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RECOLLECTIONS OF A WEST-INDIAN HOME AND SLAVE-INSURRECTION*

Dora Richards Miller (1835–1914)

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That November morning, when Columbus on his second voyage sailed into the Caribbean through the avenue of islands, he touched at one called by the native Caribs "Ay-Ay",[1] and carried some of them captives to Spain. The first half of this century[2] was closing, when in the thought of the child sitting at evening by that equatorial sea, see the old Carib name that answered to assent in our Saxon speech, seemed like the eternal "ays"[3] of

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[1] Ay-Ay was the Taíno (indigenous Arawakan) name for St. Croix, or for Salt River, St. Croix. The original meaning of the word is probably 'the river' (Highfield 2018: 30 f.). Salt River is an area located on the north shore of St. Croix; it is believed to be the site of the landing of Columbus in 1493 (for further details, cf. Highfield 2018: 513).

[2] The 19th century. Miller's account is set in 1848.

[3] Yes.

God to some high spirit who had asked for the creation of such a pearl of the ocean. To the vision of the young dreamer, all that was told by poet or prophet of a possible heaven was comprehensible, as the daily transfiguration of light and color, scintillated between wave and cloud. A sea of turquoise-blue, "like unto crystal and the trees bearing all
[2]
manner of fruits",[4] were they not here visible realities? Which was more lovely or more real, the delicate emerald of distant hills, or these opaline ranges that rose from the sea in the pomp of each day's decline? Color everywhere; fruits were crimson gold and purple; fish were palpitating masses of orange, blue and pink; shells were of rose and pearl. Sky and water; foliage and flower; bird and butterfly repeated the splendor. Everywhere the same beauty of form, the same rainbow hues, the same golden light, and round all the wooing, whispering sea creeping to the feet in the ordered rhythm of its mysterious tides. The island was the largest of the Virgin group. At the land edge of the beach that girdles it the plumed palm trees stood sentinel and mingled their fainter rustle with the wave music and the curious note
[3]
of the Thibet-trees[5] as their long, dry pods vibrated like castanets in the wind of evening. Upon that beach what treasure of strange creations! Here, a sponge with slim bearing five cups, there, a sea-fan airy enough for a Mermaid large enough for a Titan. Red-lipped shells fit for Nereides[6] to float on, homes of dead sea-creatures who had decorated them as never artists could, mystical eye-stones scattered broadcast, blushing shell-petals roseate as if fresh from the rose-garden of earth heaped in rocky nooks, and walking leisurely among these, crabs, that for brilliancy and variety of tint outdid all conchological painting. Why did the Rector preach of this as a fallen and degraded world? The statement woke the first daring question against the competence of a teacher, for those were empty words indeed when the sunset glory seemed almost too much for human vision, and the young heart trembled before its ineffable suggestions. But all this was the ocean world, turning inland earth had other charms to fix
[4]

[4] Paraphrase of Revelation 22: 2.
[5] *Pithecellobium saman* (cf. Valls 1981: 71).
[6] Sea nymphs in Greek mythology.

the gaze, as one's pony travelled over a road lined each side with majestic palm- and cocoa-nut trees, the grey satin trunks of the former gleaming in the sun or moonlight, as turned aside into a tangled dill[7] where a silver thread of water leaped through the verdure. On one side the tall mahogany trees[8] cast down their woody pears with a dull thud on another, the Sand-box[9] and calabash-trees[10] rattled their huge fruit like barbarian creatures preparing for battle. Here, the Banyan[11] dropped its curious ropes like anchors to earth, and, at a little distance, the Tamarind[12] wave waved its feathery streams like the pennone[13] of our earth-ship[14], and was strongly contrasted with the sturdy caoutchou[15] and breadfruit[16]. Here and there a clump of the deadly manchineel[17] made the air heavy with the luscious perfume of its poisonous apples, while perhaps not far off the banana rustled its cool leaves and the bamboo swung its long canes with sinuous[18] grace.

[5]

In such a ride if one came upon a little stream winding down to the sea, the black washerwomen would be seen beetling[19] clothing, on flat stones, with huge wooden paddles, or beetles, as they were called. Then to turn the horses' heads to the hills and fly with exhilarating leaps to the top of Blue

[7] Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) is an annual, erect herb up to three feet high. Dill is commonly used as a kitchen herb and is frequently cultivated.
[8] *Swietenia mahagoni.*
[9] *Hura crepitans.*
[10] *Crescentia cujete.*
[11] A Banyan tree is a tree characterized by the visibility of its roots, related to the fig (*Ficus*). The name can refer to a number of trees within the subgenus *Urostigma*.
[12] The tamarind tree (*Tamarindus indica*) is a tree bearing edible fruit that is indigenous to tropical Africa. The tamarind tree produces pod-like fruit that contains an edible pulp used in cuisines around the world.
[13] Pennon – a flag borne on a ship.
[14] The earth, regarded figuratively as a ship.
[15] The caoutchouc tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*) is common in the Amazon. It has fragrant yellow-white flowers and it yields a milky juice that is the chief source of rubber.
[16] The breadfruit tree (*Artocarpus altilis*) is a species of flowering tree. Its huge fruits are edible. It originates from the Pacific.
[17] Allsopp (1996: 367) has "manchineel", an evergreen tree which can exceed 30 feet in height, usually found near the sea or swampy ground; *Hippomane mancinella* (Euphorbiaceae).
[18] Sinuous – having many curves and turns.
[19] Beetling is the pounding of linen or cotton fabric to give a flat, lustrous effect.

Mountain[20] whence the whole Caribbean seemed to unroll its panorama of islands at the feet of the palm-trees, and one saw the breakers curl into noble bays and the rocky cliffs reared against the angry, encroaching wave. Looking northward only the lonely sublimity of nature; looking south toward the harbor of Frederiksted, a wide roadstead where the fleets of a nation might anchor – the scene was enlivened by the presence of men guiding the bird-like boats and black, red-shirted boatmen pushing their smaller barks through phosphorescent foam. Turning east the fields of sugar-cane undulating[21] beneath the ocean-breeze produced the effect of another emerald sea, but
[6]
while one looked trying to print the picture forever on the inner eye of the sudden darkness of the tropic night veiled the fading splendor. A favorite walk was that to Salt-Pond, a tiny mirror of water with a crusted frame of salt curling round its edge like frosted crystal.[22] No one would use the salt, because there was a tradition that the Spaniards had poisoned it, by sinking into it a couple of brass cannons. All about it grew the peculiar sea-side grapes[23], the dark green leaves large and round as a dessert-plate, the fruit realizing to the full the expression "the blood of the grape", for the juice more nearly resembled in color and consistency fresh human blood than probably any other liquid the world can show. A walk to Salt-Pond generally ended by a call at the neighboring plantation or sugar estate where the usual courtesy was to offer silver spoons and invite the guests to eat of the hot "Sling"[24] and sugar just crystallizing in the seething cauldron; great wooden coolers as they were
[7]

[20] Blue Mountain is a peak in St. Croix.
[21] Undulate – to form or move in waves.
[22] In the Virgin Islands, the term salt pond refers to "[a] pool used for obtaining salt by the natural evaporation of sea water" (Valls 1981: 50). The "Salt-Pond" referred to by Miller here is most likely the one located south of Frederiksted, close to Sandy Point, known today as Westend Saltpond. Salt pond is a term not only used in the Virgin Islands but also in the wider Caribbean.
[23] Valls (1981: 110 f.): "A tree (*Coccoloba uvifera*) which usually thrives along the sea shore. Fruits grow in grapelike clusters and are made into delicious preserves. When young they are used as an astringent. Also known simply as *Grape*. In [Puerto Rico], 'Uva de mar' or 'Uva de playa'. In Jamaica, 'Bay grape'".
[24] Sugarcane syrup (cf. Valls 1981: 114).

called into which the boiling liquid was poured to crystallize. Surely there is no confection on earth that can compare with it! The process of cooling was hastened by setting slaves to work dipping and pouring it from immense ladles with handles four or five feet long. It made a weird scene in the gloom of evening and the wavering light of the fires, as the big, black figures half-clothed, stepped back and forth in the fragrant steam. Very different were the walks and drives in the early morning after a hasty cup of tea. Then the object was usually to gather those delicate blossoms that the fierce sun withered before noon. Or if staying at a friend's estate to get down into the waves for a salt-bath. Whenever a sea-bath was the morning frolic the master always sent a couple of men to the beach some time before to pelt off possible marauding sharks by throwing stones and big shells in rapid succession, then we all went in together. But once we were disappointed
[8]
for two young sharks swam close up and looked at us standing there as if they would leap out to reach us, and their hungry eyes were so unpleasant we went home very fast. At this time King Christian VIII[25] was on the throne of Denmark and to that country the island had belonged, save for an interval of eight years, since 1734 when the Danish King bought it from the Guinea Company.[26] In 1807 it was captured by the English and held by them until 1815 when it was restored to Denmark.[27] But in the two centuries before this, the English and Dutch had held it, then the Spaniards, the

[25] Christian VIII (1786–1848) was King of Denmark from 1839 to 1848.
[26] Miller had the details concerning this part of the island's history wrong. In 1672, through the agency of the Danish West India and Guinea Company, Denmark had founded a permanent colony in St. Thomas. In 1718, the colony was expanded to encompass St. John, which was unoccupied at the time. The second, more significant expansion came in 1733 with the acquisition of St. Croix from France. St. Croix was taken into possession by the Company in 1734. In 1755, not 1734, the Danish Crown took over the Danish West Indies from the Company, which had been dissolved the year before. The shift to Crown colony marked the beginning of St. Croix's core plantation period, lasting until 1848. For further information about the Danish West Indies under Company rule, see the classic study by Westergaard (1917).
[27] In 1800, Denmark became involved in a war with Britain. The following year, British warships appeared near St. Thomas and demanded the Danish West Indies' surrender. This occupation lasted 10 months. In 1807, the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) occasioned a second British occupation. This interregnum lasted until 1815. For a discussion

French, then the Knights of Malta[28], the French again, who then sold it to the Guinea Company by whom it was transferred to the government of Denmark. One might have supposed that a mixture of tongues would have prevailed, but as seems usual wherever it goes, the English language dominated. The Spanish and French were utterly swept away except for a few words retained among the slaves. The Danes
[9]
learned English but the English did not learn Danish. The idea of nationality however became much mixed in a child's mind. When Grandmother told heroic stories of Revolutionary times in America, heard from her husband[29], fired with admiration, the delight of being an American, as it seemed his grandchild must be, was eagerly expressed. But another time the historic glories of England were the theme and then Grandmother said, "Your father and mother were English for she was born while Great Britain owned this island and once a Briton always a Briton". Thus it appeared as if the child of those parents must be English also, yet on alluding to that fact to some Danish playmates, they replied that it was a great mistake, every one born on the island was a Danish subject and must honor King Christian. Grandmother's house was on Kongensgade (King Street) one of
[10]
the main streets running from the walls off an estate that abutted on the southern end of town[30], to the Lagoon[31] and Fort[32] at the northern end. From this fort the evening gun resounded nightly at nine o'clock the signal for every slave to be indoors. Her house was a long, low cottage sloping to this street in front, raised high with extensive grounds at the back. It had been built for her to enter as a bride, at which time her husband was

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of linguistic and cultural changes in the Danish West Indies resulting from these occupation periods, see, for example, Sabino (2012: 74 f.).

[28] The Knights of Malta were a Catholic religious and military order which had possession of St. Croix in the period 1653–1664 (cf. Highfield 2013: 123 ff.).

[29] Author's note: "He had belonged to a family whose name is among those signed to the Declaration" – that is, The United States Declaration of Independence from 1776. Miller's mother was Philomela Huntington, born in St. Croix, in 1806 or 1807. Philomela Huntington's father was Hezekiah Huntington, born 1771, who died between 1800 and 1810. The Huntington family was a prominent family in the USA, especially in Connecticut.

[30] Frederiksted.

[31] Lagoon Street, Frederiksted.

[32] Fort Frederik in Frederiksted, constructed 1752.

wealthy. But now in her widowhood there was only what Emerson[33] has called "plain living and high thinking" in the old house, for the straitened circumstances[34] had been produced by the voluntary sacrifice of property to principles. At her husband's death, the estate left her consisted mainly of slaves whose hired labor or whose sale would have rendered her comfortable. But it was about the time of the abolition movement in England and a clergyman from there, who was imbued with all the fervor of that cause, had come out to take charge of
[11]
the Episcopal Parish. Under his teaching she reached the conviction that no Christian could conscientiously hold slaves. She therefore unfalteringly set them free by due process of law and thus condemned herself and her family to a life of much privation. In the young mind of the child who learned these facts they raised the eternal question of abstract right. Shall we do evil that good may come? Or, shall we do good that evil may come? In Grandmother's case certainly the evil had come, an evil that was far-reaching in its effects not only to her own life but to that of others, while no apparent result upon her peers had accrued from the high souled example; nor to the manumitted slaves, who simply hired their labor to the less scrupulous employers than their mistress would have chosen, grew more worthless each year, and evinced no gratitude to her who had given them the greatest of all gifts. She was pastor L.'s[35] only convert and he soon learned to say little about his views. However to be poor
[12]

[33] Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) was an American essayist and philosopher who led the so-called Transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). The phrase was actually coined by the poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850) in a poem written in 1802 (available online at https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45565/written-in-london-september-1802, accessed 8 May 2024). We have found no evidence for Emerson using this phrase.
[34] Straitened circumstances – not having enough money to pay for necessities.
[35] This most likely refers to Reverend Benjamin Luckock, an English minister who spent some 18 years in the Caribbean – the first in Jamaica, and the last, between 1832 and 1841, in St. Croix, where he was at St. John's Episcopal Church (Cissel 2011: 104; https://www.jamesarsenault.com/pages/books/7956, accessed 7 August 2024). He is believed to be the author of an 1846 book on the history of Jamaica, discussing the negative effects of slavery and the positive aftermath of emancipation, titled *Jamaica: Enslaved and Free*, which was published anonymously in London (Anon. 1846).

in that land did not mean the sordid life it does in most places, so lofty were all the suggestions of nature, so inspiring the beauty of the world. How vividly rises in memory the picture of the central sitting-room in that house! It was not simply fitted with furniture of native mahogany black with age but slightly brightened with brace. In one corner just in the draught from a large window stood a jar that could have held one of Ali Baba's[36] thieves into which trickled with a cool gurgle the water from a huge dripping-stone set in a frame above it, and still above this rose a shelf holding water vessels of the native pottery, their crimson and yellow surfaces all pearled with crystal dew evaporating through the porous clay. A long-handled dipper, silver-rimmed and black as ebony made from a cocoa-nut shell, layd[37] across the park, completed the apparatus for getting water cooled without ice. On a low mahogany Press nearby was piled the remnant of my father's library, "a well of English undefiled"[38] for the young soul trust.
[13]
On the ancient sideboard stood a pair of tall silver candlesticks covered with immense glass shades, to protect the lights at once from the breeze and the insects the flame attracted, and between them was a silver snuffers and stand. A pretty little by-play became connected in memory with these snuffers. Sometimes the daughter of an old friend came with her Danish lover to spend the evening. She was fair and majestic enough to have been the daughter of a Viking and Mr. H.[39] was also of stalwart proportions. Whenever the candles began to burn dimly, Christina would rise with stately grace and lift the shades and Mr. H. would start up and solemnly snuff the candles. The whole manner of the pair was so inimitable that their youthful observer awaited with keen interest the pauses in conversation and toppling of the wicks; conceiving also the idea that one of the special courtesies expected of an engaged man, by his lady-love, was the proper snuffing of the candles. But it was not after all from
[14]

[36] A reference to the *Arabian Nights* story "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves".
[37] Laid.
[38] A reference to the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340s–1400).
[39] We have not been able to identify this individual. It might refer to someone from the Huntington family (Miller's grandmother is referred to as "Mrs. H." elsewhere in the text), but there is no further evidence pertaining to the identity of "Mr. H." in the manuscript.

old silver, or brass, or mahogany that the effect in this well-remembered room was produced, but as you entered it from the street, the sea appeared to be in the room. Pictures would have been out of place for the windows framed the glory of living nature and through them swept the breath of ocean mixed with the spicy fragrance of cassie[40] blossoms. A big door in the middle led by a flight of stone steps to the couch-like roots of a gigantic turpentine tree[41], whose umbrageous[42] shade formed a natural aviary for birds of every hue. It completed the wonderful effect that caused an American lady, a stranger, who entered suddenly one morning, to stop short and explain amazed, "O what a beautiful room". Through a window one could step out upon a cistern which formed a terrace outside the apartment. The cistern was an excavated walled and cemented room, and one night during a dreadful hurricane Grandmother's mother was lifted bodily by the storm-wind and blown into this cistern from which the door had already been wrenched.[43] Next
[15]
morning she was found there sitting up to her waist in water, but though terribly cramped she suffered no permanent injury and it always seemed to me a pity she had left no record of her sensations during that areal flight, which I fancied something like Elijah's[44] with a tamer ending. Every house showed arrangements for protection against these storms, which were looked for between July and October, the 25th of the month being thanks-giving day if no hurricane had occurred, or humiliation and prayer if it had. Very little glass was used in dwellings as it was not really needed, but stout outer shutters as well as jalousies were on every window and door, and on

[40] A tropical and subtropical shrub (*Acacia farnesiana*) of the legume family, better known as Acacia tree.
[41] Turpentine tree (*Bursera simaruba*), also known as *tourist tree*, among other names, "yields an aromatic resin known as cachibou smelling like turpentine" (Valls 1981: 129).
[42] Umbrageous – creating or affording shade.
[43] This may be a reference to the major hurricane which hit the Virgin Islands in 1772. As a young man, Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), one of the Founding Fathers of the USA, born in St. Croix, witnessed this hurricane. He wrote an eyewitness account that appeared in the local *Royal Danish American Gazette* (Hamilton 1772).
[44] This is a reference to the Old Testament prophet Elijah. According to 2 Kings 2: 11, Elijah, like Great Grandmother, had also made a journey through the air: "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven".

the frames of these, wooden blocks were fastened with heavy screws, while the shutters were provided with iron rings. When, during the hurricane season the dire words went through the town "the barometer is falling" then "barring up" began. Stout prepared sticks of hard wood were passed through the big rings on the shutters, the ends of the sticks laid on the blocks on each side and then stout rope was twisted
[16]
around and about and securely fastened. Then of course candles or lamps had to be lighted all over the house, and it was a time of delightful excitement to an untimid child. Who could tell what might happen! Such high adventure as being blown about like Great Grandmother might be experienced, or the roof as sometimes happened, be carried away. The only drawback was that one could not sufficiently revel in the wild weather owing to the necessity of being barred in. Much pleading would generally obtain permission to keep one window a little open by two persons holding the rings ready to slam the shutters in a second. The flying clouds seemed to take on forms like demons of the air rushing to war, and the tortured trees shuddering and twisting looked in the lured light like sentient creatures. Not far from us lived two delightful old maid sisters, Miss Nancy and Miss Bee – short for Belinda. Kitchens in that climate are usually built separate from the main building and as we were a household of women who with their
[17]
dangerous skirts should not venture out of doors to make tea or anything else, it was the thoughtful habit of these good ladies, on such stormy evenings, to send their ancient man-servant, black as the night himself, with a tray holding a pot of hot tea and thin curly slices of their home-made bread and butter. Never since has any sort of food held for me the flavor of those repasts, eaten while the tempest roared without, smiting the doors and windows, and old Si'Myra, one of the freed slaves, who still had her home with us, crouched in the corner muttering "lod sabe we".[45] Once a handsome brig[46] whose captain had failed to get out in time came rushing in upon the rocks, so near, it almost seemed the masts would come into our grounds, and grandmother told me the romantic story of my father's similar arrival,

[45] Crucian English Creole: 'Lord, save us'.
[46] A brig is a two-masted, square-rigged ship.

meeting, and love at first sight of her beautiful Pauline[47]. But nothing that the storm-wind or angry sea would do was so terrible as that dread, silent force which came one bright day swift and unlooked for, when the dear, solid earth
[18]
of our loved island rocked and reeled as if it were being torn from its anchorage, and everyone rushed out of doors crying "An earthquake! An earthquake!". The long, iron hooks on the shutters, for fastening them back, started out at right angles to the house, quivering as if electrified, and this strange movement so fascinated the childish eyes observing it that danger was unrealized until the shocks were over. After this every family was busy furbishing up spare clothing to send to Guadeloupe[48] where a town was laid in ruins,[49] while we had suffered no further damage than trees and fences down and cracks and wide fissures in the ground, so the frightful experience was soon forgotten and life went on as usual. Again each morning we heard the merry cry of "hot Harapas[50] and Cassava[51]" echoing through the street. "Marra me Missis" – Good Morrow[52] – "hot harapas". The harapa was a thin pancake made of bananas beaten into batter and when eaten hot was rich and appetizing. Numberless were the sellers of fruit, cut sugarcane, and above
[19]
all the peerless alligator pear[53]. These latter made of breakfast an idyllic meal. Even the tables of the wealthy would often show but little else with tea or coffee, besides the dainty white loaves of hot bread, golden butter, but the big pears shining in their polished skins of deep green and royal purple. They were eaten without other preparation or condiment than salt

[47] Miller's mother's given name was Philomela, but her mother apparently affectionately called her Pauline.
[48] Another island in the Caribbean, colonized by France, some 400 kilometers southeast of St. Croix.
[49] This earthquake occurred in 1843.
[50] A banana cake, from Spanish *arepa* (Allsopp 1996: 39), also known as "Johnny cake" (< *journey cake*) in the Virgin Islands.
[51] *Manihot esculenta*, commonly called *cassava*, is a long, hard-fleshed, root-vegetable with a stiff leathery skin and white inside (Allsopp 1996: 139). Cassava rarely grows wild on St. Croix, but is sometimes cultivated for its large, starchy, edible roots.
[52] *Marra* 'good morning' in Crucian English Creole; from English *morrow* 'morning' (archaic).
[53] Avocado.

and pepper. On Saturdays the negroes were permitted to hold a market and sell all they could save from their rations, raise on their plots or steal from the plantation gardens. The market was an open square thickly planted with great trees. Each seller selected a tree and spread out the produce in calabashes, plain or carved, and other rural vessels. If it rained a very ludicrous scene ensued, and meat, fish, fruit and all sorts of provender[54] got terribly mixed. Not far off in a special little grove was the "Maroon market". It was difficult to understand the reason of this name. Maroon[55] among the negroes meant a picnic, but this particular
[20]
market was composed exclusively of worn-out old black women who could do no harder work than sell cakes and confections. Grandmother's old Si'Myra was often among them. She was a native-born African who could speak no English when she first came, a young girl, from the Congo coast. They named her Myra but in that island the prefix "Sis" was put before names as aunt or auntie is in Louisiana, and became contracted generally into "Si", so she became Si'Myra. She represented for me that vague, far country that looked so bare on the map, but had sands of gold the hymn said, which sands truly a traveler from there had showed us, glittering indeed as described. But Si'Myra would or could tell me nothing of her Congo home except how she used to bathe "in the big river". She possessed a deep mortar hollowed out from a tree-trunk in which she used to pound corn and brew a drink after the African recipe. It tasted to me very nice. This with a peculiar kind of candy she sold in the maroon market to supply herself with pocket money.
[21]
All these old Africans were imbued with the horrible superstitions of the savages. They believe in the Obi[56] priests being able to cause them dreadful

[54] Animal food, also used for food consumed by humans.
[55] According to Valls (1981: 78), in the Virgin Islands one meaning of the word *maroon* was "picnic". He adds that "[i]n slavery times planters would organize maroon hunts which took on very festive airs". Other meanings of the word are accounted for in Allsopp (1996: 371 f.) for the Caribbean in general. One of these meanings, far from denoting a picnic, is the following: "Any of the descendants of those slaves who freed themselves by escape and guerrilla fighting, establishing isolated communities wh[ich] have survived in mountain or forest country".
[56] Obi, also commonly spelled Obeah, is a system of spiritual and healing practices developed among enslaved West Africans in the West Indies. The term is widespread,

woes and insisted that at a word from these obeah people water would boil without fire, and living or dead matter, such as glass or caterpillars, could be made to enter the body. Added to these they had imbibed[57] from their Danish owners that curious Scandinavian myth of the wehr-wolf, and would positively assert of certain persons that they change their human form at night and ravaged around as wolves. There was a respectable, quiet, old Danish gentleman whom they always called the wehr-wolf behind his back. "Yes, me chile! Dem nights wen de moon shine bright and you heahs de dogs a barkin, ef you wus to go out you ud see twelve dogs a setten in a circle and one in the middle a talkin togedder. Den dey waits till dey heahs him an dey takes arter him but nebber cotches him and he gits back afore day".[58]

[22]

In looking back, however, nothing among all these superstitions appears so strange an accompaniment of slavery as the annual Saturnalia[59] which was permitted from Christmas Eve to January 2nd, during which time the Bamboula[60] was danced by day and night. The preparations for this festival went on through the year in meetings held at night at the cabins of the principal leaders, and its most curious feature was the censorship exercised over the morals and manners of their owners and the white population at large. Every smallest bit of private scandal or family gossip, which who else could find out so well, was seized upon and made the theme of all songs which were sung during the dances, so that the expression "the town will

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from Barbados to the Bahamas and from Belize to Suriname (Allsopp 1996: 412). It is probably derived from languages spoken in Nigeria (cf. Parkvall 2019). For information on Obeah as practiced specifically in the Danish West Indies, see Simonsen (2019).

[57] Imbibe – to assimilate or adapt.

[58] Crucian English Creole: 'Yes, my child! Those nights when the moon would shine bright and you would hear the dogs barking, if you were to venture out, you would see twelve dogs sitting in a circle and one in the middle, talking together. Then they would wait until they would hear him [i.e. the werewolf] and they would take after him but without ever catching him, and he would get back before daybreak'.

[59] The festival of Saturn took place in December in ancient Rome. It was a period of general merrymaking. Food and gift-giving were involved, and social roles were overturned. It was a time of liberty for slaves and freedmen alike.

[60] A bambula, or bamboula, is a dance. It is also a small cylindrical drum covered on one end with hide, held between knees. The term, most likely of Bantu origin (Parkvall 2019), is widespread in the Caribbean. For information about bambula as practiced in the Danish West Indies, see Philipp (1990) and Soule (2014).

ring with it", was here literally true. Somehow the utmost license was permitted them in this respect, although the children of the best families were taken by their attendants to look on and listen. It was true that it was impossible for children
[23]
to understand what was meant or catch the real words, but to any one who had given the slightest cause for scandal it was a time of terror. George Eliot in "Daniel Deronda"[61] makes Grandcourt say to Gwendolin as the worst threat he could launch at her, "You will be talked about in the clubs". Just so it was there a warning that made the most heedless girl, or reckless man, pause, to say, "You will get sung about at Christmas". There was generally a chorus to each stanza of these songs which had a taking clang that children could get hold of. I remember one running "Eef[62] stiver-bush[63] could speak, eef tamarind-tree could talk" – then followed dark insinuations of all that had being done and said under the spreading bows of the tamarind-tree, behind the cool shadow of the stiver-bush, not comprehensible to a child, but ever interluded with that recurring refrain. A king and queen, men and maids of honor were annually elected, the ability to make
[24]
good songs, or personal beauty, being the chief factors in determining the choice, while as much heart-burning and jealousy were felt as if a real royalty was involved. The dresses of these, and of all, was the most astonishing mixture of savage splendor and tawny finery; the savings and scrapings of the year being devoted to it. For weeks before seamstresses were busy getting up these remarkable costumes, but those negroes who had good-natured owners would beg "Missis" or the young ladies to make their outfit. Real velvet; silk and satin; cotton lace; artificial flowers; the brilliant native seeds of the liquorice and co-que-li-cot[64]; tinsel, beads, and pinchbeck[65]

[61] *Daniel Deronda* is the title of a novel published in 1876. The heroine is Gwendolen Harleth, and the author is George Eliot, that is, Mary Ann Evans (1819–1880).
[62] This non-standard spelling of the word *if* serves to indicate a Creole pronunciation.
[63] A low shrub or small tree six to 10 feet high. Seaman (1968: 17) suggests a Danish etymology: "The pissybed plant whose small rounded leaves resembled an obsolete Danish coin called 'styve[r]'". *Styver* comes from Dutch *stuiver*, the name of a coin.
[64] Coquelicot – a wild corn poppy, *Papaver rhoeas*, which is distinguished by its bright red color and orange tint.
[65] Pinchbeck is a form of brass, an alloy of copper and zinc, which resembles gold in appearance.

jewelry were all mixed. Favorite servants were often honored by being permitted to wear the real jewelry of their mistresses which was sewed and fastened to them so it could not be easily lost. The owners encouraged these festivities because they said it kept worse mischief out of their heads. On Christmas Eve all work except necessary household service ceased and special preparations began. Wherever in the town an eligible
[25]
ground-floor room could be rented it was decorated by covering all the sides with palm and cocoanut branches, or a tent of these was built and hung with oranges and branches of cinnamon-berries. Flowers were rarely seen, indeed their delicate beauty would have been out of place in that sensuous atmosphere. Rough supports to hold candles were replaced against the palm branches and glass lanterns hung from the roof. A few seats for their majesties, and the musicians, and buckets of lemonade highly seasoned with rum, completed the arrangements. Their herald was the "Bulrush[66] man". The idea must have been to show the dress worn by African chiefs living on water-course. He was covered from chin to ankle with bulrushes put on in layers so as to form a complete covering and a fringe of the waving grasses rose round his head just above the eyes. He carried calabash gourds filled with pebbles and danced to their clatter, expecting to be rewarded with the children's holiday stivers,
[26]
though the smaller fry were generally carried away shrieking, if it was their first sight of him. By three o'clock the dancing-clans began to gather the women trailing their gorgeous dresses through the streets, the men strutting with sceptres, ornamental shirts or satin jackets, all followed by a rabble of colored piccaninnies[67] of various shades – the refuse spawn of many races. The dancers assembled at the decorated booths where a goombay[68] had been carried. It was simply a headless, empty barrel with a goat-skin stretched over one end, the player sat astride, or on a low seat, and struck

[66] Bulrush is a name for several large grass-like plants.
[67] The (ultimately) Portuguese-derived pidgin word *pickaninny* means 'a young child of Black parentage (derogatory usage)' (Allsopp 1996: 438).
[68] Allsopp (1996: 261): "A round or square-topped, goat-skin drum played with the hands; several of them are used as central to the rhythm of a particular festive dance of the same name […] More than one Bantu language source seems possible".

it with a headed stick. When its first hoarse notes boomed out all understood that the Bamboula dance had commenced. It was said that this dance was first brought to these islands by the negroes from the Kingdom of Ardra[69] on the Guinea coast, but its objectionable features had at this time been eliminated, though it was still wild enough. The dancers formed themselves in two opposite lines the men fronting the women, one or two, generally the King and
[27]
Queen, singing a song of which the chorus was taken up by all, the gombay being usually placed at the head of the line. Nearly all held some pingling timbrel[70]. The woody seed-cases of the sandbox[71] placed on long sticks, each lobe painted a different and vivid color, basket-work rattles or calabash gourds filled with shells and pebbles; hoops hung with bells and all these decorated with bright, floating ribbons. The dancers kept their arms lifted, holding these aloft and making extraordinary contortions, as they approached each other by two steps; advancing and receding in cadence as many times as the tumultuous sound of the instrument, or the tone of the voice, signaled them to approach. Then bowing themselves against each other two or three times simultaneously, then lifting themselves and pirouetting to recommence the same lascivious[72] movement – again and again lifting the arms and making two or three terms or bows and suddenly clashing together their resonant
[28]
instruments, but without losing the rhythmical measure. After dark when a couple of hours fierce, voluptuous dancing had roused all the dormant savagery, the lights flamed out upon the dusky forms bedizined[73] with glittering beads and bangles, and reeking with the sweaty foam gathered on faces, bared necks and arms. The candle-flames, hissing and palpitating in wild response to the throbbing atmosphere, fleshed over the shining raiment[74], and ribbons and streamers, and gay, sonorous instruments. The palm branches swayed in measured movement, and a coarse, penetrating

[69] The Kingdom of Ardra, also known as the Kingdom of Allada, was a coastal West African kingdom in what is now southern Benin. The Fongbe language is dominant there.
[70] A tambourine or similar instrument.
[71] A tree species, *Hura crepitans*.
[72] Lascivious – revealing sexual interest.
[73] Bedizen – to ornament or dress in a showy or gaudy manner.
[74] Raiment – clothing.

perfume mixed with human effluence – the odorific complement of those pervasive tone-waves, suffused itself through the vaporous dust-cloud encircling the dancers, while every other sound was dominated by the barbaric beat of the gombay, and even a child stood aghast, dimly realizing the gulf that yawned between the Caucasian and his slave. But a step, and the transition was to this soft night
[29]
of the tropics darkling vaguely between the hills and the sea; the ethereal fragrance from the pink blossoms of the pont-du-pont[75]; the august radiance of starlight; the exquisite refinement of nature, into whose majestic space and silence, the stress of that insistent sound melted away like the sobs of some dying monster. When the morning of Jan. 2nd dawned, all was hushed; the revelers[76] fell again into the ranks of labor and the plantation bell of conch-shell summoned them to toil in the cane-fields. Then the spectre that stalks in all slave communities emerged again from the shadows. Although it was but seldom any slave was ill-treated, or any trampled one turned and poisoned or murdered his master, yet the doubt of what might be, where an alien, captive race is thousands strong and the conquering one numbers but hundreds, was ever arising to poison peace. In this year it was especially so because of the recent action of the Danish Government. King Christian had been induced, it was
[30]
said by the planters, that it was through the influence of England and the Exeter Hall[77] people, to enact laws towards the gradual emancipation of all slaves in his West India colonies. A proclamation had been issued in which it was ordered that all children born after that date should be free, and at the end of 12 years all should be freed; the owners to receive compensation for them. Whenever a mandate was received from the home government, a squad of Danish soldiers with a drum, marched through the streets, beat the drum at all the principal corners till a crowd gathered, and then read the orders in English and Danish. This was called "beating the protocol", and

[75] We have not been able to determine exactly what type of flowers this plant name refers to.
[76] Persons who are enjoying themselves in a lively and noisy way.
[77] Exeter Hall was a public meeting place in central London. In the 19th century, it was an important venue for gatherings by promoters of human betterment, including the anti-slavery movement.

thus had this important measure been also announced. But it was not received by either slave or owner as its profectors[78] expected. The old negroes said they would never live to see it and that was hard. The young mothers said their children would last[79] it over
[31]
them and then they too might die before it came. The planters said they had little confidence in the good faith of the government or its ability to indemnify[80] them for the loss of property; they feared a trick, a coup d'état. Thus a turbulent restlesness arose among the slaves and a sense of impending danger haunted the masters. Such was the situation of affairs when one day two English East-Indiamen[81] sailed into the harbor. This created a sensation as there was no apparent reason for their presence, they had come for no cargo and such ships were never seen there. Two weeks passed and still the mighty vessels rode at anchor and officers and sailors strolled about serenely having little to say. It may have been first as they explained that they needed some fresh water and attracted by the beauty of the island determined to rest there, but in the light of subsequent events it was impossible to make some people believe they had not come on a special errand. At this time, children coming suddenly into a room
[32]
felt something in the air and often heard the warning – "Hush! Don't frighten them", from some of the group of elders, and once the ominous words were overheard – "Remember Santa Domingo! Remember St. John"![82] After that, concealment was useless, what child there had not heard all about

[78] Those who made the announcement.
[79] This word is difficult to make out in the manuscript; it might be *last*, *hand*, or perhaps *Lord*. We have opted to write *last* as we find this to be the most likely option; however, the precise intended meaning of the sentence is not clear to us. In Cable's (1982) version of the account, which includes this passage, rather than retaining Miller's wording, the sentence reads "younger slave parents dreaded the superior liberty of their children" (p. 713).
[80] Indemnify – to compensate (someone) for harm or loss.
[81] An East Indiaman is not a person, but a large sailing vessel of the type built from the 16th to the 19th century for the trade between Europe and southern Asia.
[82] This refers to two slave uprisings. *Santa Domingo* is the Spanish name for the French colony Saint-Domingue, which changed its name to Haiti after the formerly enslaved population and free people of color took control of the island following an uprising in 1791. The other insurrection took place in 1733 on the island of St. John in the Danish West Indies. An account of the 1733 insurrection in St. John is provided in Sebro (2023).

the massacres by slaves and the terrible retribution that followed. I marched boldly then into the secret council with my friend Jeannie and said, "we know what you are talking about, you think the negroes are going to rise but I am not afraid because we own none, and they would'nt hurt you who set so many free. They couldn't – Rachel, and Tom, and Lotta, and Jule and Jack, and the others, would'nt let them, and Jeannie can stay here and be protected too". The same view must have been taken by Gilbert W. – a brilliant youth, the son of an old friend, for he dropped in frequently about this time to speak his mind which he seemed to feel he could not do elsewhere. "Mrs. H."[83], he said one evening as we looked out
[33]
of the seaward windows at the big Indiamen anchored so far off, "those fellows are here for no good. There's a boat-load of them now, pulling out! They have been just swarming all over the place at all hours. I meet them on every road out of town talking to the negroes. Take my word for it, they are either distributing arms and ammunition among the slaves, or putting them up to some deviltry". "O no Gilbert", aunt Marion said, English ships of that class would not come on such an errand!". "Dismiss your fears, my boy", Grandmother added. "There will be no insurrection, all the clergy are acting together now and using all their influence to quiet the agitation of the slaves. They have shown them it is right to wait the allotted time for their happiness". Here I struck into the talk with a surprise question. "Oh! is it for happiness they are setting them free? How can that make it up to them?!". "Make up what? What do you mean?". "For being black", I replied.
[34]
"Nothing, not even freedom, can alter that". "Would'nt you rather be free even if black, you, who won't even keep a caged bird?". I glanced round the circle at the golden curls of a little visitor, at Aunt Anna's fair hands, at the bright flush on Gilbert's proud face, and then, at old Si'Myra pounding corn in her big mortar under a tamarind tree in the yard. "I believe if I were black", I answered slowly, "I should'nt care for anything but to get back where everybody else was black too. It was cruel of God to make them like that, but it was crueler to bring them where they could see us so different". "Hush!" said Grandmother sternly. "Do not dare to question the creator!

[83] Miller's grandmother: Mary Huntington.

And what do you know about it all, you think only of ourselves and Jeannie". "Gilbert, will they send them back to Africa?" I questioned. "They don't want to go, D.[84] Don't you know Mr. B.[85] gave two of his men permission and money to go to Liberia[86] and neither those nor any others could be induced to go". This strange fact sent me off silenced to ponder, but
[35]
through the wondering thoughts I heard aunt Anna saying to Gilbert – "The Europeans say that West-Indians lose all repulsion for the blacks from the close association, yet here is a child who had a black nurse and has been with them always and you see how strong the repugnance is". "Why it is so with ever so many", replied Gilbert, "those who treat them with sympathy and kindness but have 'noli me tangere'[87] for their rule of action, and I think it's a fact as D. tried to express that to go through life in that dark livery[88] is so terrible that it would take every other advantage to offset it". "Well Gilbert", answered Grandmother, "I wish that everybody, instead of only a few, felt and practised that touch me not sensitiveness, it would be greatly for the benefit of slave communities. I have no sympathy with the people who mourn over it, it is a great safe-guard wisely implanted by nature, but they trample on it". The talk had got beyond my depth so I ran out into the moonlight to take little Jeannie home, but every word said that evening sank into
[36]
memory, because it was the last time we talked of these things. The suspected ships rocked calmly in the quiet bay but somehow the agitation ceased, the spectre politely retreated again. For many more days life went on quietly in almost sylvan[89] quiet and Sunday the 2nd of July was fair and still as so many preceding it. Sunday was always a happy day. Church and

[84] Dora.
[85] Mr. B., we learn later, was a store owner in Frederiksted, possibly Mr. B. Woods (cf. Taylor 1888: 157).
[86] Liberia is Africa's first and oldest modern republic. Along with Ethiopia, it was one of the two African countries to maintain its sovereignty during the European colonization of Africa. The country was also the home of thousands of liberated slaves who returned to Africa from 1821. It became the country of Liberia in 1847.
[87] Latin for 'touch me not', Biblical language.
[88] A special uniform worn by a servant, an official, or a member of a City Company.
[89] This adjective refers to a shady, wooded area. The word suggests a peaceful, pleasant feeling, being away from the noise of modern life.

Sunday school were delightful places for there were so many attractions. The high-stepping horses prancing[90] up gaily to the gates bringing friends from the country estates, the organ music and choir chanting, and the beautiful service our Rector read well – and one did not need to listen to the sermon for there were pleasanter things to do. The mural tablets recounting the virtues of many who lay in the churchyard were full of interest, and suggestive of endless fancies, and then the shifting panorama of light-gilding and cloud-shading passing over the hills visible through the windows embodied a wide range of dreams.
[37]
After service, we went to the school-house set on a breezy height, where a wild wind rushing continuously through the room appeared to be there for that purpose of bearing onward our ardent, young voices singing the hymns we thought so grand, like "Greenland's Icy Mountains" and "Now be the Gospel banner". This Sunday was to be even more agreeable than usual because Aunt Marion had been invited to take me with her to dine with a Danish family and it was to be my first experience of an elaborate Danish dinner. I could not help, as we walked out of sunday-school, speculating on the probable bill of fare[91]. Several gentlemen from the ships in port were to be present, and for that reason I feared Mrs. V.[92] might provide pigeon-pea[93] soup, because the negroes said of that notable aliment[94], that whoever eat of it would never wish to leave the island. Now pigeon-pea soup was most savory it was true, but it would be nothing
[38]
new to me and the dinner would be a sort of cheat to me if it was not very Danish indeed. It turned out our hosts had wisely determined to cater to the tastes of both nationalities so when Mrs. Valberg[95] said "Will you have pigeon-pea, or Guava-berry soup", of course I took the latter, and a delicious broth it was, made from a spicy, native berry after the manner of Danish cherry-soup. Of course the elegant King-fish[96] from our own bay

[90] Prance – to move with high springy steps (said of horses).
[91] Bill of fare – a menu, a program for a theatrical event.
[92] Mrs. Valberg. Her full last name figures on the next page.
[93] A pigeon pea (*Cajanus cajan*) is an edible tropical legume (Valls 1981: 95).
[94] Aliment – food; nourishment.
[95] The Mrs. V. mentioned above.
[96] Kingfish (*Scomberomorus cavalla*) is a species of mackerel (Allsopp 1996: 688).

held the place of honor and also Callalou[97], a dish of native herbs and many other delicious and curious viands prepared in a novel manner. When the dessert came there was a preparation they call "red groat"[98], made of sago[99] boiled to a Jelly in water richly flavored with guavas and colored crimson by mixing with it the juice of prickly pears[100]. This rosy island reposed in a sea of milk and was a most delicate conserve. There was another floating-island in milk made from guava Jelly beaten with eggs, but this was an
[39]
old friend. So was the Granadilla[101] that capped the feast, a pale-green polished fruit large as the head of an infant, and holding a juice, in which pulpy seeds floated, that was eaten with wine and sugar. All through the dessert the gentlemen would hold up their glasses crying out as they bowed right and left, "Skoal! Skoal!"[102], before drinking the wine. At the close of the dinner, Mr. Valberg at his end of the table and Mrs. V. at hers, both rose together and began shaking hands right and left with every guest in turn, these again turning and saluting each other in the same manner repeating at each handshake the words "vel be komme"[103]. They signified "may this food do you great good" and it seemed a very appropriate and gracious way of ending the repast[104], breaking up that ceremonious stiffness that often attends the close of a formal dinner. When the afternoon of this memorable

[97] Valls (1981: 65): "A soup dish whose principal ingredient is the kallaloo bush. […] A delicacy, kallaloo is made as a thick gumbo and served with balls of fungee. Some ingredients include conch, crabs, fish, pigtails, hambone, papalolo, kohlrabi, whitey mary, pusley, bata-bata, thyme, manbower and okras". Valls (*ibid.*) suggests a Twi etymology, but more than one West African language source seems possible (Allsopp 1996: 130). Parkvall (2019), under *kalalu*, list several proposed origins, and concludes that it has multiple origins.
[98] From Danish *rødgrød*, a dessert dish made with fruit and berries, served with cream. The word is documented as *red grout* by Valls (1981: 53). For a discussion of this word and other Danish-derived lexical items in Valls (1981), see Bøegh (2018).
[99] Sago is an edible starch which is obtained from palms. It is a staple food in parts of the tropics.
[100] A type of cactus of the *Opuntia* genus.
[101] A type of passion fruit (*Passiflora lingularis*) about the size of a hen's egg, with a hard skin that ripens purple (Allsopp 1996: 265).
[102] The Danish word *skål* 'cheers'.
[103] The Danish phrase *velbekomme* 'enjoy your meal'; from *vel* 'well' + *bekomme* 'to effect' (cf. also English *become*).
[104] Repast – a meal or taking of food.

Sunday began to wane Aunt Marion started with me to return home, but we met on the way
[40]
a couple of friends who persuaded us to turn and accompany them on a walk out on the North-side Road[105]. It was a golden evening, the sun slowly dropping over the purple sea amid the elusive glories of temples, towers and altars that usually attended his[106] setting. The lagoon that formed a moat around the rear of the fort was crossed by a slight, wooden bridge. As we approached this bridge, two black men were crossing it in opposite directions. They stopped and began talking in low tones, but we caught some significant words. "Yes I'se heered it that sich tings as nebber was known befo going be done in Westen town tonight".[107] "Well you look sharp me frend",[108] replied the other, then noticing us they parted abruptly. The one coming towards us to town appeared troubled but the other who passed on to the country looked pleased and brisk. Mrs. Dale and her daughter stepped back from the bridge. "What do you suppose he means?" said
[41]
Kate, "will it be well to go on, Mother?". "O, I suppose it is just some of their meetings to make astonishing songs for Christmas". "We had better return", said Aunt Marion. "My mother is alone and I think it means more than that". As she spoke, we saw Gilbert W. coming towards us. "I was at your house, Mrs. D., and hearing you were going to walk out of town, followed to stop you. Better get home at once. My mother had sent me to warn you. I have reliable information that there is an insurrection planned for tonight. Some of the free negroes have blabbed[109]. The signal is to be given about eight o'clock by blowing of shells, or ringing of bells, to call the negroes to certain points that they may attack the town in force. "Miss Marion we'll see you home first". It was a silent walk home. Gilbert only saying "Miss Marion you'll remember now what I said about those men". Grandmother took the news calmly. "We

[105] Northside Road turns off from Centerline Road – the main road between the two towns Christiansted and Frederiksted – between the estates Mount Pleasant and Plessen, to the north coast, continuing east alongshore to Salt River.
[106] The sun.
[107] Crucian English Creole: 'Yes, I've heard it, that such things as never were known before, are going to be done in Frederiksted tonight'.
[108] Crucian English Creole: 'Well, make sure to look out, my friend' (i.e. stay alert).
[109] "Spilled the beans".

[42]
are in God's hands, but whatever happens let us be together, so Gilbert if you will stop at Mr. K.'s[110] and send Anna and Marcia home I shall be obliged". And so what had been long feared was coming and there was this quiet pause for dread anticipation, for terrible imaginings. When my aunts returned, Mr. K. came with them, and begged that we would all come to his house for the night. This Grandmother would not agree to. "Well", he said, "I think the best way will be for all the women and children to go into the fort[111] leaving the men free to defend the town. I'm going around to see my friends and learn what is agreed on to be done". It will be madness for the handful of men in town to attempt defence against thousands", I heard aunt Anna whisper. "Marion, let us have supper and prayers while everything is quiet", said Grandmother. The simple meal was set out but only a few mouthfuls were taken by any one.
[43]
Aunt Marcia put the Bible and prayerbook by the lamp and closed all the heavy shutters on the front of the house. Through the open windows at the back, the heavy roll of the sea on the rocks made itself heard plainer than usual, for the wind had risen, and its muffled monotone pulsated in the silence like a solemn chorus while Grandmother read "God is our refuge & strength". Then we knelt while she repeated the prayer for protection during the night but while the last words were on her lips, Aunt Marion, whose nerves were on the alert, sprang to her feet – "The signal! Hear the signal!". Now it rose clear on the still air of night! A shrilling sound blown upon a reed-like pipe, the negroes made from the bamboo and used at Christmas, that gave a peculiarly mournful note. It was answered by the deeper tone from a conch-shell[112], and then the wild alarm rang from point to point,

[110] The writer George W. Cable (1918) calls this individual, or character, Mr. Kenyon in his abbreviated rendition of Miller's text. Whether he got this name from Miller or came up with it himself, we do not know. See the introduction (Bøegh & Bakker, this issue) for more information on George W. Cable and his interference with Miller's manuscript.
[111] Fort Frederik in Frederiksted.
[112] Known in the Virgin Islands as a *tutu*, that is, a "horn made from a large conch shell (*Strombus gigas*)" (Valls 1981: 131). According to Valls (*ibid.*), "[i]n the old days tutus were used to summon or dispatch slaves[,] sound messages with prearranged codes[,] or as a warning of approach on carts", and "[t]o this day [i.e. the 1970s, 1980s] 'tutus' are used as a summons to customers from incoming fisherman".

taken up by shells, and pipes, and horns with occasionally the grave clangor[113] of a bell.
[44]
How swift the sound-herald clashed from height to height; first from the south, then east, around to the north, echoing west over the cliffs and sea. It sprang from one hill-top to another, piercing, sharp, exultant. It is hard for the human soul to be calm, to gather its powers, in a strife of sound. Those wild horns, those mournful pipes trumpeting their savage mandate mastered the nerves and every face grew white as all rose up. Grandmother sat down in her easy-chair and said she would spend the night there. Aunt Anna opened the door of her room and drawing a rocking chair out to it took her seat, Marcia lay down on the sofa, and Marion brought pillows and bed-clothes and spread a pallet[114] and said "D.[115], it is your bedtime and you can go to sleep here where we are all going to stay". "Do you expect the child to go to sleep in this awful clamor, frightened as
[45]
she must be", said Aunt Marcia. "She said she would not be at all afraid", Anna reminded her. Afraid! How did it feel to be afraid? Fear had not been an element in life. Thought went back over the few remembered years. Yes when first put on a horse to learn to ride a big lump came in my throat that soon vanished, and once when sea-bathing, a big wave knocked me over, my heart thumped, but this was different, this high excitement thrilling in every vein. Aunt Marion lay down beside me and whether she slept or not I certainly did for several hours, but suddenly was broad awake and aware of a far-off, measured tramp[116] coming nearer like the tread of horses. Aunt Marcia began to unbar the shutters and fasten the inner jealousies so as to look out unobserved. Aunt Anna said "it is nearly one o'clock", and I got up wondering how the world would look at midnight – having never before been up at night –
[46]

[113] Clangor – a loud, resonant sound; clang.
[114] Pallet – a crude or makeshift bed.
[115] Dora.
[116] In the Virgin Islands, in addition to meaning 'the noise of heavy steps', the word *tramp* can also refer to an "[i]mpromptu street dance […] done during carnival or other festival time" (Valls 1981: 129).

and feeling as if those steady footfalls were the feet of friends coming to save. All gathered at the window behind the jealousies. "Ah!" exclaimed aunt Marion. "It is the troopers coming". This title meant a body of cavalry composed of nearly all the white men in Frederiksted and the plantations on its side of the island. They were thoroughly drilled, rode magnificent horses, and were looked upon as the most reliable guard the island possessed. But these were only about fifty who rode slowly down the street in the pale light of a half-obscured moon, moving as one mass, the hoof-beat of their horses ringing on the macadamized[117] road, their swords clanking, and the dark plumes on their caps nodding over their faces. Since then how much of war has surged around me,[118] but never has any movement of martial men produced such an effect off portentous[119] solemnity. The horror of their thoughts as of men
[47]
in despair who believed that property, home, life and loved ones were all at stake made itself felt, while the ghastly war-signal from shell, and reed, and horn, followed them as in wild mockery. Some time after they had passed there was a knock at the door. It was cautiously opened and Mr. K. appeared. "You saw the troopers? Now hear the strange facts. Those men rushed about the country tonight getting their families together at points where they could leave a few men to protect them and came to the Fort to be supplied with ammunition and receive orders and would you believe it, both have been refused? The captain of the Fort told them to go home, that no one would be admitted to the Fort without orders from the Governor. But, I said, an orderly can take a swift horse and reach Gov. Von S.[120] in an hour and a half. Before the negroes have all gathered you can know his wishes. 'As soon as it is light one will be sent' was all
[48]
we could get out of him. The town militia have no ammunition either so what are we to do! It is a conspiracy! I met your Jack, Mrs. K., and he will be here directly to look after this house". It was near day-break when Jack

[117] Macadam is a type of road construction in which crushed stone is placed in layers and compacted. The word comes from the name of the engineer who pioneered the technique (John Loudon McAdam).
[118] Miller refers here to the American Civil War (1861–1865).
[119] Portentous – of momentous significance.
[120] Governor-General Peter von Scholten.

arrived and mounted guard, saying "go sleep ole Miss, Miss Mary Ann you all go sleep. What for all-yu sit up all night? Si'Myra you go draw de water for boil coffee".[121] The dreadful blowing had ceased and all retired to rest but I lay and watched for the first time, the wonder of dawn slowly flushing from the hills to the sea in a crystalline sky. It was a revelation that made the night of terror seem poor and little – that tender purity of idealized color filled the soul with an unearthly peace, what the day might bring was forgotten, till the ecstasy was broken into by the swift gallop of a heavily-armed Danish orderly past the windows. He was off at last for Christiansted. The
[49]
late breakfast was hardly over when the clamor began again, blent[122] now with the tramp of many feet, the sounds of harsh voices, all that horrible commotion we feel in every sense when men are ravening[123] like beasts. Jack dashed in from the gate – "O Miss Marcia go look! Dey's a comin! Gin'ral Buddoe[124] at dey head on his wite hosse".[125] We did get behind the jalousies and saw, riding at what seemed in the narrow street like an endless multitude but was really about 2,000[126] men and women, a large powerful black man with a long, rusty sword clanking at his horse's side and wearing a cocked hat[127] adorned with a long white plume. Except this leader all the rest were on foot, the women having their skirts tied up in fighting trim.

[121] Crucian English Creole: 'Go to sleep, old miss. Miss Marion, you can all go to sleep. Why did you all sit up all night? Sister Myra, you go and fetch the water to boil coffee'.
[122] Blended.
[123] Ravening – hungry and eager to kill (used figuratively).
[124] One of the leading men among the revolters was the enslaved laborer Moses Gottlieb, often referred to as General Buddhoe, or simply Buddhoe or, as Miller spells it, Buddoe. From atop a white horse, armed with a sword, Buddhoe gave the impression of being the leader of the emancipation revolt. He apparently urged the angry crowds to remain calm and resist killing any of the Danish soldiers. In the days following the revolt, he, along with others, tried to quell the unrest in the island, but nonetheless, he was imprisoned when order was restored on the island. He was later deported to Trinidad. Not much else is known for certain about his life. Some additional information about Buddhoe and his role in the uprising can be found in Highfield (2018: 86), and in Taylor (1888), including a portrait.
[125] Crucian English Creole: 'Oh Miss Marcia, go look! They are coming! General Buddhoe is at their [i.e. the procession of enslaved people's] head on his white horse'.
[126] Taking into consideration the information presented in Hall (1992: 208 ff.), this is a very low estimate.
[127] A cocked hat is a hat with three corners that used to be worn with some uniforms.

All carried weapons; hatchetts, hoes, cutlasses, bills. The bill was a peculiar shaped axe used in cutting down the sugar-cane.[128] They had polished all
[50]
these implements till the keen edges glittered wickedly and fitted long wooden poles into the hollow handles of the bills so as to carry them like pikes. Their eyes were all blood-shot and with the glistening weapons brisling above the woolly heads or bright madras[129] turbans they looked demoniac[130] enough. Jack said "Dey's goin to de fote to ax for freedom den ef dey doan get free dey's goin tare up ebery ting".[131] Just as their leader got opposite our house, one white man stepped out from the opposite house and lifted his arms to bar their headlong march. It was the Catholic priest in his black robe and cap. He mounted the steps, displayed the cross, and began to entreat[132] and exhort[133]. They listened a few moments then brandished[134] their weapons and with howls of rage resumed the march. The yelling unnerved Aunt Marion but being naturally devout she dropped on her knees and began repeating the Litany, her tears flowing as she
[51]
ejaculated[135], "from battle murder and sudden death Good Lord deliver us! – Christ have mercy!". This acted on me like a spur, all the pride of race flamed up, all at once I felt old – "Oh Auntie!" I said, "don't let them hear you. Get up, quick! Rachel is coming, don't let her see you praying. Let them kill you, but don't let them see you frightened". But Rachel (one of the former slaves) and Tom also were in the room before aunt could be composed: "Lod Miss Mary Ann what you cryin' for? What you prayin' for? Who's goin to tech you? Dat's wat we dun cum fer to tell Miss Paula

[128] Valls (1981: 10) has the following definition: "A cutlass used for cutting cane, of a short and broad blade with a small hook at the upper end".
[129] A type of head tie, or "headkerchief", that were "so called as they were mostly made of madras material, in turn named from Madras, India" (Valls 1981: 74).
[130] Demoniac – possessed by or as by an evil spirit; raging; frantic.
[131] Crucian English Creole: 'They are going to the fort [i.e. Fort Frederik] to ask for freedom; then, if they don't get freed, they are going to tear up [i.e. destroy] everything'.
[132] Entreat – to plead with in order to persuade.
[133] Exhort – to strongly urge or persuade someone to do something.
[134] Brandish – to wave something in the air in a threatening or excited way.
[135] Ejaculate – to say something quickly and suddenly.

not be frightened".[136] Rachel had a big madras handkerchief in her hands held by the corners and packed with sugar. "Rachel you've been stealing", said Grandmother. "Well miss Paula ain't I gwin hab my sheah wen dey knocks de heads out de hogsett an tramps de sugah under da fut. Las nite dey mixed one whole cistron full'o punch".[137] "O! Rachel tell us all
[52]
about it", I begged. "Well you see dey bruk open de sugah-house fust ting, den dey take a barrl o' rum and barr'l o sugah, den dey kill a hog and put de blood in de rum, den dey put in a pile o' gunpowder and sweeten it and drink dat".[138] "O what for!" "To make dem brave – hog kin fight, powder kin kill people. Den dey want someting rale good an dey pore barrils o' rum, and sugah, and shrub in the crisron o' watah an stir it wid de hoes dey been sharpening all night an dip it out wid de sugah ladles".[139] We learned afterwards this was all true and the blood-shot eyes were accounted for. While Rachel was talking an ominous roar rising ever higher and nearer began to fill the air. I ran to the gate with Jack and saw a multitude coming round the corner dragging a great post by robes tied to it, beating and chopping at it and screaming "to de sea, trow it in de sea – you'll nebber hole obbi (all of us) again for wip".[140] Others followed
[53]

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[136] Crucian English Creole: 'Lord, Miss Marion, why are you crying? Why are you praying? Who's going to take [i.e. harm] you? That's what we've come to say, Miss Paula, don't be frightened'.

[137] Crucian English Creole: 'Well, Miss Paula, am I supposed not to have my share when they knock the heads out of the hogshead [i.e. a wooden container for holding sugar during curing and shipment] and trample the sugar under foot? Last night, they mixed a whole cistern full of punch'.

[138] Crucian English Creole: 'Well, you see, they broke open the sugar house first thing. Then they took a barrel of rum and a barrel of sugar. After that, they killed a hog and put the blood in the rum. Next, they added a pile of gunpowder, sweetened it, and drank that'.

[139] Crucian English Creole: 'To make themselves brave; hogs can fight, and gunpowder can harm people. Then they wanted something really good, so they poured barrels of rum, sugar, and shrub into the cistern of water and stirred it with the hoes they had been sharpening all night. They then dipped it out with the sugar ladles'.

[140] Crucian English Creole: 'To the sea, throw it in the sea, you will never hold us again to be whipped'. Note that the flagging posts by the forts in St. Croix, both the one in Christiansted and the one in Frederiksted, were close to the sea; it would be easy enough to toss them in the sea.

bearing something tied to a stick which every one around belabored in the same way. "You'll no squeeze obbi no mo, you'll be drownded in de sea watah".[141] It was the whipping-post and thumb-screws on which this vengeance was wreaked. Tom came up to tell us – "dey done tore up de cote-house and de Jedge's house and now dey goin on Bay Street to tare up de stoes".[142] Gilbert W. next made his appearance to tell what he had seen at the Fort. "They tried to climb the ramparts by standing on each other's shoulders – howling for freedom and daring the men to fire. Capt. A.[143] told some of us, I dare not fire on them without orders from Gov. von S. and my messenger has not returned. Mr. B. who was standing on the Fort wall called out, 'Take the responsibility and fire on them, every man on the island will sustain you and you'll stop this whole thing'. With
[54]
howls of rage they turned on Mr. B. 'We knows you Mr. B. an we'll fire on yo store'.[144] So off they went and have completely gutted it, and judging from the noise they are sacking others. I came to tell you that there is an offer from the captains of vessels in port to take the inhabitants on board if quiet is not soon restored. The negroes are increasing in town, they are drinking rum without stint[145], and may act like devils, and there seems to be nobody at the helm to protect the weak". Just as Gilbert turned away, squads of them began to dash past laden with every conceivable kind of goods from the sacked stores. The free negroes appeared to think this part of the affair the jolliest kind of a festival and were eager to divide the "prog" as they call the spoils.[146] I was standing alone behind the jalousies, for Grandmother was resting and aunts consulting in the pantry, to see if they could concoct

[141] Crucian English Creole: 'You won't oppress us anymore. You'll be drowned in the sea water'.
[142] Crucian English Creole: 'They have already destroyed the courthouse and the judge's house, and now they are on Bay Street [i.e. Strand Street; *strand* is Danish for 'beach'], destroying the stores'.
[143] An unidentified soldier in charge of the defence of the Fort.
[144] Crucian English Creole: 'We know you, Mr. B., and we'll burn down your store'.
[145] Without stint – doing something generously and in large amounts.
[146] Valls (1981: 100) offers the following information about the word *prog*: "To go out foraging for fruits or vegetables. In the islands it is considered one degree removed from stealing. (Progging has been defined as praedial larceny.) More often than not pronounced 'prag'. Maybe from Twi, 'pra' = to collect".

[55]
a dinner in such a general convulsion of mundane things, when a ferocious looking man rattled the jalousies with his murderous looking bill. "Lidde gal", he said, "gimme some watah".[147] "Wait a minute", I replied and went quickly out of the room. The impulse to hide and not return to the vicinity of that sinister weapon was strong, but I reflected that he might become enraged, break in and murder us all if disappointed of the water. It was a struggle, for he seemed like an ugly image of Death waiting at the door to brain[148] me, so with forced calm but inward trembling I handed him a big bowl of water through the window, feeling certain that if the next order should be to cook him a lunch it would have to be done. He drained the cup said, "Tanke lidde
[56]
Misse"[149] and walked off. The next group that passed were repulsive lepers, and at once I wondered, if they were set free, who would give them money to buy green lizards for their soup. There were many of these wretched beings on the island who were maintained by the planters in separate quarters, as of course they could not work.[150] These lepers believed that a broth made of fresh, green lizards was a cure for their disease if persisted in, so they paid negro boys to catch them. Little black fellows might often be seen with a lot of the uncanny creatures strung like fish for sale, or lying in wait to trap them by fences or trees. This was surely to be a day of both horrible and new sensations, for now Jack came in with something in a saucer covered with a glass to show me. It was a tarantula, the first I had ever seen. They had found it in a pile of lumber overturned during the raid on the stores. Jack said, "if dis yere was to bite yo you'ud fis begin to dance an
[57]

[147] Crucian English Creole: 'Little girl, give me some water'.
[148] Brain – to hit someone hard on the head with an object.
[149] Crucian English Creole: 'Thanks, little Miss'.
[150] It is not known when leprosy first appeared in the Danish West Indies, but the disease was certainly present from the 1760s onward, affecting many, especially among the enslaved. As noted by Jensen (2012: 96), the Moravian missionary C.G.A. Oldendorp mentions leprosy in his account of his visit to the Danish West Indies in the late 1760s (Oldendorp 1777/2000–2002), and during the period 1803–1848, leprosy among enslaved workers was a topic of significant concern among planters and colonial administrators. Leprosy is a recurrent theme in local songs from St. Croix, with lyrics in English Creole, from the second half of the 19th century (Soule 2014).

dance till yo drapped down dead".[151] This legend was an old one but not hard to believe when I remember how the pain of a centipede-bite made one feel like capering[152]. There are many dangerous creatures which have a certain terrible beauty, or the graceful ease of power, but the tarantula has none of this to the naked human vision. It is suggestive of nothing but repulsive wickedness, embodied evil. Once I had accidentally uncovered a scorpion's nest and seen the young just hatched eating up the mother and for days there had seemed to be a blur over the lovely world. Here was another blot; this loathsome thing squirming in its transparent prison. Was it akin to the golden-throated bird tilting in the turpentine[153] tree? O the mystery to a young soul of such beauty and such bale! But first then up came another negro man who had slipped in the gate while Tom was off guard and sat down on the stone steps. He looked over the pretty quiet yard, gave
[58]
a tired grunt and said "please Misse let me res. I dun bruk up".[154] He held the machinery of a broken clock and went to work to study it out. He soon became entirely absorbed, regardless of anything else, with that changed, intent look that showed he had found the work that would have been the delight of his soul. Rachel who knew him asked him at last who broke the clock. He said, "Our Halina[155] no like de way de clock was talkin, she say – 'What mek you say "Night and day night and day"' den she tuk her bill an bruk it up. And Georgina chopped up the pianner cause she say it would'n talk for her like it talk for Buckra"[156] (white person). These to me interesting tales were cut short by another wild commotion in the street. Yells and cheers, the rush and trample of hundreds of feet surging to one

[151] Crucian English Creole: 'If this here [creature] were to bite you, you would immediately start dancing and continue dancing until you dropped down dead'.
[152] Capering – to skip or dance about.
[153] Turpentine tree (*Bursera simaruba*), also known as *tourist tree*, among other names, "yields an aromatic resin known as cachibou smelling like turpentine" (Valls 1981: 129).
[154] Crucian English Creole: 'Please, Miss, let me rest. I am exhausted'.
[155] Or possibly Kalina. Cable's (1892: 717) version has "Ca'lina", short for Carolina.
[156] Crucian English Creole: 'Our Halina didn't like the way the clock was ticking. She said, 'Why do you say "Night and day, night and day?" Then she took her bill and broke it. And Georgina chopped up the piano because she said it wouldn't play for her the same way it did for the white people'. The word *buckra* 'white person/people' is derived from the Efik (Nigeria) word *mbakara* 'all + master' (Allsopp 1996: 61).

point. Above the din[157] rose the cry "de Gubnor de Gubnor's a comin".[158] This brought us all to the windows.
[59]
The Governor with two attendants, in an open carriage, surrounded by a mounted guard, was coming down the street. He did not look so smiling as when, on rare occasions, he occupied his crimson-lined, mahogany pew[159] to hear our Rector preach. He wore the uniform of a Danish general, the order of Dannebrog[160] on his breast and looked amid that dark multitude closing about him a very imposing figure. The cavalcade could make no progress so pressed upon by the crowd till at last just opposite our house some bold spirit seized the reins and the procession stopped. There was a dead pause of tense expectancy. Would they drag him from his seat? He was very pale, but suddenly as if he had come to some resolve he rose, lifted his cocked hat from his silvery hair and bowed with dignified grace. Then he unfolded a paper with big seals and began to read. His voice trembled but was clear. It proclaimed Freedom! freedom for all
[60]
the slaves of the Danish West India Islands in the name of his Majesty Christian VIII King of Denmark, and then commanded them to disperse and return to their homes. "Well! this is surely the most extra ordinary proceeding that ever was known", exclaimed Aunt Marion. "What does King Christian off in Copenhagen know about this. Perhaps he is sitting down comfortably to dinner!". Further comment was silenced by the wild cheers that rang out, "hurra hurra" from 1,000 throats. "God bless yo Ex'lency! God bless de Gubnor. Obbe is free!"[161] The retinue[162] was now allowed to pass on, the crowd behind still yelling. When the Fort was reached, the proclamation was again read from the ramparts and the negroes again ordered to disperse. But with unchained passions, inflamed by liquor, the delirious joy of sudden freedom, and elation at the idea that it had been conquered by themselves, was it likely

[157] Din – noise.
[158] Crucian English Creole: 'The Governor, the Governor is coming'.
[159] Pew – a wooden seat with a back, which people sit on in church.
[160] A Danish order of chivalry instituted in 1671 by King Christian V (1646–1699).
[161] Crucian English Creole: 'God bless Your Excellency, God bless the Governor. We are free'.
[162] Retinue – a group of advisers, assistants, or others accompanying an important person.

[61]
they would go home tamely? The majority drifted out to the estates to pillage and burn, while some remained in town to carouse[163] with friends. At evening, Mr. K. came and insisted we should spend the night at his house, where several men were gathered who had guns and ammunition. So leaving Jack and Tom in charge we complied. The way there led by the ruined Court-house and for several squares the ground was not visible so thickly was it carpeted with the manuscripts, records and books they had destroyed, and every footfall[164] rustled amid these dead leaves of the long past. The night passed in vigil and fitful sleep by turns, for though all was quiet where we were, the horizon was lighted in many places with a baleful glow that told of the blazing homes and property of planters and friends all over the country. At day-break all the men in the house
[62]
went out to learn this state of affairs. Mr. K. & Gilbert came back with gloomy faces. A courier had come from Christiansted who reported the island quite at the mercy of the insurgents who were burning and pillaging in all directions. So far, no murders had been committed, though two or three white men had been killed while trying to resist them single-handed, and several negroes killed in the next town. When the signals assembled the negroes on Sunday night they divided, three or four thousand going to Freidirkstead[165], the rest to Christiansted the capital. They made the same demand for freedom at the Fort there, and attacked it just after the Govornor [SIC] had departed for Frederiksted. He had left orders to do nothing till his return, in case of the slaves entering that town also, but one of the officials was of a different temper to those in Frederikstead[166] fort and determined to do as he thought best. He therefore gave the command to fire on the attacking negroes
[63]

[163] Carouse – to drink alcohol and party in a noisy, lively way.
[164] Footfall – the sound of footsteps.
[165] SIC. An indication that the manuscript was copied by someone else than Miller, who would not misspell the town's name.
[166] SIC. Another misspelling of Frederiksted.

and a broadside of grape-shot[167] was poured into their ranks killing several and wounding many more. It was effectual so far as the town was concerned they carried off their dead and wounded and left to scatter through the country to plunder and destroy. Mr. K. said it was thought best to accept the offer from the ships and send all the women and children on board at once so that the militia and cavalry might be free to unite with the Danish force and conquer the insurgents. A Danish man-of-war[168] was known to be in the Caribbean Sea and a schooner had been dispatched to look her up, while another had started for Porto[169] Rico to ask for aid. It was well known that the Spanish islands were always heavily garrisoned and could easily loan a regiment. Mr. K. added that he had instructed Tom to have a boat ready at the beach to take us off to an American schooner. "Now don't stop to pack trunks, just make a bundle of what
[64]
is most valuable, for they can't take people and luggage too, besides if a crowd gets there first you may be refused and I think you will find it pleasanter on that vessel than most of the others". Gilbert said he intended to take his people on one of the Indiamen for he considered they were at the bottom of the trouble and so were bound to help us. We skurried[170] home over the paper-carpeted streets crunching old deeds and Danish documents under our hurrying feet; swallowed some breakfast, and opened and shut, over and over, wardrobes, drawers, and trunks in futile effort to decide what to take or leave. We might come back only to the ashes of the beloved town. And oh! my lovely white cat, how could he be left. Charge after charge was given Si'Myra about him as I laid him with a goodbye hug on my bed and then, what was nearly a tragedy occurred. Jack came to tell that the boat was ready and saying
[65]
"see how easy I could lift you true de surf",[171] picked me up suddenly and set me on a low mahogany wardrobe. My dignity as a big girl was insulted, besides I hated to have him touch me so gave a shrill scream – "put me down!". My big cat heard and acted. With one bound he flew at Jack and

[167] Grapeshot – cannon charge consisting of small round balls, usually of lead or iron.
[168] A combatant warship.
[169] Puerto.
[170] Skurry – to move with hurry.
[171] Crucian English Creole: 'See how easily I can lift you through the surf'.

seized his throat with tooth and claw. Luckily Aunt Marcia, who was very strong, stood near. She got the cat off and stanched the flowing blood. "You duan need no watch-dog long's you got dat cat an I'll nebber tech you agin if he kin see",[172] said crest-fallen Jack. When we reached the schooner's deck a kindly, Yankee Skipper extended a cordial greeting making us welcome to a scene of strange confusion, and a crowd of friends and strangers. The whole roadstead was dotted with boats bringing the fleeing population while every vessel in port was surrounded by the like craft discharging their passengers. The decks of our ship of refuge were covered with boxes,
[66]
curious-shaped bundles and tung[173] trunks, so ancient that the hair which covered them seemed like the mossy growth of time. Children were crying to go home, women calling farewells and cautions to the men in the returning boats, friends greeting each other and telling their adventures; a Babel of tongues. We soon came across the S.'s from the beautiful North End Estate and heard their tale. The only whites on the estate that dreadful Sunday Night were Mr. S., [his] wife, little daughter and a young English girl the housekeeper. The slaves came in force to the mansion and demanded of Mr. S. that he should "make out their freedom papers". He replied that he would never set them free under compulsion. "Den we'll set yo house and ebry ting on fire, wen you'se seed yo proputty burn up den we'll tink wat for do wid you an de missis".[174] "Les go get bagasse foo burn him out",[175] they screamed, and rushed away to the works where the bagasse was stacked. The four
[67]
inmates then went quickly to work and filled every available vessel with water, piled blankets conveniently near and loaded all the fire-arms in the house. Then Mrs. S. threw wide the doors and windows opened her grand piano and played one lively, dashing piece after another, till after midnight

[172] Crucian English Creole: 'You don't need a watchdog as long as you have that cat, and I'll never touch you again if he can see'.
[173] Tung – Chinese tree bearing seeds that yield tung oil.
[174] Crucian English Creole: 'Then we will set your house and everything on fire. Once you've seen your property burn up, then we will decide what to do with you and the missis'.
[175] Crucian English Creole: 'Let's go get bagasse to burn him out'. The word *bagasse* refers to a fibrous residue from sugarcane, left after grinding (cf. Portuguese *bagaço* 'husk, peelings').

she fell exhausted from her seat. They did not return, something diverted them and they joined the marauders on another road. Next day Mr. S. got his family to town and on board this vessel. Here at nightfall all the anxious crowd dropped down upon their bundles and trunks in any sheltered corner or on the open deck to sleep the sleep of the utterly weary. The good-natured boatswain[176] lent me his sheet in a corner of the cabin to sleep on, with a bag of rope ends or something very hard for a pillow. The hard bed was but little matter to the sound health and strength of childhood while the privilege of even that measure of privacy was much appreciated. Every morning though he broke the sweet slumber of dawn, calling
[68]
"sorry to disturb you little miss but I must get to my locker". Grandmother and the American Consul's wife being the oldest ladies on board the only sofa was given up to them and other people bunked anywhere. Three days of heat, glare, confusion, anxiety seemed like three weeks but Thursday evening brought a change. As the banners of sunset streamed over the green waves, the scene in the harbor became dramatic. The Danish frigate, her bright flags flying, her yards manned, sailed and swung into her place opposite the town with an air of purpose enforced by the thundering salute from her cannon booming over the water. Soon a boat was lowered into which stepped a princely figure in glittering uniform. "There goes Capt. Erminger![177] Now we shall see what he can do", exclaimed one and another as the boat headed for the Fort. It passed into the evening shadows and darkness and silence soon reigned over the bay. On the vessel we sat out under the stars
[69]
and watched a late moon rise out of the sea while we listened to many a pathetic moan over the ingratitude which some petted slave had shown, or to the contrast, of affectionate loyalty manifested by those from whom it had been least expected. Next morning we learned that Capt E. had indeed arrived to some purpose. He had posted gunboats at every wharf, taken on

[176] Boatswain – a ship's officer in charge of equipment and the crew.
[177] Carl Ludvig Christian Irminger (1802–1888) was a Danish naval officer. As Commander of the Danish West Indian naval station, he urged the use of force, including bombardment from the sea to disperse revolters, and the deployment of soldiers and marines from his frigate Ørnen (Danish for 'The Eagle'). For more information about Irminger and the role he played on St. Croix in 1848, see Hall (1992: 208 ff.) and Highfield (2018: 343 f.).

shore all the marines he could spare, deposed the Captain of the Fort, proclaimed martial law, declared himself commander-in-chief of all forces on the island and arranged a plan of operations. Infantry and cavalry were to march from opposite ends of the island driving the insurgents before them till the two divisions met and joined forces at the centre. The Governor seemed to be simply ignored, and many began to ask was he to be the scapegoat and Captain E. the hero of the concerted plan by which the treasury of Denmark would be spared the killing blow of paying the planters for their slaves? Did we not read in
[70]
Hamlet long ago, there was "something rotten in Denmark!"[178] remarked one sprightly[179] woman. But these disloyal utterances were quickly silenced by the more politic, which was easy to do, as the crowd began to separate. Again the glassy haven was broken into sparkling foam and wavering blue light as dozens of boats flew over its surface coming to take back the refugees. Tom with our boat was soon alongside bringing messages that it was quite safe to come; the town was quiet, not a marauder in it. As we moved off towards our landing, the schooner bringing the Spanish soldiers was visible rounding the bluffs. Just before nightfall they landed, marching with much clatter to their quarters at all the entrances of the town which was destitute of other protection, all the men and Danish soldiers having gone to run down the rebels. In a few days this was accomplished. About a hundred under the leadership of one named Moses[180] made a stand on a hill and
[71]
attempted to fight by hurling down stones and small rocks, but were captured in the end.[181] The faithless general Buddoe turned King's evidence

[178] "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" is a line from Shakespeare's famous play *Hamlet*.
[179] Sprightly – lively (said of an old person).
[180] This may refer to Moses Roberts, another notable figure behind the demonstration in Frederiksted (cf. Jensen et al. 2017: 274; see also Hall 1984).
[181] Hall (1984; 1992: 208 ff.) makes no reference to such a "stand". Whether or not this episode actually took place, it reads somewhat like a scene taken from the 1733 rebellion on St. John, where something similar did happen, as a group of rebels stood their ground against the colonial power, until eventually eliminated. According to an account from 1791 by a Danish colonial official, this group of rebels on St. John numbered around 300 people (Highfield & Bøegh 2018: 88). A Danish planter on St. Croix wrote a series of

and gave information as to all the other leaders of the affair. On Monday after the Governor had proclaimed freedom Buddoe was dashing hither and thither on his white charger getting good things from the plundered stores.[182] Two Danish gentlemen of wealth and influence hoping to stop the destruction of property determined to appeal to Buddoe through the vanity of social recognition. Major G.[183] whose wachman[184] was a freeman drove out and intercepted the black commander-in-chief. Addressing him affably as General Buddoe he invited him into the carriage and drove to the residence of lawyer Z.[185] Here he was feasted, toasted and congratulated on his success, then it was broached that his great influence must be used to call of "the dogs of war" since the purpose of the outbreak was attained.[186] But the effort was wasted, he either could not or would not control his people – most probably the former was the fact. Now to save himself
[72]

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letters to Danish associates discussing the emancipation in the months following the demonstration in Frederiksted, referencing rumors suggesting 150–200 casualties within the African Caribbean population (Olsen 2012: 590). However, no reference is made specifically to an episode involving a stand on a hill.

[182] To the best of our knowledge, there exists no evidence to support what Miller is claiming here. Buddhoe is regarded as a hero in St. Croix today. A bust in his honor sits in front of Fort Frederik in Frederiksted.

[183] Major Jacob Hietman Gyllich (1795–1868), a resident of Frederiksted, of Danish descent, served as Commander of the Frederiksted Fire Corps. He was known for cultivating positive relationships with members of the enslaved population (Christensen 2018).

[184] Watchman; possibly from Danish *vagtmand* 'watchman; guard'; also found in Virgin Islands Dutch Creole as *wakman* (Bøegh & Bakker 2021: 31).

[185] This refers to Carl Frederik Vilhelm Sarauw (1806–1881). He was Crown Prosecutor in Frederiksted.

[186] Again, Miller's assertions regarding Buddhoe's actions and subsequent fate must be deemed as lacking in reliability. Buddhoe had both demanded the freedom of the enslaved and attempted to prevent destruction during the demonstration in Frederiksted and in the subsequent days around the island (Jensen et al. 2017: 276 f.). Nothing in the historical record indicates that Buddhoe was vain and sought social recognition, as Miller claims. As per Christensen (2018: 10), based on archival sources, Buddhoe had come under Gyllich's protection around this time, as a consequence of his involvement in quelling the tensions during the uprising, and subsequently, he was apprehended and deported, not by Gyllich, but at the behest of Von Scholten's successor, Frederik Oxholm (1801–1871). Oxholm had served as Governor of St. Thomas and St. John in the years 1834–1836 and 1848–1862, and briefly acted as Governor-General of the Danish West Indies following Peter von Scholten's departure in 1848.

he gave up all the other leaders to death, stipulating it was said that he should be given means to get away as his life would not be safe there afterwards. He disappeared before the trial and execution of those he had betrayed, going, it was said to New York,[187] and about the same time, the English Indiamen slipped out of the port as quietly as they had come. A sort of military trial was held over the captured leaders and they were condemned to be shot. This was done very soon. The Fredrickstead[188] militia who were forced to attend the executions on successive afternoons, described it as the most heart-rending spectacle possible to witness. The prisoners were utterly unable to die with manly courage and were shot while imploring mercy with agonising tears and cries. While Buddoe was yet in custody and known to be making his revelations, a young lady overheard a conversation between two negroes on the scene just past, and put it into verse. It was set to the Danish air "Den tapre Land-Soldat",[189] and sung about
[73]
the island a good deal. As an example of the dialect of the West-Indian negro in English-speaking colonies it is so accurate that it seems for that reason worth recording.[190]

[187] It was rumored that Buddhoe actually traveled to New York instead of being landed in Trinidad, or at least instead of remaining there (Highfield 2018: 86).
[188] SIC. Frederiksted.
[189] This translates into 'The brave foot soldier', or lit., 'The brave land soldier'. This song was composed in 1848, in support of the Danish soldiers fighting Prussian troops in the First Schleswig War (1848–1852).
[190] The following presentation features a simple interlinear glossing. The original text is in italics, followed by a direct translation of the individual words, and then a free translation, set out line by line. We have numbered each original line in the text to facilitate individual referencing to them. Some individual words are explained by Miller in parentheses. Longer explanations from Miller are included as footnotes (labeled as author's notes). Other than that, we do not explain every word individually which could be relevant for discussion, but only selected words whose meanings might appear opaque in the given context.

Conversation between Martin King and Buddy Ben[191]

(1) *Goo night me Buddy Ben,*
good night me Buddy Ben
'Good evening, my Buddy Ben'

(2) *Me glad foo see you fren;*
me glad for see you friend
'I'm glad to see you, friend'

(3) *Hab yo see Buddoe today?*
have you see Buddhoe today
'Have you seen Buddhoe today?'

(4) *He day (is there) in Westen*[192] *dem say*
he is there in Westend they say
'He is in Westend [i.e. Frederiksted], they say'

(5) *He dines wid Lawyer Zarrow wid Major Gyllich dribes*[193]*,*
he dines with Lawyer Zarrow with Major Gyllich bribes
'He is dining with Lawyer Zarrow, with Major Gyllich's bribes'

(6) *Dem say because de buckra (white person) dem kin tank*
they say because the white person/people them can thank
hem for dem libes
him for them lives
'they say, because the white people can thank him for their lives'

[191] The meaning of the word *buddy* is roughly 'friend; egalitarian address for a male' (Bøegh & Bakker 2021: 12; Baker & Huber 2001: 206). We do not know if the name Ben is intended as a reference to a historical person or is used as a generic label, chosen due to the alliteration. Martin King, an enslaved worker at the plantation Bog of Allen, was one of the most active in spreading the message about the demonstration in Frederiksted. He was an important figure in connection with the emancipation (Jensen et al. 2017: 274). According to Hall (1984: 12), "the [Danish] Court said [he] was commonly believed to be a leader of the emancipation".
[192] Author's note: "Frederiksted was West End in local phrase".
[193] This is most likely a transcription error, not a sound change; <d> should be <b>.

(7) *But lay (let) de buckra dem look sharp dat*
but let the white person/people them look sharp that
nagur no foo truss,
Negro no for trust
'But the white people need to stay alert, that Negroe can't be trusted'

(8) *Da (it was) he bin tell de people dem foo crape (scrape)*
it was he been tell the people them for scrape
off all de russ
off all the rust
'It was he who (had) told the people to scrape off all the rust'

(9) *From all dem bills and hoes and all dem owl buttoes*[194]
from all them cutlasses and hoes and all them old ?
'from all their/those cutlasses and hoes and all their/those old –?'

(10) *Foo rise, foo bawl foo free.*
for rise for bawl for free
'to rise, to cry out for freedom'

[Second verse:]

(11) *Now shet you mout me fren*
now shut you mouth me friend
'Now shut your mouth, my friend'

(12) *Me know you Martin King*
me know you Martin King
'I know you, Martin King'

(13) *De buckra dem in Westen*
the white person/people them in Westend
'The white people in Westend [i.e. Frederiksted]'

[194] We are uncertain about the intended meaning of this word, *buttoes*. It might refer to buttress, a structural support utilized to strengthen walls, terraces, or embankments.

(14) *Say yo too bin lead de ring*
say you too been lead the ring
'say you too (had) led the ring [i.e. the uprising]'

(15) *Dem yerry (hear) all yo say an all yo want foo do,*
them hear all you say and all you want for do
'They heard all you said and all you want(ed) to do'

(16) *Ef you tink buckra fool,well den yo fool foo true*
if you think white person/people fool well then you fool for true
'if you think white people are fools, well then you're truly a fool [or: have truly been fooled]'

(17) *Da pity you bin ebber run,foo dis yo bin foo blame*
it was pity you been ever run for this you been for blame
'It was a pity you ever ran away, for this you were to blame'

(18) *Buddoe him tan foo see de fun an now he get good name*
Buddhoe him stand for see the fun and now he get good name
'Buddhoe, he stayed to see the fun and now he got a good name [i.e. recognition]'

[74]

(19) *But no bruk heart foo dat, me want to hab sum chat*
but no broke heart for that me want to have some chat
'But don't let your heart be broken over that, I want to have a chat'

(20) *Tonight, wid yo tonight.*
tonight with you tonight
'tonight, with you tonight'

[Third verse:]

(21) *De West En buckra dem*
the Westend white person/people them
'The white people of Westend [i.e. Frederiksted]'

(22) *Bin run go hide on board*
been run go hide on board
'had run away and taken refuge on board [of a ship]'

(23) *One ob de officer O crem!*
one of the officer oh scream
'One of the officers – oh my!'

(24) *Bin gib Buddoe he sword.*
been give Buddhoe he sword
'gave/had given up his sword to Buddhoe'

(25) *Me yerry say de nagur bin play de deuce da town,*
me hear say the Negro been play the deuce in town
'I heard that the Negroes (had) played the deuce [i.e. acted like devils] in town'

(26) *De fort bin hab no powder foo shoot dem down;*
the fort been have no powder for shoot them down
'The fort had no gunpowder to shoot them down'

(27) *You blebe me, Bass En*[195] *Gentlemen dem brave pon my word,*
you believe me Bassin/"Boss End" gentlemen them brave upon my word
'Believe you me, Gentlement of Bassin [i.e. Christiansted], they are brave, upon my word'

(28) *You nebber bin goin catch dem gib nagur up dem sword,*
you never been going catch them give Negro up them sword
'You would never catch them giving up their swords to the Negroes'

(29) *Dem know foo use dem right, dem know how foo fight.*
them know for use them right them know how for fight
'They know how to use them right, they know how to fight'

[195] Author's note: "Bass En was Christiansted".

(30) *Hurra foo dem, hurra!*
hurra for them hurra
'Hurra for them, hurra'

[Fourth verse:]

(31) *When Mesto Peter*[196] *say*
when master Peter say
'When Master Peter said'

(32) *De nagur dem bin free –*
the Negro them been free
'the Negroes have been freed'

(33) *Nagur bin so drunk so tay (till)*[197]
Negro been so drunk until
'Negroes got so very drunk until'

(34) *Dem could'nt yerry couldn't see*
them couldn't hear couldn't see
'they couldn't hear, couldn't see [i.e. got drunk "out of their minds"]'

(35) *Da (that) day dem ring de bell – da day dem blow de shell.*
that day them ring the bell that day them blow the shell
'That day they rang the bell, that day they sounded the conch shell'

(36) *Chaw! dem bin do some ugly ting, de ting no good foo tell,*
pshaw[198] them been do some ugly thing the thing no good for tell
'I can't believe it – they went and did some ugly things, the things are best not mentioned'

[196] Peter von Scholten. The word *mesto* probably comes from Dutch *meester* 'master', found in 20th century Virgin Islands Dutch Creole as *mēstər*, *mēstu*, *mēstə* (Bøegh & Bakker 2021: 23).
[197] Baker & Huber (2001: 200) have *so te(l)* 'until; a long time'.
[198] Pshaw – interjection; an expression of contempt, disapproval, disbelief.

(37) *Dem kill the buckra sheep and hog to mek one*
them kill the white person/people sheep and hog to make one
famous lunch
famous lunch/meal
'They killed the white people's sheep and hog(s) to make an infamous meal'

(38) *Me yerry say dem bin hab one cisron full ob punch;*
me hear say them been have one cistern full of punch
'I heard that they had a cistern full of punch'

(39) *Dem bruk the buckra store dem ruin Mr. Moor*
them broke the white person/people store them ruin Mr. Moore
'They destroyed the white people's/person's store(s), they ruined Mr. Moore'

(40) *Da shame, da shame da shame*
it was shame it was shame it was shame
'Shame! Shame! Shame!'

[75]

[Fifth verse:]

(41) *You blebe (believe) me obby (all our) ouman (woman) all*
you believe me all our woman all
'Believe you me, all our women'

(42) *Dem head more hard dan goat*
them head more hard than goat
'they are so thickheaded [lit., their heads harder than goats']'

(43) *Da shame foo heah dem call*
it was shame for hear them call
'It was a shame to hear them call'

(44) *Foo all de hansome petticoat.*
for all the handsome petticoat
'for all the handsome [i.e. pretty; nice] petticoats'

(45) *Da grudge dem grudge de buckra foo all*
it was grudge them grudge the white person/people for all
dim good sumting
them good something
'A grudge is what they held against the white people, for all their nice belongings'

(46) *Dem bruk dem press and buro so tief (steal) dem chain and*
them broke them press and bureau so steal them chain and
ring,
ring
'They broke their press and bureau and so stole their chain and rings'

(47) *Da dem no bin wary race, dem no bin wary walk,*
it was them no been wary race them no been wary walk
'They raced around without caution, they walked around without caution'

(48) *Dem went bout from place to place foo make piano talk;*
them went about from place to place for make piano talk
'They went about from place to place to create a commotion [lit., make piano(s) talk]'

(49) *Me no kin tell de haf else yo sa dead wid laugh*
me no can tell the half else you shall dead with laugh
'I can't tell you the half of it, or else you will die laughing'

(50) *No laugh! no laugh! no laugh*
no laugh no laugh no laugh
'Don't laugh, don't laugh, don't laugh!'

[Sixth verse:]

(51) *De Parson an de Priest*
the parson and the priest
'The parson and the priest'

(52) *Bin try foo mek dem shame;*
been try to make them shame
'tried to make them feel ashamed'

(53) *Some nagur wuss dan beast*
some Negro worse than beast
'Some Negroes are worse than beasts'

(54) *Yes dem much mo hard foo tame,*
yes them much more hard for tame
'Yes, they are much more hard to tame'

(55) *De Roman priest bin try wid water in he yey (eye)*
the Roman priest been try with water in he eye
'The Roman priest tried, with tears in his eyes'

(56) *All he could say, all he could do dem still bin blow,*
all he could say all he could do them still been blow
"too-too"
conch shell horn
'No matter what he said or did, they still sounded their conch shell horns'

(57) *Dem take dem bill, dem chook am (stuck them) pon long*
them take them cutlass them stuck them upon long
long tick (stick) so high
long stick so high
'They took their cutlasses, they stuck them onto very long sticks, so high'

(58) *Dem bill bin shine me fren shine jis like de nagur yey.*
them cutlass been shine me friend shine just like the Negro eye
'Their cutlasses shone, my friend, shone just like the Negroes' eyes'

(59) *But wen dem feel de shot in Bass En bin so hot*
but when them feel the shot in Bassin/"Boss End" been so hot
'But when they felt the shots in Bassin [i.e. Christiansted] were so hot'

(60) *Dem run, dem bawl dem run.*
them run them cry them run
'they ran, they cried, they ran'

[76]

By July 10th order and quiet were restored. On that day the planters met and elected a board to regulate the price of labor and the manner of contracting with laborers.[199] On some estates work was at once resumed but on others the works had been burned or destroyed. Some negroes were refractory and drifted about among the islands, so that it was many months before all the wind-mills on the hills were once more whirling merrily before the salt sea-breezes. The Spanish regiment remained several months for there were no ocean cables then and it was long before any word could come from Denmark, but there seemed to be no doubt in the minds of owners that their slaves were free and that they could hope for no compensation. And so of course it proved when another frigate arrived. The Govornor's [SIC] Emancipation proclamation was confirmed but nothing said of pay. Captain Erminger[200] had been doing police duty between the three Danish islands and his ship was ordered home. Governor von S. was recalled for another Governor had come to take his place,[201]

[77]

and a Danish regiment had come to releave the Spaniards. We heard afterwards that Gov. von S. and Capt. Erminger were called before a Court Martial or Court of Enquiry at Copenhagen, that the Governor was acquitted with a reprimand and Captain E. commended for his prompt course of action. There was much speculation among the impoverished planters and owners as to the secret springs of the occurrences that had been so fateful to them. But that obscurity which sometimes settles over the unnoticed causes of events that are part of great world-movements, and often makes the mystery of history, sank these into oblivion under the rushing tide of time. The shadow of bondage was lifted and the familiar skeleton forever banished, but to judge from the talk of the more far-seeing a score of troublesome spectres were stealing up to take its place. Everybody black and

[199] For a discussion of the conditions of the working class in St. Croix in the period following 1848, including the Labor Act of January 1849, the establishment's response to the emancipation, see Highfield (2009: 153 ff.).
[200] Irminger.
[201] Oxholm.

white seemed somehow older and sadder. Only nature was still young, fair and carefree and full of satisfying beauty, solemn
[78]
without dullness and smiling without frivolity. Each day yet rose over the hills a new resurrection of loveliness, and still at evening we watched it sink into the sea with triumphant promise. That era had laved[202] the shore thus in the radiance of sunset when the Carib danced beside the wave, and would kiss it with the same soft murmur when the Caucasian and his train of subject races had also vanished into the unknown.

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[202] To lave – to wash.
[203] This list of references has been added by the editors. It lists works cited in the text and in footnotes throughout the text supplied by the author and the editors.

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