four French and one English sugar estates in the immediate neighbourhood. Our opinions of the soil did not however coincide with that of Mr. Anderson, who, in the account he gave some years ago, thought it very fertile. It is worthy of remark, that the main body of the pitch, which may properly be called the lake, is situated higher than the adjoining land, and that you descend by a gentle slope to the sea, where the pitch is much contaminated by the sand of the beach.

“During the dry season, as I have before remarked, this pitch is much softened, so that different bodies have been known slowly to sink into it; and if a quantity be cut out, the cavity left will be shortly filled up; and I have heard it related, that when the Spaniards undertook [94] formerly to prepare the pitch for useful purposes, and had imprudently erected their cauldrons on the very lake, they completely sank in the course of a night, so as to defeat their intention. Numberless proofs are given of its being at times in this softened state; the negro houses of the vicinage, for instance, built by driving posts in the earth, frequently are twisted or sunk on one side. In many places it seems actually to have overflowed like lava, and presents the wrinkled appearance which a sluggish substance would exhibit in motion. This substance is generally thought to be the asphaltum of naturalists; in different spots, however, it presents different appearances. In some parts it is black, with splintering conchoidal fractures of considerable specific gravity, with little or no lustre, resembling particular kinds of coal, and so hard as to require a severe blow of the hammer to detach or break it; in other parts, it is so much softer, as to allow one to cut out a piece in any form with a spade or hatchet; and in the interior is vesicular and oily; this is the [95] character of by far the greater portion of the whole mass. In one place it bubbles up in a perfectly fluid state, so that you may take it up in a cup; and I am informed, that in one of the neighbouring plantations, there is a spot where it is of a bright colour, shining transparent and brittle, like bottle glass in resin. The odour in all these instances is strong, and like that of a combination of pitch and sulphur. No sulphur, however, is any where to be perceived; but from the strong exhalation of that substance, and the affinity which is known to exist between it and the fluid bitumens, much is no doubt contained in a state of combination; a bit of the pitch melts in the

candle like sealing-wax, and burns with a light flame, which is extinguished whenever it is removed, and on cooling, the bitumen hardens again. From this property it is sufficiently evident, that this substance may be applied to many useful purposes, and accordingly it is universally used in the country wherever pitch is required: and the reports of the naval officers who have [96] tried it, are favourable to its more general adoption. It is requisite merely to prepare it | with a proportion of oil, tallow, or common tar, to give it a sufficient degree of fluidity. In this point of view, this lake is of great national importance, and more especially to a great maritime power.

“It is indeed singular that the attention of government should not have been more forcibly directed to a subject of such magnitude; the attempts that have been hitherto made to render it extensively useful, have for the most part been only feeble and injudicious, and have consequently proved abortive. This vast collection of bitumen might in all probability afford an inexhaustible supply of an essential article of naval stores, and being situated on the margin of the sea, could be brought and shipped with little inconvenience or expense. It would however be great in- justice to Sir Alexander Cochrane not to state explicitly that he has at various times, during his long command on the Leeward Island sta- [97] tion, taken considerable pains to insure a proper and fair trial of this mineral production, for the highly important purposes for which it is generally believed to be capable. But whether it has arisen from certain perverse occurrences, or from the prejudices of the mechanical superintendants of the colonial dock-yards, or as some have pretended, from an absolute unfitness of the substance in question, the views of the gallant admiral have I believe been invariably thwarted, and his exertions rendered altogether fruitless.

“I was at Antigua in 1809, when a transport arrived laden with this pitch for the use of the dock-yard at English Harbour; it had evidently been hastily collected, with little care or zeal, from the beach, and was of course much contaminated with sand and other foreign substances. The best way probably would be to have it properly prepared on the spot, and brought to the state in which it may be serviceable, previously to its exportation. I have frequently seen it used for the bottoms of small [98] vessels, for which it is particularly well adapted, as it preserves them from the numerous tribe of worms so abundant in tropical countries. There seems indeed no reason why it should not, when duly prepared and attenuated, be made applicable to all the purposes of the petroleum of Zante, a well known article of commerce in the Adriatic; or that of the district of Burmah in India, where 400,000 hogsheads are said to be collected annually.”

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WEST INDIES. [99]

CHAPTER XVI.

The cigar of Trinidad — Society — Negro effrontery Dishonesty — Slave laws in Trinidad — Partial manumission—Departure for Laurel-Hill estate — approach and arrival — Description of the residence.

Nothing used to annoy us more of an evening at Belmont, than an insect known in Trinidad by the name of the cigar; it is evidently a species of locust. An engraving in the sixth vol. of the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, page 251, very nearly resembles it; but neither in that, nor any other work, have I seen an accurate description of the cigar of Trinidad. It is of a lightish brown colour, from an inch and half to two inches long, with perfectly [100] transparent lace-looking wings, of a delicate texture. Every evening, almost as soon as we sat down to dinner, the insect settled on some tree or shrub close to the house, and began a sort of rattling whistle, or rather a ringing, chirping sound, — first very weak, and then louder; this he repeats three times, the last time the loudest, when suddenly a complete band of choristers begin—at first not very loud, but swelling out, and increasing, to the effectual stoppage of all conversation, and even making it impossible while it lasts, for the servants to hear one word that is said to them. It is excessively ridiculous to see all at a stand during the time this deafening noise continues, which is generally about two or three minutes. There is then a dead silence for perhaps five minutes, and just as the ear begins to recover from the deafening concert, a second act begins; and so it goes on, sometimes until nine p.m.

Nature is altogether more gigantic in Trinidad than in St. Vincent. The cockroaches are of extraordinary size, and during the evening, [101] are extremely troublesome, flying about, dashing against the lamps and shades of the candles with great force, and occasionally slapping one most unceremoniously on the face. The mosquitoes also are larger, stronger, and more tormenting than those of St. Vincent. The sand-flies, though not very numerous near town, did great execution; and altogether, the nervous sensation as regards reptiles and insects is kept in a more lively state of excitement in Trinidad. One evening an enormous crassand [*? probably a large frog. eEd.*] got into the room while we were at dinner, and made no small disturbance, — the gentlemen happened to be dining out, and I believe we cut rather a ludicrous figure, as we all jumped up on the seats of our chairs to avoid the unpleasant intruder.

I had now been about a month in Trinidad; and was already forced to admit, that the society of Port of Spain was greatly superior to that of St. Vincent, and the style of entertainment, &c. very different. One cause of this was, the superiority of the servants; but [102] let it be well understood that I speak of the town only, and not of the country.

Mentioning this difference, one day, to the Chief Justice, he related to me, in corroboration of my opinion, a circumstance that had happened at St. Vincent before he settled in Trinidad. There was

a dinner given by a club, to the ladies in Kingstown. They dined upon the green in tents; the Governor proposed after dinner, that the cold turkeys, fowls and hams, &c., should be taken to the nearest gentleman's house, and that they should adjourn there and give the ladies a dance. The nearest house happened to be Mr. Warner's, who was then a barrister in St. Vincent's. Mrs. W. took the trouble of seeing the arrangements made for supper; and one negro boy was left in the upper gallery, where it was laid out, to take care of it. After the dancing had ended, the party went up to supper, — but alas! supper there was none: every article had disappeared; nothing was left but a few empty platters. Every inquiry was made; but of course that [103] clever personage, Mr. Nobody, or Jumbee, was the thief. Next morning, an old faithful servant of Mr. Warner's, found the bones of the feast scattered here and there all through a neighboring cane-piece; the fragments of the dishes, also, were found; for they had literally tossed the supper dishes and all, over the windows into this cane-piece. This was rather a daring piece of impudence; but the lesser kinds: of impudence, as I have already remarked, are common wherever there are negro servants. Negroes understand better than any set of people I ever saw, a species of annoyance which, though it is impossible not to see that the act has been premeditated, yet can be passed off so well as a mistake, that you have not the power of even giving them a reproof for it. As an example: a lady, who had a large ceremonious party at supper, was rather shocked when she took her seat at the head of her table, to find a sheet upon it instead of a table cloth. She asked the head servant next day, how he could do such a thing, as she had [104] given him a table cloth; he admitted that he had received it, but he said that he saw some sheets lying beside it, and "he no know, he tink sheet as good as table cloth." The fact was, the servant was offended at something, and on all these occasions such modes of retaliation are common.

Trinidad negroes are quite as dishonest as they are in St. Vincent, and I think have as little shame on being convicted. I recollect one day, at Belmont, upon our return from a drive, one of our party missed a handkerchief. The carriage was searched, but it was not to be found: the servants who had attended us were asked if they had seen it, — and the young lady to whom it belonged was about to put up quietly with her loss, when a very faithful female negro servant, who had nursed all the children of the family, walked away, saying, "Pl get it." She returned in a few minutes with it. "Where did you find it?" said I. "Misses, me put me hand in L's. pocket, I knowed very well who'd have it." There was [105] a lad of about fifteen, in a family I knew, who persisted he found gold joes under a tree, and that he believed the tree "growed'em." The old Spanish law, which had never been altered up to the period of my being in Trinidad, though it may perhaps now be changed, was a much milder code as regarded master and slave, than that of any English colony. It is but fair however to state, that though the laws of St. Vincent were not so mild, yet the inclination of the masters of slaves rendered it of little consequence to them, for the receiving of slave evidence under proper limitations was as practically followed up in St. Vincent, as if it had been the legal code of the island. In Trinidad there was even then, a positive law, that every slave upon paying his own price at a fair valuation, might if he chose immediately claim his freedom. Now this was an excellent law, because independently altogether of justice, it constituted an incitement to the slave to work with industry: that is, if he happened to have any wish for freedom, — a wish by the way, [106] never heard of in St. Vincent, unless by the term free, be understood *free time*, with all the allowances of a slave. The greatest boon that could be conferred on a St. Vincent slave, was to let him remain a slave with all his allowances; his grounds, house, clothing, &c. and have his *own time free*. Many good and attached negroes in St.

Vincent had this favour bestowed upon them; and they judged very wisely, for it enabled them to get rapidly rich, and at the same time in sickness or old age, they had a sure provision for themselves.

In Port of Spain, it may be advantageous for a domestic slave to free himself; because no servant in town can make so much money as if he were free, and either rented or possessed, in right of his wife (a slave) a piece of land. The return for the most trifling labour on land in Trinidad is so great, owing to the richness of the soil, that I know of no situation, free or slave, in town, that can bring the same income as the cultivation of vegetables and fruit. But when I was in Trinidad, it was customary [107] (though I am not sure, but rather think it was not law), that a slave might come to his master, and paying a certain part of his purchase money, and agreeing at a future period to pay the remainder, promise so many days in the week to serve his master, or at all events so much time, until he had paid him all. But no sooner was this partial freedom secured, than the master was completely in their power, for there was no getting them to work the time promised to the master, — though they worked for themselves: and thus the master was cheated out of both the remaining work and money promised. I conceive it completely false kindness in a master to pass over such conduct as this. If a master cannot afford to give liberty to his slave (no uncommon case, because if he did he must after be unable to meet his engagements), surely in such circumstances he ought to have had some way through the law, if not of forcing the negro to labour — for I believe that to be impossible — at least of punishing him, for the sake of deterring others. [108] Many such instances of dishonesty came under my notice: nothing is more detrimental to the well-being of society than carelessness as to the performance of a promise; and as the negroes, generally speaking, are strict enough in exacting the performance of one in their favour, such conduct is owing not to ignorance, but to a deliberate want of honesty.

I had now become very anxious to see our future abode. I had anticipated a good deal of difficulty; but on the other hand, I was very enthusiastic as to the much greater opportunity I should have of doing good to the negroes upon my estate in the retirement of the country, than I could hope to effect in town. Not that I considered, even independently of the personal pleasure I had received, that my time had been altogether misspent at Belmont. I had seen a good deal of the general society of the town and its vicinity, and there are many useful lessons in this world, which can only be gained by mixing in it. We set out for Laurel-Hill on a very charming [109] morning, accompanied by the judge. Passing through part of the town, we soon got on the road to St. Josephs; which continues excellent as far as St. Josephs, seven miles from Port of Spain. In some places it resembled an English road, but then there were continual peeps of cane pieces; and the palm, cocoa nut, orange, and lime trees, dissipated the illusion. Mr. C. pointed out to me, soon after leaving town, the place where he had been on guard, when the Spanish governor was brought in to the British in 1797; and he also shewed us where the treasure was found when he was sent to look for it, with Captain Rhind and a brother lieutenant, with a company of the 53d regiment. An Irishman of the name of Malony, a baker in St. Josephs, who bore no good-will to the Spaniards, shewed them the plantations where the treasure was buried, and they brought some wagon-loads of dollars into Port of Spain. The dollars were ultimately returned to the Spanish government. After passing St. Josephs, on a rising ground, to the left, the roads became [110] rather deep from the heavy rains we had had; we passed several estates, and some neat looking houses. The house of El Dorado II. struck me as a very English-looking place, and extremely beautiful. The view at the ford of Tacariqua river, is decidedly English scenery; and such as know the

river Teme, at the village of Bransford, in Worcestershire, will find a strong resemblance. We now passed Paradise estate, and soon after turned up the avenue to Laurel-Hill.

Those who fancy a fine trim English avenue to a West Indian estate, will be in most cases woefully disappointed. There cannot be a better specimen than this, of the great difference there is between telling the truth, and yet not telling the whole truth. [I might with the utmost correctness say we drove along an avenue nearly three quarters of a mile in length, with a lime fence on either side, and lime trees at short intervals; some in blossom, others with green fruit, and some loaded with their yellow treasures. This would read well; but [111] indeed, with all the deductions which the telling of the whole truth will make, it was very beautiful, — but still, it was an avenue nearly in a state of nature: the fences sometimes thick, sometimes thin; at times high, and in other places all broken down. The road was grown over with grass, and the deep ruts of the sugar-cart wheels rendered skilful driving absolutely necessary: many a juicy lime we crushed in driving up; and I could not help thinking what the good folks of Glasgow would have given for such, to aid them in the manufacture of their favourite punch.

At the end of the avenue the ground rose suddenly into a little hill, upon which were two small wooden houses, such as West India planters are well enough contented with; but to the European, they seem at first uncouth abodes. We had a small dining room, and another room to which we ascended by a few steps, as a drawing room; a bed-chamber, and dressing room entering from it, with a separate entrance also. About fifty feet off, [112] there were two bed rooms — a larger and a smaller; and a light closet, which served as a store for medicines, &c. for the negroes. The house rested upon wooden posts, rather more than two feet from the ground; a good preventive against damp, but serving also as a shelter for snakes, and all sorts of reptiles. There was also a small gallery in front of the left-hand house. A cellar at the end of the one house, and a store-room and servants' pantry at the end of the other, with a kitchen near it; but a separate building, as it always is in the West Indies.

These houses were like the greater number in the West Indies, with open rafters, and no glass windows, — only a wooden shutter, pushed up during the day by a long stick, to admit air and light; and shut at night, by withdrawing the stick, and putting in a hook to an eye attached to the ledge of the window-frame. Latterly we had glass put in the windward windows; before that improvement, if it rained heavy, we had only the choice between dark- [113] ness and suffocation, or else, having all the floor of the room deluged. These are a few of the luxuries of a planter's life, which seem not to be known in Britain.

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WEST INDIES. [114]

CHAPTER XVII.

Description of the Laurel-Hill estate — Scenery and views — Trees and birds — Orders in council — Drivers — Instruction of children on the estate and some detail of their progress — Negro curiosity.

I was nevertheless well pleased by the aspect of our future home. Those who have an eye for the beauties of nature, will not miss a fine house, when they have such a prospect to rest the eye upon as I had. There was a noble hogplum tree in front of the house, some fifty feet high; it branched out in great beauty, and there was still some fruit upon it, though now the middle of September. The fruit is a bright yellow, like the English magnum bo- [115] num; irregular, elongated, and fully an inch long. The stone is so large, that the pulp in which it is enclosed is very small, and compared with the stone, is out of all proportion: this remark applies to all the plum tribe of the West Indies. The flavour is very delightful; but no doubt a skilful horticulturist might improve it. Hog-plum trees abound in Trinidad, and wherever this is the case, there are plenty of wild boars, — an excellent species of game.

The view from the house in front was, for a land view, very extensive: there was a good deal of cultivation, and beyond that a dark thick forest, many parts of which I understood had never been trodden by the foot of man. The landscape terminated by the mountain of Tumana [interesting; misspelling? or a *patois* leaning spelling. We know it today as Mount Tamana. *eEd.*] to the south-east: this mountain is generally the refuge of run-a-way negroes.

The pasture for the cattle of the estate was one of the most lovely objects; it commenced at the foot of the hill, and I could hardly believe it possible that the hand of man had had nothing to do with the arrangement of the [116] majestic trees that rose here and there; some single, others grouped in the most perfect style of picturesque beauty — a little clear stream ran across the pasture. This is always an ornament in any country to such a scene, but it is doubly enviable in a tropical climate.

On one side of the pasture were the negro houses. Two rows of wattled mud cottages, white-washed and thatched, with cane tops; very similar in external appearance to the cottages all over Devonshire, only they have no such chimneys as are common in England. There were some fine almond trees, in the road between the negro houses, which afforded them shade during the heat of the day.

The works for the manufactory of the sugar and rum, were at the foot of the hill, to the right of the house: the hill sloped gradually down to the river — an inconsiderable one indeed, but quite sufficient even then for many useful purposes; it was beautifully clear, and some fine plantains and bananas grew on the banks of it. There was a pretty cottage by the water [117] side to be occupied by

the watermen: it looked as white as snow, when contrasted with the deep green line of wood, which rose to a great height, and served as the boundary between the Laurel-Hill and the Paradise estates.

To the north, or back of the house, the ground rose gently; and gradually became more abrupt one height rising above another, covered with brushwood, and numerous fine forest trees. There was a winding path, which even the fear of snakes and wild boars could not deter one from exploring, and which resembled exceedingly some of the lovely wild scenery of Hawthornden, near the village of Roslyn, in Scotland: and in this direction something that might almost be called a mountain, terminated our view. This mountain was covered with impervious wood, excepting an angular portion near the top, which was an open natural savannah, and which bore a crop of tall rank grass, such as is common to tropical countries. This had a singular and fine effect.

In fact, as regarded nature, the place was a [118] perfect paradise of beauty. But the canes were in a sad state; every thing required the hand of industrious man; and the difficulty was, where to begin reform, where there seemed hardly anything fit to remain as it was.

There was something too within doors that promised well for a leisure hour, for Mr. Warner had kindly left a number of books — a great luxury in a country where it is so difficult to procure them; these, added to our own stock, made us very independent.

A great many negroes came up to see us the day of our arrival; others delayed till the ensuing day; but by that time, all had paid their compliments to us, excepting two old women who were too feeble to walk up the hill. To these I subsequently paid many a visit.

I was glad to find my piano forte in safety, after a drive of fourteen miles in a cart; it however required tuning, so that we spent our evening in chatting over the events of the day. In adverting to the Irish baker who discovered where the Spanish treasure was buried, the [119] Judge informed me he had made himself the hero of a most ludicrous scene: “Two gentlemen of St. Josephs had intentionally annoyed and vexed him, and a quarrel ensued, — Malony vowing vengeance against them. He had a hut in the mountains, whither he occasionally retired for recreation. These gentlemen going out upon an excursion to see that part of the island, lost their way, and were in danger of starving. Seeing at last to their great delight, something like a human habitation, they approached it, and asked if they could get any thing to eat or drink, as they were in a state of great exhaustion: imagine their feelings, when they were answered in the affirmative with the greatest civility, by their old enemy Malony. Starvation, however, conquered pride, and they were fain to accept the offer of a dinner. In the meantime Malony, to complete the farce, begged them to come in and rest, and have a little rum and water, while dinner was being cooked. Dinner at length made its appearance: it was an excellent ragout, and not only looked [120] well, but tasted admirably. The travellers, delighted and refreshed, thanked Malony gratefully for his attentions; and added, “whenever you come to town, you will make our house your home.” Malony heard them very quietly, and looking archly at them said, “Indeed, gentlemen, you need not be thanking me so much, may be you don’t know what you’ve had for dinner?” So saying, he turned round the door on its hinges, exhibiting to the grateful travellers the skin of an immense yellow, full-grown monkey. They did not dare to remonstrate: —probably Malony gave the only thing he had

to bestow; though no doubt, Irish humour and a spice of revenge had made him not over-scrupulous about the matter.

Next morning, the first, after our arrival, I arose at break of day to enjoy the cool fresh air of the country. I was more than ever struck by the beauty of the line of wood on the Paradise estate: the trees were exceedingly lofty, and literally festooned from top to bottom by wild vines; thus fastening the branches [121] of the different trees together, and presenting the most gay and brilliant assemblage of blossoms, varying from every shade of pink and purple to the purest white. These blossoms are larger, but very similar in size and form, to the convolvulus-major of Great Britain, — some of these vines run up as high as fifty feet.

On one side of the house, and close to it, was a very large Pois Doux tree: it has a papilionaceous purple blossom, rather small, and bears not very large pods, with small brownish-black peas, enclosed in a sort of white cotton-looking pulp, which is very sweet. Children are fond of sucking it, and it is perfectly harmless; but to birds it is a great attraction, — they open the shell and pick out the pulp, but evidently do not eat the seeds, as they are found lying under the tree. Every morning this tree was literally like an aviary, so full was it of birds of all shapes, hues, and sizes. Many were exceedingly beautiful in their plumage; but the parrots, gay as they look, make a horrible chattering, and are far from being agreeable [122] companions. One of the prettiest birds is the Louis D'or, — thus called because it is of so peculiarly a bright golden colour. There were many beautiful birds of different shades of purple and blue; but one I observed more particularly, of a bright light blue, which looked very gay, perched on the same bough with a Lows D'or.

Few of these lovely creatures had any note: the *Qu'est que dit* [The French onomatopoeic phrase for the sound made by the bird. Translates as: *What is it saying?* We today know the bird as the Great or King Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) *eEd.*], indeed, repeats something very like those words distinctly enough; and I never could learn any other name for this bird. But after all, the handsomest shape and the gayest plumage are poor compensations for the melodious song of birds; and how one's heart would have bounded, could one have heard the note of a blackbird, or a sweet Scotch mayis!

There was one thing we could not admire; and that was the sand-flies, which had done such havoc on the younger members of the family, that it was quite distressing to see them. We all suffered severely; but nothing compared with the children, who, in a few days, [123] had their faces so swollen, that a stranger would have supposed they were labouring under confluent smallpox; and at last their ancles and feet were in such a state that they could not walk. This attack did not subside for some weeks; and though for the future nothing so severe occurred as this first seasoning, still the sand-fly is at all times a most tormenting annoyance, and is so small that no mosquito-curtain protects you.

The mosquitoes were abundant and active, but you may, by great care at night, exclude the greater number of them, though not always all; and one persevering fellow will keep singing, and eluding all your efforts at destroying him, until, in despair you yield to fatigue and sleep; when he instantly begins to feast upon you, and you rise next morning worn out with these pests of a tropical climate.

The order in council for the improvement of the slaves of Trinidad had been some time in force. The driver is neither more nor less than an upper servant, promoted to the situation of [124] superintendant over the negroes who are employed in field labour. He is selected from the others for his superior intelligence, and his general knowledge of the culture of the cane; his own character, too, is necessarily taken into the account, as the common field negro looks up to the driver as an example in every point of view; and he has always numbers to watch him, and report any false step he may make. They reply to him with the addition of Sir, which custom also obtains from the field negro to head tradesmen and boiler-men; and their wives and daughters have precedence next to the driver's wife and family.

The driver in Trinidad merely superintends and points out where they are wrong, and endeavours to keep up some order and regularity, "The driver" is a name obnoxious to British ears, and I think it would have been good policy had the colonists never employed such a term. The black overseer would have been a better designation; because Britons naturally associate *a driver*, with the idea of a man [125] driving cattle to a fair with a whip. Now, in point of fact, the driver is no driver; for he precedes, and does not follow the negroes to their work, — which if he drove them, he must do. In Trinidad he carries neither stick, whip, nor other such emblem of his office: he stands behind them at work, precisely the same way as a foreman does in England, and a grieve in Scotland. If they are incorrigible, he can report them to the white overseer, — and he again to the master, — or he may, and often does, report direct to the master: this plan was always followed at Laurel Hill. The driver has no power to punish in any way, whether by corporal punishment or confinement: his power is restricted to what I have already mentioned, and is exactly that of a farmer in England, or of a grieve in Scotland. A white, or free overseer, might legally order corporal punishment; but this could not take place without another free person being present, nor could any punishment exceed twenty-five stripes.

If any slave considered himself aggrieved, [126] either as regarded punishment or any thing else, he had a right to apply to the commandant of the quarter, or to the protector of slaves, whichever he might prefer. Every negro had one day in the week to work his provision-grounds. There was a market every Sunday, closed however at ten a.m., and a market every Thursday, — in order, as far as possible, to check by degrees the fondness for Sunday markets, and to lead finally to their abolition, — a blessed change, which has been effected in Trinidad, and also in St. Vincent. I never saw any of the white population who did not deplore the Sunday market: they were suffering from the error, nay the sin, of their ancestors, who had ever permitted such an arrangement, — and which, when once established, although only by custom, is not so easily stopped as some people imagine.

The colonists were placed in more difficulty on this subject than people at home can well understand, for let it be recollected that in Port of Spain, meat killed however late on Saturday, [127] would be totally unfit for use on Sunday; and even in England, during the mackarel season, where in many places it is a harvest for the poor, it is permitted to be sold before church hours, — and however some people may disapprove of this, I cannot help thinking that where there is so much suffering from the high price of provisions, and when Providence at one particular season sends a supply, it is our duty to let the poor have the full benefit of it, and not to allow wholesome food to be wasted because it is Sunday. Such is the heat in Port of Spain, at some seasons, that fish caught in the morning are

unfit for use by the dinner hour, which is necessarily about seven. Business goes on steadily until four, and often five, p. m., and by the time that a drive or ride for the preservation of health is over, it is nearly seven. There is a weekly market at St. Josephs, and at the village of Arima, which is six miles to the eastward of Laurel Hill. There are also down the coast, the small towns of San Fernando de Naparima and St. Juan de Aricagua, [128] and several other small villages throughout the island, where the negroes dispose of their surplus produce. I believe there was a little ebullition of feeling on the part of the slave population, when the Sunday market was abolished, but government was quite right to persist in it; it was an intolerable nuisance to every one who had a spark of Christian feeling. I often talked to the negroes on this subject; and their sole ground of real objection was, that they did not like dressing in all their “grandee buckra clothes” (as they call their holiday dress) twice a week — that is, Sunday and week-day also, — and all negroes like to go smart to market. There are negroes who go to market not very tidy in their appearance; but then these are generally not the best characters. I uniformly remarked, that good negroes never liked to go to market without being a little dandyish in their costume.

We thought it prudent not to interfere the first Sunday we were in the country; but to wait until we saw what were the habits of the [129] people. We were fourteen miles from any Protestant church, — a distance that rendered our going quite out of the question, and especially in that climate. Mr. C. told the people he would read the morning service at eleven, and would be happy to see them attend, as there was room enough for them in the gallery of the house. They had, more than once, attended very decorously to the Judge reading the morning service, when he had passed a Sunday on the estate, previous to our arrival. But rapid changes were then accomplishing in the character of the negro. The alterations enforced by the orders in council, had been too sudden for the mind of almost the best and most intelligent negro. They were possessed with the idea, that the master was no longer at liberty even to advise them, although that advice was given in the kindest and most disinterested manner. We read the service at the hour appointed, and not one attended. With the children of the estate, we viewed the matter in a different light, and ordered them to come up [130] in the evening about seven. I think we mustered fifteen, from the age of about five to sixteen years. Some of these were my old pupils. I found all the Laurel-Hill children at once readily answered all the ordinary questions which were put to them: they had more or less been in the Roman Catholic chapel at Arima. What shall we say of the apathy of the Protestant church of England, when we find the negroes who attend the Roman Catholic chapel, always so much better informed than those left by the Episcopalian church to glean an uncertain instruction? Some of these children crossed themselves when they answered who the Saviour was; and also when I put the question. But I did not confuse their ideas by putting a stop to what they had been taught to consider right, and what, in their present state of knowledge, was immaterial. Of a Holy Spirit it might be said they had no idea, — their only notion of a spirit was confined to the word spirit — “a spirit, or Jumbee, the Devil;” so that we had not only to teach, but to unteach — [131] a still more difficult task. The Catholic children could all say the Lord’s Prayer, and the Belief, as they called it.

As I know of no catechism, quite so well adapted as it ought to be, for the first instruction of negroes, I took my own plan; which was to relate the simple story of the creation of the world; of man — of his state when innocent, and how he fell from it, and was driven by God out of the garden of

Eden. I related this twice; simply and slowly, in their *patois*; and as I went on, I paused and asked them if they “savey” what I said, (comprehended me); and if not, to stop me and ask questions; which I assured them I liked very much. I spoke kindly and cheerfully to them. One fine lad about fourteen, Laurel-Hill J—k, said, “Misses if I’d been Eve, I’d kill a snake dead.” They were all alive to what I told them, and interested in it; and to give them some incitement, I promised them I would shew them some pictures of what I had told them, if they answered well tomorrow evening: and that I [132] expected them up every night. The following evening my little pupils returned, full of anxiety to say well; and to see the pictures. They answered very intelligently; and from their answers, they had evidently given their understanding to the work. One of the St. Vincent boys, who had declined learning to read; and whom, it was impossible to instruct in any way, so sulky was he and so averse to apply; all at once changed, and became the most steady, attentive pupil I had, excepting Laurel-Hill J—k. There was not a great difference in their ages, and they were then both house boys, and consequently always together. It was very interesting to see these two lads watching with eager countenances, when a question was asked, to see whether his companion could answer or not, that he might have the pleasure of doing so. I arranged them in a class; and they took up the plan without any difficulty: — but I told them no unfairness would be permitted — no speaking before their turn — no whispering to a favourite — no signs whatever; [133] and every one so offending, should be instantly placed at the bottom of the class. I thought such regulations might be useful in teaching them a little self control; and I was strict to the very letter of the law. I told them I recollected my promise of shewing them the pictures, and I took this favourable moment of teaching them what a promise meant. They had, done what I required, in answering correctly; and of course I was bound to keep my promise to them. I shewed them, in Mrs. Trimmer’s little Scripture prints, those applicable to the story of the preceding evening, and they were exceedingly pleased. I then proceeded to explain the state of man after his fall; and the remedy for his helplessness provided by God; and I promised the little classes, that if they answered well the following evening, I would tell them a story. The next evening came, the answers were quick and intelligent, and after some farther instruction, they all with one consent said, “now misses, the tory.” So squatting themselves down in a half circle, with open [134] eyes and mouths, I read to them, with those omissions and alterations which I knew to be necessary for their comprehending it, Miss Edgeworth’s story of the “honest boy and the thief.” If that excellent authoress could have peeped across the Atlantic, at the little animated circle of happy faces of those negro children; she would have had her reward. To proceed with these details would of course be tedious: but I may state generally, that the children became tolerably well informed upon the contents of the Bible; the stories gleaned from which, read and explained, greatly interested them; and by means of which many of the Scripture truths may be advantageously explained and illustrated. I cannot but entertain a hope that these agreeable labours have left behind them some results.

After some time I offered, as a favour, to teach any to read who chose it; but I determined never to press this: because I am satisfied, however desirable the knowledge of reading may be, that a great deal of good may [135] be done without reading. Three or four accepted the offer — but this appeared dry work to them; and I must honestly confess, that hardly any progress was made. As I had often taught little children, and was rather fond of the employment, I cannot but believe that my want of success was owing to the natural indisposition of the negro to apply, except when there is a very lively excitement of the mind. I endeavoured to produce this excitement, by telling them what a blessing it

would be to them to read the book of God for themselves, and all the beautiful stories I had told them, and to find them all true; but even this had little or no effect, for the answer used always to be, “Misses, you no peak lie, me savey dat well.” “Misses always keep promise to a we.”

I then shifted my tactics, and pointed out to them, that reading would make them clever; and that they would rise in the world, and be as they term it, “a head man.” But I made so little progress in my attempt, that it is not worth reporting. Some few indeed could spell [136] out their words, but those who read with great difficulty are not much the wiser; the attention is absorbed on the letters, not in attending to the sense. Mental arithmetic they made progress in; and used to correct each other, and take places with great spirit.

They were often in the habit of asking questions about “home,” as they all call Great Britain, and were exceedingly disappointed when I told them I had never seen massa King George; and were not satisfied until they found that their own massa had seen him frequently. Laurel-Hill J—k, was quite pleased when he heard that massa King George was a very tall handsome massa. “Massa, do he tand so,” said he, drawing himself up and rising on tip toe — looking as he imagined, “every inch a king.” The quickness of this boy’s memory was astonishing. His father’s name happened to be Hector; and sometimes in jest, Dr. C, used, when J—k came into the room, to repeat the lines upon Hector and Andromache. The lad one day looking very full of meaning, said, [137] “me can say so too, massa,” and he began to spout the lines in the exact manner the doctor had done. It is true he could not finish the quotation, but such anecdotes prove there is no want of quickness in a negro. Nevertheless there is a restlessness, an impatience of steady application, and a dislike to every species of knowledge, where the outset is dry, that I never found in any European in any rank of life, or under any circumstances.

Some singular notions I found among the negroes, which it was next to impossible to eradicate; but they were generally harmless. Among others, I found the Trinidad negroes. young and old, with few exceptions, thought that when God made the world, he shook the earth from off his ha[nd]s into the water, and that made the West Indies.

Note: Pagination numbers shown [nn]; begin at the TOP of each page. eEd.

WEST INDIES. [138]

CHAPTER XVIII.

The vine gang on an estate — Little runaways — Deception — Punishment of negro girls by their mother — Infant habits — Court martial so called — Negro jealousy.

It is the custom for all children in Trinidad, from four years of age upwards, to enter what is called the “vine gang;” that is, they pick here and there, among the fences and cane pieces, wild vines for the sheep, under the inspection of some trusty elderly female negro. They continue under this regulation until eight or nine; when, at the season for weeding the young canes, they get a hoe put into their hands, proportioned to their size. This work is performed by them infinitely better than by grown people. The children work at first only three hours a-day with the hoe, and that not [139] without intermission; the rest of the day they pick wild vines with their old comrades. As they get older and stronger, they work more and more with the hoe; and when at sixteen, they are considered fit for the common field duty.

This, however, is uniformly regulated by the health and strength of the individual; and it must be borne in mind, that sixteen in the West Indies is quite equal to eighteen in Britain.

Boys have many intermediate employments; such as driving mules; and if the estate’s mill be a cattle one, he probably drives the mule in the mill. I never saw any of the young people, at six o’clock in the evening, when their work was done, who seemed tired, or disposed to sit down; on the contrary, they were always dancing about, and full of life and fun.

The old woman who, on the Laurel- Hill estate, took care of the vine gang, was a very respectable native African, of great intelligence. I made a point of hearing, in their presence, [140] from her, how they had behaved during the day. I allowed them to disprove, *if they could*, the statements she made; but Mammy J. was a very steady person; and knowing well that I would have no favourites, she was generally found to give a faithful account.

There was one little boy, of nearly seven years of age: he was the sole instance among all my pupils of such apparently dogged sulkiness, that he would not speak at all. His first pretence was, that he did not know one word of English; but I obviated this excuse, by making his sister translate, what was said in English, into his French patois: but speak he would not; his improvement seemed hopeless. Day after day, Mammy J. complained that “D. was one very bad pic-a-ninny — he no gather as many vines in one day as oder do in an hour.”

One afternoon, walking down a cane piece with my children and their governess, we met J. and the vine gang; she addressed me, “Misses, you no see D., he wicked too much; he run away dis morning, and me no see ’em da whole [141] day; me tell he mammy and he daddy, they no see ’em;

abowshee (overseer), and ebery one, and nobody see 'em, Misses, what me do?" Of course she had done already all that was possible; and I had no fear but that D. would make his appearance at night. We continued our walk a little way, when observing something like a human being moving among the tall canes, I put out my hand and caught him. I had not time to speak a word, when the little fellow, in as good English as any negro ever speaks, said, "Misses, misses, oh! please no tell Mammy J., for she tell me daddy and he go cob me." What made you run away all day? — your father and mother, and every one are hunting for you. Suppose a good big snake had come, what would you have done? "Misses, me no feared for da snake; but misses, misses, no let Mammy J. tell me daddy." I said, I shall give you up to Mammy J., and she will take you to your father or mother — I have nothing to do with punishing you, she must take care of you until six o'clock, and then take [142] you home. This she did, and I believe his father administered a much more severe whipping than he would have got, had he been under the *old regime*, and punished by the order of his master. Now this child had for months carried on the farce of being unable to speak one word of English; and had in fact completely succeeded in imposing upon me. But next lesson, when he came, I said, "Well D., I now know you can speak English when it serves your own purpose; and if you do not answer as the others do, I tell you very fairly that I will not only give you no reward, but I will tell your daddy." These last words had a most powerful effect; from that moment D. answered in English; but to the close he was a sulky untoward scholar. The propensity to run off and hide, is both dangerous to old and young negroes, and extremely troublesome to the master.

Another little fellow, just turned seven, but of a very different disposition from D., being uncommonly smart, active, and intelligent — in [143] fact a little man in miniature, had several times run away. He had that rare blessing among negroes — a most affectionate father and mother. The mother, when a little girl, had had this propensity; which, in fact, was a kind of disease. In every other respect she had been, according to the common meaning of the phrase, "a good negro." This little boy had been born when the mother had made one of her excursions in the woods in St. Vincent; she and the child were found together — both did well, and she never once again ran away. But at five years old, S. had began the same tricks, and his good father had caught him, and whipt him more than once. Whether the report of wild hogs, big snakes, &c. had operated for some time as a preventive, I know not; but S., though taking flight occasionally during the day, always contrived to fall in with Mammy J. before six o'clock; and, moreover, he always brought such a quantity of vines with him, that as J. said, "what me do with the pic-a-ninny; he only no walk wid us — he bring plenty a vine." [144] But one evening about seven o'clock, when all was quiet, his father and mother presented themselves at the door, saying that S. was absent without leave; and "if he sleep in a bush, massa, he'll may be, be killed wid da snake."

I mention this, that I may give an example of the extraordinary effrontery of little negro boys in telling lies. This little fellow, after having been absent a week, was found in Port of Spain, and brought to Laurel-Hill. "Nell," said his master, "please tell me why you ran off?" I shall never forget the sturdy determined look of the little fellow, as he eyed his master, saying, "Massa, me no run away— me tell you true tory me, Massa : me go pic a vine in the plantain walk with Mamma J. and the pic-a-ninny, and massa dere come a pirit; now he just lift me up massa high so — jump wid me in he arm, from one plantain tree to anoder, massa — pirit den take me all a way to Port a Spain and so

he continued to detail his adventures until he was caught; making the spirit answerable, however, for all that had taken place. The [145] little run-a-way was delivered to his father, and punished by him. The parents of those who took an interest in their children, complained very much of the order in council, which prevented their girls being punished by the order of the master. Strange as it may seem, they did not like to trust themselves to punish their child; and that, too, from the fear that they might punish too severely. Let one, out of many examples suffice. S., a girl of about fourteen, was indisputably guilty of most disgraceful and immoral conduct. Her mother was, in this one respect, particularly correct, and had a high sense of her honour; at least from the time I knew her. She was a creole of St. Vincent, — past the meridian of life, — a perfect Amazon in strength and figure, — possessing a sound understanding, and in many respects a superior person. But she was possessed also with one of the worst of tempers. She could steal too; but she was so clever and so cunning, that it was next to impracticable to prove it. Nor had she any objection to her [146] children stealing, if they did it adroitly; the sin, in her eyes, was in being so silly as to let it be discovered. F. herself came to us, and told me other daughter's conduct; and begged that her massa would punish her. I said, "F., he can have her put in the stocks." "But, misses," said she, "what signify tock to nigger, — S. no mind tock dat;" and she bit her nail, and spit it out. Her master was called, and he said, "That is all I can do; and to talk to her, and try to convince her how improperly she has behaved." F. looked very grave; and said, "Well, massa, better for S. had you punish her; for may be I punish her, and no top as you would." Her master told her she must not attempt such conduct; for if she acted to S. as he had known her act before towards her elder daughter, she would be subject to be sent to the commandant of the quarter, and punished for cruelty to her child.

F. promised she would be quiet; but seeing her irritation, and knowing her temper, I kept the girl out of the mother's way until it was [147] bedtime; and as R had promised to punish her, without going to extremes, S. returned to her mother's to bed. Late at night, however, when all was quiet, did this woman rise, and beat her daughter most cruelly. I do not mean to say that the girl did not deserve punishment, and that it might not perhaps be the best way of deterring her from such conduct in future; I only mean to assert, and I could enforce the truth of the assertion by a multitude of other examples, that in the greater number of cases young female negroes are now exposed to ten times greater severity of corporal punishment than they were when the master was the judge. This girl was so cruelly beaten, that next day she was unable to move. I dared not have shewn her any attention, or taken her from her mother's house, whom she assisted in washing and bleaching. Her elder sister, a sensible girl, who also was employed in washing, said to me, "Misses no say noting to me mammy; if you say anything to me mammy, she go lick her again."

[148] F., the girl's mother, was not an ignorant woman; she had received much instruction from her youth upwards—had attended the Methodist chapel regularly for years in St. Vincent; and could talk very religiously. But it was nothing beyond talk: although a creole negro, she was in some respects as much a savage as if she had been imported from Africa the day before.

I have seldom met so mild a disposition, in a negro, as in Laurel-Hill J. He was exceedingly affectionate and obliging; he had, however, his failings he was rather artful, and withal a great coward; and like most such, a great braggadocia. One evening standing at the door talking, and dilating upon

his great love for massa; he at last went so far as to say, that there was nothing his massa could ask him to do, but he would do it at once — he had so great love for him. So massa, just to try him, said, “Well J., I have a letter to go to Belmont — now set off like a good boy, and take it immediately.” “Yes, massa, yes me [149] know; me rise very early, and go a Belmont.” “That is not what I mean; I intend you to go now.” “To it now, massa? not just now; by and by, massa, me run when da sun come.” “The sun come! — why J. the sun is just gone down.” “Yes, massa, and he soon come up again; and den, massa, me run all a way to Belmont,” “But J., ’t is this very time, now, I wish you to go,” “Well then,” said J., “E. (meaning his fellow servant in the house) E. will take me on he back; he trong, massa; he run, and den we go a Belmont wid da paper.” These little details are truly very insignificant; but it is the insignificant that is often too much neglected, in speaking of the character and condition of a population.

These boys, being domestics, were often in the habit of asking questions about home. On the occasion of the arrival of a barrel of Scotch oatmeal, I was surprised at the curiosity they shewed to know what it was. I detailed to them, as I best could, the whole process from the sowing of a field of oats, to the return from [150] the mill. The next question was, “do white massa do all dat vorck?” “Not massas, but white men, plough as I have told you.” I then shewed them a print of a man ploughing, sowing, and harrowing, in some of my children’s books. “Oh!” said E., “D. and G. (naming two servants of Mr. Whitfield’s, in St. Vincent, who had been in England), tell me white folk vorck hard too much in da cold too; and if dey no vorck, dey tarve: how would you like dat J.?”

Nothing astonished the young negroes more than looking through a telescope; or seeing the quicksilver rise in the thermometer. Notwithstanding all my asseverations to the contrary; “Jumbee,” they said, “must be in the telescope.” I shewed them how I could, by pushing it out or in, prevent or enable them to see; and that I had the whole of it at command, not “Jumbee.” Then how anything could move up and down, as quicksilver did, and that thing not be really alive, passed their belief. I do not think it advantageous to shew [151] those things unasked to negroes; for it seems to me to confound and bewilder them. But they had often seen me look down the avenue, and tell what was going on, when they could not do so with the naked eye; and they had seen my children raise the quicksilver by holding the bulb of the thermometer in their hand: this it was which attracted their attention, and led them to ask questions.

I found nothing more difficult than to get the little girls to sew, — they disliked it extremely. They learnt well enough; but they did not like sitting. One young coloured girl, of about fifteen, who could work very neatly, I hired to assist in needle work. I gave her some stockings to mend. In the evening she brought them all done, and nicely folded up; but when they were taken out to be used, it was found that she had cut off all that part of the toes which required mending; and had only mended the heels; which being very well done, proved she knew how to go about the work. When I told her of it, she said “some one else [152] had done bad to him, no she.” So there was no remedy, but to purchase new ones. Servants know you have no remedy against such conduct, and therefore do such things daily.

The youngest negro, almost as soon as it can stand, begins to dance and sing in its own way. As they get older, they improve in both of these native accomplishments: some of them have very quick

ears for music. Very often, when I had finished their lessons for the evening, I sat down to play on the pianoforte. On such occasions they remained about the house, listening to the music; and if it happened to be of a kind that admitted of dancing, they were sure to avail themselves of it. They soon had a large addition of tunes added to their stock of negro airs; and I have heard sundry airs from Hadyn and Mozart, chanted by the boys when cleaning their knives, with astonishing accuracy. One of the most difficult propensities to check among negro children, is the habit of fighting with each other: and in checking this, I succeeded better than in many [153] other of my attempts. They got into the habit; whenever they disagreed among themselves, of coming up to Misses, often accompanied by Mammy J., and then the whole evidence was heard. I made a point of first hearing all the complainant had to say, and his witnesses, one after another; and then the defendant, and his witnesses. I seldom failed in being able to pronounce a verdict to please all parties; because as they said, "Come up to misses; it all one to she, who right who wrong; she no love one pick-a-ninny more den anoder."

As for stealing, I found it impossible, in any way, altogether to break the young people of this negro habit; they seldom let slip a good opportunity of helping themselves. — When I was positively certain who was the thief, I told them so; and upon all such occasions there was this improvement, if improvement it could be called, that the article stolen was generally returned.

The clothing for the house-boys is expensive beyond belief; and there is no keeping them [154] clean or decent do what yon may. A gentleman recently arrived from England, came to pay us a morning visit at Laurel-Hill. I rang the bell for one of the boys to bring glasses and some cool water: after waiting a long while, and repeatedly ringing, a little fellow of about ten years of age made his appearance. Without turning round to see which of the boys it was, I ordered the water and tumblers; when A. returned and placed them on the table, having on no clothing but his shirt. "I suppose you 've been in your grounds, A.," said a lady present; who felt I believe like myself, a little ashamed at a stranger having such a first introduction to a planter's house, "No, misses, but me go a house for me trowsers; and mamma say dey all, ebery one, in da riber." Twelve pairs of good stout trowsers had this little lad, and yet not one pair left to wear.

I have already said, that I succeeded tolerably well in restraining the quarrelling and cruel behaviour of the negro children towards each other; because when they did quarrel, it became at last [155] an amusement to come to me and hold "court martial" — a term they borrowed from the elder negroes. But I could not stop their wanton cruelty to the brute creation — the delight they evidently took in torturing helpless animals. We had been exceedingly plagued by rats all over the house, so that we had even to beat them out of bed; and in the store-room they made sad havock. At last E. and J. proposed setting a trap: this was done; and it is utterly impossible to conceive the eagerness with which these boys waited my opening the lock of the store-room next morning. There was an immense rat caught, half strangled. "J." I said, "if you are not afraid of lifting the trap, take it away, and destroy the poor creature - put it out of pain as fast as you can." "Yes, misses, me no fear 'em." About half an hour after, my children came crying to tell me that E. was very naughty; for that he and J. had got the rat behind the kitchen in the trap, and they were torturing it and cutting it with knives; and they could not bear to see such a [156] thing. I instantly went out, and found them at the work, exactly as described. I said, "Boys, how can you be so cruel?" "Cruel, misses, little misses fool too much; go cry for a tief

and a ratta. — Misses, me let 'em know what it is to tief from my massa.” This, I need scarcely say, was all art and hypocrisy, to cover their cruelty. All other animals which fell into their hands, shared the same fate as the rat. Snakes they always try to dispatch quickly, because they know their danger from them.

To return to the subject of those arbitrations, called by the negroes court martial, of which I have just spoken. These were not confined to the children, but were very generally resorted to by negroes of all ages, for the settlement of their disputes. Among the most fertile of these disputes was jealousy; and, just to convey some idea of the multifarious duties which planters may be called upon to discharge, I will give an outline of two cases which were made the subject of these references. Soon after our [157] coming to Laurel-Hill, S., a Laurel-Hill field negress, and the mother of a large family, came up to have, as she termed it, a court-martial from massa. S. complained that A., a young St. Vincent negro, was a great coquette, and that she was trying to deprive her of her husband, B. W., a free American negro, and a rich man, with fine grounds on Laurel-Hill: he kept a house, and was a person of some consequence. A. was summoned, and B. W. also, with the witnesses on all sides; and it was fully proven that B. W. had been giving A. plantains and sundry other presents. Mr. C. had no authority over him; but gave him his best advice. A. also was cautioned, not to receive presents from B. W.; nor from any man who had a wife; and was perfectly satisfied and pleased, when she found that A.'s mother had whipped her for her imprudence.

C., the wife of K., was a remarkably plain negress, — some ten or twelve years older than her husband. She was economical, almost to parsimony; a rare thing among negroes. R. was the handsomest negro I ever saw, a fine face [158] and noble commanding figure: his address was really graceful; and he was withal known to be a great Philander, if not a gay deceiver. He liked C's good management — her well-worked grounds, and the care she took to keep him a “*dandy*.” She was proud of R., but had no confidence in him, — probably she was not far wrong in this; but he knew her temper, and was as cunning as a fox. He was one of the carters; and at the season when R. carted in the sugar to town, C. would often walk as far as the Jacaragua River to meet him; and to ascertain that, in his politeness, he had not taken up some young negress in his cart, to help her home to some estate in the neighbourhood. The report was, that R. often did so: certain is it that he staid often three and four hours longer than necessary; and that his mules came in quite worn out. Time after time did C. go and meet him; but nothing did she see, but R. and his mules. At length one night, he being unusually late, C. lost all patience; and, going to meet him, she encountered him at the end of the avenue, and asked [159] where he had been? — “Nowhere” was of course the answer. When he got to the works, he took off his hat to get out a note he had received from the Judge; when C. saw inside, a woman's handkerchief. This was too much for C. to bear; she poured out a torrent of invective against R., who said he wasn't going to fight a woman, but they'd go up to massa in the morning to have a court-martial, — and up they came. C. began with, “Massa, see dat;” and she spread out a common Madras handkerchief, such as the female negroes wear on their heads, — “see dat, massa, — R. bring dat home in he hat last night, — massa, make him say who handkerchief it be.” “R., whose handkerchief is that?” said his master. “Massa, it's mine; me bought it a Port of Spain.” “Bought, indeed!” said C., with a most contemptuous air; “he hem! no buy hem handkerchief, massa; me misses, dey know dey not sell hem

handkerchief;" — and so on. These, however, are specimens of the numerous class of cases which we were constantly obliged to give ear to, and judgment in.

Note: Pagination numbers shown [nn]; begin at the TOP of each page. eEd.

WEST INDIES. [160]

CHAPTER XIX.

Settlement of the negroes at Laurel- Hill — Their new provision- grounds and their returns — Sums paid to negroes on the estate for provisions for the family — Estate dandies — Absurd orders in council — An anecdote — Another anecdote — Massa Buxton and Massa King George — Ignorance — Negro character.



Cutting cane

Provided by Neil Yip Choy when he posted *Domestic Manners - Chapter XIX*

A valuable subject representation by Richard A Muller (1849-1915); ~1910.

An American printmaker, engraver, b. Germany, worked in the USA. Not part of the original text.

Negroes, from the earliest age, have their provision-grounds; and if too young to work them, the master causes the ground to be worked by a negro, during the master's hours. The produce of course goes to the family who takes care of the child; who, as soon as he can work a little, goes up to his grounds on the negroes' day, and learns the art of cultivating the soil. At seven years of age, little boys and girls have often a great deal to sell of their own, and buy fine clothes, cakes, &c. with the produce. All the little boys and girls about [161] the house, have one day for themselves every week — not a Sunday — to work their grounds. On such days they rise earlier, and work longer, than they are ever in the habit of doing for their master. They do often work their grounds on Sunday also; but there is no occasion for this: were they never to lift a hoe on Sunday, they would still have an abundance of food for themselves, their pigs and their poultry, and money for fine clothes also.

I do not believe, that either English or colonial law will prevent negroes from working on Sunday. "The love of money is the root of evil," applies with great force to the negro character; and I do not think, that if negroes had all the six days of the week to work their own ground, they would cease from labour on the seventh. I do not of course speak of isolated cases — but of the majority; nor is there wanting practical proof of this truth. Who labours more on the Sunday than the free negro? and even those born free are notorious for this.

[162] Little negroes soon learn to rear chickens; and by twelve years old, they make many a dollar by the sale of their eggs and chickens. After this age, boys in particular take to raising pigs; and an excellent speculation it is. Then many of them are clever at catching fresh-water fish; and many a half dollar have I paid at Laurel-Hill, for a dish of fresh-water fish. These fish were caught in the stream that ran at the foot of Laurel-Hill, by a boy; and at his noon time, from twelve to two.

Those who know little practically, of the self denial, and the privations of the working classes and labourers of England and Scotland, are little able to judge correctly of the comparative condition of labourers in Britain and in the West Indies. But living, as I had done in my early years, very much in the country — in the counties of Mid Lothian and Fife; and latterly seeing a good deal of the habits and mode of life of those classes in some of the finest and richest counties of England; I cannot help saying that, whether in infancy, in [163] youth, in maturity, or in age, the negro slave is in much the more enviable condition.

It was in the end of August or the beginning of September, that Mr. C. measured out the provision-grounds to the St. Vincent negroes, at Laurel-Hill. They eyed the fertile soil, on the sloping hillsides; which were now, for the first time, about to be rendered subservient to the wants of man. The boundary on the front, and on two sides, was distinctly marked out for each, to prevent, if possible, all quarrelling; but to the upper end no boundary was assigned; and they might clear the woods, and turn up as much new soil in that direction as they chose.

The St. Vincent people soon had their houses erected and whitewashed; and upon my arrival in the middle of September, they were nearly ready to enter into their new abodes. They got abundance of roots, and slips of every thing useful for them to cultivate; and I pleased some of them much by

giving — to one, a little early English cabbage seed; and to another, turnip, carrot, or English peas. They had [164] brought bags full of seeds of the legumes of St. Vincent; and I was requested to recollect and keep all the pine-apple crowns, or tops, as they call them, to plant in their grounds.

None of our people had come with empty purses; so they soon purchased pigs and fowls enough to set all a-going. Besides the estate's allowance of fish, &c., they had, until their provision-grounds were productive, an allowance of plantains from their master's plantain-walk, every week, for six months; and each, two shillings and sixpence for the purchase of extras. I find, by my account-book, that each child had, besides fish and plantains proportioned to his or her age, two shillings and sixpence currency a week, from seven years of age upwards; — two shillings for all above two years, and under seven, — and one shilling for all under two years of age. They had all new locks for their houses; which cost four shillings and sixpence each. The infants had an allowance of rice, instead of plantains. I have already said, that every negro has always as [165] much sugar as he and his family can consume; but of course it is not wished that they should sell it.

There is a well-known root in Trinidad, common all over the West Indies I believe, known by the name of the eddoe. It abounds upon every estate. The roots are not unlike a rough irregular potatoe: — the leaves make excellent wholesome greens; and the negro, with the addition of a bit of salt fish, or salt pork — sometimes indeed both, has an excellent pot of soup. He may add pigeon peas during the months they are in season; and as for capsicums [Large sweet pepper] — his seasoning for all dishes — they are never wanting. This soup is excellent, wholesome, and palatable to all — creoles, white, free, coloured or slave; and indeed is one of the great blessings of the West Indies.

It is needless after this to say, that in point of food our people, new comers as they were, were not to be pitied. Bread, unless it be fresh from the oven, negroes have no relish for; but three times a week, hucksters used to come, [166] from St. Josephs to our estate, with great trays on their heads, loaded with bread, cakes, and pastry; and they seldom carried many of their dainties away. The negroes did not give money for these little luxuries; they went on the system of barter and exchange; and these huckster women might be seen, coming across the pasture from the negro houses, equally heavily laden as when they went; but with this difference, that they now carried fruit, vegetables, and eggs, to retail at St. Josephs.

Of course it was some time before the St. Vincent people were able to cope as merchants with the old settlers; but still they did so much sooner than I had expected. The soil is so prolific and the climate so congenial, that no one who has lived only in Europe, can readily believe the quick and sure return made for any, even the most trivial labour — that of a very little child. The quick return of garden produce, often seemed to me like enchantment; and might very well have been ascribed by the negro to the agency of Jumbee. I paid 20*l.* [167] currency in the first nine months of our residence at Laurel-Hill, to each of two negroes from St. Vincent for corn alone. They came and asked me, if “massa wanted corn (Indian corn or maize) for he horses?” I said he did; and they brought up so much, that I thought they were selling more than they ought. They assured me they had plenty for themselves, and their stock in their houses, if I would come down and see: I did so, and found their account correct;

and paid to each their 20*l.* currency — forty Spanish dollars, for one article alone, out of many others, raised during the time I have specified.

The first entry I find of St. Vincent people's cultivation, is on the 7th of November — two months and a half from their settlement; when I paid E., a house boy, seven shillings for two chickens. From that date, fruit, vegetables, eggs, fresh fish, game, poultry, and pork, following in succession; and money was fast made.

From the 16th September to 29th December [168] — little more than three months, I paid the negroes on Laurel-Hill estate — seventy-seven in number, including all ages — from infancy upwards — 176*l.* 15*s.* 1*d.*, not including corn; being upwards of three hundred and fifty-two Spanish dollars. I paid besides this, during these months, about 10*l.* more, for articles from other negroes, some free and some slaves. It ought to be borne in mind that all those articles sold to me, were by no means all that was sold off the estate; they were but an item of the negro produce. Every week some of our people went to St. Josephs and to Arima to market; and the carters rarely took the carts to Port of Spain without getting some articles sent into town for sale; and they also occasionally sold to the neighbouring estates, as their negroes did to us. These negroes were healthy and robust: there were a few sick now and then, and many more who pretended sickness to avoid working; but there did not seem any inclination to starve themselves in order to obtain money, by selling what they ought to [169] eat. The likings and dislikings of negroes are very different from those of an European: there is indeed a good deal of the *gourmond* in their disposition; and negro cookery is by no means so despicable as some suppose. I rather think a good supper is one of their first objects; fine clothes for a gala day the next. As for their appreciation of a fine house and furniture, that altogether depends upon their advancement in civilization. Every negro house on Laurel-Hill estate, was quite equal to those that I have described in the first volume of this work, as the general abodes of negroes. They had their plantain leaf mattresses, as we also had, in general use. Their pillows and bolsters were feathers of their own purchasing; and in the article of sheets and linen, I seldom found any deficiency in any negro of good character. Some of course have much finer linen than others; but there are few who do not lay up some "Irish cloth," as they call it, for their burial. Attachment to respectable dress (I do not mean mere finery, such as jewels, &c.) is [170] always a proof of civilization; and some negroes are most ridiculous dandies. We had several of such at Laurel-Hill. S., the head boiler-man at Laurel-Hill, was invariably a dandy; and it was quite a picture to see him at the teach, watching the sugar, with his air of authority, and his shirt collar stuck up to his ears. He was a native African, — a Coromantee, of a very grave and sedate deportment, and exceedingly reserved as regarded his former life. Upon my first visit to Laurel-Hill boiling house, with my children and their governess, he advanced and made a very dignified bow, — wished us all health and happiness, and stooping down, with a piece of white chalk, he put, as I have already said is usual, a mark on our feet; and we got another bow in return for our Spanish dollar. S. then ushered us all through the works of the sugar manufactory; when we tasted hot liquor and cool liquor, and pan sugar, the best of all. This is the remains of the sugar that hardens in the spout, which conveys the sugar from the teach to the wooden coolers. I asked [171] one day, if he remembered Africa? "A little, misses." Would you like to return there and see it again? "No misses, me country nigger very wicked, — me no wish to see 'em again." Do you think them more wicked than negroes here — do they steal and lie more, and are they more apt to quarrel and fight? "Misses, white lady

know noting of Africa, in my part; dey bad too much, me cannot tell you how bad.” S’s. look at this moment, was one so expressive of a determination that seemed to say ask no more, that I stopped the conversation. Some time after, I mentioned this conversation with S. to D., one of the pleasantest and mildest mannered female negroes I ever saw. She said, “Misses, it’s well you no ask S. no more questions and she shook her head and looked very wise, “his country misses, wicked too much.” In a half mysterious whisper, she added, “Misses, S. be one Coromantee! and oh! misses, Coromantee eat men; misses, S. be one very good nigger; but me misses, da Coromantee blood be in him.” S. [172] was a good workman; but it required great tact to keep him in humour: he was to be talked to always as a man of rank and authority, and in fact he had that about him, which made it impossible for any one to dare to use any freedom with him. If any little negro forgot to say Sir to him, he was sure of a blow that would make him remember in future.

One evening, hearing that S. was poorly, I went to pay him a visit. I found him in his calico dressing-gown, clean shirt, and white trowsers — his head was bound with a Madras handkerchief; and he was lying on his sofa, with three as nice pillows to recline upon as possible, with clean linen slippers, as white as snow. He had a comfortable basin of chicken soup, with plate of boiled rice beside him. And is this, thought I, a man who, had he been left in his own country, would have probably been regaling on his fellow creatures. He talked very sensibly; and thanked me politely for coming to see him; but I always [173] took care in future to avoid any allusion to his country. — S. has since freed himself.

A fertile source of annoyance to the planters of Trinidad, was the constant changes occasioned by new orders in council, perpetually coming out one after another, and often quite contradictory to each other. It was evident that they were concocted by people who knew no more of the general system of agriculture in the West Indies, than that which is perhaps pursued in the moon: and added to this, they indicated total ignorance of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of the colonies, whether white, coloured, or negro. No laws, however good and well intended, can be profitable, if they be not suited to the character, the manners, and the customs of the people to be governed by them. For what reason I know not, but an order came, that every negro was to be accurately measured! Mr. C. told them all to come up at a certain hour, and have their height ascertained. In this he was merely executing an order sent; nor did he ever [174] suspect any objection on the part of the negroes. But at the hour appointed, the overseer came up to say, that none of the negroes would come; and that they refused to assign any reason to him. Of course their master went, and told them to come up to him, and hear what he had to say. They grumbled a good deal; but still they had some faith in their master. He told them that measuring them would not hurt them; that he would do it himself; and he took one of our own little girls, and placing her back against the wall, he ascertained and marked her height — took a foot rule, and wrote down the number of feet and inches, saying “you see I do so to my own picaninny, and you see it don’t hurt her; come along, like good fellows, and let me do as I am ordered.” But all shrunk back; and the negro children began to cry. “In the name of wonder,” said Mr. C. “what is the matter with you all — what are they afraid of?” said he, to R., a fine tall, handsome, young St. Domingo negro. “Massa,” said he, “me [175] can’t tell” and evidently in a state of great alarm, and making an

effort to gain courage, he looked steadily at his master, and said, “you neber hurt me massa — me tand so” and he was measured accordingly. As he walked from the spot, his master said, “that is all, you see I have not hurt you.” R. wiped the cold perspiration from his brow, and turning round said, “Massa, a we no like to be measured for our coffin afore a we dead.” The scene was altogether more affecting than ludicrous to us; and yet, even when assured that the measure was not taken with the intention of making coffins for them, some appeared incredulous. We prevailed however upon all to be measured; and the driver laughed at his folly in not telling at once what their objection was, and ended by saying, “Massa, Massa King George, no know noting at all about a we niggers.” Change but the Massa King George, to massa something else, and never was truth better spoken.

Massa King George the negroes always [176] considered as the author and composer of every new law; and if at any time we told them that if Massa King George could see them, we were sure he would shew no want of knowledge; — they uniformly said, “Den why don't he come, and show a' we how to do.” More lately, however, Massa Buston (Buxton) was looked upon as the highest authority.

One day Mr. C. went down to the cooper's shop, and was accosted thus by P., the head cooper. P. was a thinking, grave, sensible negro— had been twice with a former master to America, and had lived some months in New York. His wife S. was a good working negro, civil and quiet; and we had always considered her as a very good wife to P., and attentive to her domestic concerns. His house was well furnished; his grounds extensive and beautiful, and they had no family. P. was a good tradesman; and not easily put in a passion. He had seen what life is; and was well aware that his lot was a very comfortable one. On the morning in question he thus addressed his master - [177] “Massa, me hear new law come out for as we nigger to go marry one wife; me massa, afore me marry one wife, me go hang me sel in a Paradise wood first.” This was said in a steady determined tone. “I have heard of no such law,” said his master, “nor do I believe it, — but you know, P., I have often said to you, and to all those negroes who have lived long and comfortably with their wives without changing, that I would be happy to see you marry, — that I thought it was your duty to do so, — but I don't believe that any law has come out to compel you to do so ; at the same time I cannot conceive what objection you could have to marrying S., with whom you have lived more than twelve years; and she has made a very good wife to you.” “True, me massa, very good as she is; but, me massa, pose (suppose) me marry S., I say, ‘S., do so;’ she my wife then, massa — so she say, ‘No!’ Well, pose massa, now me say, ‘S., do so she do it;’ cause she know if she no do it, me put her away, and get anoder dat will.” “I don't think S. would [178] behave so,” said his master; “I think she would do as much for you as she does now.” “Massa, me beg you pardon — was you eber in New York?” “No, P.” “Well den, massa, me have, — and me no be in a America for noting: no, no, me massa, me no know ebery ting you know, nor Massa King George neider; but me know some ting too, you don't know; me know dat me neber marry nigger wife: if Massa King George say, a we nigger marry, den let Massa King George send out white wife to a we from England, and den we marry as many as he like.” “We don't wish you to marry more than one wife; but why do you prefer a white wife?” “Cause, massa, white wife no run bout here, dere, and every where, like negroes; massa, if you gie me your wife, me marry her to-day; but afore me marry any nigger wife, me go hang me sel in a Paradise wood.”

Upon investigation, we found that the carters who had returned from Port of Spain the preceding evening, had spread the report over the [179] estate, that Massa Buston, and Massa King George (Mr. Buxton had the precedence), had sent out a law, to order every negro to marry his wife — a law which, with only two exceptions, the negroes declared they would resist, and die rather than obey. A recommendation to the planters to encourage marriage, had indeed been sent out, — and such is the tenacity with which negroes will resist all interference with their habits and customs, that it was some time before the discontent, which even this recommendation produced, gave way.

My object in relating such anecdotes, is to shew the great difficulty there is for persons, not well acquainted with negro character and customs, to frame laws and regulations at all suited to their improvement or amelioration. One order passed with that latter view, and no doubt considered in England greatly in favour of the negro, was, that no negro was to be punished *instanter* for any offence; but must be first confined, for a certain length of time, in the stocks. Now this, I presume, was intended [180] to prevent unnecessary or severe punishment, by allowing the master's anger time to cool. But, to those inclined towards severity, this failed altogether in its effect. I have already said, that the negro looks upon the stocks as no punishment. He goes to them, lies within his mosquito curtains, with his pillow at his head — has his food brought to him, and prefers this to any work, however light. The consequence is, that a good-for-nothing negro behaves himself as some convicts used to do, when sent to Botany Bay, and saying, "Thank your honour." The negro snaps his fingers and says, "Thank you, massa," with an air calculated rather to provoke and irritate, than disarm the anger of a master. Not only, therefore, had such an order no effect in ameliorating the condition of the negro, but it was not even considered a boon by him; for although the stocks were rather liked than otherwise, the negroes in general considered the previous confinement as meant to be an addition to punishment, and it tended therefore rather to produce [181] bad than good feeling. Let me illustrate this view by an anecdote.

Before coming on the estate, we had been told the general character and disposition of each individual. Among others, we were informed that C., a female, was a personage next to impossible to manage. She appeared to us a clever superior person, with not a disagreeable countenance; neat, and civilized looking. She had been a domestic at one time to a former master; but being in this capacity quite inefficient, she was transferred to the field with her own acquiescence in the change. About ten days after our arrival, while the negroes were holing a piece of canes near the foot of the hill, I suddenly heard a very angry voice, which became louder and louder; but as Mr. C. was in the field, I paid no more attention to it. In the evening, when the driver came up to get his orders for the next day, Mr. C. said, "F., I never saw such a woman as that; is she quiet now that she is in the stocks? — "Quiet, massa! no, noting will ever stop her. Massa, she bad [182] too much." — Can she work, F. — "Yes, for hersel, massa; fine grounds she have; but she'll neber work for you nor any massa; me tink de Jumbee in her." Mr. C. said, "Come, we must try; I find kindness won't do, for I've tried that; and now I'm trying whether the stocks will do." F. shook his head; "Massa, tock neber do good to nigger; dem who make dat new law do very bad, to make massas keep bad heart to niggers." "But why do you suppose that is a sign of keeping bad heart?" "Cause, massa, all da time a nigger is in da tock afore he be punish, massa heart burn gainst nigger, and nigger heart burn gainst massa, — dat's all bad massa; *dem who make dat law no know a we*" "But F., those who made that law say, that negroes were often and unjustly and severely flogged; because, at the moment their master was in a passion; and by giving time, they

think the master will cool, and the negro repent.” — “Bless you, me massa, den dey know noting at all about it; for afore time massa had no time for he heart to burn; [183] and nigger neber like noting so bad as for he massa to keep bad heart to him.” — “Well, F., I did not make the law. I must keep it, and try whether it will do good or not.” — “Me massa, hear me; I know black nigger better eber dan you; it do no good; it do very bad, massa.”

To return for a moment to C., the negro who gave rise to this colloquy: in the stocks, or at work, it was all the same to C.; she was the torment of every one, — she poured forth abuse upon her master, the overseer, the driver, and her mother. She often came to sell articles to me, — poultry, fruit, and vegetables; and was very civil and polite. I took no notice of her bad conduct on the estate; whether it was that she had expected I would have done so, and therefore was pleased at my forbearance, I cannot tell; but she always looked graciously upon me.

The cook at this time wished to change for the field; and I proposed to C. to take her place. I thought that, by removing her from [184] those with whom she had been accustomed to quarrel, and by flattering her self-esteem (for to cook well is no small pride in a negro), I might change her character. She accepted the place, and served me faithfully and well; and became, under my eye, a most exemplary person; and she served us until the day we left Laurel-Hill; and cried for days before we went away. I asked her if she would like to go home to England with me? She said, u Yes, misses, me like to see England, if you bring me back.” I said, “That is very natural, C.; your mother is here, and all your friends.” — “Yes, misses, and me grounds.” She might well say “me grounds,” for C.’s grounds were indeed a source of riches to her; she had them in beautiful order, and was altogether a moneymaking personage. She kept a complete huckster’s shop on the estate; and many, both on Laurel-Hill and the adjoining properties, bought thread, tapes, candle, soap, and pins, &c. from her. She had always plenty of money, and could at any time change a doubloon for [185] me; or, if I was short of a few dollars, C. always produced whatever sum I required at once; I giving her an acknowledgment for the sum borrowed, which she kept until I repaid her, when it was torn up. She had no ostensible husband. I often advised her to marry, and settle like a respectable girl, — for, spite of her temper, she had two great attractions: she had money, and was handsome; and I knew she had many admirers. She would not hear of marriage, however; but said, that “when nigger come good, like white man, den she might marry.” She gave dances, and made a great deal of money by them: she paid for every thing — supper, liquor, and music; and each negro paid half a dollar for admission. The refreshments were in the house, which was particularly neat; the dance was in front of her house, with seats surrounding a space large enough for the dancing; the musicians being placed at the end. Yet, inconsistent as it must appear, this young woman was a perfect savage in many respects: if any one [186] contradicted her, she was like a frantic person, and always began to bite furiously.

I had told the grown up negroes, that I should be very happy to see them come up, and hear the children instructed; and some, now and then dropped in; while others were very frequent in their attendance. Among these was C., who listened with great attention. I often tried to convince her how improper her violent conduct was; but she always defended herself; and said, “Misses, when me say bad to you, no curse me:” by which she meant, that if when she abused the other negroes they would not return the abuse, she would sooner restrain her temper. No sooner had we left the estate, than she

was as bad as before we had come to Laurel-Hill — no one dared to speak to her. She freed herself, I believe, in 1830, or thereabouts.

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END Ch 19

eEd tobagojo@gmail.com 20240826