

The Caribbean

The Caribbean had been dominated by slavery since the 1600s. During the Romantic period, abolition and emancipation debates raged in Britain, although Britain itself still dominated the slave trade, transporting more slaves from Africa to the Caribbean or America than any other country. But Africans were never simply passive slaves to British masters. Every island witnessed revolutions, rebellions, and continued acts of local resistance. The Haitian revolution of 1791 lasted many years. The major uprisings of 1816 in Barbados, of 1823 in Demerara, and of 1831-32 in Jamaica flooded newspapers and worried politicians. The two most influential travel texts of this period were Bryan Edwards' *History Civil and Commercial of the British West Indies* and Edward Long's extremely racist *History of Jamaica*. Most Romantic writers read Bryan Edwards, and all of them would have been exposed to the question of slavery on an almost daily basis. While some of the poems of this period, such as Blake's "The Little Black Boy" and Wordsworth's "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" deal directly with slavery, much of the poetry centers on the idea of freedom which was at the heart of the slavery question.

Matthew Gregory Lewis was author of *The Monk* (1796), the most sensation Gothic novel of the period and *The Castle Spectre* (1797) the most successful Gothic melodrama. When Lewis's father died in 1812, Lewis inherited two Jamaican sugar estates, six or seven hundred human beings, and the problem of slavery.

Lewis made two trips to Jamaica in 1815-16 and 1817-18, to visit his plantations and if possible to improve the living and working conditions for his slaves.

On the first voyage out, Lewis passed the time writing a long narrative poem, "The Isle of Devils." On his return voyage, he copied it into his *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*.

Lewis died of fever on his second voyage home, in 1818. The *Journal* was not published until 1834, sixteen years after his death and one year after the emancipation of slaves.

JOURNAL
OF A
WEST INDIA PROPRIETOR.

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"Nunc alio patriam quero sub sole jacentem."—VIRGIL.

1815. NOVEMBER 8. (Wednesday.)

I LEFT London, and reached Gravesend at nine in the morning, having been taught to expect our sailing in a few hours. But although the vessel left the Docks on Saturday, she did not reach this place till three o'clock on Thursday, the 9th. The captain now tells me, that we may expect to sail certainly in the afternoon of to-morrow, the 10th. I expect the ship's cabin to gain greatly by my two days' residence at the "***** **," which nothing can exceed for noise, dirt, and dulness. Eloisa would never have established "black melancholy" at the Paraclete as its favourite residence, if she had happened to pass three days at an inn at Gravesend: nowhere else did I ever see the sky look so dingy, and the river

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have in various publications been accused of a total want of religion, but this appears to me quite incompatible with the ideas of spirits existing after dissolution of the body, which necessarily implies a belief in a future state; and although (as far as I can make out) they have no outward forms of religion, the most devout Christian cannot have "God bless you" oftener on his lips than the negro; nor, on the other hand, appear to feel the wish for their enemy's damnation more sincerely when he utters it.

The Africans (as is well known) generally believe, that there is a life beyond this world, and that they shall enjoy it by returning to their own country; and this idea used frequently to induce them, soon after their landing in the colonies, to commit suicide; but this was never known to take place except among fresh negroes, and since the execrable slave-trade has been abolished, such an illusion is unheard of. As to those who had once got over the dreadful period of "seasoning," they were generally soon sensible enough of the amelioration of their condition, to make the idea of returning to Africa the most painful that could be presented to them. But, to be sure, poor creatures! what with the terrors and sufferings of the voyage, and the unavoidable hardships of the seasoning, those advantages were purchased more dearly than any in this life can possibly be worth. God be thanked, all that is now at an end; and

certainly, as far as I can as yet judge, if I were now standing on the banks of Virgil's Lethe, with a goblet of the waters of oblivion in my hand, and asked whether I chose to enter life anew as an English labourer or a Jamaica negro, I should have no hesitation in preferring the latter. For myself, it appears to me almost worth surrendering the luxuries and pleasures of Great Britain, for the single pleasure of being surrounded with beings who are always laughing and singing, and who seem to perform their work with so much *nonchalance*, taking up their baskets as if it were perfectly optional whether they took them up or left them there; sauntering along with their hands dangling; stopping to chat with every one they meet; or if they meet no one, standing still to look round, and examine whether there is nothing to be seen that can amuse them, so that I can hardly persuade myself that it is really work that they are about. The negro might well say, on his arrival in England — "Massa, in England every thing work!" for here nobody appears to work at all.

I am told that there is one part of their business very laborious, the digging holes for receiving the cane-plants, and which I have not as yet seen; but this does not occupy above a month (I believe) at the utmost, at two periods of the year; and on my estate this service is chiefly performed by extra negroes, hired for the purpose; which, although equally hard on the hired negroes (called a jobbing

they are excellent cajolers, and lay it on with a trowel. Nicholas and John Fuller came to me this morning to beg a favour, "and beg massa hard, quite hard!" It was, that when massa went away, he would leave his picture for the negroes; "that they might talk to it, all just as they did to massa." Shakspeare says —

"A little flattery does well sometimes!"

But, although the mode of expressing it may be artifice, the sentiment of good-will may be shown. A dog grows attached to the person who feeds and makes much of him; and as they have never experienced as yet any but kind treatment from me personally, it would be against common sense and nature to suppose that my negroes do not feel kindly towards me.

JANUARY 20.

THE RUNAWAY.

Peter, Peter was a black boy;
Peter, him pull foot one day:
Buckra girl, him* Peter's joy;
Lilly white girl entice him away.
Fye, Missy Sally, fye on you!
Poor Blacky Peter why undo?
Oh! Peter, Peter was a bad boy;
Peter was a runaway.

* The negroes never distinguish between "him" and "her" in their conversation.

Peter, him Massa thief — Oh! fye!
Missy Sally, him say him do so.
Him money spent, Sally bid him bye,
And from Peter away him go;
Fye, Missy Sally, fye on you!
Poor Blacky Peter what him do?
Oh! Peter, Peter was a sad boy;
Peter was a runaway!

Peter, him go to him Massa back;
There him humbly own him crime:
"Massa, forgib one poor young Black!
Oh! Massa, good Massa, forgib dis time!" —
Then in come him Missy so fine, so gay,
And to him Peter thus him say:
"Oh! Missy, good Missy, you for me pray!
Beg Massa forgib poor runaway!"

"Missy, you checks so red, so white;
Missy, you eyes like diamond shine!
Missy, you Massa's sole delight,
And Lilly Sally, him was mine!
Him say — 'Come, Peter, mid me go!' —
Could me refuse him? Could me say 'no?' —
Poor Peter — 'no' him could no say!
So Peter, Peter ran away!" —

Him Missy him pray; him Massa so kind
Was moved by him prayer, and to Peter him say:
"Well, boy, for this once I forgive you! — but mind!
With the buckra girls you no more go away!
Though fair without, they're foul within;
Their heart is black, though white their skin.
Then Peter, Peter with me stay;
Peter no more run away!" —

tion to their quantity of white. On the contrary I am told that such a thing as a black horse is not to be found in the island; those which may be imported black soon change their colour into a bay; and colts are said to have been dropped perfectly black, which afterwards grew lighter and lighter till they arrived at being perfectly white.

FEBRUARY 28.

Hearing that a manati (the sea-cow) had been taken at the mouth of the Cabrita River, and was kept alive at the Hope Wharf, I got a sailing-boat, and went about eight miles to see the animal. It was suffered to live in the sea, a rope being fastened round it, by which it could be landed at pleasure. It was a male, and a very young one, not exceeding nine feet in length, whereas they have frequently been found on the outside of eighteen. The females yield a quart of milk at a time: a gentleman told me that he had tasted it, and could not have distinguished it from the sweetest cow's milk. Unlike the seal, it never comes on shore, although it ventures up rivers in the night, to feed on the grass of their banks; but during the day it constantly inhabits the ocean, where its chief enemy is the shark, whose attacks it beats off with its tail, the strength of which is prodigious. It was killed this morning, and the gentleman to whom it belonged was obliging enough to send me part of it; we roasted it for

dinner, and, except that its consistence was rather firmer, I should not have known it from veal.

FEBRUARY 29.

The wife of an old negro on the neighbouring estate of Anchovy had lately forsaken him for a younger lover. One night, when she happened to be alone, the incensed husband entered her hut unexpectedly, abused her with all the rage of jealousy, and demanded the clothes to be restored, which he had formerly given her. On her refusal he drew a knife, and threatened to cut them off her back; nor could she persuade him to depart, till she had received a severe beating. He had but just left the hut, when he encountered his successful rival, who was returning home: a quarrel instantly ensued; and the husband, having the knife still unsheathed in his hand, plunged it into the neck of his antagonist. It pierced the jugular vein; of course the man fell dead on the spot; and the murderer has been sent to Montego Bay, to take his trial.

MARCH 1. (Friday.)

One of my house-boys, named Prince, is son to the Duke of Sully; and to-day his Grace came to beg that, when I should leave Jamaica, I would direct the boy to be made a tradesman, instead of being sent back to be a common field-negro: but my own shops are not only full at present, but

cident fortunately took place in the day time, and when the sea was perfectly calm, it was speedily remedied: but this was "talking of the devil and his imps" with a vengeance.

APRIL 10.

During the early part of my outward-bound voyage I was extremely afflicted with sea-sickness; and between eight o'clock on a Monday morning, and twelve on the following Thursday, I actually brought up almost a thousand lines, with rhymes at the end of them. Having nothing better to do at present, I may as well copy them into this book. Composed with such speed, and under such circumstances, I take it for granted that the verses cannot be very good; but let them be ever so bad, I defy any one to be more sick while reading them than the author himself was while writing them. This strange story was found by me in an old Italian book, called "Il Palagio degli Incanti," in which it was related as a fact, and stated to be taken from the "Annals of Portugal," an historical work. I will not vouch for the truth of it myself; and, at all events, I earnestly request that no person who may read these verses will ask me "who the hero really was?" If he does, I shall only return the same answer which the lady gave her husband when, being on the point of shipwreck, he requested her to tell him whether she had really ever wronged his bed? "My dear," said she, "sink or swim, that secret shall go to the grave with me."

THE ISLE OF DEVILS.

A METRICAL TALE.

"Should I report this now, would they believe me?
If I should say, I saw such islanders,
Who, though they were of monstrous shape, yet, note,
Their manners were more gentle-kind, than of
Our human generation you shall find
Many; nay, almost any!" — *Tempest, Act 3.*

I.

SPEED, Haleyon, speed, and here construct thy nest:
Brood on these waves, and charm the winds to rest!
No wave should dare to rage, no wind to roar,
Till lands yon blooming maid on Lisbon's shore.
That maid, as Venus fair and chaste is she,
When first to dazzled sky and glorying sea
The bursting conch Love's new-born queen exposed,
The fairest pearl that ever shell inclosed.

While love's fantastic hand had joyed to braid
Her locks with weeds and shells like some sea-maid,
High seated at the stern was Irza seen,
And seemed to rule the tide, as ocean's queen.
Smooth sailed the bark; the sun shone clear and bright;
The glittering billows danced along in light;
While Irza, free from fear, from sorrow free,
Bright as the sun, and buoyant as the sea,
Bade o'er the lute her flying fingers move,
And sang a Spanish lay of Moorish love.

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DECEMBER 1. (Monday.)

Here we are, still riding at anchor, with no better consolation than that of Klopstock's half-devil Abadonna; the consciousness that others are deeper damned than ourselves. Another ship belonging to the same proprietor left the West India Docks three weeks before us, and here she is still rocking cheek by jowl alongside of us,

"One writ with us in sour misfortune's book."

DECEMBER 3.

A tolerably fair breeze at length enabled us to set sail once more.

DECEMBER 24. (Wednesday.)

I had often heard talk of "a hell upon earth," and now I have a perfect idea of "a hell upon water." It must be precisely our vessel during the last three weeks. At twelve at noon upon the 4th, we passed Plymouth, and were actually in sight of the Lizard point, when the wind suddenly became completely foul, and drove us back into the Channel. It continued to strengthen gradually but rapidly; and by the time that night arrived, we had a violent gale, which blew incessantly till the middle of Sunday, the 7th, when we were glad to find ourselves once more in sight of Plymouth, and took advantage of a temporary abatement of the wind to seek refuge in the Sound. Here,

however, we soon found that we had but little reason to rejoice at the change of our situation. The Sound was already crowded with vessels of all descriptions; and as we arrived so late, the only mooring still unoccupied, placed us so near the rocks on one side, and another vessel astern, that the captain confessed that he should feel considerable anxiety if the gale should return with its former violence. So, of course, about eleven at night, the gale *did* return; not, indeed, with its former violence, but with its violence increased tenfold; and once we were in very imminent danger from our ship's swinging round by a sudden squall, and narrowly escaping coming in contact with the ship astern, which had not, it seems, allowed itself sufficient cable. Luckily, we just missed her; and our cables (for both our anchors were down) being new and good, we rode out the storm without driving, or meeting with any accident whatever. The next day was squally; and in spite of the Breakwater, the rocking of the ship from the violent agitation of the waves by the late stormy weather was almost insupportable. However, on the 9th, the wind took a more favourable turn, though in so slight a degree, that the pilot expressed great doubts whether it would last long to do us any service. But the captain felt his situation in Plymouth Sound so uneasy, that he resolved at least to make the attempt; and so we crept once more into the Channel. In a few hours the breeze

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grace enough to run down to the scene of action; but the greatest part remained quietly in the negro-houses, beating the gummy-drum, and singing their joy for my arrival with the whole strength of their lungs, but without thinking it in the least necessary to move so much as a finger-joint in my service. The cattle were at length replaced in their pen, but not till the cane-piece had been ruined irretrievably. Such is negro gratitude, and such my reward for all that I have suffered on ship-board. To be sure, as yet there could not be a more ill-starred expedition than my present one. I only learned, yesterday, that before making the island of Madeira an Algerine corsair was actually in sight, and near enough to discern the turbans of the crew; but we lost each other through the violence of the gale.

JANUARY 29.

There is a popular negro song, the burden of which is, —

“ Take him to the Gulley ! Take him to the Gulley !
But bringee back the frock and board.” —
“ Oh ! ma' n, massa ! me no deadee yet ! ” —
“ Take him to the Gulley ! Take him to the Gulley ! ”
“ Carry him along ! ”

This alludes to a transaction which took place some thirty years ago, on an estate in this neighbourhood, called Spring-Garden; the owner of which (I think the name was Bedward) is quoted

as the cruellest proprietor that ever disgraced Jamaica. It was his constant practice, whenever a sick negro was pronounced incurable, to order the poor wretch to be carried to a solitary vale upon his estate, called the Gulley, where he was thrown down, and abandoned to his fate; which fate was generally to be half devoured by the john-crows, before death had put an end to his sufferings. By this proceeding the avaricious owner avoided the expence of maintaining the slave during his last illness; and in order that he might be as little a loser as possible, he always enjoined the negro bearers of the dying man to strip him naked before leaving the Gulley, and not to forget to bring back his frock and the board on which he had been carried down. One poor creature, while in the act of being removed, screamed out most piteously “ that he was not dead yet; ” and implored not to be left to perish in the Gulley in a manner so horrible. His cries had no effect upon his master, but operated so forcibly on the less marble hearts of his fellow-slaves, that in the night some of them removed him back to the negro village privately, and nursed him there with so much care, that he recovered, and left the estate unquestioned and undiscovered. Unluckily, one day the master was passing through Kingston, when, on turning the corner of a street suddenly, he found himself face to face with the negro, whom he had supposed long ago to have been picked to

the bones in the Gulley of Spring-Garden. He immediately seized him, claimed him as his slave, and ordered his attendants to convey him to his house ; but the fellow's cries attracted a crowd round them, before he could be dragged away. He related his melancholy story, and the singular manner in which he had recovered his life and liberty ; and the public indignation was so forcibly excited by the shocking tale, that Mr. Bedward was glad to save himself from being torn to pieces by a precipitate retreat from Kingston, and never ventured to advance his claim to the negro a second time.



Its juice being expressed and allowed to ferment, a small worm is generated, the substance of which being received into the stomach is of a nature the most pernicious. A small portion of this worm is concealed under one of the thumb-nails, which are suffered to grow long for this purpose; then when the negro has contrived to persuade his intended victim to eat or drink with him, he takes an opportunity, while handing to him a dish or cup, to let the worm fall, which never fails to destroy the person who swallows it. Another means of destruction is to be found (as I am assured) in almost every negro garden throughout the island: it is the arsenic bean, neither useful for food nor ornamental in its appearance; nor can the negroes, when questioned, give any reason for affording it a place in their gardens; yet there it is always to be seen. The alligator's liver also possesses deleterious properties; and the gall is said to be still more dangerous.

FEBRUARY 3.

On Friday I was made to observe, in the hospital, a remarkably fine young negro, about twenty-two years of age, stout and strong, and whom every one praised for his numerous good qualities, and particularly for his affection for his mother, and the services which he rendered her. He complained of a little fever, and a slight pain in his side. On Saturday he left the hospital, and in-

tended to go to his provision grounds, among the mountains, on Sunday morning; but, as he complained of a pain in his head, his mother prevented his going, and obliged him to return to the hospital in the evening. On Monday he was seized with fainting fits, lost his speech and power of motion, and this morning I was awaked by the shrieks and lamentations of the poor mother, who, on coming to the hospital to enquire for her son, found, that in spite of all possible care and exertions on the part of his medical attendants, he had just expired. Whether it be the climate not agreeing with their African blood (genuine or inherited), or whether it be from some defect in their general formation, certainly negroes seem to hold their lives upon a very precarious tenure. Nicholas, John Fuller, and others of my best and most favoured workmen, the very servants, too, in my own house, are perpetually falling ill with little fevers, or colds, or pains in the head or limbs. However, the season is universally allowed to have been peculiarly unhealthy for negroes; and, indeed, even for white people, the deaths on board the shipping having been unusually numerous this year. As to the barracks, which are scarcely a couple of miles distant from my estate, there the yellow fever has established itself, and, as I hear, is committing terrible ravages, particularly among the wives of the soldiers.—This morning several negro-mothers, belonging to Friendship and Greenwich, came to

a more meagre congregation. It was literally ↴
 "two or three gathered together," and it seemed
 as if five or six would be too many, and forfeit the
 promise. I cannot discover that the negroes have
 any external forms of worship, nor any priests in
 Jamaica, unless their Obeah men should be con-
 sidered as such; but still I cannot think that they
 ought to be considered as totally devoid of all
 natural religion. There is no phrase so common on
 their lips as "God bless you!" and "God preserve
 you!" and "God will bless you wherever you go!"
 Phrases which they pronounce with every appear-
 ance of sincerity, and as if they came from the very
 bottom of their hearts. "God-A'mity! God-
 A'mity!" is their constant exclamation in pain and
 in sorrow; and with this perpetual recurrence to
 the Supreme Being, it must be difficult to insist
 upon their being atheists. But they have even got
 a step further than the belief in a God; they also
 allow the existence of an evil principle. One of
 them complained to me the other day, that when
 he went to the field his companions had told him
 "that he might go to hell, for he was not worthy to
 work with them;" and one of his adversaries in
 return accused him of being so lazy, "that instead
 of being a slave upon Cornwall estate, he was only
 fit to be the slave of the devil." Then surely they
 could not be afraid of duppies (or ghosts) without
 some idea of a future state; and indeed nothing is
 more firmly impressed upon the mind of the Afri-

cans, than that after death they shall go back to
 Africa, and pass an eternity in revelling and feast-
 ing with their ancestors. The proprietor of a
 neighbouring estate lately used all his influence to
 persuade his foster-sister to be christened; but it
 was all in vain: she had imbibed strong African
 prejudices from her mother, and frankly declared
 that she found nothing in the Christian system so
 alluring to her taste as the post-obit balls and
 banquets promised by the religion of Africa. I
 confess, that this prejudice appears to me to be
 so strongly rooted, that in spite of the curates ex-
 pected from the hands of the bishop of London,
 I am sadly afraid, that "the pulpit drum eccle-
 siastic" will find it a hard matter to overpower the
 gummy; and that the joys of the Christian paradise
 will be seen to kick the beam, when they are
 weighed against the pleasures of eating fat hog,
 drinking raw rum, and dancing for centuries to the
 jam-jam and kitty-katty. In the negro festivals in
 this life, the chief point lies in making as much
 noise as possible, and the Africans and Creoles
 dispute it with the greatest pertinacity. I am just
 informed that at the dance last night the Eboes
 obtained a decided triumph, for they roared and
 screamed and shouted and thumped their drums
 with so much effect, that the Creoles were fairly
 rendered deaf with the noise of their rivals, and
 dumb with their own, and obliged to leave off
 singing altogether.

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FEBRUARY 20.

I asked one of my negro servants this morning whether old Luke was a relation of his. "Yes," he said.—"Is he your uncle, or your cousin?"—"No, massa."—"What then?"—"He and my father were shipmates, massa."

FEBRUARY 23.

The law-charges in Jamaica have lately been regulated by the House of Assembly; and by all accounts (except that of the lawyers) it was full time that something should be done on the subject. A case was mentioned to me this morning of an estate litigated between several parties. At length a decision was given: the estate was sold for 16,000*l.*; but the lawyer's claim must always be the first discharged, and as this amounted to more than 16,000*l.* the lawyer found himself in possession of the estate. This was the fable of *Æsop's* oyster put in action with a vengeance.

FEBRUARY 25.

A negro, named Adam, has long been the terror of my whole estate. He was accused of being an Obeah-man, and persons notorious for the practice of Obeah had been found concealed from justice in his house, who were afterwards convicted and transported. He was strongly suspected of having poisoned more than twelve negroes, men and

women; and having been displaced by my former trustee from being principal governor, in revenge he put poison into his water jar. Luckily he was observed by one of the house servants, who impeached him, and prevented the intended mischief. For this offence he ought to have been given up to justice; but being brother of the trustee's mistress she found means to get him off, after undergoing a long confinement in the stocks. I found him, on my arrival, living in a state of utter excommunication; I tried what reasoning with him could effect, reconciled him to his companions, treated him with marked kindness, and he promised solemnly to behave well during my absence. However, instead of attributing my lenity to a wish to reform him, his pride and confidence in his own talents and powers of deception made him attribute the indulgence shown him to his having obtained an influence over my mind. This he determined to employ to his own purposes upon my return; so he set about forming a conspiracy against Sully, the present chief governor, and boasted on various estates in the neighbourhood that on my arrival he would take care to get Sully broke, and himself substituted in his place. In the mean while he quarrelled and fought, to the right and to the left; and on my arrival I found the whole estate in an uproar about Adam. No less than three charges of assault, with intent to kill, were preferred against him. In a fit of jealousy he had endeavoured to

strangle Marlborough with the thong of a whip, and had nearly effected his purpose before he could be dragged away: he had knocked Nato down in some trifling dispute, and while the man was senseless had thrown him into the river to drown him; and having taken offence at a poor weak creature called Old Rachael, on meeting her by accident he struck her to the ground, beat her with a supplejack, stamped upon her belly, and begged her to be assured of his intention (as he eloquently worded it) "to kick her guts out." The breeding mothers also accused him of having been the cause of the poisoning a particular spring, from which they were in the habit of fetching water for their children, as Adam on that morning had been seen near the spring without having any business there, and he had been heard to caution his little daughter against drinking water from it that day, although he stoutly denied both circumstances. Into the bargain, my head blacksmith being perfectly well at five o'clock, was found by his son dead in his bed at eight; and it was known that he had lately had a dispute with Adam, who on that day had made it up with him, and had invited him to drink, although it was not certain that his offer had been accepted. He had, moreover, threatened the lives of many of the best negroes. Two of the cooks declared, that he had severally directed them to dress Sully's food apart, and had given them powders to mix with it. The first to whom he ap-

plied refused positively; the second he treated with liquor, and when she had drunk, he gave her the poison, with instructions how to use it. Being a timid creature, she did not dare to object, so threw away the powder privately, and pretended that it had been administered; but finding no effect produced by it, Adam gave her a second powder, at the same time bidding her remember the liquor which she had swallowed, and which he assured her would effect her own destruction through the force of Obeah, unless she prevented it by sacrificing his enemy in her stead. The poor creature still threw away the powder, but the strength of imagination brought upon her a serious malady, and it was not till after several weeks that she recovered from the effects of her fears. The terror thus produced was universal throughout the estate, and Sully and several other principal negroes requested me to remove them to my property in St. Thomas's, as their lives were not safe while breathing the same air with Adam. However, it appeared a more salutary measure to remove Adam himself; but all the poisoning charges either went no further than strong suspicion, or (any more than the assaults) were not liable by the laws of Jamaica to be punished, except by flogging or temporary imprisonment, which would only have returned him to the estate with increased resentment against those to whom he should ascribe his sufferings, however deserved.

However, on searching his house, a musket with a plentiful accompaniment of powder and ball was found concealed, as also a considerable quantity of materials for the practice of Obeah: the possession of either of the above articles (if the musket is without the consent of the proprietor) authorises the magistrates to pronounce a sentence of transportation. In consequence of this discovery, Adam was immediately committed to gaol; a slave court was summoned, and to-day a sentence of transportation from the island was pronounced, after a trial of three hours. As to the man's guilt, of that the jury entertained no doubt after the first half hour's evidence; and the only difficulty was to restrain the verdict to transportation. We produced nothing which could possibly affect the man's life; for although perhaps no offender ever better deserved hanging; yet I confess my being weak-minded enough to entertain doubts whether hanging or other capital punishment ought to be inflicted for any offence whatever: I am at least certain, that if offenders waited till they were hanged by me, they would remain unhanged till they were all so many old Parrs. However, although I did my best to prevent Adam from being hanged, it was no easy matter to prevent his hanging himself. The Obeah ceremonies always commence with what is called, by the negroes, "the Myal dance." This is intended to remove any doubt of the chief Obeah-man's supernatural

powers; and in the course of it, he undertakes to show his art by killing one of the persons present, whom he pitches upon for that purpose. He sprinkles various powders over the devoted victim, blows upon him, and dances round him, obliges him to drink a liquor prepared for the occasion, and finally the sorcerer and his assistants seize him and whirl him rapidly round and round till the man loses his senses, and falls on the ground to all appearance and the belief of the spectators a perfect corpse. The chief Myal-man then utters loud shrieks, rushes out of the house with wild and frantic gestures, and conceals himself in some neighbouring wood. At the end of two or three hours he returns with a large bundle of herbs, from some of which he squeezes the juice into the mouth of the dead person; with others he anoints his eyes and stains the tips of his fingers, accompanying the ceremony with a great variety of grotesque actions, and chanting all the while something between a song and a howl, while the assistants hand in hand dance slowly round them in a circle, stamping the ground loudly with their feet to keep time with his chant. A considerable time elapses before the desired effect is produced, but at length the corpse gradually recovers animation, rises from the ground perfectly recovered, and the Myal dance concludes. After this proof of his power, those who wish to be revenged upon their enemies apply to the sorcerer for some of the same

powder, which produced apparent death upon their companion, and as they never employ the means used for his recovery, of course the powder once administered never fails to be lastingly fatal. It must be superfluous to mention that the Myal-man on this second occasion substitutes a poison for a narcotic. Now, among other suspicious articles found in Adam's hut, there was a string of beads of various sizes, shapes, and colours, arranged in a form peculiar to the performance of the Obeah-man in the Myal dance. Their use was so well known, that Adam on his trial did not even attempt to deny that they could serve for no purpose but the practice of Obeah; but he endeavoured to refute their being his own property, and with this view he began to narrate the means by which he had become possessed of them. He said that they belonged to Fox (a negro who was lately transported), from whom he had taken them at a Myal dance held on the estate of Dean's Valley; but as the assistants at one of these dances are by law condemned to death equally with the principal performer, the court had the humanity to interrupt his confession of having been present on such an occasion, and thus saved him from criminating himself so deeply as to render a capital punishment inevitable. I understand that he was quite unabashed and at his ease the whole time; upon hearing his sentence, he only said very coolly, "Well! I ca'n't help it!" turned himself round,

and walked out of court. That nothing might be wanting, this fellow had even a decided talent for hypocrisy. When on my arrival he gave me a letter filled with the grossest lies respecting the trustee, and every creditable negro on the estate, he took care to sign it by the name which he had lately received in baptism; and in his defence at the bar to prove his probity of character and purity of manners, he informed the court that for some time past he had been learning to read, for the sole purpose of learning the Lord's Prayer. The nick-name by which he was generally known among the negroes in this part of the country, was Buonaparte, and he always appeared to exult in the appellation. Once condemned, the marshal is bound under a heavy penalty to see him shipped from off the island before the expiration of six weeks, and probably he will be sent to Cuba. He is a fine-looking man between thirty and forty, square built, and of great bodily strength, and his countenance equally expresses intelligence and malignity. The sum allowed me for him is one hundred pounds currency, which is scarcely a third of his worth as a labourer, but which is the highest value which a jury is permitted to mention.

MARCH 1. (Sunday.)

Last night the negroes of Friendship took it into their ingenious heads to pay me a compliment of an extremely inconvenient nature. They thought,

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FURTHER PAPERS

RELATING TO

SLAVES IN THE WEST INDIES;

(*Demerara and Berbice*.)

VIZ.

Further Return to an Address of The Honourable the House of Commons,
dated the 13th of April 1824;—for

COPIES OF THE RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Of the Fiscals of *Demerara* and *Berbice*, in their capacity of Guardians and
Protectors of the Slaves; with their Decisions in all Cases of Complaint of
Masters and Slaves, respectively, against each other and the Punishments
inflicted, or Redress given, in consequence of such Complaints;—from the
1st January 1814 to this Time:

AS FAR AS THE SAME RELATE TO

BERBICE.

(For Records of the Proceedings of the Fiscal of *Demerara*, see Paper N° 66
of the present Session, page 17.)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
23 June 1825.

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Berbice, 4th June 1819.

Berbice: 214

Decisions on
Complaints of
Slaves.

Thomas Keen versus Thomas:—States, that the negro Thomas, whom he hires from the agent of the Winkle department, absented himself some time previous to the late holidays; was absent eight days; during which time he went about shoeing horses (he being a smith) on his own account. There is a positive order that no smith shall take tools out of the shop; this order, however, paid no respect to. Mr. Gaymer, clerk to the Winkle department, met Thomas with his tools in a bag, a bottle of porter, and a loaf of bread; on inquiry where he was going? Thomas replied he had been sent by me to shoe Mr. Williams's horse. He shod horses for several persons; some paid him in money, others gave him porter, wine, &c. After he had been absent eight days, I was informed by the other smiths that he, Thomas, was lurking about the shop, he having sent to call two of them. I went out, and, speaking to him, directed him to come to me; this he refused, and walked off. I directed two men to go and seize him; he ran towards the river, and threatened to drown himself if pursued. He jumped into the river: I went there myself, and directed the workmen to follow him in a boat; they did so, but as often as they came up to him he would dive and remain so long under water that I became alarmed. At length, being exhausted, he was taken. He was entreated to surrender, but would not. After he was taken I sent him to the barracks, and solicit now that he may receive a punishment.—Directed to be flogged at Mr. Keen's foundry.

Beerenstein Complaint.—*Rosetta v. Zealand.*

John Beresford, medical practitioner, and attendant of the hospital belonging to the Winkle department, being questioned whether it was to his knowledge that the woman *Susetta* had miscarried in the hospital during her late confinement, states, that he was requested by Mr. Scott to examine the said woman, who had complained that she had miscarried in consequence of the ill-treatment experienced from *Zealand*; that he, the medical practitioner, had examined the said woman *Susetta* very minutely, and could not discover any appearance of miscarriage which she stated had occurred a few days before; and finding nothing the matter with her, he reported her fit for work.

Examination *Elias*; cause *Rosetta*, alias *Susetta*; witness doctor of hospital:—Says, that *Rosetta* has been in the hospital four or five weeks ago; she came from the estate to complain no physic was given her; she was put in the stocks by Mr. Scott's order; she was examined by the doctor, but he ordered no physic; she one morning showed me a pot half full of blood and water; she said she had miscarried; the appearance was of a thick substance; I directed her to put it up carefully till the doctor came; she put it under the hospital; it was destroyed by the pigs; doctor never saw it; I never told him, because it was made away with by the pigs, and she did not because she was in the stocks; she had been about a week in the stocks when this occurrence took place; I never knew she was pregnant.

Mandorina, witness cause *Rosetta*:—Says she was in the hospital at the time *Susetta* was there; saw a pewter pot, which had blood in it; *Susetta* said she had passed it; I did not examine it; *Susetta* did not say in my hearing she had miscarried; being sick, I paid little attention; the doctor came there every morning; it was never told to him.

Mocalla, witness cause *Rosetta*, or *Susetta*:—Says, *Susetta*, or *Rosetta*, was confined in the stocks whilst I was sick in the hospital; I understood one day that she had miscarried; I saw a pot which she showed to *Elias*, the hospital black doctor; I did not examine it, being sick; the doctor did not attend this day; I heard *Rosetta* say she had miscarried; I saw her clothes; there was blood on them, and I believe she did miscarry; neither this, nor former witness, knows how long *Rosetta* had been confined when this occurrence took place.

W. Scott, agent, having heard the above evidence, states that the woman *Rosetta*, alias *Susetta*, came to him to complain against the manager; that she reported she had absconded in consequence of ill-treatment received from *Zealand*, and had miscarried during the short stay he made in the bush, for which reason he, agent, requested Dr. Beresford to attend her; states further, that she has a complaint of the bladder.—Reprimanded.

Plantation L'Espérance, 10th June.

Complaint *Jonas* versus *Grade*, manager:—States, that two women, named *Diana* and *Cornelia*, were in the hospital, having small sores in their feet; complainant is sick-nurse, and occasionally employed as house-servant; the said women were directed by the manager to go to the negro-houses to split leaves; the overseer, seeing one of them he conceived able to go to the field, sent her there; manager saw her in the field with a piece of rag round her foot, and observed, as the coffee-crop was coming in he was wishful of no sores being on the estate; directed me to confine them in the sick-house till well; I told them of this, and they absented themselves.

There was also a woman named *Roosje*; she was employed in the Logie picking coffee; she was big with child; wanted one month of her time; the manager sent the overseer to see her; she with the others were coming on; the overseer informed him that they were not picking enough or well; and the manager, standing at his window up stairs, directed the driver *Zindex* to flog them; the driver did this with his whip doubled; whether they were flogged so by the manager's order I do not know, but he saw it; the woman *Rosa* was

She's Reprimanded or not on pregnancy

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was flogged either on Friday or Saturday. I am not certain; Sunday she complained of pain in her belly and back, and Sunday night I think she miscarried; the doctor of the estate came to visit and attend her next day, and directed physic; she remained some weeks in her house.

In consequence of my not bringing the two women above stated, the manager directed I should be locked up in the stocks every night; he went to town, and the overseer put me watchman at the water-side; the manager came home the evening I was placed there, and inquired who was watchman; I answered it was I, Jonas; he inquired who put me watchman; I informed him it was the overseer; he directed me to call the overseer; on the overseer's coming, he said, "Did I not direct that Jonas should be locked up in the stocks every night? take him, and do so now." On hearing this order, I availed myself of the darkness of the evening and started off, and went to town to seek redress, not knowing what I had done to deserve this punishment.

Evidence of the woman *Rosa*:—States, that she was sent by the manager's order to pick coffee in the Logie. The complainant represented to the manager that she was too big to stoop. The manager directed her to comply with the order; she went to pick coffee on her knees. At eleven o'clock their work was examined, and the driver Zondag directed to flog them by the manager; this was done with the whip doubled. When Zondag the driver came to her, he said to the manager, this woman is rather big with child; the manager replied, "Give it to her till the blood flies out." I was flogged; the whip broke, and I was flogged with carracarras, this happened on a Friday; I was sent to the field on Saturday. I told the driver I could not work, as I had pains in my loins; he directed me to go to the manager. I went to him; he sent me to the hospital; I remained there a day. The doctor examined me, and said there was nothing the matter with me, and sitting down was not good for me. I went to the field, and was put on a row with another to help. On Sunday evening I miscarried; I was five months gone with child; the labour was hard. The midwife had to force it; the child was dead; one eye was out, the arm broken, and a stripe visible over the head, which must have been done with the double whip. The doctor came to attend me on Monday morning; the child was not seen by him; it had been buried. He prescribed for me. The child was seen by Ariantje, Claritje and Marianna. I was assisted by my sister Claritje; the regular midwife did not attend me, as I was taken suddenly. She was sent for however, and saw the child; it was buried by Marianna.

Evidence of *J. H. Eenhuys*, assistant surgeon to Dr. Westervild, practitioner of and medical attendant on plantation L'Espérance:—States, that he visited the woman *Rosa* early in the morning on the 14th March; she informed him she had miscarried that evening before I examined and prescribed for her. A few days previous to this occurrence I saw *Rosa* in the sick-house; she was pregnant and complaining; I thought between three and four months gone. I experience that many miscarriages arise from the women taking no exercise and contracting lazy habits; and thinking this was her case, I directed her to take exercise. I did not see the child, it was buried. I believe I inquired if she had been delivered of the after-birth, and being informed by an old woman, the midwife, I directed something for her and went away.

Evidence of the negro woman *Marianna*:—States, I was sent for in the night to come to *Rosa*, who was taken in labour, (trouble had come,) I went; she was not yet delivered. I assisted another woman to deliver her. The child's arm was broken; one eye out, bruised and sunk in the head; it was a fine male child, quite formed; in every respect perfect. Thinks the child was more than five months from its perfect form and appearance. Claritje and George reported it to the manager that *Rooosje* had miscarried, and as he gave no directions respecting it I buried it. The child was seen by the father and the two other women, Claritje and Ariantje. The woman *Rooosje* told the doctor the state the child was in. He replied, "I suppose you have been eating green pines." *Rooosje* denied it, saying it was from the flogging she got.

Evidence of *Ariantje*:—States that *Rooosje* is her sister, witness was called in the night by Claritje to come to *Rooosje*, who was in labour. I went, and found her in said state; I got there before *Marianna* was present. When the child fell, the child was a male, perfect; the arm broken, the eye out, the head broken and bruised. After the miscarriage I went away. Being asked why it was not mentioned to the manager, the doctor, or the burgher officer, she says it was not her business.

Evidence of *George*:—States he is husband to *Rooosje*; corroborates her evidence as to the flogging she received, and the expressions made use of by the manager to the driver about flogging her. This happened on a Thursday; Sunday night she miscarried. The child was a male, perfect; it was born dead; the arm was broken, one of the eyes out, and the head bruised. States this to have been occasioned from the blows his wife received from the driver *Zindeg* with the doubled whip. Reported this miscarriage to Mr. Grade, the manager, who told him to bring it. Did not mention to him the state it was in. *Rooosje* did give this information to the doctor, the little one; he replied, "You must tell a lie; you have been eating green pines I believe." Inquired why he had not gone to complain either to the burgher officer or fiscal; says he was cook; and therefore could not leave his work.

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Evidence of the driver Zondag:—States, that the women were put to pick coffee; a certain quantity was to be got, which did not take place. The overseer told me by order of the manager, Mr. Grade, to flog the women out on the drogery planker: I did so. The manager came out, and told me to begin and flog them, from one to the other; I began and went on till I came to the woman Roosje. I observed to the manager, "This woman is pregnant:" the manager said, "Go; that is my business." I did so; she did not get more than the rest. I did not flog Roosje with a carracarra; it had broken before I came to her: she received her punishment with the whip doubled; she miscarried a few nights after this punishment took place. The punishment was inflicted at eleven o'clock, breakfast time. I did not see the child. Claritje told me the state the child was in. The question being put to him, "Whether the manager, on his (the driver's) representation that Roosje was pregnant, had made use of the expression, "Never mind; flog her till the blood comes?" He replied, "Yes."

Driver

Evidence of the negro woman Claritje:—States that she is elder sister or shipmate of Roosje; that she was sent for at night to Roosje, who was taken in labour. The child was born dead; it was a male, perfect. Marianna was there; Ariaantje also. The arm was broken, one eye was bruised and hurt; it could be seen it was done with the whip; and the head broken. The father reported the death of it. Manager said to bury it: the father dug the grave. Marianna took it out. Reason she did not tell the manager of the state the child was in was, because she thought Marianna would have done it. George mentioned it to Mr. Grade: does not know what he said.

George again called in, and inquired whether he had mentioned to Mr. Grade the state the child was in; said, he told Mr. Grade the arm was broken, and that it was in consequence of the flogging she got. Mr. Grade said, "It is a lie." Says the overseer was present; the manager asked him how it was his wife had miscarried: he replied, it was from the flogging you gave her. Manager says, "You lie; I did not flog her." The overseer said, "I did not either." I then observed, "If neither of you did, who did then?" Says his wife has had seven children for him, and never miscarried before.

Examination of Justus Von Steiniss, overseer of plantation L'Espérance:—I was present when the women were ranged out on the drogery; they were flogged by Zondag. Mr. Grade said, if they did not pick coffee enough, he the (driver) should be confined in the stocks. I saw him punish some of the women. Mr. Grade was not present. I did not hear Zondag say any thing to Mr. Grade respecting this child having a broken arm. Never said any thing to him himself.

Difficult to call what the verdict was.

On inquiry, the manager states that Jonas absented himself from the estate on the 30th of April last.

The negro Adam denies making use of the expression stated by the manager. Says that Mr. Grade came home whilst they were drinking rum, and seeing him refuse half a dram given him by a woman, remarked, "If I had not been here, you would have drunk that." He then began to say that in Heytmeyer's time they got only a small piece of fish; that Heytmeyer had run the estate in debt, and that he (the manager) was now paying those debts; that it was only through his exertions that the estate was not sold. Tells a long tale of his former services, but not in the least relating to the subject now under investigation.

Lieutenant Jifkins:—States, that he received a letter from Mr. Grade, requesting his attendance to inquire into the conduct of the negro Adam for insolence; that not being able to leave home he directed the man to be confined in the stocks; that he attended next day, and found the man had not been confined in the stocks. Directed his attendance, but learned that the driver Adam's hat and whip were in the house, but he had gone. On hearing Mr. Grade speak to the negro, and inquired whether he had any complaint, and the negro said, "No." I inquired whether Adam had been so insolent, and he said "Yes; and what reason he had for so being I do not know."

J. F. Obermuller, attorney of plantation L'Espérance:—States, that the negro Adam came to him in town to complain, that the manager coming into the field accused him of all the negroes not being employed in the field, but some in their provision fields; that he denied this, and in order to convince him of the contrary he would crack his whip and call them all up. On this Mr. Grade became so very vexed that he said, "Never mind, I'll pay you for this." That seeing Mr. Jifkins coming to the estate next day he thought he was to be flogged, and therefore came to prefer his grievance.

Lieutenant Jifkins states, that living in the neighbourhood, he is acquainted with the character of the negro Adam; that the negroes on the adjoining estates, and of L'Espérance in particular, are in great dread of him; and the present complaint having remained uninquied into for some time, feels confident that no negro on the property dares give evidence against him.

The overseer Steiniss:—States, that he was present; and is ready to depose, that the expressions and general conduct of the negro Adam, on the evening complained of, was most insolent.

Examination of the negro Louis, of plantation Friends:—States, that it is the regular custom on the estate to give a task of work in the morning; that on the 11th instant he

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