

Domestic manners and social condition of the white, coloured, and negro population of the West Indies by Mrs. Carmichael.

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WEST INDIES.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE NEGRO POPULATION.

Negro food—Provision-grounds—West India fruits and vegetables, and manner of cooking them—Prices of the produce of provision-grounds—Stock rearing—General returns of provision-grounds—Manner of life of the negro—Negro cookery—Negro children—Singular custom—Succession to property—Love of barter.

EVERY field negro has two pounds of excellent salt fish served out weekly, and head people have four pounds. A pound and a half is allowed for every child, from the day of its birth until twelve years of age, when full allowance is given. This is the most favourite food of the negro, and they prefer it to salt beef or pork, a small piece of which they relish occa-

sionally. They have (besides the garden which I have already described as being attached to their house) a portion of ground at a short distance from the negro houses. In this ground they plant provisions; chiefly plantain and Banana trees. Two full grown bunches of plantains are worth from 4*s.* to 4*s.* 6*d.* sterling, if bought wholesale, but by retail they are exactly double the price. A bunch contains no certain number of plantains, but a good full bunch will seldom exceed thirty or forty plantains, and seldom fall short of twenty. One hundred plantains is considered by a negro, along with salt fish, as much as he can consume in a week. The plantain and yam are to the negro, what the potatoe is to the lower classes in Britain. Every good plantain tree yields one perfect bunch annually; when this is taken off, the tree must be cut down to the ground, and in the following year, two or three other trees sprout from the old stock, and they each yield their bunch. Thus every successive year the crop is increased with great rapidity.

The banana is cultivated precisely in the same way, and yields the same increase; its value, also, being nearly the same as the plantain. Negroes have the bread-fruit-tree in their grounds, one good tree of which will bear more than a hundred heads annually,—each head being worth from 3*d.* to 8*d.* according to its size. Yams are planted by cuttings, in the same way as the English potatoe. They are of the clematis tribe: strong stakes are driven in to support them, although some negroes allow them to creep upon the ground like strawberry plants. The root of the yam is often larger than a white-globe turnip, but generally of an elongated irregular shape.

There are great varieties of yams—Portuguese, Guinea, water, white, and the cush-cush yam. Some few, when boiled, are of a deep purple, but a colour resembling a dry English potatoe is the most common. The cush-cush yam is the smallest and most delicate. They are a very farinaceous vegetable. The tania is a root something of the size of a potatoe,—

resembling it also in colour; it is farinaceous, though not so much so as the yam.

The eddoe root is at times cultivated, but it also grows wild: it nearly resembles the tania; is doubly useful, as its leaves make an excellent substitute for spinach, similar to calialou; in fact it is a more delicate vegetable than English spinach. The sweet-cassada is a farinaceous root, resembling the carrot only in shape, for in colour and taste it is more like the yam; it is of very quick growth, and gives immense returns. These are the principal roots cultivated in the negro provision-grounds: their value is all nearly alike, and one dollar's worth of any of the above roots is, in point of sustenance, equal to one dollar's worth of plantains. These fruits and roots come into use at different seasons; but I take their value from the time of the year when they are abundant, for at the season when they are rare, they are sold at a considerable advance in price. The cassada, or cassavi, is a root of great value. When unprepared, or even when the juice is extracted from

this root, it is deadly poison both to man and to the brute creation. After being drawn out of the ground, it is scraped clean and washed, then grated; for which process the negroes have graters of a large size. The juice is afterwards expressed, by means of pressing the grated cassada in a bag or strainer, made for the purpose. After being dried in the sun, it is put into a large pan (which is a fixture, in general supplied by every estate for the use of the negroes), and a fire is made underneath this pan; then putting in the grated cassada, they turn it frequently for some time, until it becomes as dry as kiln-dried oatmeal, and it is then a very wholesome article of food, and is known by the name of farine. The juice expressed from the grated cassada is saved; and being allowed to settle, it precipitates to the bottom a very white paste-like substance. The water is then poured off, and this substance is put out upon plates or large plantain leaves, in the sun, when it dries, becomes hard, and forms excellent starch, which sells for about 8*d.* the quart bottle.

Farine sells from 4*s.* to 8*s.* per bushel, according to the season.

Negroes cultivate a variety of the pulse tribe in their grounds—Lima beans, which sell at about 6*d.* per dish;—the common kidney, or French bean, as known in England, is used both in the pod and in the bean. The gub-agub, or black-eyed pea, is also excellent; and the value of all these is the same as the Lima bean. English peas they do not like; but many cultivate them for the market;—they are worth 2*s.* a dish. They come into season in the end of December, and are quite out by the end of June. English cabbage, also, is cultivated merely for sale; it is worth from 4*d.* to even 8*d.* per head. Turnips and carrots are never used by negroes; but many raise them, also, for the market. Three, or at most four, turnips or carrots, fetch 6*d.* sterling. Onions will not grow in St. Vincent, nor in several other colonies; but shalots thrive well, and they make a good substitute: they are sold at about 1*d.* for a small bunch. The tomata comes to great per-

fection, and the negroes use a great deal of it in soup—they are worth about 2*d.* sterling per dozen. Pumpkins grow luxuriantly: of these the negro is fond, but he raises them, also, for sale: they are worth from 2*d.* to 4*d.* The pigeon-pea is an uncommonly nice vegetable: its cultivation is easy, and every estate is full of pigeon-pea bushes. The plant is not unlike our laburnum, and the pods and peas are of that size. They bear so richly, that a negroe can pick in ten minutes as many peas as would serve for soup for dinner to four or five grown persons; and if he choose to sell them, he would get from 4*d.* to 6*d.* according to the season. Calialou may be called the spinage of the West Indies; and is a favourite vegetable with white, coloured, and black. From 1*d.* to 2*d.* will buy as much of it as is necessary for soup for four or five persons. Christophine is more properly a fruit, as it grows upon a vine; it is planted about November, by means of burying the bean, which is found inside the fruit. The bean is put at the root of a high tree—in a few

months it climbs to the top, and in six months is covered with a constant succession of fruit, known by the name of Christophine in general, though the name varies in different colonies. The fruit is somewhat like a pear—is shaped irregularly, ribbed, and of a light pea green; and sometimes, mashed like turnips, it is simply boiled; sometimes it is made into good soup, and is worth 2*d.* per dish. In taste, it resembles sea-kale. The fruit of the papaw tree, when unripe, is good either boiled or mashed as turnips: it grows in such great abundance, that it will fetch no price. When ripe, the papaw is sometimes sold—two large ones for a penny: in size it is equal to an English melon. Cucumbers grow abundantly, and are peculiarly excellent in the West Indies; they are so plentiful that they will not sell in season, but out of season they will fetch a penny each. Negroes are fond of them, and taking the skin off, they eat them as we would an apple; nor are they ever found to disagree with them.

Sweet pot herbs are at all times to be found

in the negro's ground: sweet marjoram grows luxuriantly; thyme is more difficult to rear, but mint, sage, and marjoram grow readily, by merely sticking a sprig in the ground. They sell a good bunch of pot herbs for eight-pence sterling. Every variety of capsicum is to be found upon a West Indian estate; indeed, they are almost a weed; but peppers, nevertheless, are purchased in town with avidity, and I have paid two-pence for a dozen of moderate-sized country peppers: at the height of the season you can get three or four dozen for two-pence.

The fruit-trees upon an estate are, by common consent, the perquisite of the negroes belonging to it. The West Indian islands differ as to their productiveness in fruit; but, generally speaking, there is a great variety of fruits, according to their season; and upon every property the negroes make a considerable sum by the sale of the fruit. The mango is certainly the most abundant. This fruit hangs in such thick clusters, that the produce of one tree is immense. Of the mango, there are many

varieties, but the small ones are the best. Some very small delicate kinds, of a yellow colour, are to be found in the botanic garden at St. Vincent: these are most delicious, though their turpentine flavour is disagreeable to those unused to it. The large kidney-shaped green mango is coarse and full of threads; and I know nothing so perfectly resembling it in taste as a coarse field carrot, with the addition of a small portion of turpentine and sugar. Mangoes are said to produce leprosy; and I have observed that negroes who eat many of them are very liable to cutaneous diseases. The alligator pear is a pleasant wholesome fruit, larger than our largest English pears, with two seeds inside: when ripe, it is soft and mellow, and the inside exactly resembles fine yellow butter. It is from this that it is often called subaltern's butter. It is generally eaten for breakfast, either with sugar and lime juice, or with salt and pepper. The negroes are very fond of the alligator pear, and generally call it the zabaca pear. They sell three large ones,

when in season, for a penny. The sappadillo tree produces a fruit larger, but in colour and flavour very like the English medlar. This fruit is not so abundant, and sells for ten-pence per dozen, or thereabouts. There are several sorts of plum trees—the Jamaica, the hog plum, and varieties of the Java plum. These fruits are highly astringent; and eaten freely, must be dangerous. During the season they are to be had in abundance, for a mere trifle. The mountain-pear is one of the best, if not the very best fruit of the West Indies. The plant is a cactus, and the negroes have it in their grounds, and sell it often for a penny each. It is in size something similar to a ripe fig; of an olive green and red colour outside, and its inside resembles a mixture of salt and ground pepper, from its numerous small black seeds. It is always cool, and may be eaten in almost any quantity, without danger. Melons are often raised in negro grounds: they grow without any attention, further than putting the seed

in the ground. They are worth from four-pence to eight-pence each, according to their size, which is often immense. Pines are every where found on the provision-grounds: they grow like a weed, and the poorer the soil, the better is the pine. I have bought them for a penny, and have also paid for a very large one, out of season, as much as a shilling sterling. Grapes are also found; but they are generally cultivated by the coloured or free-negro population. They resemble the large Portugal grape as imported here from Portugal and Spain. They would be of the best quality, were they suffered to remain long enough upon the vine; but the depredation among them, and the injury they sustain from insects, are so great, that they cut the fruit prematurely, and the grapes consequently are seldom to be had so good as we find them raised in a hot-house at home. In point of beauty, however, there is no comparison; for the bunches are exceedingly fine, and the grapes of a very large size. About two shillings per lb. is the common price. The white muscat of

Alexandria, is the common grape: purple ones are very rare indeed.

Maize, known in England by the name of Indian corn, is a great source of wealth among the slaves, and also of personal comfort. With maize he feeds his poultry, and occasionally his hogs before he kills them. When green he roasts it, and in this state it is excellent; when ripe and dried in the sun, he grinds it (and there is always a mill on every estate), and uses it either as meal to bake for cakes, or he boils it into a sort of pottage. There is not one slave upon an estate who cannot raise an abundance of these fruits, roots, and vegetables—far more than he can use for his own consumption. The great majority of negroes have their grounds fully stocked; some however, are lazy and will not work their grounds to the extent that they might do; while run-a-ways do no work at all, either for their masters or themselves, and live by plundering the provision-grounds of industrious negroes. There is not an instance of a negro who works well for his

owner, who has not his provision-grounds in the greatest order, and full of all sorts of supplies, both for himself and the market. Every individual has his own ground, and every mother has a fixed portion more for each child. In St. Vincent, Saturday from twelve at noon is allowed them to work their grounds, or else the whole day once every fortnight. Sunday is their own the whole year round. The half Saturday every week, or the whole every fortnight, is not given during crop time; otherwise no sugar could be made on Friday, Saturday, or Monday. For the sugar made on Friday must be potted on the following morning, and canes cut on Friday would be sour by Monday morning; the canes must be cut either the preceding night, or at most not more than twenty-four hours before they are ground in the mill. This, however, is no real loss to the negro; for after January, the principal season for preparing the ground for the reception of plants and roots is over, until the end of June, when the showers become frequent. During the dry months

little or nothing can be done; and what is planted, seldom or ever lives. If it does survive, it does not come to such maturity as to be of good quality; but in general the soil is so dry that the root or seed dies in the ground. This I know from my own experience and the negroes' information, upon this subject; and I feel certain that were Saturday given to them once a fortnight during the hot season, it would be put to very bad use.

Besides, if the crop time brings some little increase of work, it brings also its privileges and pleasures, and like harvest in Scotland, it is a very merry season. There is a regular contention who is to cut the last cane, and when this is done the rest of the day is spent in mirth and jollity. The mule boys dress themselves in ribbons, and as there is generally a fiddler upon the estate, he leads the procession up to the proprietor's, or if absent, the manager's, who provides wherewithal to make them merry. The women, who are well dressed, dance before the door, singing their wild

choruses of joy at the last cane being cut. The evening is ended by a general dance; and to the credit of the slaves, intoxication rarely appears among them.

During crop time, every slave may have as much hot and cold liquor as he chooses, and they have only to ask for a calibash full of rich syrup or some sugar, and they receive it. Those who are not inclined to intoxication, are never refused a little rum when they wish for it. There cannot be a more mistaken notion than that negroes generally dislike crop time; every good negro enjoys it; and as for lazy bad characters, they dislike working, whether for their master or themselves, and their only pleasure is sleeping away life. There is not a negro who cannot easily accumulate his 30*l*. sterling every year, and very many save much more. Besides, they procure bread, salt pork, salt beef, mackerel, corned fish, cakes or other nice things. For these they do not pay the value in money, but they barter their provisions.

Another source of the gains of the slave popu-

lation is their stock. They rear great quantities of fowls, and many rear ducks; guinea birds too, are generally raised by both the coloured and free negro population. They fatten a great number of pigs, and full grown hogs; indeed, many colonial markets are almost wholly supplied by the slaves. Pork of a most superior quality may be had two or three times a week, and always of a Sunday. Negroes also rear goats and kids for sale in abundance. When they kill a hog, they are very loathe to sell the head and feet; and if you wish for these, you must coax them as for a favour. These parts they keep for a treat to themselves. When I lived in St. Vincent, pork sold at eightpence sterling per. lb. A pig fit for roasting, fourteen shillings sterling. A chicken, two shillings. A full grown fowl, from three and sixpence to four and sixpence. A pair of ducks, twelve and sixpence. Arrow root, which I had almost forgotten to mention, is made in abundance by the negroes, and is prepared, nearly in the same way as the starch,

from the root of the manioe. It sells at two shillings, or thereabouts, the quart bottle, and can always be had in the coloured hucksters' shops.

The guava bush is indigenous to most of the islands of the West Indies, and every estate is more or less over-run with guavas. The St. Vincent guavas are considered of a very fine quality, and when stewed with sugar, are not unlike the flavour of a strawberry; at least, those who sigh for home, try to fancy this. Negroes pick them and sell them cheap enough when in season, which is from May to September. A great quantity of this fruit is made into jelly by coloured free women. The negro children hurt themselves much by eating too freely of the raw guava, which is a very tempting fruit for them, but particularly injurious. When I say that any industrious negro may save 30*l.* sterling yearly with ease, I really mean save; for besides this, he will purchase all those little articles he requires,—candles, soap, now and then salt pork and beef, &c.

besides plenty of fine dresses for himself, his wife or wives, and children; for good negroes have no small pride in dressing their family, as they call it, "handsome."

There are few estates which are not situate in the vicinity of some river. These streams abound in mullet, cray fish—resembling a small lobster, eels, and mud fish. The negroes are not prevented from having the full benefit of fishing; and I have many a time paid a slave eighteen pence for fresh-water fish, which he had caught and brought to town during the two hours allotted for his dinner. I once asked a negro who brought me some mullet in this way, how he managed to have anything to eat and catch fish also? He immediately informed me, "he wife cook a victual, no him;" at the same time apparently astonished at my supposing that he could be so silly as not to have a wife to cook for him.

I have now enumerated many of the different methods by which slaves not only live well, and purchase fine clothing; but some a great

deal of it. I am the better able to do this from having lived in town, where I was regularly supplied with all the fruits, roots, vegetables, poultry, eggs, pork, and also goat and kid, by the negro slaves, and from having walked again and again over the provision-grounds of estates. By these means I saw the whole system fully and experimentally developed. The slave may be perfectly idle, and yet he is supported. The British labourer strains every nerve to live. The slave is provided for without anxiety on his part; the object he has in view is not to live, but to save, and get rich. A wife and family are often a serious burden to the British labourer; and, in order to support them, he is frequently obliged to seek pecuniary aid from the parish. A wife and family are the greatest possible advantage to a slave, for his master supplies them with every thing: his wife washes and cooks, the children soon begin to assist the mother, and they all work in their garden and grounds, and reap a great annual crop of different kinds.

I shall now go on to describe the daily fare of the estates' negroes, beginning with the head people—that is, drivers, boiler-men, coopers, carpenters, masons, &c. These have their breakfast boiled generally the preceding evening. The mess consists of green plantains, eddoes or yam, made into soup, with an abundance of creole peas or beans, or the eddoe leaf, the calialou, or perhaps a plant which grows indigenous, and particularly among the canes; it is known by the name of weedy-weedy; I never could learn that there was any other appellation for it: it also nearly resembles spinach. This soup is seasoned with salt fish, and occasionally, as a change, with a bit of salt pork. The soup is boiled very thoroughly, and forms a substantial mess, being of the consistency of thick potatoe soup. It is well spiced with country peppers; and cooked, as they cook it, is a most excellent dish indeed. All the various soups, whether tancias, calialou, pigeon pea, or pumpkin, are to be found almost daily at the tables of the white population, whose children

are almost fed upon those messes. I never met with an European who did not relish all the different creole soups, or, as they are often called, "negro pot."

Dinner is not a regular meal with them: a roasted yam, or plantain, and a bit of salt fish roasted on the coals with it, is their repast between twelve and two, which are their dinner hours.

The wives of the head people eat the same breakfast, &c. with the husband; for, although he may have many wives, yet there is only one who regularly lives with him, and manages the household. The children, if in the young gang, breakfast with the parents; and the children of such people get soup, along with roasted yam, a plantain, or sweet cassada. At noon-time they get farine, cassada, plantain cake, or roasted corn, &c. The drink of all such families of a morning is either melasses, syrup, or sugar and water; and, during crop-time, they often take, and may always have, hot liquor, which is the hot cane juice, before it begins to thicken and

attain the consistency of syrup. When head people conduct themselves properly, they have an allowance of rum given them, sufficient to mix them a glass or two of weak grog daily.

Supper is their chief meal, and their soup, although the principal dish, is not the only one: they often have tum-tum—made of plantains boiled quite soft, and beat in a wooden mortar,—it is eaten like a potatoe pudding; at other times the plantain, after being beaten soft, is made up into round cakes, and fried. Ripe plantains roasted is another dish, but they are best sliced and fried, and, indeed, are superior to apple fritters. Pigeon peas, stewed with a little bit of salt fish or salt pork, with the addition of country peppers and sweet herbs, is another supper dish. In fact it would require almost a volume to enumerate all their different modes of dressing their provisions. Sweet cassada, roasted, is excellent; and when they kill a hog, which they all do three or four times a year, besides the pigs which they sell, they keep the head of the hog, and dress it in

the following manner:—The head and feet being cleaned, and made quite white, they are boiled until soft in strong salt and water, or, if near the sea, in sea water. The meat is then picked off the head, and, being cut up in small pieces, it is placed, along with the feet, in a deep vessel; and, when cold, immersed in water well salted, lime juice sufficient to acidulate it, and plenty of country peppers. It will keep good for a week at least, which renders it a very convenient dish. It is eaten cold; and the sauce, with a bit of cassada cake, or farine, soaked in it, is liked by every one. The dish is well known in the West Indies by the name of *souse*, and is a favourite with all.

Negroes are fond of turtle: it is the cheapest meat in the market, and they occasionally buy it; but it is by no means a favourite dish with the majority of the white population, and many will not eat it. Excepting in November, December, and January, negroes have plenty of eggs: they rarely or ever eat them, but sell them at three and four for fourpence sterling:

in the scarce season they are sometimes as dear as twopence a-piece. These they often barter for food, such as fresh or corned fish. Jack-fish they are very fond of.

All negroes understand well the composition of sausages; and although they most commonly dispose of them, I have often had sausages made a present of to me by different slaves. Their poultry is so abundant, that they do not grudge, upon any little merry-making, to kill a few fowls and roast them; and they occasionally make fowl soup, with a bit of salt pork added. Fresh meat, without something salt to eat along with it, has no charms for a negro.

The common field negro has not soup so often for breakfast as the head people. A roasted yam or plantain, or farine with lime juice, salt, and pepper, satisfies him; followed by some sweet, and generally hot beverage, as drink. Generally speaking, his dinner and supper will be found little, if at all inferior, to the head people's; but he has not grog so often as they have, whose work, particularly that of the

boiler-men, is more severe. Few negroes think of cleaning and washing the pans they cook in, or the dishes or calabashes they eat out of. These are almost always left uncleaned until required again. The same practice obtains in a gentleman's kitchen; and it is in vain to expect to find any utensil clean when required. Negroes have always plenty of fuel: when they go to their grounds they bring down a load, twice generally, each day they are there. Occasionally during the week they are permitted to go up and bring down wood, and see that all is right in their provision grounds.

Children who are too young to be employed, are all brought up by women, whose sole office is to take care of them. The elder children look after those who are younger; while the nurse, at other times, makes them pick a little wood to boil their victuals with. They return to their parents at night, but not until then. Their food is given by the manager to the nurse, and consists of a good breakfast of either well boiled soup, or at times rice, boiled

with a little sprig of salt fish, or else boiled down to a thick gruel with sugar. Sucking infants have either arrow root or flour pap, and at times bread boiled to pap, and sweetened. Many estates get out oatmeal for the use of the youngest children: the sick negroes also are very fond of gruel sweetened with sugar. Oatmeal forms also excellent food for the children who are too young to eat the creole soups. There is always a plantain walk, with plantains, yams, and other provisions, for the use of the children in the nursery, and for the sick or aged. Such children have creole soup well boiled, generally with fish; but for a change occasionally, with Irish mess, beef, or pork, which is in store upon every estate for the purpose. They have soup again at dinner, and generally roast plantains, yams, sweet cassada, &c. At different times of the day, when they deserve it, they have sugar or melasses and water for drink. The woman who has the care of them, keeps them together all day in a building appropriated for them,

out of the sun. It is her business to keep them clean, and to see that no chigres are permitted to remain on their feet, so as to produce sores.* These women are far kinder to the children than I ever knew any of the negro mothers to be, and the infant invariably shews more affection for the nurse than for its parent. I have seen a negro nurse quite proud of her little charges,—teaching them to make a curtsy, and answer politely; and she always keeps them good humoured, by dancing and singing to them. The arrangement of the children upon a West Indian estate is most gratifying, for every want and comfort is minutely attended to; in case of sickness, they are handed over to the nurse or nurses in the hospital.

Negro children are brought up altogether

* Chigres are a sand flea, which penetrate under the skin of the feet, but particularly the toes. As soon as they accomplish this, an itching sensation is felt, when the chigre ought to be removed by means of a needle breaking the skin. No uneasiness follows; but should this precaution be neglected, the insect breeds in the toe, and produces sometimes dreadful sores.

differently from European infants; and however strange the mode may appear, I have seen such fine healthy robust infants treated in the way I am about to describe, that I feel no hesitation in believing it to be perfectly adapted to the climate. The mother, unless in cases where sickness prevents, always suckles her own child. For the first fortnight the nurse gives it no spoon food,—but from that time it gets two meals a day, of arrow root, or pap of some kind or other. Every third or fourth day she gives it a tea-spoonful of castor oil, and bathes it morning and evening in cold water. After completely immersing it two or three times in the water, the nurse takes the baby, and holding it by the right leg only, she suspends it thus for about a second; she then suspends it by the left leg, next by the right arm, then by the left one, shaking each joint apparently very roughly; and last of all taking the infant, she throws it up into the air, catching it very adroitly. They consider this the best and only method of making the baby's joints firm and

supple. At first the child cries when this operation is performed, but it soon becomes used to it, laughs and enjoys it amazingly. If an infant cry after it has been for some time washed in this way, they say, "he good for noting at all, he coward too much." Every mother has time allowed her in the morning to wash, dress, and suckle her infant—that is, when she again returns from her confinement to work. The nurse keeps the baby, and attends upon the mother from three to four weeks, as may be requisite. One or more nurses are required for the estate, according to the number and ages of those in the nursery.

At five or six months' old these children all eat the creole soup, even pretty well seasoned with country peppers. A negro mother would think it downright starvation if you were to deny her child salt fish; and it is quite common to see a little child of a few months old, sucking a great piece of fish or salt pork. I have often tried negro children with fowl soup, but I never found that they could be persuaded to

eat it. Infants are never weaned before they are fifteen or sixteen months, and rarely so early: they are often great robust children, following their mother all over the estate before they are weaned.

Old negroes rarely or ever live alone, and are never at a loss for some one to cook for them. If they have a god-child resident upon the estate, they always perform this duty: their allowances of food are the same as the working people. Should they be so infirm as no longer to be able to cultivate their provision-grounds, they get some of the young people to do this; whom they pay for their trouble, not in money, but in a given portion of the produce of their grounds. These old people are always fond of rearing poultry; and I have known many who were so bent down with old age as never to stir fifty yards from the door of their dwelling, raise great numbers of fowls of all kinds.

Such people are always treated with much kindness, and they are often employed in getting rice, oatmeal, and plantain from the plantain

walk ; or something to make them comfortable in their old age. I have frequently visited invalids and aged slaves ; and I never found one who was not comfortably housed, clothed, and well provided with food ; neither can I recollect, with the exception of one, any instance where they did not manage, in some way or other, to make a little money, and this one had made money when young. At Christmas, Irish mess, beef, flour, or rice, sugar and rum are served out. At this season, all head people receive, 3lbs. of pork, 8lbs. of flour or rice, two quarts of sugar, and a bottle of rum. Head domestics receive the same ; and although it is optional, yet there are few, if any of these people who do not also get some Madeira and porter to add to their good cheer. It is very common also at Christmas to kill an ox, when a portion of fresh animal food is distributed. Field people have 4lbs. of pork, 4lbs. of flour, two quarts of sugar, and a bottle of rum. Children under twelve years of age have half allowance ; above that age, they have the same as the full

grown people. The women and children prefer receiving sugar instead of rum. Serving out the Christmas provisions is a time of great merriment ; the negroes powder each other over with flour, and there is a complete scene of romping among the young people.

It is not easy to give a description of the food provided for the sick, for their diet must depend upon the nature of the disease ; but neither trouble nor expense is spared to procure the very best for them, and the quantity of fowls and chickens purchased for the sick is enormous. There is often a great deal of wine used, besides porter. Rice, arrow root, sago, and bread, are all articles commonly used in the hospital ; but should the proprietor be resident, the invalids are very often fed from his table, and their victuals at all events cooked in the master's kitchen.

There was nothing surprised me more than the liberality with which the convalescent slaves are treated ; and any comparison between their comforts, and the comforts of the labouring

classes in Britain, mutually circumstanced, would be absurd. Before going abroad, I had lived a good deal in the country, and was pretty accurately acquainted with the comforts enjoyed by ploughmen and their families, in counties nearly adjoining to Edinburgh, and also by the lower classes in that city. Since I returned to England, I have made many inquiries upon this subject, and the result of the investigation has left no doubt in my mind of the superior comforts hitherto enjoyed by slaves, most particularly during sickness and convalescence. Should a slave be unable, from bad health or any other cause, to work his provision-grounds, another negro is always appointed by his master to cultivate them for him; so that the slave is never permitted to be a sufferer, should he be laid aside by indisposition.

In St. Vincent, provision-grounds near town are not so productive in proportion as those farther from Kingstown, where the estates have not been so long under cultivation. The soil of the latter is very fertile,—producing amazing

crops, with hardly any labour, particularly those in the Charaib country. The negroes on those estates have occasionally the use of their proprietors' drogher (a small vessel for conveying sugars to Kingstown to be shipped for England), to carry their plantains to town for sale; and also the carts to bring them from the grounds to the beach. This I have heard many Charaib country negroes describe: their plantains are separately marked by the manager, who when he is in town receives the payment, and upon his return gives it to the people. I have known a manager receive at one time 270*l.* sterling for the surplus plantain crop of the slaves, besides what they personally consumed and gave to their hogs. This was an estate too where there was no resident proprietor; and the manager nevertheless took quite as great an interest in the well-being of the negroes, as if they had been his own people. Such instances as these are continually occurring, and it is right that they should be known to the world.

Slaves upon those estates which are situated in the neighbourhood of a colonial town, have many ways of making money which those who are distant from a town do not possess. English vegetables, and Guinea grass in particular, yield great profits. Guinea grass grows very readily, and a small bundle sells for twopence. A horse requires six of these bundles in the twenty-four hours, besides oats three times a day. All the families resident in Kingstown, have their horses supplied with Guinea grass, from the negroes belonging to the estates in Kingstown valley. Many also of the slaves cut and sell wood, which is worth thirteen pence per bundle, while others deal in charcoal. Their dealing in the latter article is, however, strictly forbidden by law. Still the negroes persist in it; and whenever it appears in the market, it is impossible to tell whether the charcoal was made from wood, stolen by a slave, or whether it was made by free negroes, who lawfully purchased the wood wherewith to make it.

It is sometimes necessary to remove the provision grounds upon an estate; but six months' warning is always given, and the produce of the new ground is in season before they quit the old ones. Such removal happens very rarely—perhaps not once in twenty or thirty years; but still when it does occur, it is done with perfect justice to all parties. There cannot be a remark more devoid of truth, than that the property of slaves is not respected, for I have abundant evidence that the reverse is the case. In the event of death, they understand very well who is the legal heir or heirs, failing all blood relations, when the god-child or god-children succeed. I have always observed that there was the greatest accuracy and attention in regard to those points; and strange as it may appear, considering what notorious thieves negroes are, they are not prone to steal from the house of the deceased, though it is often the custom for the proprietor or manager to lock up the effects of a slave, unless the heir be upon the spot to receive them. I recollect,

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not very long after I had been in the West Indies, a young female domestic of ours asked permission to go to an estate full twenty miles off; adding that her god-father was dead, and they had sent for her to get what he had left, for he had no other one, as she expressed it, "to own it." I had heard it in England so constantly asserted, that the property of slaves was not respected, and that the proprietor or manager, in the event of their death, claimed all, that when she told me this story, I gave no credit to it; but, upon applying to her master, he informed me it was like most other home stories—without a shadow of truth. The servant, therefore, was permitted to go, and returned the third day with ostensible proofs of her being indeed the heir; for she led an immense pig along with her, and had a large quantity of yams. The other property, being rather more bulky than she could readily remove, she sold upon the estate; and had, as she said, got some "leetle ting" (some money) for it. She had not, however, been proof

against the charms of a scarlet waistcoat, which she brought home with her as too pretty an article of dress to part with. Negro slaves have no idea that any one would or could doubt their legal right to their own property; they often sell provisions without receiving the payment until it amounts to a certain sum; and they rather prefer taking a few dollars at one time. Indeed those slaves who sell Guinea grass are seldom or ever paid oftener than once a week, and frequently only once a month. Were their rights as men not respected, they would act very differently; but they know by experience that there is not a white person who does not, both practically and theoretically, consider a debt due to a slave as much his bounden duty to pay, as if it had been contracted to a white or coloured free person.

I recollect a female domestic who died in our house. She was a young woman of indifferent character, and had had several husbands, but would never settle—always idle, and a great runaway. She left no children; and upon her

death-bed, her elder sister took undisturbed possession of her wardrobe; for that was her all, as she had been so indifferent and indolent a character. None of her former husbands claimed her property, and her sister took it. On all these subjects negro slaves are by no means ignorant as to how they ought to act: they are perfectly aware of their rights, and have undisturbed possession of them.

I trust my readers are convinced that negro slaves have abundance of food; and that, although it is different from the usual victuals of either English, Scotch, or Irish working people, it is wholesome and nutritious. This I can assert, that negroes greatly prefer it to the common food of the working classes of Great Britain. I have often tried, and never yet found one negro who liked an English potatoe; and I have often seen them put them aside, when they had been left from their master's table, or throw them to the fowls or pigs, expressing astonishment that any one could eat them.

Slaves, who are domestics to families in town, have money instead of their allowances;—none have less than half a dollar, and none more than a round dollar, weekly. They always have two meals a day from table, so that the greater part of this allowance is saved. Servants also have their clothes washed, or if females, the materials for washing allowed them. They have candles also; and as they cook in their master's kitchen, they are at no expense for fuel. They get a little sugar daily for beverage, and a head man servant either has his grog daily, or a bottle of rum weekly. All negroes prefer having provision-grounds, for by them they make much more than a dollar weekly. Town servants very frequently keep pigs; and there are none who do not rear poultry, there being always some court-yard about the servants' houses.

Negro servants have all a great turn for barter, and readily perceive any opportunity of turning it to advantage. I recollect B—, (whom I have more than once mentioned) going

down to Trinidad: when he returned, I happened to go into his house an hour or two after, when I saw a cloth full of blue for washing. I inquired of his wife what she was going to do with such a quantity of blue; when she informed me that B—— had bought it in the market, at *Port au Spain*, for two dollars and a half, but it would sell in Kingstown market for four dollars: and some time after, when he made a second visit to Trinidad, he brought up more than twice as much of the same article, and also a quantity of starch, and he gained a very good profit. But upon an estate, negroes are so accustomed to receive the necessaries of life, without even thinking of them, that they feel more independent in that than in any other situation; although pride operates so powerfully upon some of them, that to be called a head-servant is a great attraction, as adding to their consequence.