

THE  
INDEPENDENCE ANTHOLOGY  
OF  
JAMAICAN LITERATURE

*selected by*

A. L. Hendriks & Cedric Lindo

with an introduction by

Peter Abrahams

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of  
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Dedicated to  
THE FREE PEOPLE OF JAMAICA



# FOREWORD

The publication of this Anthology of Jamaican writings was one of the responsibilities of the Committee set up by the Ministry of Development and Welfare to plan and organise the artistic activities of Jamaica's Independence Celebrations. It also reflects a conscious effort on the part of the Government of Jamaica to bring the Arts into greater focus as the country enters its new era of Independence.

I should like to pay tribute to all those pioneer writers and organisations, whose vision and unstinting labours have laid the foundations of our creative literature, so that today as we enter Independence, we can publish a collection of Jamaican poetry and prose, without having to apologise for the quality of its contents.

It is far easier to follow than to make a beginning; and it is one of the besetting sins of our society that as we become more sophisticated, we tend to look down our noses at those who by making mistakes first showed us the way.

Even so, the works of many of our earlier writers — I have in mind the poets Tom Redcam and Claude McKay, and among those who are still living, W. Adolphe Roberts and J. E. Clare McFarlane — have already entered into the complex of our national culture. And it is a pleasure to attend Speech Festivals and other gatherings and hear our young people speak with conviction such poems as *San Gloria*, *Flameheart*, *The Maroon Girl* and *On National Vanity*.

One of the challenges of Independence is that national pride will always seek for indigenous artistic expression. This is not the same thing as suggesting a blatant partisanship on the part of the artist, or that he should be committed to one ideology or another. The artist, if he is worth his salt, will always be true to his own vision.

There seems to be overwhelming evidence from the history of other cultures, however, that until we are truly national, that is to say, until we have really learnt to exploit our own resources, the body of our creative literature will never speak with a voice that is undeniably its own, and thus

throw up the writers who can win through to universal acclaim.

It is true that a number of Jamaican writers have been securing publication overseas. They deserve our warmest congratulations.

I appreciate that the opportunities for publication in Jamaica are limited. One cannot overlook the fact, however, that Jamaican and other West Indian books do not at present have a commanding readership in this island, but it is hoped that efforts such as the local publication of this volume will help towards creating a reasonable market at home.

I do not believe that writers can escape the responsibility of writing for their own people. To the extent that they are able to communicate to their own people at home, that they can give them some illumination of life, to that extent will they be establishing contact with universal values and writing the books of which we can be proud.

It is for these reasons that I am able to commend this Independence Anthology of Jamaican writing as making a start in the right direction.

EDWARD SEAGA,  
Minister of Development and Welfare.

Hanover House,  
90 Hanover Street,  
Kingston,  
Jamaica.

# INTRODUCTION

The publication of this anthology of Jamaican prose and verse is to commemorate the achievement of Jamaica's political independence on August 6th, 1962: it is part of the island's independence celebrations, and the publishers are an advisory committee to the government of Jamaica — the Arts Advisory Council. Production costs will be met out of a sum allocated as an annual subvention to the Arts Advisory Council by the Ministry of Development and Welfare to encourage the arts in Jamaica. This anthology is therefore not a private commercial venture but is government-sponsored. But it was compiled as though it were a private commercial venture. The compilers sent out invitations to a number of known writers and published advertisements in the press inviting manuscripts. When these arrived they selected, sorted and edited them and sent them to the printers without reference to any government official anywhere along the line. The reader should therefore know that but for the active interest and financial support of the government of Jamaica there might have been no anthology to celebrate Jamaica's independence.

Modern Jamaican writing can fairly be said to have begun with 'Tom Redcam' — Thomas Henry MacDermot — whose Irish ancestors settled in Jamaica in the 18th century. Redcam was born in 1870 and died in England in 1933 after spending nearly eleven years in and out of English nursing homes, dreaming of and longing for his 'Little Green Island'.

A Little Green Island, in far away seas!  
Now the swift Tropic shadows stride over thy leas;  
The evening's Elf-bugles call over the land,  
And ocean's low lapping falls soft on the strand.  
Then down the far West, towards the portals of Night,  
Gleam the glory of orange and rich chrysolite.  
Day endeth its splendour; the Night is at hand;  
My heart groweth tender, dear, far away land.

But before that Redcam had sung Jamaica in a new way that made its people and its natural beauty come alive with that startling freshness and sense of discovery which is the glory of good poetry. As editor of the *Jamaica Times* Redcam encouraged younger writers and found space for the works. As a native-born white Jamaican

of his times he was totally committed to Jamaica, there were no split loyalties, no thought or talk of Great Britain or Ireland as 'Home'. As far back as 1899 he could say to his fellow whites and coloureds: "Today we lead; tomorrow we advise; and on the day following we are co-workers together with our black countrymen. . . . It is as our actions and opinions relate to them that they will stand applauded or condemned by the future historian."

Among those whom Redcam published and encouraged was a poor black boy from the hills of Clarendon named Claude McKay. Thanks largely to Redcam McKay's first two volumes of verse *Constab Ballads* and *Songs of Jamaica* were published in his homeland. With these, and a Musgrave Medal from the Institute of Jamaica, the young poet left his homeland to win a great reputation as one of the leading poets of the 'Negro Renaissance' of the 20s in the United States. In America, Africa and elsewhere McKay is known mainly as the explosively angry race - and colour-conscious poet using words as weapons against discrimination and bigotry:

If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honour us though dead!

But in Jamaica he is also remembered, and honoured, for his humorous and comic verses like 'Flat Foot Drill' — he spent some time in the Jamaica Constabulary force:

Fus' beginnin', flat foot drill,  
Larnin' how fe mek right tu'n:  
"Tention! keep you' han's dem still  
Can't you tek in dat a li'l?  
Hearin' all, but larnin' none . . .

And for the haunting lyricism of his love for his island and the terrible homesickness in poems like 'Flame Heart' and 'After Winter'. For McKay his self-imposed exile was winter and after winter would be when he got home. But he died in America in 1948 — in winter. Both Redcam and McKay, the pioneers of modern Jamaican poetry, died far from home.

By 1923 interest in poetry had grown to such an extent that J. E. Clare McFarlane, the island's senior living poet could found

the Poetry League of Jamaica as a branch of the Empire Poetry League. The League posthumously declared Tom Redcam Jamaica's first Poet Laureate. In 1924 McFarlane published his own first collection of poems. He also edited the first anthology of Jamaican poetry, *Voices From Summerland*, which was published in London in 1929. The poets of the Poetry League were not, overtly at least, as preoccupied with, and involved in, the social, political and economic problems of Jamaica as were Redcam and McKay. Their verse did not reflect or draw inspiration from the growing national awakening that stirred the land. Their verse brought to mind Keats and Wordsworth, and Shelley bereft of revolutionary content. But they nurtured the poetic awakening and McFarlane himself and Vivian Virtue, to my mind the most successful of the Poetry League poets, achieved some memorable verse. McFarlane's 'Villanelle of Immortal Love' is a fair example:

Love will awaken all lovely things at last.  
One by one they shall come from the sleep of time,  
Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.  
Hard on their fair designs come the wreck of the blast;  
Where they lie scattered in every land and clime,  
Love will awaken all lovely things at last.

The troubles of the 1930s and the growth of the nationalist movement under the leadership of the P.N.P. led the emergence of a new group of poets in the late 1930s and early 1940s. These poets were involved in the nationalist movement, drew their inspiration from it and gave voice to its aspirations. Much of this was protest, agitational verse, often crude and lacking in the grace achieved by the Poetry League poets. But occasionally they struck pure poetic gold as did Roger Mais with his:

All men come to the hills  
Finally . . .

with its deep undertones of the island's past and the poverty of the 'proud lone men' with 'dusty, broken feet'. A host of other poets emerged the most outstanding to my mind being George Campbell, M. G. Smith, H. D. Carberry and Basil McFarlane, son of Clare McFarlane. And there were other poets like W. Adolphe Roberts and P. M. Sherlock who preceded and nurtured the awakening.

Up to this time prose fiction had played a relatively unimportant part in Jamaican literature. At least a dozen novels had been written but mostly in the nineteenth century, beginning with Michael Scott's *Tom Cringle's Log* and the *Cruise of the Midge*. But Scott and all the other writers were 'outsiders' seeing and writing about Jamaica as 'outsiders'. In the opening years of this century Herbert George de Lisser had published five novels. But it was not until 1943, with the publication of the first *Focus* under the editorship of Edna Manley that prose, first of all in the form of the short story, came into its own. The first *Focus* contained ten short stories, over fifty poems, three short plays and five short essays. The second *Focus*, published five years later, had roughly the same number of poems but there were sixteen short stories. The third *Focus*, published in 1956, had thirteen stories simply because there was no room for any more. And the fourth *Focus*, published in 1960, carried eighteen prose pieces of which sixteen were fiction, and fewer poems than in all the other issues of *Focus*.

Prose fiction had come into its own, and when Robert Herring devoted an entire issue of *Life and Letters* to Jamaican writing way back in 1948 he could not find space for all the publishable short stories he received from Jamaica. In the second *Focus* Edna Manley wrote: "There are signs that our people are becoming more conscious that it is essential that we should produce books of our own, and if this feeling grows, there will be far less financial risk involved in putting our writers of talent before the public". In 1950 this idea became a reality when the Gleaner Company established the Pioneer Press which has published well over twenty titles in very attractive paperback editions selling round about three shillings and six-pence. It is a great tragedy that the publishing activity of the Pioneer Press has fallen off so very badly in recent years.

In 1949, the same year in which J. E. Clare McFarlane published his second anthology, *A Treasury of Jamaican Poetry*, Vic Reid published his novel, *New Day*. This novel which was published in both New York and London, was the beginning of the emergence of a whole new school of Jamaican and West Indian novelists. The names of the leading members of this group are pub-

lic property. There is Edgar Mittelholzer, George Lamming, Roger Mais, John Hearne, Vidia Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, Jan Carew and Andrew Salkey. And behind them are others pressing hard for publication and public recognition.

It is not my purpose here to discuss the novels of all these West Indian writers — indeed it is not possible to encompass such a discussion within the framework of this brief introduction to an anthology commemorating Jamaica's Independence. But some of the problems which face these writers are common to Barbados, Trinidad, British Guiana as much as to Jamaica. So, while I shall confine myself to the Jamaican novelists specifically, it might be useful to bear in mind that the problems are region-wide and that on the whole the novelists themselves see them as being region-wide.

After Vic Reid published his *New Day*, Roger Mais appeared on the literary scene with three novels following each other in fairly rapid succession. These were: *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, *Brother Man* and *Black Lightning*. And then, in 1955, Mais died just when he seemed on the verge of becoming a really powerful influence on Jamaican and West Indian writing. Next came John Hearne whose publication of *Voices Under the Window* heralded the emergence of one of, if not the best, craftsmen among West Indian writers. All his succeeding novels have attested to his skill. The fourth Jamaican novelist to have achieved a critical and public acclaim that entitles him to consideration beside Reid, Mais and Hearne is Andrew Salkey.

Of the four only Vic Reid stayed at home. The others went away to England to live and write and find the wider fields they sought for their talents. It is possible that because he stayed at home Vic Reid has published only two novels, his second, *The Leopard*, dealing not with Jamaica but with the Mau Mau in Kenya. This, incidentally, was one of the most remarkable feats of creative imagination I have ever read. It is equally possible that if he had gone away he might still have written only the two novels between 1949 and the present time. Roger Mais went away, but in some ways his three novels written within a tight time span give a truer street level view of the lower depths of contemporary Jamaica than

anything else I know. By the same token there is no knowing whether Hearne and Salkey staying at home would have made any difference to the choice of subject matter and angle of approach. So it seems to me that we want to get away from all this talk about the 'pleasures of exile' or the duty of writers to come home. In any case, writers everywhere have a tendency to do exactly what they want — and the reader can take it or leave it. If the writer elects not to be concerned with the **human and** social problems of his own emerging society, that is his business. There may be those of us who think that since all good art must be bedded on the realities of life any escapist or tourist guide type of fiction which trades on the exotic setting or quaintness of speech will not be great or even very good. But we cannot impose this view on the writer.

What we can say, and I think we can say this fairly of the Jamaican novelist and of the West Indian novelist, is that there must be a reason why there has been such great skill and promise shown — and why it has remained just promise, unfulfilled these many years. We can ask our novelists to try and give answers to this question. And their best answer would be a really great Jamaican novel that would make Jamaica and Jamaicans uniquely real as a land and a people for all men in all lands and for all time. I think it is the recognition of this challenge that has brought John Hearne home, and that is a very hopeful thing.

As this anthology shows, Jamaican literature has evolved and grown and achieved much that is extremely good in both poetry and prose. It is striking and impressive compared with that of any emerging society similar to ours. The challenge to our writers now is to build on what has been achieved and to create a literature that will stand beside the best in the modern world. And for this our writers need, I think, to look deeply inward.

PETER ABRAHAMS

Coyaba,  
Jamaica.

# AT THE STELLING

JOHN HEARNE

“Dis one is no boss fe’ we, Dinnie,” Son-Son say. “I don’ like how him stay. Dis one is boss fe’ messenger an’ women in Department office, but not fe’ we.”

“Shut your mou’,” I tell him. “Since when a stupid, black nigger can like and don’t like a boss in New Holland? What you goin’ do? Retire an’ live ’pon your estate?” But I know say that Son-Son is right.

The two of we talk so at the back of the line; Son-Son carrying the chain, me with the level on the tripod. The grass stay high, and the ground hard with sun. It is three mile to where the Catacuma run black past the *stelling*, and even the long light down the sky can’t strike a shine from Catacuma water. You can smell Rooi Swamp, dark and sweet and wicked like a woman in a bad house back in Zuyder Town. Nothing live in Rooi Swamp except snake; like nothing live in a bad woman. In all South America there is no swamp like the Rooi; not even in Brazil; not even in Cayenne. The new boss, Mister Cockburn, walk far ahead with the little assistant man, Mister Bailey. Nobody count the assistant. Him only come down to the Catacuma to learn. John stay close behind them, near to the rifle. The other rest of the gang file out upon the trail between them three and me and Son-Son. Mister Cockburn is brand-new from head to foot. New hat, new bush-shirt, new denim pant, new boot. Him walk new.

“Mister Cockburn!” John call, quick and sharp. “Look!”

I follow the point of John’s finger and see the deer. It fat and promise tender and it turn on the hoof-tip like deer always do, with the four tip standing in a nickel and leaving enough bare to make a cent change, before the spring into high grass. Mister Cockburn unship the rifle, and *pow*, if we was all cōw then him shoot plenty grass for us to eat.

“Why him don’t give John de rifle?” Son-Son say.

“Because de rifle is Government,” I tell him, “and Mister Cockburn is Government. So it is him have a right to de rifle.”

Mister Cockburn turn and walk back. He is a tall, high mulatto man,

young and full in body, with eyes not blue and not green, but coloured like the glass of a beer bottle. The big hat make him look like a soldier in the moving pictures.

"Blast this sun," he say, loud, to John. "I can't see a damn' thing in the glare; it's right in my eyes."

The sun is falling down the sky behind us but maybe him think we can't see that too.

John don't answer but only nod once, and Mister Cockburn turn and walk on, and I know say that if I could see John's face it would be all Carib buck. Sometimes you can see where the Indian lap with it, but other times it is all Indian and closed like a prison gate; and I knew say, too, that it was this face Mister Cockburn did just see.

"Trouble dere, soon," Son-Son say, and him chin point to John and then to Mister Cockburn. "Why Mister Hamilton did have to get sick, eh, Dunny? Dat was a boss to have."

"Whatever trouble to happen is John's trouble," I tell him. "John's trouble is Mister Cockburn's. Leave it. You is a poor naygur wid no schooling, five *pickney* and a sick woman. Dat is trouble enough for you."

But in my heart I find agreement for what stupid Son-Son have to say. If I have only known what trouble . . .

No. Life don't come so. It only come one day at a time. Like it had come every day since we lose Mister Hamilton and Mister Cockburn take we up to survey the Catacuma drainage area in Mister Hamilton's stead.

The first day we go on the savannah beyond the *stelling*, I know say that Mister Cockburn is frighten. Frighten, and hiding his frighten from himself. The worst kind of frighten. You hear frighten in him voice when he shout at we to keep the chain straight and plant the markers where him tell us. You see frighten when him try to work us, and himself, one hour after midday, when even the alligators hide in the water. And you understand frighten when him try to run the camp at the *stelling* as if we was soldier and him was a general. But all that is because he is new and it would pass but for John. Because of John everything remain bad. From the first day when John try to treat him as he treat Mister Hamilton.

You see, John and Mister Hamilton was like one thing except that

Mister Hamilton have schooling and come from a big family in Zuyder Town. But they each suck from a Carib woman and from the first both their spirit take. When we have Mister Hamilton as boss whatever John say we do as if it was Mister Hamilton say it, and at night when Mister Hamilton lie off in the big Berbice chair on the veranda and him and John talk it sound like one mind with two tongue. That's how it sound to the rest of we when we sit down the steps and listen to them talk. Only when Mister Cockburn come back up the river with we, after Mister Hamilton take sick, we know say all that is change. For Mister Cockburn is frighten and must reduce John's pride, and from that day John don't touch the rifle and don't come to the veranda except to take orders and for Mister Cockburn to show that gang foreman is only gang foreman and that boss is always boss.

Son-Son say true, I think. Trouble is to come between John and Mister Cockburn. Poor John. Here, in the bush, him is a king, but in New Zuyder him is just another poor half-buck without a job and Mister Cockburn is boss and some he cast down and some he raiseth up.

Ahead of we, I see Mister Cockburn trying to step easy and smooth, as if we didn't just spend seven hours on the savannah. Him is trying hard but very often the new boot kick black dirt from the trail. That is all right I think. Him will learn. Him don't know say that even John hold respect for the sun on the Catacuma. The sun down here on the savannah is like the centurion in the Bible who say to one man, Come, and he cometh, and to another, Go, and he goeth. Like it say go, to Mister Hamilton. For it was a man sick bad we take down to the mouth of the river that day after he fall down on the wharf at the *stelling*. And it was nearly a dead man we drive up the coast road one hundred mile to Zuyder Town. We did want to stop in Hendrikstadt with him that night, but he think him was dying — we think so too — and him would not stop for fear he die away from his wife. And afterwards the Government doctor tell Survey that he must stay in the office forevermore and even Mister Hamilton who think him love the bush and the swamp and the forest more than life itself was grateful to the doctor for those words.

So it was it did happen with Mister Hamilton, and so it was Mister Cockburn come to we.

Three weeks we is on the Catacuma with Mister Cockburn, and every new day things stay worse than the last.

In the morning, when him come out with the rifle, him shout: "Dunnie! Take the *corial* across the river and put up these bottles." And he fling the empty rum and beer bottle down the slope to me and I get into the *corial* and paddle across the river, and put the necks over seven sticks on the other bank. Then him and the little assistant, Mister Bailey, stay on the veranda and fire across the river, each spelling each, until the bottle is all broken.

And John, down by the river, in the soft morning light, standing in the *corial* we have half-buried in the water, half-drawn upon the bank, washing himself all over careful like an Indian and not looking to the veranda.

"John!" Mister Cockburn shout, and laugh bad. "Careful, eh, man. Mind a *perai* don't cut off your balls."

We have to stand in the *corial* because *perai* is bad on the Catacuma and will take off your heel and your toe if you stand in the river six inches from the bank. We always joke each other about it, but not the way Mister Cockburn joke John. That man know what him is doing and it is not nice to hear.

John say nothing. Him stand in the still water catch of the *corial* we half-sink and wash him whole body like an Indian and wash him mouth out and listen to Mister Cockburn fire at the bottle across the river. Only we know how John need to hold that rifle. When it come to rifle and gun him is all Indian, no African in it at all. Rifle to him is like woman to we. Him don't really hold a rifle, him make love with it. And I think how things go in Mister Hamilton's time when him and John stand on the veranda in the morning and take seven shots break seven bottle, and out in the bush they feel shame if four shot fire and only three piece of game come back. Although, I don't talk truth, if I don't say how sometimes Mister Hamilton miss a shot on the bottle. When that happen you know him is thinking. He is a man think hard all the time. And the question he ask! "Dunnie," he ask, "what do you see in your looking-glass?" or, "Do you know, Dunnie, that this country has had its images broken on the wheels of false assumptions? Arrogance and servility.

Twin criminals pleading for the mercy of an early death." That is how Mister Hamilton talk late at night when him lie off in the big Berbice chair and share him mind with we.

After three weeks on the Catacuma, Mister Cockburn and most of we go down the river. Mister Cockburn to take him plans to the Department and the rest of we because nothing to do when him is gone. All the way down the river John don't say a word. Him sit in the boat bows and stare down the black water as if it is a book giving him secret to remember. Mister Cockburn is loud and happy, for him feel, we know say, now, who is boss and him begin to lose him frighten spirit. Him is better now the frighten gone and confidence begin to come.

"Remember, now," him say in the Department yard at Zuyder Town. "Eight o'clock sharp on Tuesday morning. If one of you is five minutes late, the truck leaves without you. Plenty of men between here and the Catacuma glad to get work." We laugh and say, "Sure, boss, sure," because we know say that already him is not so new as him was and that him is only joking. Only John don't laugh but walk out of the yard and down the street.

Monday night, John come to my house; I is living in a little place between the coolie cinema and the dockyard.

"Dunnie," he say, "Dunnie, you have fifteen dollar?"

"Jesus," I say, "what you need fifteen dollar for, man? Dat is plenty, you know?"

"All right," he say. "You don't have it. I or y ask."

Him turn, as if it was the time him ask and I don't have no watch.

"Hold on, hold on," I tell him. "I never say I don't have fifteen dollar. I just say what you want it for?"

"Lend me. I don't have enough for what I want. As we pay off next month, you get it back. My word to God."

I go into the house.

"Where de money?" I ask the woman.

"What you want it for?" she ask. "You promise say we don't spend dat money until we marry and buy furnitures. What you want tek it now for?"

"Just tell me where it stay," I tell her. "Just tell me. Don't mek me have to find it, eh?"

"Thank you, Dunny," John say when I bring him the fifteen dollar. "One day you will want something bad. Come to me then."

And him gone up the street so quick you scarcely see him pass under the light.

The next morning, in the truck going down to the boat at the Catacuma mouth, we see what John did want fifteen dollar for.

"You have a licence for that?" Mister Cockburn ask him, hard and quick, when he see it.

"Yes," John say and stow the new Ivor-Johnson repeater with his gear up in the boat bows.

"All right," Mister Cockburn say. "I hope you do. I don't want any unlicensed guns on my camp."

Him and John was never born to get on.

We reach the *stelling* late afternoon. The bungalow stand on the bluff above the big tent where we sleep and Zacchy, who we did leave to look to the camp, wait on the wharf waving to us.

When we passing the gear from the boat, John grab his bundle by the string and swing it up. The string break and shirt, pant and handkerchief fly out to float on the water. Them float but the new carton of .32 ammunition fall out too and we see it for a second, green in the black water as it slide to the bottom and the mud and the *perai*.

Mister Bailey, the little assistant, look sorry, John look sick, and Mister Cockburn laugh a little up in the back of him nose.

"Is that all you had?" him ask.

"Yes," John say, "I don't need no more than that for three weeks."

"Too bad," Mister Cockburn reply. "Too bad. Rotten luck. I might be able to spare you a few from stores."

Funny how a man who can stay decent with everybody always find one other who turn him bad.

Is another three weeks we stay up on the survey. We triangulate all the stretch between the Rooi Swamp and the first forest. Things is better this time. Mister Cockburn don't feel so rampageous to show what a hard boss him is. Everything is better except him and John. Whenever

him and John speak, one voice is sharp and empty and the other voice is dead, and empty too. Every few day him give John two-three cartridge, and John go out and come back with two-three piece of game. A deer and a *labba*, maybe. Or a bush pig and an *agouti*. Whatever ammunition John get him bring back meat to match. And, you know, I think that rowel Mister Cockburn's spirit worse than anything else John do. Mister Cockburn is shooting good, too, and we is eating plenty meat, but him don't walk with the gun like John. Who could ever. Not even Mister Hamilton.

The last Saturday before we leave, John come to Mister Cockburn. It is afternoon and work done till Monday. Son-Son and me is getting the gears ready for a little cricket on the flat piece under the *kookorit* palms. The cricket gears keep in the big room with the other rest of stores and we hear every word John and Mister Cockburn say.

"No, John," Mister Cockburn tell him. "We don't need any meat. We're leaving Tuesday morning. We have more than enough now."

Him voice sleepy and deep from the Berbice chair.

"Sell me a few rounds, Mister Cockburn," John say. "I will give you store price for a few rounds of .32."

"They're not mine to sell." Mister Cockburn say, and him is liking the whole business so damn' much his voice don't even hold malice as it always do for John. "You know every round of ammunition here belongs to Survey. I have to indent and account for every shot fired."

Him know, like we know, that Survey don't give a lime how much shot fire up in the bush so long as the men stay happy and get meat.

"You can't give three shot, Mister Cockburn?" John say. You know how bad John want to use the new repeater when you hear him beg.

"Sorry, John," Mister Cockburn say. "Have you checked the caulking on the boat? I don't want us shipping any water when we're going down on Tuesday."

A little later all of we except John go out to play cricket. Mister Cockburn and Mister Bailey come too and each take captain of a side. We play till the parrots come talking across the river to the *kookorits* and the sky turn to green and fire out of the savannah. When we come back to the camp John is gone. Him take the *corial* and gone.

"That damn' buck," Mister Cockburn say to Mister Bailey. "Gone up the river to his cousin, I suppose. We won't see him until Monday morning now. You can take an Indian out of the bush, but God Almighty himself can't take the bush out of the Indian."

Monday morning, we get up and John is there. Him is seated on the *stelling* and all you can see of him face is the teeth as him grin and the cheeks swell up and shiny with pleasure. Lay out of the *stelling* before him is seven piece of game. Three deer, a *labba* and three bush pig. None of we ever see John look so. Him tired till him thin and grey, but happy and proud till him can't speak.

"Seven," him say at last and hold up him finger. "Seven shots, Dinnie. That's all I take. One day and seven shot."

Who can stay like an Indian with him game and no shot gone wide?

"What's this?" a voice call from up the veranda and we look and see Mister Cockburn in the soft, white-man pyjamas lean over to look at we on the *stelling*. "Is that you, John? Where the devil have you been?"

"I make a little trip, Mister Cockburn," John say. Him is so proud and feel so damn' sweet him like even Mister Cockburn. "I make a little trip. I bring back something for you to take back to town. Come and make your choice, sir."

Mister Cockburn is off the veranda before the eye can blink, and we hear the fine red slipper go slap-slap on the patch down the bluff. Him come to the wharf and stop short when him see the game. Then him look at John for a long time and turn away slow and make water over the *stelling* edge and come back, slow and steady.

"All right," him say, and him voice soft and feel bad in your ears, like you did stumble in the dark and put your hand into something you would walk round. "All right, John. Where did you get the ammunition? Who gave it you, eh?"

Him voice go up and break like a boy's voice when the first hairs begin to grow low down on him belly.

"Mister Cockburn," John say, so crazy proud that even now him want to like the man and share pride with him. "I did take the rounds, sir. From you room. Seven shot I take, Mister Cockburn, and look what I

bring you back. Take that deer, sir, for yourself and your family. Town people never taste meat like that."

"You son of a bitch," Mister Cockburn reply. "You damned impertinent, thieving son of a bitch. Bailey!" and him voice scream until Mister Bailey come out to the veranda. "Bailey! Listen to this. We have a thief in the camp. This beauty here feels that the government owes him his ammunition. What else did you take?"

Him voice sound as if a rope tie round him throat.

"What else I take?" John look as if him try to kiss a woman and she slap him face. "How I could take anything, Mister Cockburn? As if I am a thief. Seven little shot I take from the carton. You don't even remember how many rounds you did have left. How many you did have leave, eh? Tell me that."

"Don't back chat me, you bloody thief!" Mister Cockburn yell. "This is your last job with Survey, you hear me? I'm going to fire your arse as soon as we get to the river mouth. And don't think this game is yours to give away. You shot it with government ammunition. With *stolen* government ammunition. Here! Dunny! Son-Son! Zacchy! Get that stuff up to the house. Zacchy gut them and hang 'em. I'll decide what to do with them later."

John stay as still as if him was dead. Only when we gather up the game and a kid deer drop one splash of dark stomach blood onto the boards him draw one long breath and shiver.

"Now," Mister Cockburn say, "get to hell out of here! Up to the tent. You don't work for me anymore. I'll take you down river on Tuesday and that's all. And if I find one dollar missing from my wallet I'm going to see you behind bars."

It is that day I know say how nothing so bad before but corruption and rottenness come worse after. None of we could forget John's face when we pick up him game. For we Negro, and for the white man, and for the mulatto man, game is to eat sometimes, or it is play to shoot. But for the Indian, oh God, game that him kill true is life everlasting. It is manhood.

When we come back early in the afternoon, with work done, we don't

see John. But the *corial* still there, and the engine boat, and we know that him not far. Little later, when Zacchy cook, I fill a billy pot and go out to the *kookorits*. I find him there, in the grass.

"John," I say. "Don't tek it so. Mister Cockburn young and foolish and don't mean harm. Eat, John. By the time we reach river mouth tomorrow everyt'ing will be well again. Do, John. Eat dis."

John look at me and it is one black Indian Carib face stare like statue into mine. All of him still, except the hands that hold the new rifle and polish, polish, polish with a rag until the barrel shine blue like a Chinese whore hair.

I come back to the *stelling*. Mister Cockburn and Mister Bailey lie into two deck chair under the tarpaulin, enjoying the afternoon breeze off the river. Work done and they hold celebration with a bottle. The rest of the gang sit on the boards and drink too. Nothing sweeter than rum and river water.

"Mister Cockburn," I tell him, "I don't like how John stay. Him is hit hard, sah."

"Oh, sit down, Dunnye," him say. "Have a drink. That damned buck needs a lesson. I'll take him back when we reach Zuyder Town. It won't do him any harm to miss two days' pay."

So I sit, although I know say I shouldn't. I sit and I have one drink, and then two, and then one more. And the Catacuma run soft music round the piles of the *stelling*. All anybody can feel is that work done and we have one week in Zuyder Town before money need call we to the bush again.

Then as I go to the *stelling* edge to dip water in the mug I look up and see John. He is coming down from the house, gliding on the path like Jesus across the Sea of Galilee, and I say, "Oh God, Mister Cockburn! Where you leave the ammunition, eh?"

But already it is too late to say that.

The first shot catch Mister Cockburn in the forehead and him drop back in the deck chair, peaceful and easy, like a man call gently from sleep who only half wake. And I shout, "Dive-oh, Mister Bailey!" and as I drop from the *stelling* into black Catacuma water, I feel something

like a *marabunta* wasp sting between my legs and know say I must be the first thing John ever shoot to kill that him only wound.

I sink far down in that river and already, before it happen, I can feel *perai* chew at my fly button and tear off my cod, or alligator grab my leg to drag me to drowning. But God is good. When I come up the sun is still there and I strike out for the little island in the river opposite the *stelling*. The river is full of death that pass you by, but the *stelling* holds a walking death like the destruction of Apocalypse.

I make ground at the island and draw myself into the mud and the bush and blood draw after me from between my legs. And when I look back at the *stelling*, I see Mister Cockburn lie down in him deck chair, as if fast asleep, and Mister Bailey lying on him face upon the boards, with him hands under him stomach, and Zacchy on him back with him arms flung wide like a baby, and three more of the gang, Will, Benjie and Sim, all sprawl off on the boards, too, and a man more, the one we call "Venezuela", fallen into the grass, and a last one, Christopher, walking like a chicken without a head until him drop close to Mister Bailey and cry out once before death hold him. The other seven gone. Them vanish. All except Son-Son, poor foolish Son-Son, who make across the flat where we play cricket, under the *kookorits* and straight to Rooi Swamp.

"Oh Jesus, John!" him bawl as him run. "Don't kill me, John! Don't kill me, John!"

And John standing on the path, with the repeater still as the finger of God in him hands, aim once at Son-Son, and I know say how, even at that distance, him could break Son-Son's back clean in the middle. But him lower the gun, and shrug and watch Son-Son into the long grass of the savannah and into the swamp. Then him come down the path and look at the eight dead men.

"Dunnie!" him call. "I know you is over there. How you stay?"

I dig a grave for the living into the mud.

"Dunnie!" him call again. "You hurt bad? Answer me, man, I see you, you know? Look!"

A bullet bury itself one inch from my face and mud smack into my eye.

"Don't shoot me, John," I beg. "I lend you fifteen dollar, remember?"

"I finish shooting, Dunnie," him say. "You hurt bad?"

"No," I tell him the lie. "I all right."

"Good," him say from the *stelling*. "I will bring the *corial* come fetch you."

"No, John!" I plead with him. "Stay where you is. Stay there! You don't want to kill me now." But I know say how demon guide a Carib hand sometimes and make that hand cut throats. "Stay there, John!"

Him shrug again and squat beside Mister Cockburn's chair, and lift the fallen head and look at it and let the head fall again. And I wait. I wait and bleed and suffer, and think how plenty women will cry and plenty children bawl for them daddy when John's work is known in Zuyder Town. I think these things and watch John the way I would watch a bushmaster snake and bleed in suffering until dark fall. All night I lie there until God take pity and close my eye and mind.

When my mind come back to me, it is full day. John gone from the *stelling* and I can see him sit on the steps up at the house, watching the river. The dead stay same place where he drop them. Fever burn in me, but the leg stop bleed and I dip water from the river and drink.

The day turn above my head until I hear a boat engine on the far side of the bend, and in a little bit a police launch come up mid-stream and make for the *stelling*. When they draw near, one man step to the bows with a boat-hook, and then the rifle talk from the steps and the man yell, hold him wrist and drop to the deck. Him twist and wriggle behind the cabin quicker than a lizard. I hear an Englishman's voice yell in the cabin and the man at the wheel find reverse before the yell come back from the savannah. The boat go down-stream a little then nose into the overhang of the bank where John's rifle can't find them. I call out once and they come across to the island and take me off on the other side, away from the house. And is when I come on board that I see how police know so quick about what happen. For Son-Son, poor foolish old Son-Son, who I think still hide out in the swamp is there. Him have on clothes not him own, and him is scratched and torn as if him had try to wrestle a jaguar.

"Man," the police sergeant tell me. "You should have seen him when they did bring to us. Swamp tear off him clothes clean. Nearly tear off him skin."

As is so I learn that Son-Son did run straight as a *peccary* pig, all night, twenty mile across Rooi Swamp where never any man had even put him

foot before. Him did run until him drop down in the camp of a coolie rancher bringing cattle down to the coast, and they did take him from there down to the nearest police post. When him tell police the story, they put him in the jeep and drive like hell for the river mouth and the main station.

"Lord witness, Son-Son," I say, "you was born to hang. How you didn't meet death in Rooi Swamp, eh?"

Him just look frighten and tremble, and the sergeant laugh.

"Him didn't want to come up river with we," he say. "Superintendent nearly have to tie him before him would step on the boat."

"Sergeant," the Superintendent say. Him was the Englishman I hear call out when John wound the policeman. "Sergeant, you take three men and move in on him from behind the house. Spread out well. I'll take the front approach with the rest. Keep low, you understand. Take your time."

"Don't do it, Super," I beg him. "Look how John stay in that house up there. River behind him and clear view before. Him will see you as you move one step. Don't do it."

Him look at me angry and the white eyebrow draw together in him red face.

"Do you think I'm going to leave him up there?" he say. "He's killed eight and already tried to kill one of my men."

Him is bad angry for the constable who sit on the bunk and holding him wrist in the red bandage.

"No, Super," I tell him. "John don't *try* to kill you. If him did try then you would have take one dead man out of the river. Him only want to show you that him can sting."

But what use a poor black man talk to police. The sergeant and him three stand on the cabin roof, hold onto the bank and drag themselves over. Then the Super with him five do the same. I can hear them through the grass like snakes on them stomach. John let them come a little way to the house, and then, with him first shot, him knock the Super's black cap off, and with him second, him plug the sergeant in the shoulder. The police rifles talk back for a while, and Son-Son look at me.

When the police come back, I take care to say no word. The sergeant curse when the Super pour Dettol on the wound and beg the Super to

let him go back and bring John down.

"We'll get him," the Super say. "He knows it. He knows he doesn't stand a chance."

But him voice can't reach John to tell him that, and when them try again one man come back with him big toe flat and bloody in the police boot. When I go out, though, and walk along the bank to the *stelling* and lay out the bodies decent and cover them with canvas from the launch, it could have been an empty house up there on the bluff.

Another hour pass and the police begin to fret, and I know say that them is going to try once more. I want to tell them don't go, but them is police and police don't like hear other men talk.

And is then, as we wait, that we hear a next engine, an outboard, and round the bend come a Survey boat, and long before it draw up beside the overhang, my eye know Mister Hamilton as him sit straight and calm in the bows.

"Dunnie, you old fool," him say and hold me by the shoulders. "Why didn't you stop it? D'you mean to say you couldn't see it coming?"

Him smile to show me that the words is to hide sorrow. Him is the same Mister Hamilton. Dress off in the white shirt and white stocking him always wear, with the big linen handkerchief spread upon him head under the hat and hanging down the neck back to guard him from sun.

"I came as soon as I could," him say to the Super. "As soon as the police in Zuyder rang Survey and told us what you had 'phoned through.

You can see the Super is glad to have one of him own sort to talk with. More glad, though, because it is Mister Hamilton and Mister Hamilton's spirit make all trouble seem less.

"We might have to bomb him out," Super say. "I've never seen a man shoot like that. He must be a devil. Do you think he's sane, Hamilton?"

Mister Hamilton give a little smile that is not a smile.

"He's sane now," he say. "If he wasn't he'd have blown your head off."

"What's he going to do?" Super ask.

Mister Hamilton lift him shoulder and shake him head. Then him go up to the cabin top and jump on the bank and walk to the *stelling*. Not a sign from the house.

I follow him and move the canvas from all the staring dead faces and him look and look and pass him hand, tired and slow, across him face.

"How did it go, Dunny?" him ask.

I tell him.

"You couldn't have stopped him?"

"No," I say. "Him did have pride to restore. Who could have stop that? You, maybe, Mister Hamilton. But I doubt me if even you."

"All right," him say. "All right."

Him turn and start to walk to the house.

"Come back, man," Super shout from where him lie in the grass on the bank. Mister Hamilton just walk on regular and gentle.

John's first bullet open a white wound in the boards by Mister Hamilton's left foot. The next one do the same by the right. Him never look or pause; even him back, as I watch, don't stiffen. The third shot strike earth before him and kick dirt onto him shoe.

"John!" him call, and Mister Hamilton have a voice like a howler monkey when him want. "John, if you make a ricochet and kill me, I'm going to come up there and break your —ing neck."

Then I know say how this Mister Hamilton is the same Mister Hamilton that left we.

Him walk on, easy and slow, up the path, up the steps, and into the house.

I sit by the dead and wait.

Little bit pass and Mister Hamilton come back. Him is alone, with a basket in him hand. Him face still. Like the face of a mountain lake, back in the Interior, where you feel but can't see the current and the fullness of the water below.

"Shirley," him call to the Super, "bring the launch up to the *stelling*. You'll be more comfortable here than where you are. It's quite safe. He won't shoot if you don't rush him."

I look into the basket him bring down from the house. It full of well-cooked *labba*. Enough there to feed five times the men that begin to gather on the *stelling*.

The Super look into the basket also, and I see a great bewilderment come into his face.

"Good God!" him say. "What's all this? What's he doing?"

"Dunny," Mister Hamilton say to me. "There's a bottle of rum in my boat. And some bread and a packet of butter. Bring them over for me,

will you? Go on," him tell Super. "Have some. John thought you might be getting hungry."

Him draw up the deck-chair in which Mister Cockburn did die. I go to the Survey boat and fetch out the rum and the bread and the butter. The butter wrap into grease paper and sink in a closed billy pot of water to keep it from the sun. I bring knife, also, and a plate and a mug for Mister Hamilton, and a billyful of river water for put into the rum. When everything come, him cut bread and butter it and pour rum for Super and himself, and take a leg of *labba*. When him chew the food, him eat like John. The jaws of him mouth move sideways and not a crumb drop to waste. The rest of we watch him and Super, and then we cut into the *labba* too, and pour liquor from the bottle. The tarpaulin stretch above we and the tall day is beginning to die over the western savannah.

"Why did he do it?" Super say and look at the eight dead lay out under the canvas. "I don't understand it, Hamilton. Christ! He *must* be mad."

Him lean over beside Mister Hamilton and cut another piece of *labba* from the basket.

"What does he think he can do?" him ask again. "If he doesn't come down I'm going to send down river for grenades. We'll have to get him out somehow."

Mister Hamilton sit and eat and say nothing. Him signal to me and I pass him the bottle. Not much left into it, for we all take a drink. Mister Hamilton tilt out the last drop and I take the billy and go to the *stelling* edge and draw a little water for Mister Hamilton and bring it back. Him draw the drink and put the mug beside him. Then him step from under the tarpaulin and fling the empty bottle high over Catacuma water. And as the bottle turn and flash against the dying sun, I see it fall apart in the middle and broken glass falling like raindrops as John's bullet strike.

We all watch and wait, for now the whole world stand still and wait with we. Only the water make soft music round the *stelling*.

Then from up the house there is the sound of one shot. It come to us sudden and short and distant, as if something close it round.

"All right," Mister Hamilton say to the Super. "You better go and bring him down now."

# GOOD BROWN EARTH

LESLIE ROBERTS

OUR village is on a hill and it is three miles from the bay where the waves wash the shore in a noisy, purposeful way and one is reminded that it does no good to be a lazybones. Most of us villagers like this place where we belong and many try to be industrious. It does something to most of the young ones when they hear Old Tom bragging about how much work he could and did do, in a day, when he was young. It is like hearing a gambler say how easy it is to win. One gets the feeling that if one works his hardest good luck will come his way.

But Old Tom hardly seem to think he has been particularly lucky. He is called Old Tom because he likes to call himself The Old One, but we do not really think of him as being old. He has a well-knit body of medium built and he walks with a slightly shuffling gait which is natural and due to no physical defect. Those who knew Old Tom's father will tell you that he walked just the same way. Old Tom is about as straight as a young man although his hair vies for whiteness with the white-washed walls of his house. He is not particularly skilled in any way such as Willie While who is the best fiddler we know or Ackman Skully who sculptured a marvellous likeness of the devil. But he is as popular as any other worthy of the village.

Old Tom's cottage, a plain oblong structure, stands on a sort of mound-like rise above the road. From the house there is a lovely open view of the river below the road. The river fits into its bed like an infant in a fourposter, the comparatively wide water course comes near to being fully occupied only when the river is in spate. Old Tom knows the contours of the rocks at the side of the stream about as well as he knows the lines in his hands. This place was always home for him. He played by the sides of the stream when a boy and even nowadays he can be seen fishing in the river sometimes when the mood moves him to do so.

It is well known that he inherited a portion of his land from his father and that as he prospered from his farming he acquired adjoining land, adding to that he already had. There are as many stories of his thrift as

there are stories of his industry. But he is human enough, he has his little faults and failings like the rest of us. His wife, Ma Sanny, is a little deaf in one ear now but she is a very cheerful soul and in some ways she is like Old Tom.

When she was young she had worked harder than most women. Ma Sanny had had opportunities to marry outside of the village and be other than the wife of a farmer who had to work hard to make a living. But this was the life she chose. She loves to see plants and animals grow and to gather the fruits although her years of going to market are over. She likes to know that Old Tom is at work in a field even if she is not there beside him. I always feel that in some subtle way their intense love of animals and plants do something to their character and helps to make them lovable.

The couple had not been as plenteously blessed with children as they would have liked. They had only one child, a son called Larry.

\* \* \*

When Larry was fifteen years old and Old Tom was having his best success Larry went away to continue his schooling in the metropolis. In time, Larry became a clerk. Then he married and his wife bore him a son. But before he was thirty-five Larry's wife had become a widow. Larry had died somewhat suddenly.

Old Tom and Ma Sanny took the loss gamely and the young widow didn't take long to find herself another mate.

Larry's son would come at times to visit and stay a few days with his grandfather and his grandmother. Old Tom and Ma Sanny were frankly proud of their grandson. Nigel was a bright, handsome boy.

"But he will never love the village here; he was born in the city and there he will belong," Old Tom once remarked.

A drought came. It gripped the land with malignant intensity. It seemed as if the drought would never break. During the drought, a noticeable change came over Old Tom. The jovial man had become taciturn and moody. Like the grass he seemed to be withering away. Well, of course, almost everyone had become less cheerful as the drought lengthened. But this was not the most frightful drought Old Tom had experienced, and at other times of drought he had been the one to coax

courage into other farmers and he would do whatever he possibly could to keep up their spirits, much as if he felt that was a duty.

Ma Sanny would offer no clue regarding the change that had come over Old Tom. If you asked her if he was ill she would say, "I don't know", in her non-committal way and you would wonder if he was really ill and she knew it but had no mind to disclose the nature of the malady.

But she was not unconcerned. She was secretly worried about Old Tom. She could not be cheerful when he was not contented.

A woman of the village had said pointedly to Ma Sanny that she could not suppose it was just the drought that was the cause of the change in Old Tom, for he wasn't one of the poorest men in the neighbourhood. She added, "It would be a long drought your Tom couldn't see his way through. And if you was a young gal, Sanny, I would ha' fancy dat what eatin' Tom's spirits is a belief dat you hav' another lover an' dat you not all for he."

Alfred Tucker, another farmer, is also a cobbler and a professed Christian, with perhaps, too much of an inclination to be prophetic. His prophecies had invariably proved false. Nevertheless, several of the villagers were inclined to believe his allegation that Old Tom was losing his mind.

The mid-summer holidays had come and Ma Sanny thought up something. Quite a scheming one she can be, in a lovable way. Her idea was to write to Nigel and ask him to come and spend a week or two with her and Old Tom during the time school would be closed.

Nigel came and for a day or two Old Tom tried to raise himself out of his depression. But the reticence came back again. Again he was avoiding company and looking like one who despaired. And time and again Ma Sanny caught him looking at the boy askance with furrowed brow. It was a look she could not fathom.

Another dawn and the sun threw shafts of colour and light on huge packets of fleecy clouds. "Look, Grand-Pa, look at the clouds gathering," the boy yelled excitedly. Rain will come, rain will come, soon!"

Old Tom uttered a quiet laugh. "The rains will matter to you, Nigel?" he asked sheepishly.

"Really it will, really it will, Grand-Pa", the boy answered, "I do want

to see the trees and the fields come green and thriving again. Look at the apple tree how it seems to be crying for thirst. I would like to see the cows not looking so puny and I would like to see more water in the river.”

“Old Tom laughed again, now less quietly and with obvious mirth. Then Old Tom was grinning thoughtfully and the boy could count his Grand-Pa’s remaining tobacco-stained teeth. After a while Old Tom said, “I am glad you think of that; I did not know you cared.”

“Our land here is good,” Nigel was saying, “I know other parts of the country and nowhere else the trees and fields are more lovely when the good brown earth is not thirsty for rain”.

Turning to his grandmother, the boy said, “You know what I think, Ma Sanny? I believe God chose the best colour for the trees when He made them green.”

And Old Tom nodded approvingly.

That was when the change came. From then Old Tom was again his usual cheerful and vigorous self. After breakfast he worked, plowing a field, making the earth loose for the rain that would come.

In the evening Old Tom and Ma Sanny were alone.

“Larry come back,” he said.

But you remember, now, that Larry was the son who had died.

“Yes, we may say he come back,” she replied. They understood each other.

Rain was falling when night fell.

Naturally, at first folks took it for granted that after all it had been just the vicious dry spell that had made Old Tom taciturn and moody. But when Ma Sanny heard them saying that now that the drought had ended Old Tom was looking younger each day, she said, “I wonder how much good it would do to a fiddler if he lay abed dying and knew that his fiddle was still quite good but knew, too, that no one would care to play it when he would be gone. Nigel loves the land — it will be his one day.”



# GRANNIE BELL

ULRIC SIMMONDS

I WILL never forget the night Grannie Bell died. It seemed to me then that a link with the past had been cut. It was somewhat strange how this legendary figure of our youthful days had so affected us children that with the passing of the years it had never entered our minds that Grannie Bell would die.

The first time I remember seeing Grannie Bell was in 1926 when I was taken to Trelawny. I was young then, barely six, and my sisters and brothers were only slightly older.

And there was Grannie Bell. She was a big woman, big and rawboned, with a broad, flat nose and the widest mouth I have ever seen on a woman's face. She didn't have many teeth and her wrinkles made her black face appear like a shrivelled star-apple.

If we thought her strange, if we were fascinated by the bright-coloured 'kerchief she wore continuously around her head, we were even more fascinated when Mammie told us that Grannie Bell was more than one hundred and fifteen years old!

"Why, then, she must have been a slave!" my eldest brother exclaimed, and I can still remember every one of us children opening our eyes wide and taking sly peeps at Grannie Bell as she nodded quietly in the corner.

I went closer to her to take a good look. I wanted really to realize what one hundred and fifteen years old was like. She was nodding in short jerky fashion. Her lips were open and I heard her mumbling in a sort of sleepy sing-song fashion. The words I finally made out are among the things about her that I shall never forget.

"The year ob Jubilee is come . . ."

She gave a sudden snore, a sudden jerk, and I scampered away rabbit-fashion. She opened her eyes and smiled at us, and from that moment we children lost our fear of Grannie Bell.

We hardly left her alone after that. We would surround her, sit on the arms of her chair, sit in her lap, stare up at her, surprised to find that

one so old could be so strong, could see so well, could laugh so loudly, could move about so heartily.

And she told us stories. Oh ! such wonderful stories. Of days in cane-fields. Of slaves. Of rolling calves, and debbil-ghosts. She knew everyone in Falmouth — Barrett Town, she called it — and she knew to which slave owner their parents had belonged.

But it is about the night she died that I am to tell. This happened some five years after we first came to know Grannie Bell, and she must have been over 120 years old then.

She had been dying all day. At least, that's what we children heard the old people talking.

All the family seemed to have been gathered in the little home; every now and again I would creep into the room among the grown-ups and unseen and unheard, take sly peeps at Grannie Bell and listen to her mumblings as she lay there on the bed on which she was spending the last moments of her life.

The sun had long since fallen below the horizon when she finally caught sight of me. She called me to her. I had always been her favourite. "Little man," she used to call me.

Her voice was weak, extremely weak. It sounded like the rustle of slight breezes along dried, fallen leaves in a wood. But you could hear it gathering strength like when you hear rain rushing down from the mountains; and somehow in a strange far-away manner, while the light from the old oil-lamp threw flickering ghosts of shadows against the walls, I seemed to hear the creak of ox-carts, the curses of book-keepers, the grunts of black people bawling, Lawd ! Lawd ! Lawd ! in unison with the crack of whiplash, the sound of mournful voices singing mournful songs.

A shiver raced up and down my body, and now that I am older I wonder if it was racial memory rising up to my mind that made me hear these things, or if it was the look I saw in the dying eyes of my great-grandmother.

In those eyes that were glazed with death was a look that brought

cold, clutching fear to my eleven-year-old heart. They seemed to be looking backward, backward, backward into faraway days, into awful faraway days. I began to cry.

Grannie Bell seemed to gather strength in relation to the volume of my weeping. She raised herself on the crook of an arm and placed the other on my bowed head.

"No cry, little man," she said, her voice in a hoarse, croaking whisper. "No cry." It was like the rattle of a crow-picked skeleton in a dark cotton tree. "No cry, little man. De days ob crying am over. De days ob freedom am here."

But I continued to cry, and I know now that the tears will not stop, and somehow I will always be crying in my heart, for I had caught a glimpse of something I had never known before.

They tried to "hush!" me.

Grannie Bell turned the fierce light of her eyes on them.

"No hush him 'tall if 'im wan' fe cry!" It was queer how she was all on my side of a sudden. "Eberybody ob fe cry sometime."

And while her hand still lay trembling on my bowed head, she began to talk in the manner in which I had always known her to talk. And while she talked my tears dried, and I opened my eyes and followed the movements of her toothless mouth as she spoke in her high-cracked voice.

I could hear the keening of the wind in the high trees and the rustle of the dried leaves about the house. And deep, deep down in my consciousness there was the crack of whiplash, the creak of ox-carts, the sound of mournful voices singing mournful songs, the deep familiar refrain of black people bawling, "Lawd ! Lawd ! Lawd !"

"I used to cry," Grannie Bell said. "Deep, deep down in ma heart, I used to cry. Sometimes I feel like my belly was a-buss."

Her voice trailed off, and she looked as if she was about to cry again, while the wind kept keening in the high trees, and the dried leaves kept rustling against the shingles on the roof. But she didn't cry. And suddenly I knew that Grannie would cry no more, for she had used up all her tears.

She must have lost the trend of her thoughts, for she lapsed into a shrill falsetto.

"Thirty-nine lashes. Black people getting thirty-nine lashes. Thirty-nine lashes. Black people getting thirty-nine lashes. One . . . ah . . . two . . . ah . . . three . . . ah . . . four . . . ah . . . five . . . ah . . . six . . . ah . . . seven . . . ah . . . eight . . . ah . . . nine . . . Jesus ! Black and red. Red blood a-turning rivers on black people's skin. Red blood making patterns on black people's skin."

I shivered. I could feel my heart going thump, thump, thump against the bones of my chest; and in my head I could hear the sound of mournful voices singing mournful songs, the creak of wagon wheels, the lash of whips, and black people's voices bawling, Lawd ! Lawd ! Lawd !

Grannie Bell's voice grew stronger. "Yes, little man, everybody ob fe cry some time, but nobody eber cry like we black people. Nobody but we black people will eber know how eye water can fall behind the eyes, how screams can scream within de heart. Nobody, yu hear me, little man? Nobody 'tall."

She stopped speaking and nobody else spoke.

A light, thin drizzle raced out from the far dark, tripped lightly over the roof and was gone. Far away a dog howled. Quite near by there was the croak of a frog in a tree.

Grannie Bell's eyes went to the window, and our eyes all followed hers. Peenie-wallies were flirting in the dark of the night, their flashing fires like slave-lights bobbing in a dark canefield, like the lights of white folks seeking a hiding slave, like cane fires burning on a riot night.

When she looked at us again, the peenie-wallies were in her eyes.

"Ah goin' tell yu a story, little man," she said. "I goin' tell yu a story that is as true as de Lord, a story of what happened jus' before that man Knibb done freed we black people. It happen one dark o'night in this very town on Marse Barrett's land. De oberseer, a big red-faced Scotchman, him was bexed because the freedom was a-come. Him didn't want it fe come. Him was tearing bex, that man, tearing bex ! Me 'member him wid him cane-trash mustache and him big red-face gettin' redder and redder, like when cane-fire bun strong 'gainst big breeze. And de more

fe him face get red, de more him cuss black people. De men not de wimen, for him like de big strapping black gal dem. Me 'member the night it happened, when him come a house-slave quarters a look fe a big black gal whey catch him eye. Lawd ! Me wi neber feget dat night, little man, neber, neber, neber. De gal no like him 'tall. She got her husban', a tall spanking bwoy, with de light ob heaven in him eyes. . . ."

Her voice trailed off again, and the far-away look returned. She seemed to be looking on vast spaces and far distances, on an unending spiral of memories, bitter sweet with sing song voices and the harsh, acrid sound of whiplash under a burning sun.

When she spoke again it was in a softer voice, a sort of whispering monotone, like the light patter of a heavy drizzle on shingled roofs or the playful rush of a summer-day's breeze through leafy plantation fields.

"De light ob heaven in him eyes," she repeated, and then she roused herself. "Like I tell yu, little man, dis oberseer come looking fer dis black gal and, she didn't like him 'tall, and she bawled and lick him and him bex.

"Let me go, Busha," she cry out, "Let me go," and fe her husban' hear her a scream and come running come lick down Busha. When dat red face man pick himself up a dutty, him redder than Poinsettia rose in June. Him cuss somethin' awful, an' de more him cuss, de more him get bex. Well wha' happen? Him decide fe punish de gal and fe her husban'. 'No nigger mustn't lick white man,' him roar, and order de gal fe strip naked an' lash to wagon wheel. Den him order fe her husban' fe gib de thirty-nine lashes."

Grannie Bell stopped speaking again, and she closed her eyes and the peenie-wallies were gone. In their place was the wrinkled face of an old, old woman, looking like a shrivelled star-apple.

I could hear the breathing of my mother. I could hear the soft weeping of my aunt, and I could hear the restless shuffles of Brother Jim and Sister Kate, and the keening of the wind in the tall trees, the rustle of dried leaves around the house, while the oil lamp threw flickering black

shadows against the walls, shadows that played hopscotch with each other, and leap-frog, and hide-and-peek.

She re-opened her eyes so suddenly that it took us all by surprise, and I saw another of the things about Grannie Bell that I shall always remember as long as I live, so long as I have memories. The deepest fires burned in those near-dead eyes. The most mournful things were in those near-dead eyes. I have never seen eyes that looked just that way since, and I can't describe it, but for always I'll remember it.

When she spoke again, her voice was weaker, and we had to bend low to catch her words.

"Dey did it, little man. Dey did it. Dey didn't want to, but dey did it. The oberseer ha' two bookkeepers wid him, and dey ha' big long guns wid dem. Dey did it, sonny, dey did it. While the red face Scotchman counted slowly up to thirty-nine, de gal's husban', with the guns a point pon him, him beat him naked wife whey dem tie her to de wagon wheel, while she cry an' she twist, an' she wonder if de baby in her belly would a die. An' all de while de beatin' went on, dey ha' wood-torch dey a light up de place, an' de black people a look on an' a moan' . . . ooh-a . . . ooh-a . . . ooh-a . . ."

"When de beatin' all finish, an' de gal look as if she dead, de white people dem mek dem rub saltpetre in de blood 'pon her body, but she didn't cry no more. She near dead. She no know whey happen den, but later dem tell her, when she so better she could talk an' understan'. Dey tell her say she husban', dat tall spanking black bwoy, begin cry, an' den him must a get mad, for him tek up a cutlass whey lie nearby, an' him mek one spring, one chop, so cut off de Busha head. Den him run like de debbil back o'him fe de woods. Dem no fin him 'till nex' day him a hang by him own rope tie by him own han' from a cotton-wood tree."

Grannie Bell lay back on the bed and began to breathe as if her strength was spent. But only for a while. She stared out of the dark window, drew back her eyes inside the room, looked around at those who were standing by her dying bed, and quite suddenly she turned herself over on her face, lifted up her clothes above her buttocks, and with a quiver in

her shrill voice, said: "Dere am de marks o' that night o' beating ! Dere am de marks !"

I stared with my eleven-year-old eyes at the angry weals that a lifetime of living could not erase, and as I stared I felt the blood welling up to my head, and a fierce awful beating began to beat at my ear drums.

Grannie Bell was now lying on her back again, but she was weak. Her strength was spent. Her voice was now the rustle of coconut cakes against coarse brown paper.

"It was me, little man. It was me dat cried dat night, just a day before de night o' freedom. It was me own spanking husban' who hang himself a look fo' de freedom him neber get before, just a day before de black people dem all a go a Baptist Church fe listen Knibb, de parson man, a tell dem dat we people am free. I cry that night little man, but I neber cry again 'tall. I neber cry again. Fo', little man, I know from dat night dat we black people neber ha' need fo' dat day ob freedom 'tall. We always free, little man. We always free. Is dem people dat mek we husban' dem beat we dat wasn't free. Is dem people, little man, no' we. We am free fe cry. We am free fe cry. We am free fe laugh. We am free fe sing."

The last smile I ever saw on Grannie Bell's face made its feeble appearance and she began to sing, a very thin voice of song:

"De day ob Jubilee is come."

And while she sang she died.

But the song continued in my head like a record that would not stop.

While the others cried, I could not cry. I could only stare out of the windows at the peenie-wallies flirting in the dark, like cane fires burning in the night, and I could hear the keening of the wind in the high trees, and the rustle of dried leaves around the house, and somewhere inside my consciousness, there was the creak of ox carts, the crack of whiplash, the sound of black people's voices saying, Lawd ! Lawd ! Lawd !

And above all, like a flash of lightning, like the burst of a rocket, was the sound of a single word . . . "Freedom."

# LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

MONICA MARSH

IT was one of those gray, foggy November mornings that Moygula appeared on our doorstep. Newly arrived from West Africa, the weather must have been as great a trial to him as it was to us Jamaicans but he radiated such good cheer! Eyes all lit up with friendly, easy laughter.

When Moygula arrived in London that morning, he had contacted Tom, the only other African he knew in London, a suave, sophisticated, Nigerian of mixed African and European parentage who occupied a bedsitter in the flat above ours. Tom wasn't at all happy at putting up Moygula when he scornfully described as an ignorant African, an expression, I remember, that amused me out of all proportion coming as it did from a fellow African.

After making it quite clear that Moygula was not a friend of his, Tom agreed that he could come and bunk with him. Tom was planning to leave shortly for the United States and even said — most graciously for him — that Moygula could perhaps take over the bedsitter if my West Indian friend Kathryn, who owned the flat and who also lived there, had no objections.

Everything about Moygula intrigued me. His name for instance — an impressive, almost guttural Moy-gu-la, followed by James. I never tired of saying it. He called me Monicah and I found myself making opportunities for him to say it. In fact, I now spent nearly all my spare time upstairs hearing all about Moygula's latest social blunders from an irate and voluble Tom who was frequently stopped in mid-speech by my gentle and understanding friend Kathryn. But most of all, I enjoyed talking to Moygula, his face beaming like the sun. In those early days, it seemed to me that he was always smiling.

Moygula intrigued me because he was the first real African that I had met. Tom I never thought of as African. He looked like a West Indian and behaved like one and his frequent disparaging remarks about Moygula only served to emphasize his difference. Tom had grown up in Lagos, was a city man in fact. Moygula had been there twice in his life, living in a small native village 400 miles away.

Moygula was so anxious to please and be liked! He never made an original remark and agreed enthusiastically with whatever sentiments were being expressed, his eyes opening and closing rapidly the while. To please Kathryn, who was so proud of him, Moygula started going to Mass every Sunday and on so many occasions that I lost count, I would hear his voice as he ran down the stairs: "Just going to Mass, Kathryn." Inevitably, Tom took ruthless advantage of this willingness to please and in no time at all, Moygula was saddled with all the domestic chores, cleaning the flat, cooking, making innumerable trips to the grocery, the butcher, the tobacconist. Each time he ran past my door, he would cheerfully call out: "Just going to the corner, Monicah." It was as if he needed our approval of his every action.

Looking back now, I realize that at that time, I saw Moygula as a primitive African, devoid of any sort of culture, that I was judging him by Western standards. The truth of course being that his way of life, incorporating an ancient, unadulterated culture, was too alien for me to understand it. I can now appreciate the reason for Tom's furious outbursts at Moygula's social lapses. Having exchanged this pure African culture for a Westernized one, any reminder constituted a threat to Tom, an outrage, against which he had to protect himself at all costs. Two incidents in particular serve to illustrate this. Moygula and Tom shared the bathroom with Kathryn and, at Kathryn's startled request, Tom furiously and at some length pointed out to Moygula that this was not his village and that one was expected to pull the chain before leaving the bathroom. He didn't get the message and Kathryn and I undertook to enlighten him. I'll never forget how pained he looked as he explained that he was only trying to "conserve" water — a great necessity at home where one had to carry water for miles on foot.

Then there was the famous farewell party that Tom gave. He was about to leave for America to take up a scholarship in Drama. Tom was a very clever, versatile chap who had originally come to England to study Law — but that's another story. He had, however, put a lot of effort into making the party a success, and among his guests were Winnifred Atwell, two visiting American celebrities and a playwright lately "discovered" whose current play was making headlines in London's West End. Kathryn

and I were hostesses, and were kept very busy seeing that everyone was fed and happy. Someone had persuaded a girl to sing — a West Indian who was currently appearing in a cabaret show and who had just happened to bring her guitar along. As she started to sing, Tom beckoned to me from the doorway. I took one look at his face and went quickly over to him. Speech failed him. He could only point to where Moygula sat, erect in a straight chair in the passageway, just outside the room where the guests were assembled, draped in an enormous white towel while a fellow African, wielding a shining pair of shears, worked solemnly and with great concentration on Moygula's head . . .

Tom left for America and Moygula was in sole possession of the bed-sitter. He seemed to gain in self-confidence. His once diffident: "Just going to the corner, Monicah" now told me that here was a man who knew where he was going.

He began to entertain. I was invited to tea on several occasions along with some African friends he had acquired. We all behaved very correctly and passed the cake and sandwiches in approved mid-Victorian manner. Moygula was becoming westernized.

Then he acquired a cheque book and his joy was complete. This was the open sesame to all his desires. This was also the beginning of his troubles. For Moygula dispensed with ready money and wrote cheques with great rapidity, several times a day, with no provocation, and on every imaginable occasion. He paid his rent by cheque; he paid his school fees by cheque; he paid the grocer by cheque; he paid — but with great difficulty — for four records by a cheque which had to be certified by his bank. He reached the limit the day I arrived in time to rescue him from the wrath of a London cab-driver who was being offered a cheque for eight shillings for the fare. Of course the inevitable end was in sight. Cheques written at such a rate require an adding machine to keep a proper balance between expenditure and income. Moygula hadn't an adding machine. Fortunately for him, the first one that bounced was to Kathryn for his rent. He appeared so amazed and puzzled that Kathryn readily forgave him. He wrote another. That bounced also, but by this time,

others were coming back and Moygula was in trouble with his bank. I could never understand how anyone who was studying accountancy as part of his course could get himself into such a hopeless financial tangle. Some people said that Moygula wasn't half as dumb as we thought and that this was all an act to give us this impression. But he appeared so naive and so bewildered that I could never bring myself to believe him capable of this duplicity.

By now, Moygula's once cheerful face began to wear a worried, serious expression and it was obviously an effort for him to be gay. He was not doing well in his studies. Had just failed an exam for the second time in fact and, coupled with his financial difficulties, this was very serious indeed. Moygula, let's face it, was not very bright. I often wondered how he ever got admitted to the Polytechnic School at all. His ultimate aim was to study Law, but at this stage he was doing English, Latin and a specialized accountancy course which looked to me like simple bookkeeping. All these subjects were more than he could cope with.

One evening, I went upstairs to see him and found him very glum indeed. "You know, Monicah", he said to me, "I will never go back home unless I get through my exams. I am the first from home who they sent to England to study. They were so proud of me. Gave me presents and money . . . I told them then, I said: 'You will never be ashamed of me.' I must remain here until I get through." In the sudden silence, I shivered as I thought of all the long, cold winters facing Moygula.

Later, he said something else. "You know, Monicah, you people from the West Indies, I don't understand you. I don't think you understand me either. You like me . . . yes, but not as a friend. Why is this? At home I am Moygula James. My grandfather is a Paramount Chief. Some day I may be one too." I had read a book lent me some months before by Tom, called *Trial by Saswood*, written by an American who had spent a great deal of time in Africa. Certain words from the book spoken by an African came back to me now: "To be a Chief is a wonderful thing indeed, but who so great as a Paramount Chief?" For the first time, I really looked behind the smiling mask at the powerful, proud tilt of the

head and for the first time, in his presence, I didn't feel like laughing.

I left England shortly after. I learned from Kathryn that Moygula had moved to cheaper quarters and that he had taken a job and was going to school at night instead of full time.

This summer, three years later, I returned to England just in time to hear that Moygula had had a sudden seizure at his workplace and had been rushed to hospital. Kathryn, who had kept in touch with him, went with me for news, to the flat which he shared with two other Africans. We learned that Moygula had died the day before. They insisted that we come to the morgue with them to pay our last respects — apparently an accepted custom — and, reluctantly, we went. There, on a cold marble slab, I took my last look at Moygula, the man who had travelled so far to assimilate Western culture and had succumbed in the effort.



# MADAM

R. L. C. AARONS

"MADAM."

That was her name, she said. Just that and nothing more.

Clara Harmsworth and her husband stood looking down upon the miserable little bundle of wet rags huddled on their front verandah and who in response to their enquiries as to her name and what she wanted would give no other answer but "Madam."

"Madam?" she repeated, bending over the child and trying to rouse her. "That isn't a name. Surely you must have some other. Come tell us who you are and what you want."

In reply the child began to whimper afresh and to cower further away among the shadows of the verandah.

Mrs. Harmsworth stood and faced her husband with a gesture of resignation.

"I'm afraid I can do nothing, Jim," she said. "You'd better try."

Jim Harmsworth removed his pipe from his mouth and regarded the wet bundle before him critically. Unlike his wife who was city bred, he had spent his boyhood in the country and knew the people and their ways.

"If I were you," he told her after a little, "I wouldn't bother about the name. In fact it's just the sort of thing she's likely to be called. A sort of pet name. I'll even bet she has a sister named 'Princess' or something just as inappropriate."

"That might be so for all I care," his wife assented a trifle impatiently, "but in the meanwhile what are we to do with her?" She indicated with a movement of her hand the state of the weather outside. It had been raining heavily earlier in the night and even now it was still drizzling slightly. An inky darkness hemmed them in on all sides. From nearby tree tops came the harsh discordant croaking of innumerable toads.

Mr. Harmsworth shrugged his shoulders.

"A bit awkward, yes," he admitted. Then as if struck by a sudden thought added, "suppose we feed it. Probably the poor thing is hungry. 'Twill talk after that I'm sure."

Between them they lifted the child to its feet and led her across the wide polished floor of the dining room. Balancing herself nervously on the edge of a mahogany chair while Mrs. Harmsworth set before her bread, cheese, cold beef and some hot cocoa, they had opportunity to observe their guest the night had brought.

She was black as coal and probably not more than nine or ten years of age. Her thin body was obviously underfed and the legs that twined around the bars of the chair were long and spidery. They were cut and bruised in many places. A tear-stained face entirely in keeping with the body surmounted the whole, lighted up by a pair of unnaturally large eyes which gave her a curiously solemn and aged appearance. For clothes she wore a nondescript sort of dress which might have been cut down to fit her or just as likely built up out of smaller ones. There was no telling. Hat she had none.

For some minutes she sat in silence and ate ravenously.

"Finished?" Mrs. Harmsworth asked as she bolted the last bit of bread and looked nervously around.

"Yes, ma'am," she replied in a peculiarly tearful sing-song.

"Had enough? Sure?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Again the suggestion of tears. She'd begin crying again if they weren't careful. Mrs. Harmsworth leaned across the table and patted her reassuringly.

"Come, don't be frightened," she said. "Nobody's going to hurt you. Now do you think you can tell us about it? I mean who you are and how you came to be outside there looking all so miserable?"

At first the child seemed disinclined to answer the question. She looked wide-eyed and silent from one to the other as though trying to decide from which of the two she could expect more protection. Then at last between sobs it came out.

It appeared that she was the eldest of five children, the youngest being not more than a year old. Over this brood of brothers and sisters it was her duty to watch and see that no harm befell during their mother's ab-

sence. Their mother, who worked out as a domestic servant, often left them at times with scarcely any food, and they had to manage as best they could until her return in the evenings.

On this particular evening, their mother had been much later than usual and as all the smaller children were crying for hunger she had gone into a box where she knew her mother had put away a few bits of silver and had taken a threepence to buy some bread.

As ill luck would have it the threepence dropped from her and got lost while on her way to the shop and her mother when she got home wouldn't believe her story. Said she had stolen it. Moreover had flown into a terrible rage and called her a thief; had beaten her dreadfully and told her that she didn't want to see her again and finally had driven her away hungry as she was. Not knowing where to go she had wandered around the village and when the rain came had crept on their verandah to shelter.

"And," she wound up piteously, looking up to them, "Ah doan't know where to go."

Mrs. Harmsworth called the child to her and put an arm protectively around her.

"Never mind about that, Madam," she said. "We aren't going to turn you out tonight. You'll sleep here and in the morning we'll see if we can find your mother. What say you to that?"

"De Lawd will bless you," she brought out unexpectedly and with all the mature gravity of one who, within the space of ten years had already experienced most of the major tragedies of life.

Benefited by a hearty meal and a good night's rest, Madam appeared to better advantage in the morning light. Her face still showed thin and wan, but it had lost the pinched expression of the night before. With good food and care there was no telling how she would improve. Mrs. Harmsworth thought too that she seemed intelligent and her mind went on to dwell excitedly on a little scheme she had been planning. It was no other than this.

Ever since her husband had bought a property in the country and they

had come here to live, she had wanted to get some little girl who in return for her board and keep would make herself generally useful in the home. What used to be called 'a school girl'. None of those she had seen had so far taken her fancy, then just as if heaven sent, Madam had turned up. Of course, she realised that nothing could be definitely decided upon until she had seen the child's mother.

She wasn't a bit surprised either when an hour or so later that lady announced herself.

"Mornin', Mrs. Harmsworth," she began without any other preliminary. "Ah 'ear say dat Madam is 'ere."

For a moment or two Mrs. Harmsworth made no reply. Instead she surveyed the newcomer. She saw a surly, barefooted woman in a none-too-clean dress of coarse blue material, wearing a dirty straw hat. She couldn't have been more than about twenty-six years of age, but had none of the mature freshness peculiar to that period of life. 'Brutalized' was the thought that came to Mrs. Harmsworth as she watched the purposely put on insolence with which the woman stared about her as though expecting to see her child's head or feet protruding from some hiding place as in some clumsily performed conjuring trick.

"Yes, Madam is here," Mrs. Harmsworth replied at last with elaborate coolness. "Do you think I'd try to hide her?"

Caught out as it were, the woman's carefully prepared assurance forsook her almost at once. She shifted her feet about uneasily.

"It's not dat ah t'ink you 'ide her, ma'am," she hastened to explain, "but she run 'way last night and dis mornin' ah 'ear say she's 'ere. Dat's all.

"Why did she run away?" pursued Mrs. Harmsworth relentlessly. She was playing her hand for all it was worth.

"Pickney too rude an' tief, missis," was the emphatic reply. "An' when dem want beating you mus' beat dem."

"But surely there is such a thing as over-doing it. I think it's a shame how you flogged her. The poor child is all cut up. Women like you ought never to have children. You don't know how to care them."

"When we is poor, missis, an' 'ave plenty of dem, it's hard," Madam's mother replied in surprisingly contrite tones.

"Then why don't you try and get someone who would take them and look after them for you?"

The woman hung her head a moment as though abashed, then suddenly raised it and looked at Mrs. Harmsworth.

"Ah tell you what, ma'am, you want take Madam?"

Her lips parted in a nervous smile as she waited for the reply to the daring proposal she had made.

Mrs. Harmsworth looked at her for a moment or two to make sure the woman was in earnest, then quickly nodded her head.

"All right, I'll take her."

And that was how Madam came to live with them.

The months went by. Not once during this period did Mrs. Harmsworth ever have cause to regret the sudden impulse that had caused her to take the child. She proved a perfect marvel. Quick and intelligent beyond her years, she soon made herself indispensable to her mistress. She learned how to sew, to wait at table, to do light household work and she proved just as apt at learning to read and write. Clothed and well fed she was a far different person to the pinched and hungry Madam they had found on the verandah some months before. She rounded out, became a child again.

Nor in her present prosperity did she forget her mother and younger brothers and sisters. It would have been perfectly understandable if she had now refused to have anything to do with her mother. On the contrary, however, she frequently asked permission to go and see her and many an evening would be seen sneaking off carrying with her some of her own supper she had saved.

Time went by. In a few weeks it would be the annual Sunday School picnic. Mrs. Harmsworth had promised that if she kept on as splendidly as she had begun she would give her a pair of shoes and a new dress to wear for the occasion. Madam had never yet worn shoes and the glee with which she received this announcement was boundless. To be the possessor of a pair of shoes was the highest limit of her ambition. A

dozen times a day she could be seen attentively examining her feet and then all at once she would suddenly hug herself and skip about through sheer joy.

On these occasions Madam who ordinarily was a quiet child would grow expansive and talkative. She would never leave her kind mistress, she said. She would remain with her until she became a big, big woman — she opened her arms wide to show how big she would be — so that when Mrs. Harmsworth grew old she would be there to take care of her. And many other such childish nonsense she would talk.

But one evening Mrs. Harmsworth noticed that Madam seemed unusually quiet and thoughtful after her visit to her mother. To her question if there was anything wrong, she answered in her shrill treble:

“Nuttin’, ma’am.”

“Are you quite sure, Madam?” she asked, drawing the child to her and tilting up her chin. “She hasn’t been scolding or flogging you, has she?”

A look of pain flickered across the child’s face.

“No, ma’am.”

“Then what is it?”

She wriggled herself free.

“Nuttin’, ma’am.”

One evening about a week later, Mrs. Harmsworth thought she heard the woman’s voice at the back gate. Madam had just returned from her usual errand of mercy and her mother had walked home with her. Mrs. Harmsworth was about to move away when she was struck by the menacing tone of the other. She seemed to be threatening the child. She listened, amazed.

She knew now why Madam had been so downcast after her last visit to her mother. The woman was actually proposing that on a stated night the child should contrive to steal some of her mistress’s coffee out drying on the barbecue and give it to her. If she refused she would be given a sound beating, besides which, Mrs. Harmsworth would be told that the child was in the habit of stealing coffee and selling it.

"For," the woman concluded with a brutal chuckle, "she will believe me for she will say dat ah wouldn't tell lie 'pon me own chile."

Mrs. Harmsworth moved away from the window quietly. She hadn't been observed. What a wretch Madam had as a mother! She had half a mind to call the child then and there and tell her she had overheard everything and suggest that after this she should have nothing to do with so unnatural a parent. But a sudden impulse restrained her. She was curious to see how the child would act in the face of this little blackmailing scheme. Would she allow her undoubted affection for her mother to outweigh all considerations of honesty and gratitude? Or would she take the harder course? It would be interesting to see.

At times Mrs. Harmsworth would grow suddenly aware that the child too was watching her, furtively it seemed. And then she would call to mind how notoriously ungrateful children were supposed to be. One's own sometimes were, how much more so a little waif picked up so to speak from off the streets.

In other moods, however, she would grow ashamed of her suspicions. Madam was different. It was unthinkable she could ever prove so wicked and ungrateful.

Then on the evening before the long-looked-for picnic, Mrs. Harmsworth in her room writing letters heard a softly uttered call coming from somewhere by the back gate.

"Madam! Madam!"

Madam sitting on the dining room floor playing with the cat evidently heard it too for all sounds of play suddenly ceased.

Again the soft call.

"Madam! Madam!"

The child dropped the cat and went out.

Dimming her lamp Mrs. Harmsworth tip-toed quietly to the window and listened.

The woman was there asking in a breathless whisper if she had brought the coffee.

In a surprisingly firm little voice Madam replied that she had not and had no intention of so doing.

"What!" the woman choked, taken aback. "You didn't bring it! You

really mean to say dat you *not* bringin' it?"

Madam remained silent.

In a sudden fury the woman grabbed hold of the child by the collar of her dress and shook her savagely from side to side.

"Dat will teach you !" she hissed, letting her go. She fell with a little cry of pain against the iron gate.

The woman stalked away muttering oaths and voicing threats of what she would do on the morrow.

Mrs. Harmsworth watched Madam cross the back yard and return to the house. She heard her lock the dining room door and make her way to the little room at the other end of the passage where she slept, and it seemed to her that Madam took rather a long time to take her things off and get into bed. But she thought nothing of it.

The following morning, the day of the picnic — the day Madam had been looking forward to for months — broke fine and fair but of Madam there was not a trace. The door of her little room stood wide open, and heaped upon the bed were all the things Mrs. Harmsworth had ever given her: slate, pencil, books, hats, dresses — her new pair of shoes. But Madam herself had disappeared completely.

Slowly the realization of what it all meant dawned on Clara Harmsworth. Madam in her own tragic little way had forestalled her mother and decided the issue. She had run away rather than be bullied into stealing from her mistress and benefactress.

Something suspiciously like a sob caught in Clara Harmsworth's throat, for she knew she would never see Madam again.



# POINSETTIA — FOR CHRISTMAS

H. V. ORMSBY MARSHALL

AMELIA MARTIN glanced uneasily toward the entrance of the restaurant where she worked. Would the incoming crowd ever lessen? Where were so many people coming from she wondered, even although she knew the great size of London? And she was tired now — so tired. It was a good thing that when, at length, she could set out for her home she would not have so long a wait on her 'bus as back home in Jamaica.

Amelia liked the big double-decker 'buses that came along so frequently. Seated on the upper deck of these she had managed to see quite a bit of London since she had come to England a couple of months earlier. She had a fairly long run to her home in Brixton. It was nice to be able to see all the lights and the houses, and the shops that were now being so elaborately decorated for Christmas. She knew that as the Season advanced the sights would be even more wonderful.

"Hurry along Amelia. That table over there in the far corner needs a waitress. This is no time for day-dreamin' my girl!"

Amelia's boss, a fat, florid woman, whispered this advice in her ear as she passed by on her way to the kitchen from which standpoint she usually kept her hawk's eye on the outside scene. Amelia endeavoured to hurry at these words. Having deposited the contents of the tray that she was carrying on the table she was serving near by, she went across to the one indicated by her boss. At the table sat an elderly lady and gentleman.

"Please Ma'am, what can I do for you?" the girl enquired politely, as she had been instructed always to do. The lady who had been scanning the menu card, gazed intently at Amelia for a few moments before she said, "Tell me, my girl, where do you come from?"

"Please Ma'am, I come from Jamaica," Amelia answered.

"From *Jamaica!* Oh, then it really must be you!"

The lady's ejaculation caused her companion to sit forward with a surprised expression in his face.

"My dear, what on earth are you talking about? Who do you think our waitress is?" he enquired of his wife.

"John, I am almost certain that she is the maid who attended our suite

at the Arawak when we were in Jamaica last December. Tell me, young woman, am I right? Are you Amelia? And do you not remember us, Sir John and Lady Cardell?"

Amelia's eyes lighted with recognition. Of course, now she remembered them, though in the confusion around her and in her own perturbed state of mind she had not done so. Now she said, smiling, "Yes, M'lady. I 'member you well now. Please if you are both well?"

"We are very well indeed, thank you Amelia, thanks to the sunny Winter that we spent with you last year. We should like to be back in your lovely island again now."

"We certainly shall be back next Christmas," Sir John said.

"Where are you living Amelia?" Lady Cardell next asked, making her choice and handing the menu card on to her husband, "I understand that living quarters are very hard to find when you all come across to us from the West Indies."

"Please Ma'am, I live in Brixton," Amelia replied.

"And why did you leave that lovely land of yours to come over here Amelia? You were in a good position at the Arawak."

A shadow, perceptible to Lady Cardell's searching eyes, crossed Amelia's face.

"I did come to the father of me little girl Ma'am. I did do what I did think was the bes' for her."

"Oh! And did you bring your child with you Amelia?"

"Not yet Ma'am."

"But you are with . . . her father?"

The shadow deepened and settled itself in the depths of Amelia's lovely dark eyes.

"No, Ma'am."

"Why, Amelia?"

Amelia hesitated perceptibly. Then in a low voice barely audible above the clamour in the restaurant she said, "Because him tek up with a English girl Ma'am."

"You poor girl. But never mind. I am sure that you will soon settle down happily and be able to send for your little girl. If you are ever in need or in trouble Amelia, telephone or write to me here, at the address on this card. This is where we live," Lady Cardell said, handing the girl her card.

Amelia received it graciously and placed it in her pocket. Then she hurried back to her employer at the kitchen door, feeling her sharp eyes bent upon her. Before they left the restaurant Sir John pressed a large tip into Amelia's hand. "We'll be in again before Christmas for some more shopping," he assured her.

But on the day that they did come in Amelia was nowhere to be seen. Lady Cardell made enquiries of the restaurant manageress.

"She's in 'ospital M'lady. Down with the pneumonia, she is."

Lady Cardell sighed. "Poor girl, this is all that she has got for coming over."

On learning which hospital Amelia was in the Cardells went to visit her that afternoon before returning home. Amelia was overjoyed to see them. She had been too ill to let them know she explained, but now she was improving. Before they left Lady Cardell spoke to the Matron.

"The girl is to have every care. She must want for nothing. This is my address. Do you think that she will be well enough to leave the hospital before Christmas?"

The Matron showed surprise at the concern of these titled people for one of the dark immigrants, but she replied yes, that she thought so.

"Then please telephone me the moment that I can come and take her out. I shall keep her at my home to recuperate. Will you tell her this for me please?"

Amelia's surprise and thankfulness at this message aided her recovery as nothing else could have at the time. True to their word, Sir John and Lady Cardell arrived at the hospital for her in their car two days before Christmas. The glimpses that she had of London arrayed in its Christmas gear astonished the girl as she sped through the crowded streets. She had never before seen anything so wonderful. The mantle of glistening snow that had fallen only that morning converted the scene into a living Christmas card.

Amelia was given a warmed room in the maids' quarters at Dainton Manor, and one of the Cardells' maids was placed in charge of her.

"Now just you rest yourself Amelia," Lady Cardell instructed her before leaving," and tomorrow we'll come to fetch you to show you our great hall decorated for Christmas before our guests arrive."

True to her word Lady Cardell came herself for Amelia. The girl was feeling stronger now and was able to walk down the long corridor slowly, her distinguished hosts on either side of her. At the entrance of the hall a chair had been placed in readiness for her to rest in.

At the doorway Amelia paused, gazing in dismay at a sight that astonished her beyond words. Forming the centrepiece on the huge dining-table under the crystal chandelier were red poinsettia blooms, as fresh and beautiful as if they had just been picked from the garden. Clusters of these lovely Christmas blossoms were in evidence also in many other parts of the long chamber.

Amelia uttered a low cry at last. "But Ma'am, please how did they reach here?" she questioned eagerly. Lady Cardell laughed in delight.

"We had a florist in Jamaica send them to us by air Amelia," Lady Cardell explained. "After seeing them in Jamaica last year we felt that we wanted all our friends here to experience the delight we felt in seeing them at this Season. We feel that Christmas will never be Christmas again for us without poinsettia blooms."

Suddenly Amelia knew that as soon as ever she was well enough to travel she must return to the land of the red poinsettia.



# RIVERMAN

LLOYD A. CLARKE

IF you asked him his name, most likely he wouldn't say: "Gideon Thomas;" that's how he had been christened. Most likely he would answer: "Riverman," just plain: "Riverman." He knew most of the Rio Cobre where it ran through the Gordon Pen area in St. Catherine . . . knew it as you and I know our own backyard.

But then, that part of the river *was* Riverman's backyard.

His wattle-and-daub hut stood on the high bluff overlooking the valley where the river forked at the spot known as "Two Meetings." Riverman's canes and corns thrived on the fertile slope. Betsy, his dun-coloured cow, grew fat on the lush grass along the riverbank.

Usually, you would find Riverman working in his field. You'd hear him swopping jokes with the village women who washed clothes in the river, spreading them out to dry on the stony islet across from Riverman's field. Ever so often his hearty laugh would boom and swell along the slope; and the ground-doves drowsing in the bushes would rise, scattering in fright.

Often, too, while Betsy contentedly cropped grass, Riverman squatted on the bank, his eyes twinkling at the antics of the naked boys who splashed and swam in the river below. After a while, though, he would caution them: "Come out now. You wi' get cramp if you stay in de water too long. Bad if you get cramp in water, ver' bad . . ." Then the boys would clamber, dripping, up the bank, and listen wide-eyed and open-mouthed while Riverman told them strange tales about the Rio Cobre.

Oh, yes, he was a great one for talking about the river. He could tell you *anything* you wanted to know about the Rio Cobre. He would, too, if you asked him. . .

Perhaps you'd say to him' "Hey, Riverman, I hear you know a lot about the river. Tell me something about 'Gold Table' Hole. They say a gold table comes up there at noon sometimes. Is that true, Riverman?"

The gleam of white teeth would light up his dark face as he answered: "No, me nevah see no gol' table dere, but me ketch plenty fat mullet in Gol' Table 'Ole. Plenty fish in dat 'Ole; it nevah dry."

If he was in that mood, and the water was low, maybe Riverman'd roam upstream with you. Seeing him plunge his hand into a rocky recess you'd wonder what Riverman was doing. You'd wonder. . .until he withdrew his hand, and you saw the fat crayfish squirming in his grasp. And when he scooped up handful after handful of shiny shrimps from under the slime-coated stones in the shallows, then you'd begin to realise that Riverman really knew the river.

Not as you or I know a river.

No. With Riverman it was different. To him the Rio Cobre was alive. It had moods, fickle and unpredictable as a woman's. The river *spoke* to him, too. . .so it seemed to Riverman. What did the river say? What *could* a river say? Only Riverman could have told you; he understood the language of the river.

Sometimes he had seen it rushing along in flood, stretched from bank to bank like a shimmering sheet of corrugated copper. Rio Cobre. . .Copper River, indeed. Times like that Riverman would shake his woolly head and say: "Huh, she vex today. . .wonder who she goin' tek 'way dis time. . ." To him the river would seem to roar a warning: "*Stay away, Riverman. I am angry today. Stay away.*" And standing, helpless, on the slope, Riverman would watch the foaming Rio Cobre as it overflowed its banks, uprooting the corns and levelling the canes in the lower part of his field.

Afterwards, though, the river would glide leisurely by, clear and calm, seeming to murmur an invitation: "*Come on in, Riverman. I am gentle today. Come on in, and forget that I flooded your field.*" Just like that it sounded to Riverman: like a penitent mother soothing a favourite child she had scolded.

Today, working on the high ground back of his hut, Riverman knew that the river was angry. From time to time he rested on his hoe, his

head tilted to one side, listening. The sullen roar of the water from below told him that the river was rising.

Riverman remembered Betsy, but he wasn't worried about the cow. Luckily, he had pastured her high . . . the water couldn't have reached her yet. She'd be all right, unless she strayed . . . Riverman paused at the thought. Come to think of it, a cow does stray sometimes . . . he'd better see about Betsy.

Trotting briskly down the slope, Riverman pulled up sharply as he neared the spot where he had pastured Betsy. There was no sign of her. His anxious eyes swept the slope in vain . . . where could she have gone? Riverman rounded a bend in the trail, and hurried farther down towards the brimming banks of the river. It was then that he saw Betsy, and Riverman's heart began to hammer against his ribs.

Betsy had wandered upstream to graze on the grassy mound that stood out in midstream, rearing its summit high above the surface of the water when the river was low. She must have crossed before the water had risen. Riverman recalled that earlier that morning the stream had been shallow enough to wade at some places. It was not shallow now. The Rio Cobre was like that: gentle and shallow this hour, and the next, fierce and flooded with rain from the hills.

Betsy was trapped on the mound. She was a strong swimmer, Riverman knew; but she wouldn't last long if she ventured into the wide stretch of water that boiled between her and the safety of the bank. Betsy seemed to sense her helplessness, too. Mooing plaintively, she shied away from the water that seethed up the steep sides of the mound towards her.

Bleak thoughts rose swiftly, insistently, in Riverman's mind . . . he had toiled hard — sweated in the sun, shivered in the rain — to buy Betsy, gaunt and underfed though she had been. He had tended her long, lovingly, and his eyes had shone with possessive pride at the way Betsy's flanks had filled out fast and her hide had become sleek, until now . . . well, now she was a fine animal that any man would hate to lose. Riverman's jaws set resolutely. He couldn't just stand by and watch the river take away Betsy. He had to do something

Racing up the slope to his hut, Riverman hurried back with a coil of strong rope. He would have to try a swift cast — a forlorn hope . . .

Betsy had always been shy of ropes; the distance, too, would make an accurate throw difficult. With luck, though, he might manage it.

The noosed end of the rope shot swiftly from Riverman's hand, hissed through the air to fall some distance from the cow. Riverman tried another throw; Betsy backed away; the rope fell short of her. Riverman hastily hauled in the rope, his heart heavy with apprehension. He would have to try something else. But what . . . ?

The silence and a strange sense of loneliness weighed heavily on Riverman. Later on the riverbank would be noisy with the shouts of village boys bickering over coconuts and other treasures salvaged from the swollen stream; but just then there was nobody near to offer him any suggestion, any help.

And the water was rising higher and higher up the mound.

Riverman's eyes, roving distractedly about, gleamed at the sight of a sturdy tamarind tree standing on the slope. A plan took swift shape in his questing mind. Tying one end of the rope around the tamarind, Riverman hastily slipped off his clothes. If he could swim out to Betsy with the other end, he might be able to rope her, then work her gradually towards the bank. A risky plan, he realised; but what else was there to do?

The water closed coldly around Riverman's bare body. The loose end of the rope was gripped between his strong jaws, giving him full use of his hands. Even near the bank the current was swift and strong. No man could swim up that stream . . . not even Riverman; but he was wise in the ways of the river, was Riverman. He struck a slanting course towards the mound, twisting his body snake-like to escape the full force of the water.

Out in midstream, the current clutched greedily at Riverman. The water churned muddily under his flailing arms and plunging legs. It was awkward, swimming with the end of the rope in his mouth. Gradually the treacherous tug of the current began to tell on Riverman. It was powerful, too powerful, for him. He was borne steadily, relentlessly, backwards. The rope tautened and stretched till it was jerked from his jaws. His clutching fingers found the end, gripped it.

Betsy's terrified voice reached Riverman. A swift glance upstream showed him that the rising water would soon sweep her from the mound.

Riverman's heart was a cold, leaden lump in his breast. He could do nothing for Betsy now . . . the river would take her; but he wouldn't let it take him. No. He would fight the flood . . .

Work-hardened muscles corded in Riverman's arms and shoulders as he inched his way, hand over hand, up the rope. He was glad that he had tied the other end so securely around the tree on the slope. Riverman strove strongly, but the bank was still far away, and he was tiring.

Maybe you'd think it wouldn't be difficult for Riverman to pull himself out of the river. Maybe you'd think that . . . if you had never seen the Rio Cobre in flood.

The river-devils fastened powerful, icy fingers around Riverman, trying to tear him loose from the rope. His fingers grew stiff with strain; his body began to get numb from contact with the cold water. He felt the rope slipping through his weakening grip . . . the torrent tore him loose, whirling him swiftly downstream.

Riverman was too water-wise to struggle against the rushing force of the swollen stream. Catching hold of one of the huge logs bobbing along, he rested, letting the current carry him. He couldn't force a landing then . . . perhaps he might make it farther down where the river narrowed between its banks.

He could no longer see or hear Betsy. Was it possible that she had reached the bank after all? Hope stirred for a second in Riverman, then faded. No. Betsy couldn't have made the bank . . . more likely she had perished upstream. Riverman wordlessly cursed the Rio Cobre.

The river bore him rapidly along . . . past Philpott's Fording, past Pile with its steep, frowning banks. A knot of curious villagers cowered far back up the banks, awed at the fury of the flood. Their excited shouts floated faintly after Riverman as the water swept him around the bend into Naseberry Hole.

Hope surged suddenly again in Riverman's heart. A thick vine overhung from a milk-weed tree on the left bank. The end of the sturdy creeper trailed tantalisingly in the water, not far from the bank. It was now or

never, Riverman decided, his eyes gleaming with determination . . . could he but reach that vine, he might yet thwart the Rio Cobre.  
he but reach that vine, he might yet thwart the Rio Cobre.

Riverman kicked free from the log, and struck out strongly towards the vine. The river was wide there. He angled his way against the retard tug of the cross-current. His muscles strained in aching struggle against the strength of the stream. The distance lessened . . . the vine was near now. A few more strokes and Riverman would have reached it . . . if cramp had not seized him then, knotting, numbing the over-taxed muscles of his thigh. No man . . . not even Riverman . . . can fight cramp in a flooded river.

The water buffeted him brutally away from the vine. Riverman's struggles became weaker, and the devilish roar of the river rose in his ears, mocking him with the memory of his own words: "*Bad if you get cramp in de water, ver' bad . . .*"

The Rio Cobre raged along, racing down the straights, blustering around the bends, thundering through gloomy gorges. Could he have heard the angry voice of the river then, it would have seemed to Riverman to be saying: "*You are rash, Riverman. I warned you to stay away when I'm angry. I'm angry today, Riverman.*" Just like that it would have sounded to Riverman . . . if he could have heard.

There was another creature, though, that could hear the scolding of the river . . . a cow wandering, frightened and forlorn, along the bank when a strange caprice of the current had swept her to safety . . . a dun-coloured cow it was that lowed piteously into the evening.



# SPRING PLANTING

CLAUDE THOMPSON

IT was not until after her father's digging match that Liza Ann knew which man she would choose. When you married it was for keeps. When you married sometimes you discovered you had made a mistake too late. She could hear her Aunt Hepzi —

"Min' yu'self and dem man Liza Ann — Min' yu'self. Sweet wud can't full belly gal. See me ah one ting — come lib ah house wid me is anuther."

And Liza Ann was afraid; afraid of herself — lest she could not wait and then be bound forever — no way of breaking free perhaps — no way. She could hear her Gran'paw — "Never been a divorce in this fambily — yerric. We is from good stock and we breed with good healthy stock. Never been a tief in this family either — No sah."

What would you do? Get a man that would let down your people? You could not go back home. When you called on them they'd all be silent and they'd speak only for speaking sake —

"Long time don't see yuh gal —"

"Yes sah."

"Er-r-r-m-p-h —"

"Good weather down your way?"

"No mam —"

— and you'd know they wanted you to go — to go back where you now called home to lie in your bed as you had made it and after you had gone they would say —

"Only Lawd know how we could hab a gal like that in de fambily —"

"Who's gwine swear fi a 'ooman? Lawd God! What dem want dem tek. Bred to a no-count follow-line —!" and they would spit in disgust — ashamed of you and glad to be rid of the sight of you and if you died they would be glad; for at last God had settled the bill.

Her father had been a-warning her. Nothing open — just a hinting —

"Don't like that dere Big Joe Boy. Hear he been drunk and in a fight down to town last week. Always a-wanting to fight someone — he going get dead sudden one of these days. No count raskil same like his paw."

— and she knew what he meant sitting there as calm as a rock and

puffing his chalk pipe with his hands hanging dead over his crossed legs.

"— he's gwine dead sudden." And he'd stare across the barbecue into the night.

"Yes," said her mother, "dose who live by the sword."

"Powerful true is de word of God," said her father, "One cannot gather figs of thistles."

You would hear the toads calling into the night; you could see the 'peenie wallies' flying about — and night was made for love and desire and for a gal to choose her man — the father of her children. If the night breeze touched her cheek it was the fingers of her unknown mate and with it was the smell of the land — of life as yet unborn.

In December the *lignum vitae* had blossomed and it was like a lady in blue. Now in May it blossomed again but the rains were coming, after the drought, and the pale blue blossoms were beaten to the ground and it was a time of decision — for planting — and she was reminded of the beauty of a woman — here today and tomorrow — She was reminded of the choice of a girl — joy tonight and tomorrow —

\* \* \*

In December Big Joe had been making passes at her.

"Coming up to see yuh gal —"

"Not unless you want to dead sudden."

"Strong man nevah wrong. Who's gwine stop me."

"Yuh heerd about my paw?"

"Who's afraid of Tata Higgins. He an his old gun —"

"Et yun not scared what's stoppin' yuh?"

"I'm takin' my time gal and need none of dem boy in the district set eye pon yuh. Yuh belong to me. I gwine to come a courtin'—"

"Death" she had said and flounced off.

And day after day if he met her he was at her. Big Joe had a way with women — bold and brassy. The other men she knew were too quiet especially Fred. He'd just sit there and look at her and he'd have no words to say and somehow she had narrowed it down to one of these two and out of sheer perversity perhaps Big Joe would win because the other one was afraid to move.

"Nice boy dat dere Fred" her father would say "quiet like —" and she knew he was feeling his way — telling her what he wanted her to do. You may have sons but there is something about a daughter — especially a daughter that is an only child; especially a tall, lissom well-shaped girl growing up in your house — growing so fast like a field of corn, yesterday a tiny plant peeping above the ground and tomorrow a golden field ready for the reaper, and you are afraid who the reaper will be. You try to hint to her knowing so much of life but even a father is afraid of his own girl child; for if she gets it into her head that you are forcing her into something she will be like the worst of mules. She'll be like a mule that will kick and bite when you are tightening a girth and she'll be no use to anyone. You have to break her gently like a mule — first a bag, then a pack saddle — leading her around with a light load and then — And remember to keep her neither in the centre of the road or too far into the bank side. As she was broken — so would she be. She knew it herself and she knew why her father was hinting —

"Dere is a lotta time — everything comes to him who waits. All one wants is patience."

Patience when you are young — patience to reach fruition! Patience when the night calls!

It is like the parched land — waiting for the rain. It is like the parched grass waiting — waiting — and everything is in embryo.

In February when she had looked across the low foothills to the sea — standing high on the barbecue — with the wind pressing her print dress around her, she had looked across the ever descending and undulating bottom lands to the savannahs and the sea, and far away in the distance she had seen the white virginal blur of the great catchment to a tank awaiting rain and she had rebelled against the lot of woman — to wait and wait, perhaps forever; and forever was the eternal hills — the eternal sea; blue, far-distant and dispassionate. Waiting for time and God knows what, waiting through the eternities of man.

And that had been February — February of the parched earth and no one dared to plant. Day after day the sun rolled like a molten ball across the skies; day after day her father and the other men had looked at the skies and prayed for rain, and day after day there had been no rain. The

parson when he preached spoke of rain — he prayed for kindly showers — and the people understood that their rain-maker was interceding with God and when they came out they looked for a miracle from the iron skies. They knew it would come — it must come — but when? And a girl seeking in her heart asked herself other questions of life — some-day I shall live but when?

But men seek water. The earth and the green things thereof may wither and die but man and the animals must have water. Man seeks it and finds it. Man must have love too. He seeks it and then suddenly — out of a clear sky — it is all around.

“— never a drought like this.”

\* \* \*

Easter Sunday is always a day to remember. All the women are in white; white the symbol of purity and of the contrite heart — white as the slain Lamb. And here is the familiar spirit of God the only thing that the common man over the world may have and the people are filled with the awe of it — that a man should die for them; even for them the black people! But what is colour? Black people are like all other people. They have the good points and faults of all other people but above all people they have had and still have the burden of great suffering and out of this has come their great spiritual capacity. But this is of the spirit. What of the flesh? The black people are strong. Black women are beautiful. You can ask Big Joe here in church or Fred. There is no other woman for constancy — there is no other race of women of such controlled desire and satisfying approach and even here in church Liza Ann knew her father was looking at her and praying to God to give her what it was beyond his power to give her; peace and happiness and the love of a good man — for she was beautiful. You can ask Big Joe and Fred. The parson will tell you the Song of Solomon is analogous to the Church. Big Joe and Fred will tell you it is a love song to a black woman. It is Liza Ann sitting in Church on Easter Sunday; it is the lovely black column of her neck — it is the ebony of her skin like unto velvet. You can ask Big Joe and Fred.

Why should Big Joe go to church and keep away from drink? Why should Fred go to church? For a man who died for you? Do men die in times of peace for strangers? For a man you do not know when in this

ge there is only selfishness and greed? A man shall go to church to look at a lovely young black girl and through love of her try to find the beauty that there is in life — to find faith; for women believe. How else can they live? And they cannot live unless they love and love is trust. But what shall a young girl believe? The Song of Solomon is an analogy to the Church!

Look out over the parched commons to the earth; look out over the black faces of the black sheep; feel the wind on your cheeks and listen to its whisper in the pimento trees and see the sun —

“Oh Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.

Have mercy upon us.”

\* \* \*

After the service Liza Ann had come out into the sun and her father and her mother had had her right along with them. And everyone was saying —

“Howdy Tata Higgins —”

“Howdy Miss Rosa —”

“Howdy Liza Ann —”

And the old men chucked her under the chin with their calloused fingers and said to her father — “Tata ah whey de gal ah grow good looking ah go?” — and her father had been proud; and they had said to her mother —

“— she tek after you Miss Rosa,” and her mother had giggled.

“Gwan wid you Mass Joe and you Mass Alec —”

The old men had chucked her under the chin and the young men had dreamed dreams. They had said —

“Howdy Liza Ann —”

“Howdy Liza Ann —” and the rest was in their eyes — “Some tomorrow you’ll be mine.”

And all the while she knew her father was watching them — herself and the young men. He would shoot stone dead the man who ‘advantaged’ her. He was a God-fearing man but for his family he would fight in Church and she had been thinking.

“Which of you all? I cannot make up my mind. Which of you all? If you want me come and get me — take me. Make up my mind for me.” and she had laughed to herself —

“Come and take me! Ha! Ha! Not with Paw around — Ha! Stretch

out your hand and take me! My God! Paw would have a fit.

And it had made her eyes crinkle with hidden laughter and the young men and the old men had smiled themselves—and an old man had said—  
“What a happy gal!”

And now her father had spoken and everyone had listened — men and women.

“It must rain — please God. Or we’ll be starvin’. Ah never see a drought like this in all my born days. Last week ah been down to Savannah and dem is already starvin.” The sins of man is heavy upon de earth and de hand of God is fallen upon us —”

And the old men had shaken their heads —

They had puffed at their chalk pipes and had been lost in thought and the women too had held the silence — pregnant with hope. She had smelled the land in the tobacco-filled air; she had heard the land in their voices; she had seen the red earth in their dark bodies — her country, her people, herself — waiting for rain.

\* \* \*

In May the rain had come suddenly. When the tamarind tree in the common opposite their house had appeared almost dead — when her father had decided to sell his stock — the rain came. Suddenly in the night it had come. First as a hesitant patter and then it had become a steady tattoo borne on a gust of wind hastening to the earth. She had known then how the earth must feel and the dark faces of her father and get two bottles of rum. Now we got the rain we must keep movin’ ”

In the morning the world appeared new. She had come out on the barbecue and gone to the tank to see how much water had gone into it. But first, before she did that, she had turned her eyes across the savannahs to the sea — had turned her face into the wind and then to the stone wall, now wet, on which a bird had been singing.

Her father had come out filled with renewed life as if the rain had poured it into him, and over his coffee in the kitchen he had announced that he would have a diggin’ match the next week Wednesday. He had said —

“Gwine to plant out the three acres ’cross the common and only way to do it quick an’ ketch the rain is to have a diggin’ match. Ah’ll tell dem man on Sunday and oonu ’ooman must look after the food. Ah’ll

get two bottles of rum. Now we got the rain keep movin'."

He had been full of plans and he had spent the day in the "buttery" looking over his tools and mending a pack saddle. Her mother had said nothing. After breakfast she had tied up her skirt in a pokopanya and had taken a hoe and gone out to the land behind the kitchen and commenced to plant corn. You could see her digging a hole in the ground and then dropping the corn in it from a pocket in her apron and then 'moulding' up the hole with a bare foot. The earth was receiving its own to give it forth again many fold and she — what had she been doing? She was still waiting and it was as if her father had known her dissatisfaction. Once passing her he had taken his pipe from his mouth and spoken as usual apparently to no one —

"Everything comes in God's own time."

\* \* \*

It is strange how time appeared to fly when one looked back at it. You spent all the days in the expectation of an event and it seemed a lifetime away and then after it had come and gone you discover that it had come too quickly.

Wednesday morning had been upon them before they knew it. They had hardly set a light to the large blocks of dried pimento wood that formed the fires beside the stone wall and put on kerosene tins of 'chocolate' and water to draw coffee before the men had commenced to arrive singing and shouting. All the women who were helping with the food had been there already and now came the men — singing —

'Bring me half — a hoe' —

Come gimme ya —

'Bring me half — a hoe —'

and she had heard Big Joe roaring above the rest — with his hoe over his shoulder.

'Bring me half — a hoe'

And where had Fred been? He had been standing inconspicuously in the crowd and he hadn't been singing. You never knew how these digging matches, giving free labour to one's neighbour, ever get under way. One moment they are drinking large steaming mugs of 'chocolate' and coffee and then they are off. A great line of men is surging across the

field. They are digging potato hills in one mad, frenzied struggle right across the field. The hoes are rising and falling with all the strength of the wielder. You never knew that men could work so hard. And out in front had been the singing man — singing and dancing and controlling the match. Singing fast songs to get the tempo of the race — making his own words —

'Gal — oh! Gal — oh!

They had gone across the field like mad leaving a straight line of potato hills behind them and now they were coming back and the pace had begun to tell. They had begun to string out — panting, sweating, straining every muscle and out in front had been Big Joe and behind — it had seemed impossible — Fred.

The spectators were shouting and the men were coming along with a desperate hurry. Big Joe had never been beaten in any match for a year now and here was a challenger to the champion digger of the district. To the people it had been only that — the champion digger and a challenger. To her it had been much more than that. The battle was for her. It had been as if at the end she would be the prize and that was what she knew they hoped to get — the prize of her self-esteem. The pace had told. The same two had gone far out in front and Big Joe had become desperate. He had hurried his strokes and put too much into the down swing of the hoe and Fred had come up abreast. Then the race had commenced in deadly earnest. One man had to collapse. Hill for hill they had come down the line and the old people had come to stand on the finishing line. Hill for hill they were coming and then imperceptibly Fred had come ahead and strangely she had been glad. A hill ahead! Could he hold it? Her father had spoken —

"The greatest diggin' match I have ever seen in the district."

And Old 'Custos', the oldest man in the district said —

"Only once afore ah ever seen ah match like this and the winnah dropped dead."

Fear had seized her heart. They had come on and on then there was a great cheer for the new champion. They had been panting as at the end of a long running race. They had only been able to lean on their hoes whilst the sweat had run down their dirt-begrimed faces. And then it had happened. Someone had laughed at Big Joe and in moving he had

bounced against her and she had drawn away and Big Joe humiliated before her eyes, had said —

“Who the r— you drawin’ way from? Since when you become so damn stocious?”

Fred had dropped his hoe and hit him so hard, Big Joe had rolled on the ground. Then Big Joe was up roarin’.

“Hell yah tiday —”

She had stood petrified and her father had rushed Big Joe and Big Joe had hit him and her father had rushed for his gun. The men had held both Fred and Big Joe and over all she heard her mother shouting —

“Jesus Christ! Tek him whey before Tata come out wid him gun! Ah, don’t want Tata heng fi murder!”

And then there had been a roar from the house and there was her father rushing from the house and bringing the gun to his shoulder —

“Jesus Christ! Mass Tata ”

“Mass Tata —”

Everyone except her mother, Fred and herself had run, desperately for the stone wall, Big Joe well up in front and she not knowing what she did had taken Fred by the hand and suddenly the gun had spoken.

“Lawd Jesus —”

Everyone had fallen flat on their faces and Big Joe had crawled behind the stone wall. Everyone had been screaming—

“Mass Tata —”

“Mass Tata —”

and her father had stood there and he had said—

“Dat one was in de air to get yuh people out of de way. I am just waitin’ for that son of a b— to show his head.”

And everyone had trembled — flat on their faces on the red earth. Tata Higgins was known for his gun. The greatest gun man ‘in miles and he never missed—not a target the size of Big Joe.

And everyone had moaned. It was a saddening sound going across the field to behind the stone wall where Big Joe was hidden — it was the end of time — and no one moved for fear of Tata Higgins turning his gun on them instead and all the while she had been holding Fred’s hand and he had put his hand around her and neither of them had

realised that they were doing this and even her mother just stood there waiting.

Everyone waited for Big Joe to break from cover but Big Joe had lain behind the wall — At last her father had laughed and lowered his gun and shouted —

“Everybody get up. Ah not shooting anyone but tell that Big Joe boy to get off my place.”

And then he had come up to them — Fred and herself — and said —

“Drop in at de house any time son.”

And then she knew. It was as simple as that.



# THE MERMAID'S COMB

HARTLEY NEITA

THE Dornoch River starts as a large pool of water at the foot of a tall cliff near Stewart Town in St. Ann. In the days the women from the nearby districts come to the pool with large bundles of clothes to wash in the water, and while they scrub and rinse, they keep a wary eye on their young ones swimming and splashing in the water downstream.

But at nights now, in spite of its inviting peace, no one goes to the pool for the people of these districts are fearful. And their fear is born out of a legend that has come down through the years from parent to child that has made this river-source a pool of mystery.

No one knows where the water that forms this pool comes from, but what they do know is that it is bottomless. And there is a strangeness about this place. There the trees grow tall and tower towards the sky, and if you look up into the lacework of branches far above your head you can see the leaves trembling when the breezes blow and sweeping the sky clean of clouds.

And the trees are thick with leaves which shadow the pool, so that the sun never finds its way through except at the odd moment when a thin beam lights this quiet and secluded spot.

\* \* \*

Once a rock stood at the edge of this pool. A rough, white mass of stone that on moonlight nights glowed with a strange light which brightened the pool. This rock, the people said, was the throne of a mermaid called Dora. Today the rock is gone. It tumbled deep into the pool many, many years ago, but the people who believe the legend will show you where it rested its weight during the lifetime of the legend. They say the spot will remain there until the end of time, for no blade of grass, no shrub or tree will ever take root on this bare patch of earth.

Yet, the people of the neighbourhood have never seen Dora. They say that long ago she swam away down the Dornoch and into the sea. Since then, people in other parts of the island have seen her combing her long, silky, green-tinted hair as she sits on rocks in various rivers, in the Martha

Brae, the Rio Grande, the Black River, and in more recent times on Pim Rock in the Rio Cobre.

The legend says that on moonlight nights Dora used to sit on this white rock near Stewart Town, and because the light shining from the rock gave the pool a looking glass appearance, she would look at her reflection in the pool, and humming softly to herself, would comb her hair. The song she hummed was strange, and it lilted across the river and the trees, so that people around could hear it. It was strange, yet beautiful, and it had something about it that was sad and haunting.

The tune she hummed had no words, but to all those who wanted and hoped for the things they never had, the meaning of the song was clear. It was an invitation to come to the pool and frighten her, and if they wanted the something badly enough, then Dora would leap into the pool and leave her comb on the rock. And though deep under the water, her song would still continue in the ears of the lucky one, and the words were clear.

"Take my comb home and I will come to you in your dreams, and anything you ask of me, I will give you if you will only return my comb."

This was the song.

\* \* \*

Now in Stewart Town there lived a girl named Hazel. Her father was wealthy and Hazel had everything she wanted. Her dolls were the envy of every mother in the town. They walked, cried and some even spoke saying "Mama, Mama." Hazel had no cause to play dirty pot as did the other children of Stewart Town. Oh no, she had a real kitchen set, with a small stove, pots and pans, knives and forks, and even cups and saucers. If Hazel wanted anything, she got it.

But there was one thing her father could not give her, and that was the thing she desired most of all. Her hair was short and stubby and she longed for hair that could rest on her shoulders and tickle her when it shook as she walked. So while the children envied all her possessions, here was something they could tease her about. And they did.

Hear them:

. . . Eh picka-pecka head . . .

. . . How is the cane row? . . .

. . . Child, is how you head look so like when fowl done eat coconut meal . . .

. . . Eh, Hazel? . . .

This was her torment. She bought patent oils from Kingston's best stores. She tried all the things the old women of the village suggested, coconut oil, toonah leaf, banana root, single bible, policeman oil . . . all and everything, until sometimes her head stank with the mixture of herbs. But in vain.

So when one night Hazel heard the mermaid Dora singing, it seemed as if the song was for her alone. The pool was nearly a mile from her home, but to Hazel the song came as if from below her window. It was clear and sweet, the invitation strong and full of appeal. And Hazel left her bed softly, for fear of drowning the song from the pool, and once outside she ran straight for the river and the rock that was Dora's throne.

It was Hazel's haste that frightened Dora that night. As she neared the pool her feet tangled with some brushwood and as she tumbled to the earth she screamed. The scream shocked Dora into terror, and like a flash she dived into the pool.

When she heard the splash, Hazel knew that Dora was gone, leaving her comb behind. Jumping and forgetting her bruised knees she ran towards the rock. And sure enough there was a comb, that could only be the mermaid's comb. And it was too, for among its finely carved teeth were a few silky strands of the mermaid's green-tinted hair.

The dream didn't come that night; it never comes the first night. But on the following night Hazel was hardly asleep before Dora appeared in a dream, as promised. The mermaid was beautiful, more beautiful than Hazel had imagined, but she hardly saw the flawless perfection of Dora's face, for her gaze was fastened on the hair that flowed softly over the shoulders, below the waist, and down, down until it sheathed the mermaid's fins.

Dora was the colour of chocolate that has been two days sweating its juicy coat in the boiling sun. Her face was almost full-moon round, and the green glory of her hair framed it with gentle curves and waves.

And Dora's voice was soft, sweet, and caressing. "What do you wish for most of all my child?"

Hazel choked with emotion . "Oh. I want hair, beautiful and long as yours, dear Dora", she begged.

"This you shall have my child. Come with me to the pool. Sit on the rock that is my throne. Look down into the water, and comb the hair you now have. The lovely hair you seek shall be yours."

The dream ended, and Hazel woke suddenly and was out of bed and running through the woods straight for the pool. She scrambled up on the rock, and sat looking down at her reflection in the pool.

And she began to comb.

So soft were the teeth of the comb as it passed through her hair that she was reminded of a knife passing through soft butter. Each time the pull-through was longer, and looking down Hazel saw her hair reaching now to her neck, tickling it with such a strangeness that she felt her blood curdling with cold. Then her hair was stretching past her shoulders, and it was soft and brown, like the tuft of hair at the end of an ear of full-grown corn. Soon it lay in thick tresses against her hips.

Then the rhythm of the combing became a command. It was as if other hands were helping her to comb. The hair grew heavier and heavier, and her neck bent under its weight towards the pool. Hazel saw her hair spreading on the surface of the pool, and as it soaked up the water, it began to sink, further and heavier. Then there was a splash as the hair dragged her from the rock and deep down into the pool. Her hands lost the comb as she tried to grab at the edge of the rock, but her fingers slipped helplessly on its moss green surface. And then she was grasping at empty air, and then water.

Next night Dora was back on the rock, singing her wordless, haunting melody, and combing her hair with her comb. And she was smiling now, smiling.



# THE SOUND

BERYL MARSTON

IT came like a tiny shiver. A soft, timid, trickle of sound. As though a child threw some grains of sand against a window pane. Yet, its origin was impossible to locate.

The boy and girl looked at each other, then measured the possibilities of the room. There was the table around which they sat. A bare deal table, burdened with a motley assortment of books. The beams of light from the single kerosene lamp placed in its centre, hardly reaching beyond the edge. There the shadows took over. Tall ill-shaped shadows cast by the chairs on which they sat by their own bodies and by the sofa in the corner nearest the outer door.

For there were two doors. The one leading into the darkness of the night and the other into the room beyond. They had thought there was nothing more except of course the silence. The noisy silence of a country night when when the crickets chirped or the night owl hooted.

Now they knew better. There were so many things more. There was the night wind whistling in the bamboo trees. There was the same wind sighing through the cotton tree. Ah! the cotton tree! It was a convenient place for robbers. Added to all these there was The Sound. But, most important of all was their mummy's absence. When she went through the door she had told them to sit at their studies.

\* \* \*

Out of the sea of aloneness the boy said.

"There is nothing there!"

He spoke aloud. He spoke too loudly because he was afraid. He needed to re-affirm his faith in the safety of the night.

"There is!" his sister whispered hoarsely. "I just know there is."

The fingers of one hand caught in her mouth, she pushed the other between her tiny legs hugged together.

"Let us look," the boy said.

He rose, hesitantly drawing one reluctant hand across the edge of the table.

The diamond drops stood in her eyes and in a whimpering voice she said:

"Take me with you then!"

"Come!" the boy said.

\* \* \*

He held the lamp in one hand and with the other clutched the shade, keeping it in place. His curly head peeped round it as his eyes combatted the shadows.

The girl, still with her fingers in her mouth, held tightly to the seat of his pants. So they began those myriad miles across that tiny room.

Then it came again. The same slither of sound. Only, now it was accompanied by the swish, swish of bamboo leaves fighting against the wind. It seemed more companionable.

The girl took her fingers from her mouth but she still held firmly to her brother.

They moved very slowly. He knew fear but it was better to pretend he was accommodating his steps to those of his sister.

They reached the inner doorway. The limited rays from the lamp pricked at the darkness before them but could not pierce it. It needed but a moment for the gathering of courage and then they would go in. The boy looked down at the girl and smiled. A slow, secret smile that said he was not afraid.

"Now!" he said and stepped forward.

PLOP!

\* \* \*

The scream came tearing from their throats and the darkness was entire and complete because the lamp lay in pieces where he had dropped it. Their bare feet were dripping blood as they flung themselves back into the room from which they had come.

"Mummy!" they screamed. "Mummy!" on a rising note of terror.

Battering themselves, clutching at each other's clothes, falling and rising again, they stumbled towards the lighter dark that was the door leading into the night.

"Tommy! what is it?" the mother's voice split the darkness and brought them back to sanity.

"There is something there," the boy sobbed. The girl a whimpering cuddle on her mother's shoulder would not so much as lift her head.

Voices came in then and with them a strong light. They stepped across the room which but a short while ago seemed a myriad miles. The darkness of the room beyond became the friendly daytime room.

There was the bed they usually shared. There was the story book their mummy had left open when she read them an evening tale. There was Tommy's silver gun and beside it the little girl's teddy bear.

\* \* \*

Voices went past the open window and the bamboo leaves swished, a soft friendly sound. Even the cotton tree was searched. The rays of the several lights belted its girth so they saw there was nothing there.

And then they searched the room again. The boy and girl held tightly to their mother's fingers.

They moved the table which had held the lamp. The grotesque shadows shifted their shapes as the position of the chairs was changed. The sofa near the door was moved.

But they had forgotten the window. It stood closed as it had done for years. It was beside the door and had been closed because of its superfluity. Now they came to it and what lay beneath.

On the soiled wooden floor they saw the heap of white marl. It had tumbled from the Spanish wall which made the house. It had left a tiny hole where the wooden framework of the window and the wall parted company.

They saw all this and then the mother found it. It squatted beside the heap of white marl, its well developed legs ready for hopping again.

It was as surprised as they were and seemed to gather breath for another leap after its fall. Its tiny sides heaved and its bright, grotesque eyes looked steadily at them.

It was the mother who saw it for what it was. "See," she said, "it is a frog. He pushed through the Spanish wall and tumbled with it to the floor!"



# HARRY THE HUMMER

LAURICE BIRD

**H**ARRY the hummer was feeling low in spirits this special Sunday morning.

For many seasons past Erma and himself had built their nests in the notches of an old-fashioned hanging lantern in one of the country churches of Jamaica. Now each notch encircling the lantern had the remnants of a nest firmly embedded in it

Harry was thoroughly against doing any further 'repairs', and wanted an entirely new nest this season. He had a special reason for this. The day before he had rushed with great excitement to Erma, as she flitted here and there in the church, quietly looking for another suitable place to build.

"Listen to this, old girl," he burst out. "Just heard that *I've* been chosen as the national bird of Jamaica! Can you beat that?"

"Oh, Harry . . ." Erma laughed indulgently. "You mean it's your *species* they've chosen — not *you* in particular."

"Eh . . . what did you say?" Harry quietened down for a moment, a bit taken aback. "Oh, well, that includes me, anyway," he said grandly, buzzing his wings a bit faster. "You've heard that the Nature Club youngsters are camping out at Johnson's Farm?" he continued. "Young Bertie pointed at me as I hovered around. He said, 'This chap has been chosen as national bird, because he is found *only* in this island.' Boy, that means we're really important!"

Now it was nearly time for people to start coming in for morning service. Harry *did* feel annoyed that they had no new nest ready to show the important people who would be there for the service of Thanksgiving, to mark the island's independence.

Hovering in mid-air by means of his loudly vibrating wings, he voiced his complaints to his little spouse, who was not as brilliantly garbed as he was, neither had she his long and elegant tail.

"You know, my dear," he said fussily, swishing his scissors tail as he followed her round the building, "I can't think what we're going to do

about this housing shortage! We can't find a suitable site, and building materials are so scarce. It's really bothering me."

"Don't be silly, Harry," answered Erma without conviction. "The heavenly Father knows our needs, and He will show us what to do. In the meantime," she added drily, "may I suggest that from to-morrow you go a little further afield, and see if you can't find any silk cotton? Failing that, you must search for the down of asclepias seeds."

Erma always looked on the bright side of things. She knew that Harry had spent most of his time moping, and had scarcely been further than the churchyard to look for the soft silk cotton which they needed to build the nest. This seemed to be in short supply, and he had volunteered a few ideas as to how to obtain some.

"We might, of course, look out for other birds who have got some and nab it." (He wouldn't say 'steal'; 'nab' sounded more respectable). But Erma had put her foot down on that one.

"We will do no such thing," she said firmly. "Call it what you will — nab, pilfer, borrow, bag — it's just plain stealing." Harry had the grace to feel ashamed; but then he came up with another suggestion.

"You know what, Erma, suppose we make a father of a fuss till the churchpeople feel they must do something about it? Or I tell you what — the members of the Nature Club are the ones who ought to assist us!"

"Oh, get on with you, Harry," Erma replied a bit wearily. She *did* wish her husband would make more effort himself and not dwell so much on what others ought to do to help them.

She herself, like any human mother, had already begun to think about trimmings for the nest. She knew just where to find the scraps of lichen and fine fern to decorate the outside.

To make the nest she would skilfully weave the silk cotton with her beak into a beautiful egg-cup shape. When the nest was half-finished she would sit down in it, and with her breast press it into shape.

Erma never allowed any slip-shod sort of job. Truth to tell, she spent a great deal of perspiration on it, whilst Harry's job was mostly admiration!

The church bell began to ring, and Harry flashed around to see who and who were out this morning. He cut quite a dash in his bright metallic

plumage, of shimmering greens and blues and darker shades.

There was the fat lady who dressed to beat the band, and who sang louder than anyone else. Sitting at the back were those horrid boys who loved to tease him. He wished the Nature Club would get hold of them.

The specially invited guests were beginning to arrive, and Harry cut his capers through the church and made sure that they all noticed him. After all, was he not a national figure now?

Presently his attention was turned to the choir coming in, and with a cheery "S'long, see you later!" to Erma, he dashed lower down to watch with interest as they took their places. Harry knew them all quite well by now, including the boy who pumped the organ.

Just under the hanging lantern he could spot Miss Esmie, the nice old lady who kept the village shop, and . . . ah yes, there were his favourite family, the Johnsons, in their pew as usual. They filled up a second bench today, having as their guests members of the Nature Club, to which twelve-year old Bertie belonged.

Besides Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and Bertie, there were two daughters. Audrey was a year older than Bertie, and Rita was quite a bit younger. If Harry the hummer had a special liking for them, there was no doubt that the Johnsons took a lively interest in the doings of Harry and Erma.

There was an anthem by the choir, and then the congregation sang a hymn that Harry had often heard. He felt ashamed of his former peevish mood as he listened to the verses.

"Through all the changing scenes of life,  
In trouble and in joy,  
The praises of my God shall still  
My heart and tongue employ.  
O magnify the Lord with me,  
With me exalt His Name;  
When in distress to Him I called,  
He to my rescue came.  
Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then  
Have nothing else to fear:  
Make you His service your delight,  
Your wants shall be His care."

"Huh . . . I guess Erma's right," Harry told himself, "It really *is* better to praise than to pout. If even a sparrow has the Father's care (and he didn't think much of sparrows) I reckon He will look after *our* problems."

Next came the sermon, and Harry felt even more ashamed as the Jamaican minister seemed to know just what was going on in his mind. Harry liked the first text he quoted. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding." He knew that Erma would approve of the next. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

The minister repeated an old saying which he urged everyone to apply to himself or herself as a motto for Independence. "We must *trust* as if we had no need to work; and we must *work* as if there was no need to trust."

Erma had been listening intently as she sat motionless on an eave above the pulpit. Harry, however, could not be still for long and, glancing round the congregation, he spied the bright artificial flowers that covered the entire crown of Audrey Johnson's hat.

Down swooped Harry the hummer upon Audrey's head, and stuck his long red beak into the flowers, but alas, there was no nectar for him to sup!

Audrey quickly brushed him away with her hand, but Harry was only the more eager and determined to get at the lovely nectar he was sure those beautiful flowers contained.

Again and again he returned to the attack until a veritable boxing match was taking place between Audrey and himself, assisted by enthusiastic members of the Nature Club.

Harry was a fighter like all of his species, and was determined to gain his objective, whilst poor Audrey's face grew crimson under her swarthy skin.

She became more uncomfortable each moment, as people turned round to look. The children giggled outright. There was a peculiar twitching at the corner of Mr. Johnson's mouth, as he sat at the other end of the bench.

Mrs. Johnson decided that something must be done.

"You'd better take your hat off, Audrey," she whispered hurriedly. Only too happy to take her mother's advice, Audrey quickly grabbed it off her

head and stuck it under the bench, whilst Bertie flipped away his friend for the last time.

As he flew back to Erma to pour out his rage, Harry bounced against one of the old nests and dislodged it right out of its notch in the hanging lantern.

Erma gave a gasp of delight as she saw it fluttering down on the shoulder of Miss Emmie.

"Look, Harry!" she almost shouted, as her very annoyed and indignant husband fluttered round her. "Do you see what's happened? Why, there'll be no need for us to look elsewhere to build our nest!"

It took Harry a moment or two to collect his wits and allow his temper to cool off; for really, it *had* been provoking not to be allowed to get at that nectar. As he saw the empty notch in the lantern, he stuttered in amazement, "Now why hadn't I thought of that before?"

"We may be nitwits, dear," Erma said joyfully, "but again we've proved that our heavenly Father really does make 'all things work together for good to them that love Him!'"

As the people trooped out of church and greeted one another, Harry hovered within earshot of the Johnsons, pretending to gather nectar and insects from the honeysuckle vine nearby. He really wanted to hear all the latest news.

Bertie drew the attention of the Nature Club to the way Harry thrust his long, slender beak into the flowers. Audrey joined them, having thrown her offending hat into the car. "I'm mad with him still!" she said, as Bertie with a grin, continued his lecture.

"A humming bird's tongue is like two tubes laid side by side," he explained, "but it is joined half way, and separate for the remainder."

"Yes, he sucks up nectar from the flowers through these tubes," Mr. Johnson continued, "and the tips, which are split into tiny, irregular pieces that turn backwards, he uses for catching and entangling insects."

"Why is he called the 'doctor' bird?" enquired Rita.

"I know!" exclaimed a member of the Club. "It's because his long tail reminded people of the frock-tailed coats that doctors used to wear."

"I've been told it was the black crest on his head that made people think of a doctor's top hat," said another.

"Really, it's time we were going home, or dinner will be late," chipped in Mrs. Johnson.

"Mummy, wait for me!" called out little Rita, as she ran to a bed of fern where, before the service, she had left some pods of silk cotton. "I brought these for Erma and Harry; where shall I put them?" she asked, looking around.

"Here, under the honeysuckle," ordered Bertie. "Then they'll be sure to see them."

Erma was already having lunch from a red hibiscus flower, when she turned to see them depart. Her eyes fell on the silk cotton as Rita placed it on the spot indicated by Bertie.

Hardly able to contain her joy, she called "Harry! Harry! Two miracles in one day! First we can build again in our dear old lantern; and now, just look at what that thoughtful child has brought us!"

Harry too was thrilled, and he looped the loop and turned somersaults till his wife was almost dizzy.

Then Erma called him to order. "Listen, old top," she said in her best lecture manner, "make up your mind that from tomorrow — Independence Day — your'e getting down to some good hard work on that nest!"



*"When fly bodder mauger mule nobody see, but when him kick, dem say him bad."*

## CARMEN MANLEY

Mrs. SPIDER was known by everyone in the town as a trouble maker. She would carry news and gossip from one home to the other. Uninvited, she would move into any house in the town, weave her web, and settle down on the ceiling for an indefinite stay. From her position on the ceiling, nothing that went on in the house would escape her sharp eyes. She was always boasting about her famous grandfather, Anancy — the wonderful webs he had woven and the hundreds of flies he had caught in them.

Mrs. Spider had just moved into Mauger Mule's house. She had heard that Mauger Mule was having a trying time with flies. The Fly family were squatters; they would never settle down but would swarm into homes, eating, and sleeping, and playing music and dancing all over the place, until the food was finished. Then they would move on to another house and start all over again. Their behaviour was a disgrace to the town. They would hang around shops, on the street corners drinking and singing at tops of their voices. Traps had been set for them, but they were too clever to be caught in that way.

Mauger Mule was a worried man. He pranced about all day swishing his tail, trying to clear his home of the squatters and as if that weren't bad enough, Mrs. Spider kept up a steady stream of chatter, telling him how useless his methods were.

"Why," she would say, in her high squeaky voice. "Mauger Mule, you are a fool. Your tail is missing them by a mile every time."

"Oh, shut up!" Mauger Mule would bray "What would you have me do? Stand still and do nothing?"

"Oh, no," Mrs. Spider said. "I know exactly what to do."

"What, then?" stamped Mule.

"Oh," smiled Mrs. Spider. "I had better not tell you, for it is a secret my grandfather, Anancy, taught me."

"Your grandfather," grunted Mule, "was a . . ."

"Was a what?" snapped Mrs. Spider, in her most icy tone.

"Oh, forget it," Mule said, as a fly nipped him on his hind leg.

"If you are going to talk disrespectfully about my ancestors," Mrs. Spider said, drawing her web around her, "I will be forced to take up residence elsewhere."

Mule was shocked by this remark. Forced to take up residence elsewhere, indeed!!! This woman had moved into his home uninvited, had dirtied his ceiling with her web, had called him a fool, laughed at his efforts to deal with the fly menace, and now had the nerve to stand there, on *his* ceiling, and suggest she was doing him a favour by remaining! The nerve of some people!

They stood glaring at each other. Mrs. Spider changed her tactics. She realised Mule, who was normally quite a patient man was getting angry. "Mr. Mule," she said sweetly. "If I told you what to do to get rid of the Fly family, you must promise not to say where you got it from."

"Come, now, woman," said Mule. "Nobody has ever suggested before that I cannot keep my mouth shut."

"Oh, I know," said Mrs. Spider. "They all say you are a very stubborn man."

"*Who* says I am stubborn?" brayed Mule.

"Oh, Mulesy Woolsy," Mrs. Spider said, trying to look coy.

"Cut out the nonsense, woman, and tell me what to do about these flies," he said.

"Well, just outside under the cotton tree, Her Majesty Queen Bee has her honeycombs. If you steal one and put it in a box, all the flies will rush in for the honey. They will stick in it and then you could easily slam the lid on the box. Then you can take the box down to the sea and kick it in the ocean as far as it can go."

"But that sounds a good plan. Thank you," said Mr. Mule, and out he trotted to steal the Honey Comb.

He slowed down as he came to the cotton tree on whose bark Her Majesty kept her honeycombs. There were the drones, the men bees, idling away the time, doing not one stitch of work.

"Good morning, drones," said Mauger Mule. "Nice day, isn't it?"

"Buzz off," the drones said rudely.

Mr. Mule thought to himself. "They are not only lazy, but very rude

indeed. Anyway, if *they* have been left here to guard the honeycomb, I will have no difficulty."

"Is Her Majesty at home?" asked Mule. The lazy drones looked at each other and pretended not to hear. Perhaps he would want them to take a message in, and they really had no intention of moving. In any case, Her Highness was at that moment giving audience to a deputation about Mr. Owl's new order which decreed that all sharp weapons should be put away and not used except in time of war. This was a grave matter indeed for the colony as it seemed that all stings would have to be removed. Her Highness had made it clear that she should not be interrupted.

Mr. Mule realised that the drones were not going to answer his question, so he moved nearer to the Honey Comb. Out came the Worker bees.

"Now this is a problem," thought Mule. "I have got to get rid of them."

He hurried back into his house to ask Mrs. Spider's advice.

"Mrs. S.," he said, in his kindest voice. "It is very nice of you to tell me how to get rid of the flies, but first I must get rid of the worker bees, to get at the honeycomb."

"Use your head, man, and think," said Mrs. Spider. "You are a dumb mule. Go and borrow one of Mrs. Jackass' ropes. Lie under the tree and smoke it. You know smoke makes the bees very sleepy. They won't even notice what you are doing."

"Thank you kindly, mam." Mule said, bowing his way out.

"Mule," called Spider as he reached the door. "Would you like me to show you how to steal as well?"

Mr. Mule pretended not to hear. "That woman is going too far," he mumbled to himself.

Going across to his neighbour's fence, he called to the Jackasses.

Mrs. Jackass stopped her work of drying grass and turned to her husband. "Jack," she said, "I didn't know Mr. Mule smoked."

"You know now," brayed Mr. Jackass, who was a man of very few words. He always complained that he was too tired to talk.

He handed Mr. Mule a length of Jackass rope, and Mr. Mule thanked him gratefully. He was always very polite when he did not have to pay for what he got. Mrs. Jackass brayed, "You are most welcome," but she

thought to herself: "I hope you will buy your own cigars next time" (for that was really what Jackass rope was).

And so Mr. Mule made his way back to the cotton tree. Lying on his back, he crossed his hind legs, and with the right hoof of the foreleg puffed away at the Jackass rope. The heavy cloud of smoke not only made the bees sleepy, but it also gave off a smell that was far from pleasant. Soon the workers came shouting: "Run for cover, it is a stink bomb", and they all moved off in a daze to warn Her Majesty that war had been declared.

As soon as they were out of sight, Mr. Mule removed the honeycomb and hurried into his house with it.

"Mrs. Spider," he called, as he entered. But there was no answer. Looking up into the ceiling, he could find no trace of Mrs. Spider's web.

"Well, well, well," said Mr. Mule happily to himself. "It seems I have got rid of her at last. This is indeed my lucky day. Now to attend to these flies."

Finding a box, he laid the honeycomb gently inside, then hiding behind a door with a cover for the box in his hand, he waited smilingly for the flies to find this treasure.

Mrs. Spider, however, trouble-maker that she was like her grandfather, Anancy, had packed her web and left the house soon after she had seen Mule get rid of the bees. Now she was hurrying down the road spreading the news of the robbery and of the trick Mr. Mule had played to get rid of the bees.

Mrs. Jackass supported her story, braying: "Disgraceful. Trying to get me in trouble with the Bees. Using my good cigars for such a purpose." She was really angry for in telling the story, Mrs. Jackass had not failed to mention that the bees had thought it was a stink bomb.

Soon the whole village had heard the news and were on their way to Mr. Owl, the leader of the country, to see that justice was done.

Mr. Mule had in the meantime succeeded in trapping the flies and had taken the box down to the sea as Mrs. Spider had suggested. On his way home, he was met by two police dogs and escorted to College Proper — the public square where all matters of state were dealt with.

Mr. Owl was indeed very fair as he listened to all the witnesses, Mrs. Spider being the chief one. Indeed she so loved the idea of being the

centre of attention that she talked too much. And as Mr. Owl listened, he realised that poor Mule was more sinned against than wrong himself. Still, of course, he had to be punished for his crime.

Before passing sentence on him, Mr. Owl said:

"When flies bother Mauger Mule, nobody sees, but when he kicks, you all say he is bad. This poor Mule is blamed because he has at last tried to do something about his continued sufferings."

The vast crowd hung their heads. They felt ashamed of their behaviour. One of the bees came forward and said: "Mr. Owl, I know that if Her Majesty could be here now, she would ask that Mr. Mule be freed. Unfortunately she is unable to leave home just now, but she asked me to say that she has heard much of the story and that anytime Mule has any troubles of this kind, she would be pleased to let him have a bit of honey-comb."

All the animals cheered.

"Mule," Mr. Owl said. "You are free to go now. And you, Mrs. Spider, must stop making trouble in this country or you will be deported to the land of your ancestors."

"I didn't mean any harm," she squeaked. "It was a harmless little joke. How was I to know people would believe everything you tell them?"

But she soon realised that everyone was looking at her in anger. She would find great difficulty spinning her web around them all for a long time to come.



# EXTRACT FROM SAN GLORIA

(Act 3 Scene 1)

On the shore as before, Columbus soliloquises:

Moans on the reef the deep sea's hated voice;  
Surging and sapping on the rough reef's rim;  
It speaks of death, dead faces and of woes,  
Unnumbered, past and sorrows yet to be;  
It is the pulse of sad eternity;  
It is the prophet voice of grief and pain;  
It is the judgment voice of things to come,  
When, at high heaven's throne, the dead shall meet,  
And, small and great, make answer for their deeds;  
In those sad moanings come the widow's tears,  
The orphan's anguish and the hopeless hope  
Of watchers, from the white sands, far to sea.  
Mendez, what fate is thine? Perchance, now, now  
The body that enoused thy soul is flung,  
And tumbled O'er and O'er, amid the wrack  
And slime of ocean's bottomless abyss.  
Here, it was here, on such a day as this,  
The sea-surge sounding in the self-same way  
Through these wind-whispering trees, that your young  
    heart  
Leapt to the service; once did you essay  
The perilous passage, and were driven back  
All but yourself killed by the silent hate  
Of staring suns upon a stirless sea;  
So thirst to fury grew; to frenzy past;  
And madness whirled to death. Again you tried,

Then, from the sea swept back to storms, you came,  
But yet, undaunted, for the third time dared  
To cross that sea of lurking death; long weeks  
Have dragged their slow way towards Eternity.  
The sea smiles, moans, and keeps its secret.  
Where art thou?

My heart misgives me, dead; there is a dirge  
In the soft whisper of these moving trees;  
The sun gleams cynic unconcern, and the sad reef  
Sends its deep murmur flooding through my mind,  
As if there crept a shadow slowly on,  
And dark-robed mourners trod through Memory's halls.  
Suddenly I feel old; the weary body lags;  
Pain closes on the brain; thought foot-sore goes;  
The long, long way trails backward into gloom;  
Dies into darkness there; 'tis night before.

(Through the drowsy stillness of the day the sound of the reef comes monotonously; doves in the wood coo now and again plaintively; there is the sudden sharp scream of a hawk wheeling over-head.)

I see a vision of those savage men  
In fury rushing on us, trampling dark  
By their brute numbers, Life, Killing its flame,  
Each spark of evidence that in this place  
We suffered; so our story, it will pass  
Like clouds that aimless sink in shapeless air.  
A dark foreboding haunts me lest I die  
Amid the careless beauty of this isle,  
And these great heights, blue — forest-garmented.  
That wave slow signals to the mighty deep,

Callous to smaller things, across my grave  
Stare; while the green things tangle on the plain;  
While the soft waters lip the sandy shore;  
While dawns, arriving, spread their crimson flags;  
And passing day gives all her tents to fire,  
Seeking a new encampment; doves will coo  
When, into deep oblivion sunk, my grave  
Lies in the flood of life that blots out all,  
While the great hills stare on, o'er shrub and vine,  
Heeding my resting-place and me no more  
Than slow grey lichens heed the rock they stain,  
Or this huge trunk they moisten to decay.

(He rises and paces slowly, then stooping picks up the body of a small dead bird.)

Then will I not be in the world of men  
Worth more than is this little silent frame,  
This empty hut of feathers, whence hath life  
Evicted been by some chance flick of Fate.  
True! 'tis an empty house, its tenant gone,  
My tent of flesh, yet would I have it lie  
In some dear, well-loved and familiar spot  
On earth's vast amplitude.

*Tom Redcam*

## ON NATIONAL VANITY

Slowly we learn; the oft repeated line  
Lingers a little moment and is gone;  
Nation on nation follows, sun on sun.  
With empire's dust fate builds her great design,  
But we are blind and see not; in our pride  
We strain toward the petrifying mound  
To sit above our fellows, and we ride  
The slow and luckless toiler to the ground.  
Fools are we for our pains; whom we despise,  
Last come, shall mount our withered vanities,  
Topmost to sit upon the vast decay  
Of time and temporal things — for, last or first,  
The proud array of pictured bubbles burst,  
Mirages of their glory pass away.

*J. E. Clare McFarlane*

## STREET PREACHER

They are the daughters of music  
On the pavements  
Beating their drums  
When the Sabbath sun goes down.

Who can say  
If the goatskin drums  
Pound their monotonous rhythm  
On the heart of God?  
Do the tambourines  
Make a joyful noise in His ears?

*Edward Baugh*

## ANCESTOR ON THE AUCTION BLOCK

Ancestor on the auction block  
Across the years your eyes seek mine  
Compelling me to look.  
I see your shackled feet  
Your primitive black face  
I see your humiliation  
And turn away  
Ashamed.

Across the years your eyes seek mine  
Compelling me to look  
Is this mean creature that I see  
Myself?  
Ashamed to look  
Because of myself ashamed  
Shackled by my own ignorance  
I stand  
A slave.

Humiliated  
I cry to the eternal abyss  
For understanding  
Ancestor on the auction block  
Across the years your eyes meet mine  
Electric  
I am transformed  
My freedom is within myself.

I look you in the eyes and see  
The spirit of God eternal  
Of this only need I be ashamed  
Of blindness to the God within me  
The same God who dwelt within you  
The same eternal God  
Who shall dwell  
In generations yet unborn.  
  
Ancestor on the auction block  
Across the years  
I look  
I see you sweating, toiling, suffering  
Within your loins I see the seed  
Of multitudes  
From your labour  
Grow roads, aqueducts, cultivation  
A new country is born  
Yours was the task to clear the ground  
Mine be the task to build.

*Vera Bell*

## HISTORY MAKERS

Women stone breakers

Hammers on rocks

Tired child makers

Haphazard frocks

Strong thigh

Rigid head

Bent nigh

Hard white piles

Of stone

Under hot sky

In the gully bed.

No smile

No sigh

No moan.

Women child bearers

Pregnant frocks

Wilful toil sharers

Destiny shapers

History maker,

Hammers and rocks.

*George Campbell*

## HOLY

Holy be the white head of a Negro.

Sacred be the black flax of a black child.

Holy be

The golden down

That will stream in the waves of the winds

And will thin like dispersing cloud.

Holy be

Heads of Chinese hair

Sea calm sea impersonal

Deep flowering of the mellow and traditional.

Heads of peoples fair

Bright shimmering from the riches of their species;

Heads of Indians

With feeling of distance and space and dusk:

Heads of wheaten gold,

Heads of peoples dark

So strong so original:

All of the earth and the sun!

*George Campbell*

## I SHALL REMEMBER

And in strange lands  
Where the fog presses down  
And even the street lamps are faint and misty,  
I shall remember  
The beauty of our nights,  
With stars so near  
That one could almost stretch and touch them,  
Stars winking and flashing  
Magnificently in a sky of velvet blue.

I shall remember  
Walking down long avenues of trees,  
The black asphalt flecked with pale moonlight  
Pouring through the acasia leaves —  
And the soft laughter of girls  
Leaning back, cool and inviting  
Against the trunks of flaming poinciana trees.

And in the long day when rain falls suddenly  
And no sun shines

And all the earth lies in a weary stupor

I shall remember

The splendour of our sun  
The brightness of our days.

And how the rain poured down

Upon a passionate thirsty earth,

Swiftly, unrelenting with immeasurable power,

Then vanished suddenly in a peal of childlike laughter  
And all the earth was green and light once more.

I shall remember

The warmth of our island seas,  
The sparkling whiteness of the breaking waves  
And the blue haze on our hills and mountains  
With their noisy streams cascading down  
Sheer cliffs in clouds of incandescent spray  
And deafening sound.

And in strange cities

Among unaccustomed people  
Who move palefaced with tired, staring eyes

I shall remember

The warmth and gaiety of my people,  
The polyglot colour and variety of their faces,  
The happy fusion of our myriad races  
In the common love that unites and binds us to this  
land.

And I shall yearn for the sight  
Of faces black and bronzed,  
People with dark, sparkling eyes  
With ready tongue  
And laughter loud and unashamed.

*H. D. Carberry*

## FUGUE

Have seen the summer convex of the wounded sky  
want to catch it and clutch it and make it sing  
of the wild wind's whisper and the hard-boiled sun  
and the blue day kissing my mountain away  
where the hawks dip wing-tipped diving.

Have seen the curved mane of the wind-whipped cane  
want to snap it and squeeze it and make it rain  
on the roots of the summer-tree withering  
where my mountain mouths lie sleeping  
and the hawks dip wing-tipped diving.

Have seen the curving prism of the rainbow's shaft  
want to pluck it and plait it and make it bend  
to pattern in the brain of the mountain top  
where my grief is sighing like a fingered stop  
where the hawks dip wing-tipped diving  
and the graves are green at the world's end.

*Neville Dawes*

## EXPECT NO TURBULENCE

Expect no turbulence, although you hold me fast,  
For this, where late my love lay, beats no more,  
Confute, perplex not; only shield me from the past,  
What might have been is lost, not gone before.

Though in the night your surgent need impels  
Your body to seek comfort, bruising me awake,  
I will not shrink, though all your flesh repels;  
Nor sanctuary deny, while we communion take.

For we, two lost, two hungry souls, will meet  
At common board, with common need for bread.  
You, in the wood, will gather berries sweet;  
I, in the dark, taste the salt flesh of the dead.

*Barbara Ferland*

## AT HOME THE GREEN REMAINS . .

In England now I hear the window shake  
And see beyond its astigmatic pane  
Against black limbs Autumn's yellow stain  
Splashed about tree-tops and wet beneath the rake.

New England's hills are flattened as crimson-lake  
And purple columns, all that now remain  
Of trees, stand forward as hillocks do in rain,  
And up the hillside ruined temples make.

At home the green remains: the palm throws back  
Its head and breathes above the still blue sea,  
The separate hills are lost in common blue  
Only the splendid poinsettias, true  
And crimson like the northern ivy, tack,  
But late, the yearly notice to a tree.

*John Figueroa*

## PORT ROYAL

Seek not here now the startling incident,  
Fire on flashing brass, the formal splendour,  
Nor violence clustering, suddenly at street corners.  
The measured ebb and flow  
Leaves no obstruction in the oyster shell  
Round which to build your pearls.  
Here glory is buried under the fallen stone.  
In the dim twilight of the ocean bed  
Only the sea crabs crawl the darkened streets,  
And in the silent halls  
The many-branched candles burn around the sleeping  
Forever quenchless, shedding their fitful light.  
And the bells toll,  
And the bells toll, forever calling,  
Calling for the final approbation,  
Calling for the garlands of fresh flowers,  
The shed tear and the melancholy music,  
Calling for burial in the afternoon,  
Sleep in warm earth, with the long shadows slanting.  
O white are the flowers the wind throws on the water,  
Blossoming suddenly and as suddenly fleeting,  
And golden the tendrils of light, and various its roses.  
O sad are the feet of the sea on the shore in the evening,  
Mournful its songs, their music a murmuring prayer.  
Only the narrow lanes remember  
The secret assignations,

The silks and satins spurning the filth and mud,  
The music and the laughter,  
The hasty dagger and the red blood flowing  
And mingling with the spilt wine in the gutter.  
The bright day falling on the broken houses  
Discovers only  
The ginger-lily's unexpected beauty  
Blossoming in the festering desolation  
Perfection of young flesh grown tall and straight,  
Sucked upwards by the sun and full of laughter,  
And moulded to the sea's will.

Discovers only these,  
And old walls stained by a thousand afternoons  
Remembering their glory.

*G. A. Hamilton*

## ACROSS COLD SKIES

(To My Wife from an Aircraft)

Across cold skies I, travelling unmoulded paths of air  
send swift messages to you; for love's immediate voice  
speaks instantly and needs nor time nor space  
to bear its gentle words.

Now in the night's contiguous dark  
my silent song is here transmitted; you will know,  
a hemisphere away, its fond and constant music; I  
will receive your certain love that helps my voyage to  
prosper  
yet beckons my return.

And if, most private companion and friend,  
the terrible conceit of separate ways assume its gaunt  
and lonely shape,  
challenge that phantom with your shining thought,  
defeat  
its subtlety with your pure intent, and measure  
by these lines of love our faithful bond, my only dear.

*A. L. Hendriks*

## ROAD TO LACOVIA

This is a long, forbidding road, a narrow,  
hard aisle of asphalt under  
a high gothic arch of bamboos.

Along it a woman drags a makeshift barrow  
in slanting rain, and thunder:

a thin woman who wears no shoes.

This is St. Elizabeth, a hard parish  
to work; but when you are born  
on land, you want to work that land.

Nightfall comes here swift and harsh and deep, but  
garish

flames of lightning show up torn  
cheap clothing barely patched, and

a face patterned by living. Every sharp line  
of this etching has the mark  
of struggle. To the eye, unyielding  
bleak earth has brought her close to famine;  
yet through this wild descent of dark  
this woman dares to walk, and sing.

*A. L. Hendriks*

## AT VILLA FLORA

If I dream upon this lea,  
The water sprites should capture me,  
Pulling me from the bank to where  
The water bubbles joyously  
I think that I should know no fear.

Part of its beauty I should be  
And hear its deeper song and see  
Its darker depths where silvers gleam  
Out of the rushes timorously  
With treasures of the gentle stream.

Pebbles as smooth as silk and glass  
Blue as the gliding waves that pass  
Over their surface constantly  
And where the thicker reeds amass  
Secrets no human eye can see.

Nymphs of the river, as I sleep,  
Rise from your playing in the deep  
To where the little wavelets stir  
The water-lilies, softly creep  
And take a happy prisoner.

*Vivette Hendriks*



## YELLOW

I will sing a song of yellow on this yellow day  
All the loveliness of yellow passes in a swift array:  
Yellow of bright buttercups in Kingston's dazzling  
fields —  
Yellow of chrysanthemums that Autumn lavish yields,  
Sun-flowers and primroses sparkling in the sun —  
The sheen of children's hair like sunbeams golden spun.  
I can sing of yellow — almost endless — the refrain  
But best of all are *alamandas* dripping in the rain.  
I will sing of butter in the dairy clean and cool —  
I will sing of gold-fish in the crystal pool —  
Or of amber in a necklace carved, of beauty rare  
Or topaz shining, with a light, deep, soft and clear.  
Of honey in a jar that lets the daylight through,  
Of oranges and limes and brilliant mangoes too.  
There seems no end to all the rapturous yellow train  
But best of all are *alamandas* dripping in the rain.  
Sulphur and saffron light the drug-store that I pass.  
Canaries flit and sing — this gold-finch gleams like  
glass

The pumpkin is so rich and luscious in a pie;  
The paw-paws, with their black seeds, with golden  
apples vie —  
Siena Marble is a golden glory I dare not compare  
With any other yellow — but I name it here.  
Yellows flame on yellows — Cockatoo and crane —  
But best of all are *alamandas* dripping in the rain.  
I can sing of fairy cassia and cosmos in a ring,  
Of "Little Pages" in the sand — of cowslips in the  
Spring —  
Of cheese and cream and shining yellow corn —  
Of fiscus blossoms — sweet potatoes — sunshine in  
the morn.  
The yellow jewel of the egg set in its crystal band  
And all the yellow beauty of English sea-shore sand.  
Bring all your yellow glories; not one will I disdain  
But best of all are *alamandas* dripping in the rain.  
Yellow Poincianas light this dew-wet glade  
Holding yellow black-eyed Susans in their shade.  
Like candy is this vase of deep Venetial gold,  
And yellow gleams this feather-robe of chieftains old.  
I dream of yellow yacca, ivories and shells  
Of Temple music and of mellow wedding bells.

I know not what is loss or what men count as gain  
But best of all are *alamandas* dripping in the rain.

For *alamanda* gathers up the yellow of each living  
thing

And stores it in its golden cups for glad remembering.

It is no hoarding miser — it spills it far and wide —

It pours it on the garden and on the bleak hill-side.

So deeply yellow are the flowers, their chalices held up

I often wonder that the rain does not drip yellow from  
each cup.

Yellow is a golden bounty, vast I know — but still  
maintain

*All yellows live in alamandas dripping in the rain.*

*Constance Hollar*

## CHRYSANTHEMUM

In the white morning sunlight  
The white chrysanthemum is a strange shock-headed  
doll;  
A wild rattle-taggle gipsy  
Flirting with the wind.  
Look! How she shakes her wild white hair.  
Hoop-la! Hoop-la!  
It's a song and dance today.  
But at night  
When the ground is fresh-dug and fresh-dunged,  
And the rich smell of the humus hangs heavy in the air,  
The chrysanthemums come out like shooting meteors  
Falling in the upper air;  
All heaven is streaked and starred  
And the warm earth lies panting  
Under the barred and ragged moons  
As ragged as a midnight gipsy fair.  
And the delicate little white buds  
Draw close within the thick night air  
Flickering like stars, flickering on the brink of the  
unborn day,  
Till in the early morning they too will burst forth  
Silver-flaked and flamed,  
Meteor-like in a moon-death . . .  
Hoop-la!  
The shock-headed gipsies have returned to earth.

*K. E. Ingram*

## THE SONG OF THE BANANA MAN

Touris', white man, wipin' his face,  
Met me in Golden Grove market place.  
He looked at m' ol' clothes brown wid stain,  
An' soaked right through wid de Portlan' rain.  
He cas' his eye, turn' up his nose,  
He says, "You're a beggar man, I suppose?"  
He says, "Boy, get some occupation,  
Be of some value to your nation."

I said, "By God and dis big right han'  
You mus' recognize a banana man.

"Up in de hills, where de streams are cool,  
An' mullet an' janga swim in de pool,  
I have ten acres of mountain side,  
An a dainty-foot donkey dat I ride,  
Four Gros Michel, an' four Lacatan,  
Some coconut trees, and some hills of yam,  
An' I pasture on dat very same lan'  
Five she-goats an' a big black ram,

"Dat, by God an' dis big right han'  
Is de property of a banana man.

"I leave m' yard early-mornin' time  
An' set m' foot to de mountain climb,  
I ben' m' back to de hot-sun toil,  
An' m' cutlass rings on de stony soil,

Ploughin' an' weedin' diggin' an' plantin'  
Till Massa Sun drop back o' John Crow mountain,  
Den home again in cool evenin' time,  
Perhaps whistling dis likkle rhyme,

(SUNG) "Praise God an' me' big right han'  
I will live and die a banana man.

"Banana day is my special day,  
I cut my stems an' I'm on m' way,  
Load up de donkey, leave de lan'  
Head down de hill to banana stan'  
When de truck comes roun' I take a ride  
All de way down to de harbour side —  
Dat is de night, when you, touris' man,  
Would change your place wid a banana man.

"Yes, by God, an' m' big right han'  
I will live an' die a banana man.

"De bay is calm, an' de moon is bright,  
De hills look black for de sky is light,  
Down at de dock is an English ship,  
Restin' after her ocean trip,  
While on de pier is a monstrous hustle,  
Tallymen carriers, all in a bustle,  
Wid stems on deir heads in a long black snake  
Some singin' de songs dat banana men make,

"Like, (SUNG) "Praise God an' m' big right han'  
I will live an' die a banana man.

“Den de payment comes, an’ we have some fun,  
Me, Zekiel, Breda and Duppy Son.  
Down at de bar near United Wharf  
We knock back a white rum, bus’ a laugh,  
Fill de empty bag for further toil  
Wid saltfish, breadfruit, coconut oil.  
Den head back home to m’ yard to sleep,  
A proper sleep dat is long an’ deep.  
“Yes, by God, an’ m’ big right han’  
I will live an’ die a banana man.

“So when you see dese ol’ clothes brown wid stain,  
An’ soaked right through wid de Portlan’ rain,  
Don’t cas’ your eye nor turn your nose,  
Don’t judge a man by his patchy clothes,  
I’m a strong man, a proud man, an’ I’m free,  
Free as dese mountains, free as dis sea,  
I know myself, an’ I know my ways,  
An’ will sing wid pride to de end o’ my days,  
(SUNG) “Praise God an’ m’ big right han’  
I will live an’ die a banana man.”

*Evan Jones*

## THE LAMENT OF THE BANANA MAN

Gal, I'm tellin' you, I'm tired fo' true,  
Tired of Englan', tired o' you.  
But I can' go back to Jamaica now . . .  
I'm here in Englan', I'm drawin' pay,  
    go to de underground every day —  
Eight hours is all, half-hour fo' lunch,  
M' uniform's free, an' m' ticket punch —  
Punchin' tickets not hard to do,  
When I'm tired o' punchin', I let dem through.  
I get a paid holiday once a year.  
Ol' age an' sickness can' touch me here.  
I have a room o' m own, an' a iron bed,  
Dunlopillo under m' head,  
A Morphy-Richards to warm de air,  
A formica table, an easy chair.  
I have summer clothes, an' winter clothes,  
An' paper kerchiefs to blow m' nose.  
My yoke is easy, my burden is light,  
I know a place I can go to, any night.  
Dis place Englan'! I'm not complainin',

*Lament of the Banana Man*

If it col', it col', if it rainin', it rainin'.  
I don' min' if it's mostly night,  
Dere's always inside, or de sodium light.  
I don' min' white people starin' at me,  
Dey don' want me here? Don't is deir country?  
You won' catch me bawlin' any homesick tears,  
If I don' see Jamaica for a t'ousan years!  
... Gal, I'm tellin' you, I'm tired fo' true,  
Tired of Englan', tired o' you,  
I can' go back to Jamaica now —  
But I'd want to die there, anyhow.

*Evan Jones*

## ARAWAK PROLOGUE

We cross many rivers, but here is no anguish; our dugouts have straddled the salt sea. The land we have found is a mountain, magical with birds' throats, and in the sea are fish. In the forests are many fleet canoes. And here is no anguish, though storms still the birds and frighten the fish from inshore shallows. And once, it seemed the mountain moved, groaning a little.

In the sunless wet, after rains, leaves in the tangled underbrush glisten (like cool hands of children on face and arms). I am not one for society, and think how the houses throb with the noise of women up to their elbows in cassava milk, when the dovegrey sea's breast is soft in the lowering light — and the land we found fairest of women.

That bright day, the light like clusters of gold fruit, alone, unknown of all, the dugout and I fled the shore's burning beauty; the first wave's shock an ecstasy like singing, oh, and the sea's strength entered these arms. All day we climbed the hill of the sea.

It seemed I died and found that bleak Coyaba of the wise. The dugout faltered in a long smooth swell. There were houses

on the water, aglow with light and music and strange laughter. Like great birds, with ominous mutterings and preenings, they hovered on every side. Flat on the dugout's bottom, I prayed deliverance. Where was the land, the houses throbbing with the noise of women up to their elbows in cassava milk? The towering birds floated majestically on, dragging me a little in their fabulous wake.

I tell this story in the evening, after the smoke of pipes has addled the elders' brains, and I am assured at least of the children's respectful silence. I am no longer certain it happened to me.

*Basil McFarlane*

## BANANAS RIPE AND GREEN

Bananas ripe and green, and ginger-root,  
Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,  
And tangerines and mangoes and grapefruit,  
Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,  
Set in the window, bringing memories  
Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,  
And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies  
In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;  
A wave of longing through my body swept,  
And, hungry for the old, familiar ways,  
I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.

*Claude McKay*

## FLAME-HEART

So much have I forgotten in ten years,  
So much in ten brief years! I have forgot  
What time the purple apples come to juice,  
And what month brings the shy forget-me-not.  
I have forgot the special, startling season  
Of the pimento's flowering and fruiting;  
What time of year the ground doves brown the fields  
And fill the noonday with their curious fluting.  
I have forgotten much, but still remember  
The poinsettia's red, blood-red, in warm December.  
I still recall the honey-fever grass,  
But cannot recollect the high days when  
We rooted them out of the ping-wing path  
To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.  
I often try to think in what sweet month  
The languid painted ladies used to dapple  
The yellow by-road mazing from the main,  
Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple.  
I have forgotten — strange — but quite remember  
The poinsettia's red, blood-red, in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time of the mild  
year

We cheated school to have our fling at tops?

What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy

Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?

Oh some I know! I have embalmed the days,

Even the sacred moments when we played,

All innocent of passion, uncorrupt,

At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade.

We were so happy, happy, I remember,

Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.

*Claude McKay*

## MEN OF IDEAS

Men of ideas outlive their times  
An idea held by such a man does not end with his death  
His life bleeding away goes down  
Into the earth, and they grow like seed  
The idea that is not lost with the waste of a single life  
Like seed springing up a multitude.

They hanged Gordon from a boom  
Rigged in front of the Court House  
They hanged him with eighteen others for company  
And Jesus had but two  
But the ideas for which Gordon lived  
Did not hang with him  
And the great social revolution for which Jesus died  
Did not die with him

Two men they nailed with Jesus side by side  
Eighteen went to hang with Gordon from the new-  
rigged boom  
But the idea of equality and justice with Gordon  
Went into the ground and sprung up like seed, a  
multitude

A hundred years the seed was a-growing in the ground  
A hundred years is not too long  
A hundred years is not too soon  
A hundred years is a time and a season  
And all things must wait a time and a season

And the time and the season for each growing thing  
Is the way, and there is no other  
The time and the season of its growing and bearing  
fruit  
Are inherent in the nature of the seed  
And inherent in it is its growth and its fruit  
And this is the way and there is no other  
A hundred years is not too long  
For the seed to burst its husk under the ground  
And cleave a path and press upward  
And thrust a green blade in triumph at the sun  
Do not be anxious for the house that is a-building  
For the unsown acres under the plough  
For all things await a time and a season.

The dream given to one man in the night  
Not night nor darkness can call it back again  
They hanged George William Gordon for the dream  
He had been given in the night  
That he carried in his breast  
Thinking to put the dream to death  
With the man they put to shameful death  
But they give immortality to the dream  
That time the man is put to death  
For the dream is all  
It is all of a man that there is and immortal

And all of immortality of a man there is.  
A long time ago they hanged George William Gordon  
But not so long  
A long time ago  
They put Jesus on the Cross  
But not so long  
For all things have a time and a season  
A long time ago  
The pea doves took the sweetwood seeds  
And let them fall on the valley bottoms  
That are now the virgin forest of the great backlands  
Of new timber, a long time  
Were the bare rock-spure growing  
That is now a matted forest floor  
Where the wild birds took and dropped  
The little sweet kernels of the tall timbers  
A long time ago, but not so long  
For all things have a time and a season  
And a hundred years is not too long  
And a hundred years is not too soon.  
They hanged Gordon with eighteen others  
They nailed Jesus between two thieves  
But the ideas these men lived for did not die with them  
A single grain of corn will yield an ear of corn  
And an ear of corn in two generations will sow a field  
And these things befall between a moon and a moon  
All things await a time and a season  
And twice a hundred years is not too long  
Or twice a hundred years too soon.

*Roger Mais*

## JAMAICA MARKET

Honey, pepper, leaf-green limes,  
Pagen fruit whose names are rhymes,  
Mangoes, breadfruit, ginger-roots,  
Granadillas, bamboo-shoots,  
Cho-cho, ackees, tangerines,  
Lemons, purple Congo-beans,  
Sugar, akras, kola-nuts,  
Citrons, hairy coconuts,  
Fish, tobacco, native hats,  
Gold bananas, woven mats,  
Plantains, wild-thyme, pallid leeks,  
Pigeons with their scarlet beaks,  
Oranges and saffron yams,  
Baskets, ruby guava jams,  
Turtles, goat-skins, cinnamon,  
Allspice, conch-shells, golden rum.  
Black skins, babel — and the sun  
That burns all colours into one.

*Agnes Maxwell-Hall*

## THE DAY MY FATHER DIED

The day my father died  
I could not cry;  
My mother cried,  
Not I.

His face on the pillow  
In the dim light  
Wrote mourning to me,  
Black and white.

We saw him struggle,  
Stiffen, relax;  
The face fell empty,  
Dead as wax.

I'd read of death  
But never seen.  
My father's face, I swear,  
Was not serene.

Topple that lie,  
However appealing;  
That face was absence  
Of all feeling.

My mother's tears were my tears,  
Each sob shook me:  
The pain of death is living,  
The dead are free.

For me my father's death  
Was mother's sorrow;  
That day was her day,  
Loss was tomorrow.

## A CERTAIN BEGGAR, NAMED LAZARUS

Lazarus lies at Dives' gate,  
Content with crumbs from Dives' plate  
His servitors are sisters twain —  
Sweet Poverty, and the Sybil, Pain.

Lazarus lies at Dives' gate,  
For him the skies unfold their state,  
And iridescent hours run  
The golden gamut of the sun.

Folding great wings, Time sits with him  
Until the laggard day grows dim,  
Through wakeful glooms the spheres unite  
In starry song for his delight.

Hidden redes of the dusty grass  
He learns, and marks the wise ants pass;  
Or, in a brief, Spring-chanced hour,  
Frequents the shrine of a wayside flower.

Trees are his tutors, nodding high  
In tranquil talk against the sky;  
The rain is his interpreter  
Of doubts that wake, of dreams that stir.

Gossip of winds that rove the earth  
And town-bred birds, is his for mirth;  
And ancient wisdom, strong, profound,  
He gleans from cobble-stones around.

His the answering love that lies  
Within a dog's adoring eyes;  
The sympathising tenderness  
That wells within a mute caress.

God's almoner he of treasure rare  
To each street-urchin paused to stare;  
When crude young laughter yields its place  
Before Compassion's holy grace.

Lazarus lying in Abraham's breast  
Hath won of either world the best,  
And proved the promise sent from Heaven —  
"To him that hath shall more be given."

*Barbara S. Ormsby*

## THE MAROON GIRL

I see her on a lonely forest track,  
Her level brows made salient by the sheen  
Of flesh the hue of cinnamon. The clean  
Blood of the hunted, vanished Arawak  
Flows in her veins with blood of white and black.  
Maternal, noble-breasted in her mien;  
She is a peasant, yet she is a queen.  
She is Jamaica poised against attack.  
Her woods are hung with orchids; the still flame  
Of red hibiscus lights her path, and starred  
With orange and coffee blossoms in her yard.  
Fabulous, pitted mountains close the frame.  
She stands on ground for which her fathers died;  
Figure of savage beauty, figure of pride.

*W. Adolphe Roberts*

## EXTRACT FROM "JAMAICA SYMPHONY"

There is a freedom bought with blood and time;  
blood and time anywhere mixed, time, any time,  
blood and time to curved heads, bloodbent,  
dragging at dead myths like used up leaves,  
not knowing the machete is poised, like,  
like kikuyu's kicking feet,  
Kikuyu's screams, Kenyatta's calls;  
too full can be this task, too pressing, like  
like the need of the grasspatch to the mango, that,  
that only time and time alone knows of the step  
taken in her cavernous belly  
as her slime records yet another move.

Prepare a path,  
O Gracious Sea.

Caribbea,  
Hear us now.

\* \* \*

In this our stride is seen,  
our nearing the path is witnessed, scored in more ways,  
in more ways than one across a phoenixbreast,

across a path ploughed with its own bitter prongs  
watered by its own crimson jets, yet like,  
like Caribbea's malachite eyes, glistening,  
lighting the way up from ashes to,  
to the limits beyond our immediate green;

O Caribbea,

from your blue grace, maternal,

elegant,

let shine those cold malachite eyes, blue dyed, true,

blue in freedom's blue store.

*Andrew Salkey*

## ON IMMORTALITY

The meaning of a well remembered prayer  
Is heard sometimes (within one) oftener  
By sense of rhythm than the actual words  
Often uneasy to reflect upon  
(Forgive our trespasses — as we forgive)

The melody of a forgotten hymn  
Haunts the subconscious, now seeming clear  
Now out of reach — all but the rhythm  
Lost in the fact and rule of thinking.  
(The children inherit the Kingdom).

Time rusts the keen blade of remembrance  
And makes a mirror of the glass hiding  
To-morrow — what we call the future.  
Now, is the sorrow and the pain we keep  
To justify the peace, the joy, the laughter.

We are immortal you and I  
Not bound by nature to belong  
To earth or sky — to living for so long —  
An empty span within a vacuum  
A local time of brief awareness.

This time of present being is  
But a phase in continuity

Of an existence universal  
As a cosmic ray — as timeless as  
The growth of *Homo sapiens* — from algae.

And mortal sleep, divisor of the phases  
Does not end — does not begin a life,  
As the eternal seasons sift the sands  
He ticks one moment in a timeless age,  
And rings the angelus.

*K. B. Scott*

## JAMAICAN FISHERMAN

Across the sand I saw a black man stride  
To fetch his fishing gear and broken things,  
And silently that splendid body cried  
Its proud descent from ancient chiefs and kings,  
Across the sand I saw him naked stride;  
Sang his black body in the sun's white light  
The velvet coolness of dark forests wide,  
The blackness of the jungle's starless night.  
He stood beside the old canoe which lay  
Upon the beach; swept up within his arms  
The broken nets and careless lounged away  
Towards his wretched hut. . . . .  
Nor knew how fiercely spoke his body then  
Of ancient wealth and savage regal men.

*P. M. Sherlock*

## MY FATHER IN THE NIGHT COMMANDING NO

My father in the night commanding No  
Has work to do. Smoke issues from his lips;  
    He reads in silence.  
The frogs are croaking and the streetlamps glow.  
And then my mother winds the gramophone;  
The Bride of Lammermoor begins to shriek —  
    Or reads a story  
About a prince, a castle and a dragon.  
The moon is glittering above the hill.  
I stand before the gateposts of the King —  
    So runs the story —  
Of Thule, at midnight when the mice are still.  
And I have been in Thule! It has come true —  
The journey and the danger of the world,  
    All that there is  
To bear and to enjoy, endure and do.  
Landscapes, seascapes . . . where have I been led?  
The names of cities — Paris, Venice, Rome —  
    Held out their arms.  
A feathered god, seductive, went ahead.  
Here is my house. Under a red rose tree  
A child is swinging; another gravely plays.  
    They are not surprised  
That I am here; they were expecting me.

And yet my father sits and reads in silence,  
My mother sheds a tear, the moon is still,  
    And the dark wind  
Is murmuring that nothing ever happens.  
Beyond his jurisdiction as I move  
Do I not prove him wrong? And yet, it's true  
    *They* will not change  
There, on the stage of terror and of love.  
The actors in that playhouse always sit  
In fixed positions — father, mother, child  
    With painted eyes.  
How sad it is to be a little puppet!  
Their heads are wooden. And you once pretended  
To understand them! Shake them as you will,  
    They cannot speak.  
Do what you will, the comedy is ended.  
Father, why did you work? Why did you weep,  
Mother? Was the story so important?  
    “Listen!” the wind  
Said to the children, and they fell asleep.

*Louis Simpson*

I saw my land in the morning  
And O but she was fair  
The hills flamed upwards scorning  
Death and Failure here.

I saw through the mists of morning  
A wave like a sea set free  
Faith to the dawn returning  
Dark tide bright unity.

I saw my friends in the morning  
They called from an equal gate  
"Build now: whilst time is burning  
Forward before it's late"  
The old Gods awake

Past and Future break  
On as the voices roll  
Move as a single whole  
Forward  
Forward  
Forward  
O country to your goal.

*M. G. Smith.*

A day ends and a way ends and a world ends here  
A day ends and a way ends and a world ends here  
And yet so sure the peace  
So sure the peace  
A day ends and a way ends and a world ends here  
In self-created blindness waits this earth  
And all the peoples lost and shelterless  
Stumbling amongst the ruins to the brink  
Of utmost ruin. And the world ends here.  
And yet so great the peace, this wind so sure  
So strong so full of vision that the faith  
Loses in last awareness of the source  
The great pervading stillness of the root.  
O be this pure, O be this free from fault  
Of affectation or distrust or fraud  
O be this like a flute upon thy lips  
Prophetic night, to pour thy mighty hymn.  
Old women in the gardens weeding grass  
Old men along the quayside fly their rods  
The cinemas, the slums and palaces  
Declare and spawn the dozen deformed gods.  
The builder plies his trowel. Ages pass.  
The search receives the seeker. Time still nods.  
O be for all this night the birth of faith  
And light the road, and long the travelling.

There is a limit to all human ways  
There is a limit to all human love  
And a great darkness in all human light  
Yet faith flows down the river, peace fills trees,  
And glory lights the morning when she comes  
All wet and radiant from the golden clouds  
And walks upon the mountains like a bride.  
For there is promise in all human pain  
There is a morning in all human night  
And life and birth and beauty beyond death.  
We have constructed Time with fear and greed  
We have imprisoned Space with avarice  
And murdered Life, the vision, with our sloth  
We have constructed Time  
Constructed Time  
We have created Death in all our walks.

O seas rush over seas rush over seas  
And mountains overtop the mountains of our days  
And winds that follow winds that follow winds  
And light that leads the light that leads our ways  
All to the darkness flowing, flowing on  
Declare this moving ocean without praise  
The Home of presence, the green, luminous  
And universal Moment of all days.

This is the splendid sunlight of our birth  
This is the day in which we were conceived  
The light and islands of the home we left  
This is the mountain of the given grace

And peace and nescience and the living touch  
Of a spontaneous presence flowing through  
The earth, the water, wind and light and trees,  
This human village and these human ways.  
This is the glory of such a steep ascent  
From which we were begotten to beget  
Within the sea of vision bright new isles  
Beyond the midnight's conquests; this the light  
Which never can be dimmed while yet love moves.  
Unto awareness of the synthesis  
Which doth surround, invest and lift so high  
Into its stillness this our splendid sun.

O dance and let the glory be great  
Sing and distribute down this living day  
And through the quivering corridors of light  
All of the surging ocean, all the spray,  
That from the darkness of contention passed  
Free, and forever free of doubt and care  
And all constructions that shut out the light  
And blind the power, breeding fear on fear.  
O dance, O sing, O Glory be for all  
This sunlight splendid with the fulfilled prayer.

Weary with long and fruitless search we slept  
To wake at dawn with pain between the eyes  
Hearts that had known no peace and lips athirst  
For the lost vision  
Dumb parched black loneliness.

Our spirits were like winter's trees, without a leaf,  
Our bodies moved, but knew not where nor why,  
This was the dawn of sorrow at the end  
Of the long night of woe we had invoked  
To shield and hide us and shut out the light  
And build about us cities full of fear.  
This world was our creation, us the gods  
And declaration knew no home but this  
And bitter was the winter dwelling in our hearts  
A time of grief  
A grim, blind homeless time  
All waste  
All darkness  
Torn with doubt and shame  
A place no feet may visit  
Self-inclosed  
And filled with sorrows shivering in the cold.  
This was the well of dark we daily sunk  
Deeper and deeper, to descend at last  
Unto a meeting in the Dark with God  
Unto a terrible meeting in the Dark.  
Yet as we strove to build Death for this tomb  
And walls of blindness to shut out the dawn  
God saw  
And shook this splendid sunlight from his hair  
And smiled forgiveness in this perfect day.

*M. G. Smith*

## I HAVE SEEN MARCH

I have seen March within the Ebony break  
In golden fire of fragrance un-suppressed;  
And April bring the Lignum-Vitae dressed  
In dusty purple; known pale rust awake  
The Mango's boughs; the Poinciana take  
Immortal wound of Summer. I have pressed  
The Cassia's spendthrift yellow to my breast:  
I could love Earth for one tree's royal sake . . .

I could find faith, abandoning despair  
For all Time's unfulfilled, unblossomed hopes,  
Watching the long, green patience of a tree,  
How, undiscouraged, uncomplaining, bare,  
It waits until the vernal secret gropes  
Up to the efflorescence that shall be.

*Vivian L. Virtue*

This crowded night my People's kindling pride  
Is one with all the thronging stars that dart  
Their crystal lightnings down the uttermost part  
Of brave Jamaican skies. Here in the wide  
Embrace of Freedom met to stem a tide  
Of tyranny, the rapture and the smart,  
All the large patience of your suffering heart  
I feel, my Country! and love stands justified.

Your nonage now is over. You must up,  
Gird in the calling morning, set your face  
With granite purpose to the mountain way.  
Prepare your bosom for the bitter cup:  
Steel for endurance in the wearing race:  
Yours is the triumphing, if yours the stay.

*Vivian L. Virtue*

H. G. de LISSER

"I KNOW I 'ave enemies," said Susan bitterly; "I know I am hated in this low neighbourhood. But I don't see what them should hate me for, for I never interfere wid any of them."

"Them hate y'u because you are better than them, and because y'u don't mix with them," sagaciously answered Catherine, her second sister.

"That they will never get me to do," snapped Susan. "I wouldn't mix with a lot of people who are not my companions, even if them was covered from top to toe with gold. It is bad enough that I have to live near them, but further than that I am not going. It is 'good morning' and 'good evening' with me, an' that is all."

"Then them will always hate you," said Catherine, "and if them can injure y'u them will try to do it."

Catherine referred to most of the people living in the immediate vicinity, between Susan and whom a fierce feud had existed for some months. It was born of envy and nurtured by malice, and Susan knew that well. She dressed better than most of the girls in the lane, she lived in a "front house," while most of them had to be content with ordinary yard-rooms. She frequently went for rides on the electric cars, whereas they could only afford such pleasure on Sundays and on public holidays. She carried herself with an air of social superiority which was gall and wormwood to the envious; and often on walking through the lane she had noticed the contemptuous looks of those whom, with greater contempt, she called the common folks and treated with but half-concealed disdain. On the whole, she had rather enjoyed the hostility of these people, for it was in its way a tribute to her own importance. But now a discomfiting development had taken place in the manner in which the dislike of the neighbourhood habitually showed itself.

This evening Susan sat by one of the windows of the little house in which she lived, and which opened on the lane. It contained two tiny rooms: the inner apartment was her bedroom, her two sisters sleeping with her; the outer one was a sitting-room by day and a bedroom at night,

when it was occupied by her father and mother. The house had originally been painted white and green, but the dust of Kingston had discoloured the painting somewhat; hence its appearance was now shabby and faded, though not so much so as that of the other buildings on either side of it. Opposite was an ancient fence dilapidated and almost black; behind this fence were two long ranges of rooms, in which the people of the servant classes lived. The comparison between these and Susan's residence was all in favour of the latter; and as this house overlooked the lane, and was detached from the buildings in the yard to which it belonged, its rental value was fairly high and its occupants were supposed to be of a superior social position.

The gutters on both sides of the lane ran with dirty soap-water, and banana skins, orange peel and bits of brown paper were scattered over the roughly macadamised ground. Lean dogs reclined in the centre of the patch, or prowled about seeking scraps of food which they never seemed to find. In the daytime, scantily-clad children played in the gutters; a few slatternly women, black and brown, drawled out a conversation with one another as they lounged upon the doorsteps; all during the long hours of the sunlight the sound of singing was heard as some industrious housewives washed the clothes of their families and chanted hymns as they worked; and now and then a cab or cart passed down the lane, disturbing for a little while the peaceful tenor of its way.

There were no sidewalks, or rather, there were only the vestiges of sidewalks to be seen. For the space which had been left for these by the original founders of the city had more or less been appropriated by householders who thought that they themselves could make excellent use of such valuable territory. Here a house was partly built on what was once a portion of the sidewalk; there a doorstep marked the encroachment that had taken place on public property; between these an empty space showed that the owner of the intermediate yard had not as yet been adventurous enough to extend his fence beyond its proper limits. Most of the houses that opened on the lane were of one storey, and built of wood, with foundations of red brick. An air of slow decay hung over nearly all of them, though now and then you saw a newly painted building which looked a little out of place in such surroundings.

Susan saw that hers was by no means the shabbiest of these houses, and Susan knew that she was the finest-looking young woman in that section of the lane in which she lived. It was her physical attractions that had helped her to comparative prosperity. In the euphemistic language of the country, she was "engaged" to a young man who was very liberal with his money; he came to see her two or three times a week; and though of late he had not seemed quite so ardent as before, Susan had not troubled to inquire the reason of his shortened visits. He had never failed on a Friday night to bring for her her weekly allowance, and that she regarded as a sufficiently substantial proof of his continued affection.

But now she felt that she must take some thought of the future. Thrice during the current week she had been openly laughed at by Mother Smith, a peculiarly objectionable old woman who lived about a hundred yards farther up the lane. Mother Smith had passed her house, and, looking up at the window, had uttered with a malignant air of triumph, "if you can't catch Quaco, you can catch his shirt." Meaningless as the words might have appeared to the uninitiated, Susan had immediately divined their sinister significance. She knew that Mother Smith had a daughter of about her own age, whose challenging attractiveness had always irritated her. Because Maria, though black, was comely, Susan had made a point of ignoring Maria's existence; she had never thought of Maria as a possible rival, however, so confident was she of her ascendancy over her lover, and so certain was she that Maria could never be awarded the prize for style and beauty if Susan Proudleigh happened to be near. Still, there could be no mistaking the triumphant insolence of Mother Smith's glance or the meaning of her significant words.

Tom's growing coldness now found an explanation. The base plot hatched against her stood revealed in all its hideous details. What was she to do? She did not want to quarrel with Tom outright, and so perhaps frighten him away for ever. That perhaps was precisely what her enemies were hoping she would do. After thinking over the matter and finding herself unable to decide what course of action to adopt, she had put the problem before her family; and her aunt, Miss Proudleigh, happening to come in just then, she also had been invited to give her opinion and suggest a plan.

Susan soon began to realize that she could not expect much wisdom

from their united counsel. They all knew that she was not liked by the neighbours; unfortunately, Mother Smith's design was a factor in the situation which seemed to confuse them utterly. They had gone over the ground again and again. Catherine had said the last word, and it was the reverse of helpful. For a little while they sat in silence, then Susan mechanically repeated Catherine's words, "If them can injure me, them will try to do it."

"They does dislike you, Susan," agreed her aunt, by way of continuing the conversation, "an' if them can hurt you, them will do it. But, after all, the Lord is on your side." This remark proved to Susan that at such a crisis as this her family was worse than hopeless. She turned impatiently from the window and faced Miss Proudleigh.

"I don't say the Lord is not on my side," she exclaimed; "but Mother Smith is against me, an' the devil is on her side, an' if I am not careful Mother Smith will beat me."

As no one answered, she went on, "Mother Smith wouldn't talk like she is talking if she didn't know what she was talking about. She want Tom for Maria, her big-mouth daughter. She an' Maria tryin' to take Tom from me — I know it. But, Lord! I will go to prison before them do it!" She had risen while speaking, and her clenched hands and gleaming eyes showed clearly that she was not one over whom an easy victory could be obtained.

She was of middle height, slimly built, and of dark brown complexion. Her lips were thin and pouting, her chin rather salient; her nose stood out defiantly, suggesting a somewhat pugnacious disposition. Her hair, curly but fairly long, was twisted into several plaits and formed a sort of turban on her head; her eyes, large, black, and vivacious, were the features of which she was proudest, for she knew the uses to which they could be put. As her disposition was naturally lively, these eyes of hers usually seemed to be laughing. But just now they were burning and flashing with anger; and those who knew Susan well did not care to cross her when one of these moods came on.

Her father saw her wrath and trembled; then immediately cast about in his mind for some word of consolation that might appease his daughter. He was a tall, thin man, light brown in complexion, and possessed of

that inability to arrive at positive decisions which is sometimes described as a *judicial frame of mind*. He was mildly fond of strong liquors; yet even when under their influence he managed to maintain a degree of mental uncertainty, a sort of intellectual sitting on the fence, which caused his friends to believe that his mental capacity was distinctly above the average. By these friends he was called Schoolmaster, and he wore the title with dignity. By way of living up to it he usually took three minutes to say what another person would have said in one. That is to say, he delighted in almost endless circumlocution.

It was even related of Mr. Proudleigh that, one night, no lamp having yet been lit, he surreptitiously seized hold of a bottle he found on a table and took a large sip from it, thinking the liquor it contained was rum. It happened to be kerosene oil; but such was his self-control that, instead of breaking into strong language as most other men would have done, he muttered that the mistake was very regrettable, and was merely sad and depressed during the remainder of the evening. Such a man, it is clear, was not likely to allow his feelings to triumph over his judgment, though upon occasion, and when it suited his interests, he was ready to agree with the stronger party in any argument. Though he now felt somewhat alarmed by Susan's suspicions, and knew it was a matter of the first importance that Tom, her lover, and especially Tom's wages, should be retained as an asset in the family, he could not quite agree that Susan had very good cause for serious apprehension as yet. Up to now he had said very little; he was convinced that he had not sufficient evidence before him on which to pronounce a judgment. He thought, too, that his hopeful way of looking at the situation might help her at this moment; so, his mild, lined face wearing a profoundly deliberative expression, he gave his opinion.

"I don't think you quite right, Susan," he observed; "but, mind, I don't say y'u is wrong. Mother Smith is a woman I don't like at all. But de Scripture told us, judge not lest we be judged, an' perhaps Mother Smith don't mean you at all when she talk about Quaco."

On hearing this, Susan's mother, a silent, elderly black woman with a belligerent past, screwed up her mouth by way of expressing her disapproval of her husband's point of view. Mrs. Proudleigh was a firm believer in the unmitigated wickedness of her sex, but judged it best to

say nothing just then. Susan, however, annoyed by the perverseness of her father, burst out with:

"Then see here sah, if she don't mean me an' my young man, who can she mean? Don't Mother Smith always say I am forward? Don't she pass the house this morning an' throw her words on me? Don't Maria call out 'Look at her' when I was passing her yard yesterday? Tut, me good sah, don't talk stupidity to me! If you don't have nothing sensible to say, you better keep you' mouth quiet. I am going to Tom's house to-night, to-night. And Tom will 'ave to tell me at once what him have to do with Maria."

"I will go with you," said Catherine promptly. She was a sturdy young woman of nineteen years of age, and not herself without a sneaking regard for Tom. Hence, on personal as well as on financial grounds, she objected to Tom's being taken possession of my Maria and Maria's mother.

The old man, rather fearing that Susan's wrath might presently be turned against himself, discreetly refrained from making any further remark; but his sister, an angular lady of fifty, with a great reputation for intelligence and militant Christianity, seeing that Susan's mind was fully made up as to Maria's guilt, and being herself in the habit of passing severe comment on the conduct of the absent, determined to support her niece.

"But some female are really bad!" she observed, as if in a soliloquy. "Some female are really bad. Now here is poor Susan not interfering wid anybody. She got her intended. He take his own foot an' he walk down the lane, an' he fall in love with her. It is true she don't marry him yet, but she is engaged. She is engage, and therefore it is an unprincipled sin for any other female to trouble her intended an' take him away from her. If Maria want a young man, why don't she go an' look for one? Why she an' her mother want to trouble Susan's one poor lamb, when there is ninety and nine others to pick an' choose from? Really some female is wicked!"

A speech like this, coming from a woman whose lack of physical charms was more than made up for by strength of moral character, was naturally hailed with great approval by Susan, Catherine, and their mother. The old man himself, never willing to be permanently in a minority, now went so far as to admit that the whole affair was "very

provocating," and added that if he was a younger man he would do several things of a distinctly heroic and dangerous character.

But all this, though in its way was very encouraging, was not exactly illuminating. It only brought Susan back to the point from which she had started. "What am I to do?" she asked for the last time, reduced to despair, and sinking back into her seat despondently.

"If I was you," said Catherine at last deliberately, "I would catch hold of Maria, and beat her till she bawl."

This advice appealed to Susan; it corresponded with the wish of her own heart. But she doubted the efficacy of physical force in dealing with a difficult and delicate situation. No; a beating would not do; besides, in the event of an encounter, it might be Maria who would do the beating! Susan saw plainly that no word of a helpful nature would be forthcoming from any of the anxious group, who usually appealed to her for advice and assistance. So when Miss Proudleigh was again about to give some further opinions on the general wickedness of females, she got up abruptly, saying that she was going round to Tom's house to see him. Catherine rose to accompany her, and after putting on their hats the two girls left the room.

# NEW DAY

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## CHAPTER ONE

V. S. REID

**F**OR three years now, no rain has come. Grass-piece and yam-vines are brown with dryness, cane leaves have not got much green to them. Thirst and hunger walk through our land, four hundred thousand people have no *osnaburgs* to their backs.

For three years now, no rain has come and only the rich laugh deep.

It is the year 1865. For three years, there have been no crop-times in our fields. In America, brothers o' the North have just done warred with brothers o' the South, and so no clipper ships are riding the ocean to bring flour and codfish for our empty bellies.

No growth on the land, no ship on the sea — Lord O! But there is suffering!

For three years, Edward John Eyre has been a-sit in the Queen's House at St. Jago de la Vega parish as Governor of our island. With dryness on the land and a shipless ocean we turn to the man who stands for Missis Queen Victoria. Men ha' lost the skin off their feet tramping with Petitions on the rocky roads to St. Jago. But always they are met with muskets and bayonets, and always they come home with foodless bellies but vexation curdling their bowels.

But now, badness is coming. From Westmoreland parish in the west to St. Thomas parish in the east, men are talking in secret under heavy cotton-tree roots.

Mr. George William Gordon and his friends in the House of Assembly ask for the recall o' John Eyre. Good pastors from their pulpits plead say we must be calm. *Buckra* planters on great estates and pastors o' the Established Church say hooray for Governor Eyre, curse the Baptist pastors and laugh at the hunger of our people. For soon then, bye-and-bye, labour will be cheap. But at length and at last Westminster is hearing.

Rage and bitterness walk with Eyre's voice as he tells his Council of Doctor Underhill. Underhill is o' the Baptist faith and he has penned a letter to the Secretary of States for the Colonies telling him of our sufferings. Rage and bitterness walk with the voices of Eyre's Church of England clergymen as they deny that men are very hungry. And same time,

now, they are calling with heavy voices for more and more tithes from the poor. And same time, now, the Established Church sends a note to the Queen; but still we wait in hope on Westminster.

Is the year 1865, and pastors o' the Baptist faith stir again to help the poor. A Petition has gone by packet to the Queen, praying that starvation should no' take us. *We wait in hope on Missis Queen.*

But when the packet returns, and the *Queen's Advice* is taken to every village church and mailed to every constabulary station, and on market-day we gather around and read it with lips o' stiffness — *aié, bro'!*

Then we know the Church of England has won the fight, the Baptist letter has no' been credited.

Hear the QUEEN'S ADVICE:

THE MEANS OF SUPPORT OF THE LABOURING CLASSES DEPEND  
ON THEIR LABOUR. HER MAJESTY WILL REGARD WITH INTEREST  
AND SATISFACTION THEIR ADVANCEMENT THROUGH  
THEIR OWN MERITS AND EFFORTS.

*Wait!* plead good pastors from their pulpits, *Her Majesty has been wrongly advised!*

*Wait,* says Mr. Gordon at his Underhill meetings, *we will take the case to Whitehall ourselves.*

*Wait?* Paul Bogle asks at Stoney Gut, *Is war it, or peace, they want?*

It is the year 1865. June and July and August gone, and no rain comes with October. Brown on our yam-vines, the earth a-crack with dryness, there is no *osnaburg* to make clothing for our backs, four hundred thousand are a-moan.

God O! — there are tears all over the land and only the rich laugh deep.

This Sunday morning, day-cloud nas no' peeped, but my father is calling:

"Manuel O! Davie! Ruthie! Get up and come all o' you, prayer-meeting time."

There is straw a-rustle and yawns from the other rooms. From my kitty-up in the same room as Father and Mother, I hear when Davie grumbles something. You always know when Davie grumbles something 'cause everybody giggle. Everybody, 'cept Manuel.

Pa John and Ma Tamah heard it too, for in the young light o' dawn, I saw him stiffen and look at Mother.

"You hear that boy, Tamah? Hear him?"

Then me fearful for Davie, for my father is vexed. My father leaps from his bed and rushes to where the trace-leather hangs back of the door, but Mother is quick after him and is holding to his arm. She whispered and whispered to my father until deep breath pushed anger from him.

Some of the worry-marks left my mother's face. She called:

"Hurry, all o' you *pickneys* — your father is a-wait!"

Then me, less fearful but more sorry, for nice it is and yet not nice when someone else is getting the whip. Davie must ha' heard when Father went for the trace-leather, for now he is first into the hall and on his knees looking like overgrown lambkin.

All o' us are in the hall on our knees now, Emmanuel, David, Ruth, Samuel, Ezekiel, Naomi, and me, Johnny. Father struck a lucifer-match for the lantern, raised the shade, and put flame to the wick. Young light swelled quickly to manhood, and Father puffed out the match. All of us watch as light flows down Father's face. Blue eyes which bed deep down in his head looks one time on Davie and then on all o' us.

Anger-marks are still on Father's brown forehead. Funny thing, but when Father is vexed he looks more like white man than brown. When he is at peace, there is softness in my father's face.

Ruthie says it is because Scotchmen are always warring and brown people are always singing, so that when Father is vexed he looks like his Scottish sire, and when at peace like his mother who had brown blood in her. Must be true it.

Father rested the lantern on the table and opened the Book. But no words come from him, and Mother looks on his forehead and see there are still anger-marks there. So then, feel, I feel her arms hug my shoulder and same time she begins *Sweet Hour of Prayer*.

In the long metre she sings the hymn, and all o' us take it up with her, 'cept Davie and my father. But after Father listened a little he raised his head and looked at Davie — eh, quick my bro' Davie commenced a-sing too. Bye-and-bye, Father came in at the second verse. Then we came to the end.

Through a chink over the door which Mother always covers when the Christmas wind is northing, day-cloud is peeping now at me. Down in the Bay, the sea is kneeling for early matins. There is the whisper and the roar of the chant when groundswells creep out and then come in like thunder. I am thinking say the spray must be near up to the barrack this morning and I wish say the prayer meeting was over. Is nice, it, to have spray on your face and you with nothing on, rolling on the sand.

A good light is on the Book now. Father says he is reading from the Book o' Isaiah. I do no' hear much though, for I am watching Davie. I love Davie.

I saw when Sammy touched him with his shoulder. When Davie looked up from under his brow, my bro' Sammy shook his head as if to say: *Do not make Father more vexed*. I know that Sammy loves Davie too, so when Davie's and my eyes make four, I shake my head too.

But I am eight, while Sammy is fifteen and Davie is nineteen, so Davie forms his mouth like saying *Shut up*, and I see Naomi grin. Naomi is ten. I want to rub sea-sand in her hair but Father is reading from the Book.

FOR THOSE THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD SHALL RENEW THEIR  
STRENGTH. THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES.  
THEY SHALL RUN AND NOT BE WEARY, THEY SHALL WALK  
AND NOT FAINT.

There is iron and heavy wind in my father's throat.

All of us know the Psalm which Mother recites; all, 'cept Naomi and me, but I know more than Naomi. A good. I go to the second verse but Naomi stops at the first. I say the second verse loud and she is vexed. A good. We sing a hymn and prayer meeting is over.

Outside in daylight, and sea-breeze is putting anger-marks on the face of the Bay. It is October month, and all over Salt Savannah silver arrows wave above our canefield to say that the juice is ripe. But cane leaves are brown and the earth is dusty, and I know are bad, these.

Davie says cane leaves should be green and the earth should be mouldy if hunger, thirst, and nakedness must no' be on the land.

My friends Timothy M'Laren and Quackoo M'Laren down at the barrack will be ready to go into the sea. So then, I was running down the

hill to the barrack when Mother called me back. She said this is the Sabbath morning and she will ha' peace on Salt Savannah. Naomi grins and says *A good*. I put two fingers to the fat o' her buttocks and cry, she is crying now. Howsoever, Mother has got me by the arm and is hauling me inside the house.

She puts on me the *osnaburg* pantaloons which are too short for Zekiel and too long for me. Mother turns up the bottoms so they fit. Sunday clothes, these.

Mother and me were inside our room when I heard Father call Manuel and Davie to the hall-room. I saw her cock her ears, a-listen to what was in my father's voice. Then she told me to go outside and keep the pantaloons clean for I will wear them to Chapel. But me for outside when I ha' just heard what is in my father's voice and see trace-leather is not hanging back o' the door?

So I say nothing to Mother but go to the corner near my kitty-up.

There is a boxkite under my kitty-up which I swopped from Quackoo M'Laren yesterday-day for a *buntung* mango and a *croaker*-lizard skeleton. A good kite, this, with one singer torn; a good kite, this, but Quackoo is always hungry. *Croaker* skeleton is a *brawta*. Quackoo is a Jew in business, always wanting extra when there is a swop, so now he has my *croaker*. But I know where an iguana died last week, and an iguana is very bigger than a *croaker*. A good.

I am sitting on the floor with my boxkite on my knees and form like I am looking on the torn singer while Mother makes her bed with clear Sunday sheets and pillow cases. Ruthie and Sammy are gone to woodland to look firewood for our breakfast, Zekiel and Naomi are gone to the stream for water, only Mother and me are here.

Soon I hear Pa John's voice: "Manuel, David, I want to see you both."

Father's voice has heaviness like when he recites the Psalm what asks: *How long, O Lord, how long?*

I heard the boys move their feet a little but none made answer to Father. Mother has stopped making her bed, stands with ears a-listen, worry-marks on her face. Why is Mother worrying so when she will no' be getting the whip?

Mother is funny, though. She loves Manuel more than Davie 'cause Manuel reads the Book on Sabbath-day. But my bro' Davie? Eh!

Davie goes to Stoney Gut and listen to Paul Bogle preach secession. When meeting stops for eating-time and after we ha' had the roast pig, Davie jumps the wall at Pastor Humphrey's estate and eats *Number Eleven* mangoes. Know, I know, for one Sabbath Day I went to Stoney Gut with him. How come?

We told Pa John and Ma Tamah that there was a she-goat which had strayed from our compound and say we will go to look for her. But 'stead o' that, we were off for the Gut and the big meeting there.

There, the men sang heavy that *The Year o' Jubilee Is Come*, and Deacon Bogle preached say God is right and God is might and if we ha' God we ha' might and right. And everybody shouted *Amen!* and *Alleluia!* and *Jubilee!* Me, too.

Afterwards, Davie and me climbed Pastor Humphrey's wall and fed on his cane and *Number Eleven* mangoes. I love Davie.

"Davie, I want to see you. Is what kind o' wickedness, this?"

I do no' like the iron in Father's throat. Peep through knothole into t'other room and see Father and Manuel and Davie. Father stands in the middle of the room, two fists doubled and resting on the table. Manuel and Davie are on t'other side of the table, a-face my father.

There is the trace-leather on the table 'side of my father's hand. Davie's breath is coming quick-quick; same way his chest leaps when Paul Bogle cries: *Secession! Secession! Total freedom!*

Worry is on Manuel's face, but nothing on Davie's face. Smooth and flat is Davie's face and there is nothing till you look into his eyes. Then you see a watchfulness there, like say in barrack peoples' eyes when Custos Baron Aldenburg is passing on his way to courthouse.

"Did I no' tell you Stoney Gut is not for you?"

Father is talking again. I see Davie's mouth being stubborn like Custos's mule.

My father took the trace-leather in his hand; coconut tree a-tremble in March wind is my father now. There is a groan back o' me and I know it comes from Mother, but I can no' turn from my knothole.

Hear Father with loudness: "Answer me, boy! Answer me!"

Barrack-cart going to market on Saturday-day sometimes has no grease

on the axle, and that time, the iron rubs on mahoe wood and so is Father's voice.

My bro' Manuel is a peace-maker; he talks through treacle: "Father, beg, I am begging that you take time, sir."

Now, Manuel has turned twenty-one, and his eye is same height from the ground as is Father's, but there is not anything more of my father in Manuel. For such a way he favors Mother, does my bro' Emmanuel!

But Davie? Now there you see Father a-face his own self across the table, 'cept that one face is smooth, while t'other has seen many mango seasons.

"Answer me now, boy!"

When Davie answered, his teeth were tied together. "Yes, is that what you said."

"But you go all the same and listen to wickedness from that Paul Bogle? Listen to a man preach 'gainst what the Book says?"

"How you know I ha' been to Stoney Gut?" Davie asked.

"Bro' Zaccy O'Gilvie told me o' your wickedness!" Father shouted.

Now, a smart way Davie has fixed for Stoney Gut. He has told Father that with dryness on the land all o' us should no' go to church on Sabbath, for if the animals get into what little cane we ha' on Salt Savannah, who will be there to drive away the animals? So, then, Davie stays; but when the rest o' us are on to Chapel, gone, he is gone to the Gut.

Bro' Zaccy must ha' heard of this, and told it to Father yesterday when we were at Morant Bay market.

Thunderhead for day-cloud and the sun peeping through blackness on gray water in the Bay, so is Davie's eyes. Father in a temper, Davie in a temper, Mother worrying, Manuel worrying. And me?

When another might get the whip, and you know your conscience has nothing on it, it is nice, and yet no' nice.

Hear my father: "Is what it you want? Change, you want to change God's order? You and those others can no' wait for Jehovah's plan? Paul Bogle's wickedness is better than the ordinance o' St. Paul?"

Temper bursts in my bro' Davie. There have a fall in the Plantain

Garden River, where water tumbles down in deep-voice quickness; so Davie's words are a-tumble.

"Wickedness? Wickedness? You call it so? Wickedness to want even rice and flour and *osnaburg* while *buckra* Englishman eats bacon and wears Shantung silk? Why do they no' make us govern ourselves and see if we would no' eat bacon too? Why they will no' give the vote to all o' us and make us choose our own Council?"

I can see worry riding Manuel. I see him look on my father and fright comes to his eyes. I look on Father too, and see there is lightning coming down the Blue Mountains, a-lick all sides o' Yallahs Valley. No worry is worrying Davie. Words are a-hiss and a-foam through his teeth.

"Wickedness? You say Paul Bogle is preaching wickedness? What has Governor Eyre said about our Petition to the Missis Queen Victoria? What ha' they got on the paper which hangs from Pastor Humphrey's church door? Forgot, you ha' forgotten?"

Nobody has to tell me say it is the *Queen's Advice* Davie means. 'Member, I remember the morning when Bogle read it at Stoney Gut, and all the men they laughed. But frighten takes you and you feel cold when the men o' Stoney Gut laugh that time.

Hear Davie: "Is that what will bacon we? And wine we? And Shantung silk we? And you say it is wickedness to listen to Deacon Bogle? Time now, I tell you, that we should swop Petition for powder — and God strike us if we do no' that !

Thunderhead opens in my father's eyes. What comes out I can no' look at. I see his hand moves. Up goes the trace-leather and down on Davie's back.

"Davie Campbell ! Swearing in my house! Swear God's name in John Campbell's house in front o' his very own face?"

Father is a cane-band shaking in sea-breeze. Trace-leather is a cassava-beater flailing on Davie's shoulder.

"Blaspheme Jehovah's name in my house? Eh, Davie Campbell?"

#### CHAPTER FOUR

I know where to find Davie. There have a place in the mango-walk

where the water goes to bed. We call it Maroon Hole. There are trees all around, branches bend low to whisper to it, and you do no' see the water-hole till you come right on it. Davie says it is like the wild Maroons who live in the Blue Mountains.

But it does no' spring on you and cut off your head like the wild Maroons o' the mountains.

Cool and sweet is the water, and you take off your pantaloons and swim from bank to bank and the water hugs you close. Like say when you dream at night that duppy-ghost is a-chase you and you cry out and Mother hugs you and you wake up and her breasts are a-kiss your face and there is peace on you. Is so Maroon Hole.

I creep through the trees and come to the Hole. Davie is laying on the bank, on his back, with his feet in cool water.

I say softly: "Bro' Davie?"

I lay down like him with my feet in the water and say: "Poor Davie."

Davie quiet; then he turned on his face and looked down on me for a long time; looking like I am no' there. But presently his eyes made four with mine and he laughed and said: "Cho, man, nothing."

I turned on my side and looked at him too and said: "Cho, man, nothing."

Laugh comes to Davie's eyes, summer moonshine on Maroon Hole.

"You were peeping?" he asked. I nod me head.

"From where?" "From in our bedroom," I tell him.

Heavy laugh rolls from my bro's belly. Is good, this.

There is a small quiet, then I ask: "You will go for Stoney Gut?"

Aie — bad, that; for night-clouds cover the moonshine. Wrong, I am wrong and feel to holler; but Davie jumped to his feet and hoisted me too and said: "Come, we will swim."

There is a pull at the string o' my pantaloon. His own comes off too, and over we are gone and are in the water before you can say *Jack Mandora*. When my head comes up, he is there beside me. We swim from bank to bank, then we are out and flat on our backs on the bank. Feel good and quiet now, me.

All of a sudden I hear Davie: "Johnny, you old how?"

"Eight," I say quick, for I heard from Naomi yesterday when we were a-row about some tamarinds we got from Ma Katie at Guanaboa Vale.

Naomi had said her portion should be bigger, for she was ten and me only eight.

"Eight, Johnny? Well, you will live to see it."

Live to see what? But I do no' ask, for that is how Davie says funny things sometimes with his eyes gone to bed deep in his head. But I do no' like it, for clouds are banking on Maroon Hole again. I do no' want to talk. He makes a pillow with his hands and lay looking through the leaves at the sky, so I do so too. Leaves lace 'gainst the sky like the edging on Mother's Sunday shift with blue petticoat under it.

"You ever hear about slavery, Johnny? You know our parents were born in slavery times?"

Davie down on me for talk, so what must Johnny do?

So I say: "Yes. Ruthie says Pastor Humphrey says —"

*Wayah!* His feet slap water, and cold sprays my face.

"Humphrey! Pig, that! Do no' call his name!" Teeth are mixed with his voice. "Pig, that! A man who knows how people are hungry and yet tax us for money to build his new church at Morant Bay — and no' only that, but takes the contract himself to do the building! Is a buttery-hog, that man. Machete in the belly for him! You know what, Johnny—?"

But Davie sees I am no' happy, so he sits up and raises me too. Now he talks without teeth in his throat. "Listen, Johnny, eight you are now, time you should know about things."

There is a naseberry tree hanging far over the water. Davie goes to his feet like a yearling and pulls in a branch with a full ripe fruit at the end. I am wondering how Timothy and I had no' seen it before; but that is how Davie is. Even guinea-fowl can no' lay in deepest mangrove but Davie will find the egg.

Naseberry pulpy and thick, and when you ha' finished with the richness, you roll the seeds around your mouth so they click against your teeth. Fright has gone, contentment is at Maroon Hole.

We lay down again. He placed a dead bamboo root under our heads so we were like how Father cotches up the pillows on his bed night-time when he wants talk with Mother. Cool it is under the trees. A *john-to-whit* is a-dance in a *guinep* tree and making music with whistles in his throat. To me, it sounds like militiamen making skirl with their fifes at Morant Bay when they drum down the Jack at sunset. If my bro' Sammy

was here, there would be shine in his eyes. Funny how my bro' Sammy likes soldiering.

Hear Davie: "When slavery was run out of the country, *buckra* English promised the poor land and wages. They gave the land, but all rocks and swamp, and nothing will grow there. They gave the wages, but man can no' live on sixpence a day."

He is talking quiet now, and there are the naseberry seeds at my teeth and *john-to-ubit* a-skirl like mad overhead.

"Is true it, that our family are no' badly off, for near-white we are, even if poor, and ha' been landowners for three generations, and now Father is an estate headman. But no'-the-less, Johnny, and listen well to me, we are all Jamaicans — six o' one and half dozen of t'other to the *buckra* English.

"For three years now, there has been dry weather. For five years now, Americans ha' fought with Americans. Bro' Abraham Lincoln has won his victory, and slavery has gone from his land, but still no clipper ships have come south with flour and codfish. Governor Eyre is there fat at St. Jago with good living, and the Missis Queen says we must prosper on cactus and iguana."

Davie's voice sinks low as if he is a-talk with Davie. I turn my head on the bamboo foot and see that his eyes are gone to bed. So, is true it, that perhaps he is talking with himself.

"What happens when hard time comes on us? Some poor people borrow money on their crops from *buckra* estate owner. Even before pay-back time comes, estate owner takes them to court. But since poor people ha' not grow any money, since dry weather is here and no canes will grow, *buckra* magistrate tells *buckra* estate owner that he must take the land, for poor people will no' pay.

"So, then, turn *buckra* turns his cattle onto the land and have them trample down yam-hills and cane cultivations. The poor take back *buckra* to the court, and another *buckra* magistrate says the order has been made and the land does no' belong to the poor any longer.

"And if you ever talk o' injustice, is to prison they send you. Some

charge without foundation sends you to the crank and the treadmill, or you get the gallows for treason."

There is deep breath from Davie, but it does no' push the anger from him, and Davie is still talking with Davie.

"Look back on last year. You will see a woman in a family way travelling to her cultivation with her hoe on her shoulder. On the Bath Road it is. See, you will see Judge Boltin passing, riding on his horse. Bath Road is narrow, and the hoe touches the nose o' the horse so it shies — *wayah!* Down Judge jumps from his horse and flogs the woman with his *supple-jack* so she must fall like dead! *God o' me!*"

*Davie O! Come, quiet again!*

Davie came quiet again. "Later, she loses her baby for the beating she gets. Deacon and his Councilmen give her money to fight in court. Custos is there on the Bench, and he puts it off and puts it off and puts it off so that Bogle must send Petition to St. Jago. Eyre does no' want Missis Queen hear of it, so he has talk with Custos. Month, gone, market-day, Custos meets Deacon and tells him he has fined Boltin five shillings."

Davie laughed and his feet stirred water.

"If it was in slavery days, Boltin would ha' paid a bigger fine for making a woman lose a manchild — *God strike him!*"

You ever take a bullwhip and throw the lash forward and bring it back quick so the cowskin fringe curls up and talks sharp to you? Is so, Davie's voice.

"But, tell, I tell you, Johnny, none o' these would ha' happened if for true we were governing ourselves."

Davie blasphemes a little more. Good it is to hear him blaspheme and Father no' around, so I blaspheme too. Davie grinned on me. Hear him:

"Johnny, you know about William George Gordon?"

I nod me head and say I ha' heard of Mr. Gordon.

# Extract from CREOLE

## CHAPTER I

### LUCILLE IREMONGER

**R**OSA had gone to bed.

Her father was in his bedroom, in his pyjamas. He was cross-examining her younger brother on his knowledge of the facts of life, putting him right where he had gone wrong.

Her old Aunt Etta, toothless and irritable, was sitting in her cubbyhole of a room in the dark. She was musing on the past, and rocking herself into a tremble of vexation and regret, to the tune of the squeaking of the unoiled joints of her chair.

There was a light on in the lower part of the house. Rosa's red-headed mother had put her sewing-machine on the dining-room table downstairs, and the house was filled with its whirr. Suddenly there was the grinding noise of a car stopping outside the gate. The sewing-machine halted abruptly. The woman seated at it hastily covered it, hid it in a corner, and swept her work into a drawer before hurrying out. Her unexpected guests were already mounting the steps of the front verandah.

A bony, yellow woman, with straight black hair, came first, arms out-thrust. She swept Dolly Cutler plumply into her embrace, kissing her loudly on both cheeks. Her little pale husband, consumptive and narrow-boned, came next. After him filed a long line of males and females, apparently of the same family tree, of varying ages; but all stupid, bony, awkward and silent. Only Mrs. Pratt chattered, but she spoke for the eleven.

One by one they shook hands woodenly with their hostess, then, still wordless, but completely at home, they disappeared into the house and dragged out into the verandah's heavily-creeped darkness chairs of all descriptions, wicker, wood and cane, static or rocking at a touch. Even with the revolving piano-stool there were not enough, and the visitors trooped off farther afield to bring back dining-room chairs. The smallest child, a corkscrew-ringed girl with a blank wall of a face, sat on the threshold.

Finally they were all seated. Dolly herself subsided into a throne-like wicker chair directly underneath a pink-shaded standard lamp, and switched its light full on to her red head. She was surrounded on all

sides by Pratts. On her right, on her left were Pratts, and peering coldly into the stretching shades she saw silent Pratt faces, strange replicas of those about her.

By this time her husband, Alvis, had put on his trousers over his pyjamas, since he had recognized his visitors as old friends by darting reconnaissances over the banisters. Now he came stamping out in his short-sighted way, a long, stooping man, with a mean red face and screwed-up, inquisitive eyes. As he paused in the doorway, swinging his head blindly from side to side, he seemed to be counting his guests. He had never got over his astonishment that Pratt, the smallest, weakest, most simpering boy in his class, should have acquired such a kingdom, and such a population of his own. Against his better judgment he rather envied him.

Cedric, a dull boy of about twelve, with his father's eyes, and a lock of hair dangling over his forehead, followed on his heels. He went straight to the corkscrew Althea and pinched her.

Tho two lords of these families, having said their "How-are-you-old-man?" and "Not-too-bad-old-man!" as if it were a matter of the utmost importance, sat back to listen to their wives' gossip.

Mrs. Pratt enquired for Rosa. Her mother shrugged her shoulders. She spread out her hands and turned down the corners of her lips:

"Bed!"

"That won't do, me dear! I must see the girl! What's she doing, going to bed so early? Make us go up and see her, shall we?"

Dolly, short and square, her large nose on her large head held proud, led the way. Stumbling over unexpected feet, she reached her now almost bare drawing-room. She swished through the bead curtains which separated it from the staircase (without troubling to hold them apart for her guest, so that Mrs. Pratt was almost blinded by them as they swung back at her,) climbed the dark flight of stairs, and marched into Rosa's bedroom. She snapped on the light.

"Look who's come to see you, Rosa!"

A dark-haired girl was sitting up in an enormous wooden bed. She had been asleep, and was obviously put out by this invasion. She looked from Mrs. Pratt to her mother, struggling to say something. Mrs. Pratt, she realized, was not her only visitor. The Pratt tribe, following their leader, had mounted the stairs in silence, and were crowding into the

bedroom in her wake. Over Mrs. Pratt's shoulder Rosa could see the sheepish faces of two bulky lads. Behind them stood a solid young woman, and, at the end of the file, her father and Mr. Pratt. Somewhere in the crowd Althea yelped.

"What you bawling for?" Cedric said. "I'm not doing anything!"

Suddenly, and still before Rosa had found words, her old aunt appeared round the corner of another door, frowned at Dolly, and said hotly:

"It's not *decent* in a young girl's bedroom!"

Then she disappeared again.

A minute afterwards she reappeared, this time with steel-rimmed spectacles on her nose, and shook hands with everyone she could reach, till she came to one of the bulky young men. She peered at him.

"And who are *you*?"

Apparently he was a stranger. No one else seemed to have noticed. He was not unlike the Pratts, except that he was very much better-looking. His name, he said obligingly, smiling down at the fierce little old woman, was Johnny. Johnny Pengelly.

The girl in the bed was following the exchange with eyes and ears. She was attempting to cover her shoulders with the bed-clothes, and to smooth her rumpled hair inconspicuously.

"Come on, now," the old aunt marshalled them, shooing them before her unequivocally, "downstairs!"

The Pratts turned dutifully, uncomprehendingly, and somehow Alvis and his thin little comrade were prodded into action. Meekly they led the way back to their verandah rocking-chairs.

Johnny Pengelly lingered to the last, slipping behind Mrs. Pratt (who was admiring the new curtains at 2s. 11d. a yard), until the old woman pushed him out with her own hands, muttering:

"Shameful! A girl of sixteen! I don't know what's the matter with Dolly sometimes!"

## 2

Hugh Bradley had fallen into the habit of strolling by *Fort Outlook* on his walks about the capital. The sea was within easy reach of his uncle's office, and he very often chose to reach it by way of the rickety old giant of a house.

The top two storeys of dilapidated wooden skeleton with the paint

peeling from it towered over the garden. That was all that he could see, except for a patch of weedy lawn through the iron curlings of the gate. It was not much to go on, but the house maintained that air of pride, fallen but uncaring, which he had felt so strongly during his first sight of it.

One afternoon, as he passed by rather earlier than usual, he had a tantalizing glimpse of a woman sitting alone at a wicker table laid for tea on the lawn. She was red-headed and plump, and even in those few seconds he noted that the chair she sat in was of wicker like the table, and surprisingly large, and that the white hands poised above the tray were indolent and smooth.

The next day he hastened from his office, hoping to catch the woman again at tea. He saw only the table. It was laid for tea, but no one was sitting at it. He could not hang about the gate, staring in, and so he went on his way. His whole mind was occupied with surmises about the house and the woman. He took the trouble to return home by way of it, but again there was only an empty table, this time covered with the debris of the tea he had seen laid earlier on. The strength of his disappointment amazed him.

The house became an obsession. He did not say to himself that it was his loneliness which was at the bottom of it, but if he had it would have made no difference. He thought of it as his house, and his desire to know the details of the lives of its occupants grew greater the more satisfaction was denied it.

Inevitably the day came when he again found the red-haired woman at her table. This day had more to offer him than that. Standing by the woman was a tall, dark girl. She had her back to the gate, and Hugh could not see her face. Something seemed to him to fall neatly into place when he saw her. He was quite sure that she was beautiful. It did not even occur to him that she might not be so. Certainly there was something — something in the way she stood, perhaps — something in the way her hair fell over her shoulders . . .

He did not put it to himself that he had sighted the princess in his mysterious castle, he said merely:

“That’s interesting!”

He made up his mind to enter the little gate. He devoted a great deal of thought to how it might be accomplished.

However, when it did come to pass, it was in an accidental — or almost accidental — fashion.

## CHAPTER II

OPPOSITE *Fort Outlook* stood a ramshackle shop. It carried no signboard, but from a pole thrust horizontally into the doorpost there hung a blood-red flag of coarse cloth, and every negro who passed knew that he could buy a *quattie's* worth of ice there if he wanted to.

Inside the door, in a rocking-chair, old Tabitha sat, as always, her eyes fixed on the large house opposite. All her life she had sold ice, boiled sweets and *buller*, the ever-stale brown spice-bread. When it had not been this shop, it had been another, farther within the city, noisier, shaken with the jarrings of trams and huge drays, but smelling the same, and filled with the same things.

Her present higgler-shop had stood in this place long before the Cutler family had moved into the house facing it. Tabitha had sat then as she sat now, as withered, as self-contained, her clay pipe in her mouth, her bandana on her head. Her washed-out cotton blouse hardly seemed to have changed. The full skirt striped in crimson and black might have been the same as she had worn then. At her feet the blocks of ice, set in sawdust and covered with hessian had dripped then as slowly, as delectably as they did now, trickling to her horny soles in their thonged, wooden sandals.

Tabitha herself saw the years go by without mark. Only Jeremy her son marked the decades for her, Jeremy born fifty years ago. She had almost forgotten the muscular, musical drayman called George, only sometimes when she looked at Jeremy she thought how that dim figure looked like him — never that Jeremy resembled his father.

Jeremy had been her passion and occupation these long years.

Her life had been given to a dream. The romance of white people had touched her early with an acid finger. Bitterness grew in her that nothing on this earth would ever make her white. Her ancestors had been slaves. The good things of life had been snatched from their grasp, and had gone to the whites. Tabitha's pride might have led her to hate them, but it took a different turn. Her son, at least, she was determined,

should have all that the whites had — all that she could get for him, at any rate.

It was a hope common enough among her people. It was only her long effort to bring that hope to fruition which was uncommon.

Tabitha had hoped for a white lover. A half-white child was half-way to her goal, so she thought. It was quite usual for white men to live with black women, and to give them children. English soldiers left their progeny behind them in dozens when they sailed back to their pink-and-white wives and children. Tabitha had no use for poor soldiery. Such whites did not keep track of the offspring they left behind. She wanted a man with character and standing in the community, one to whom she could point with pride as the father of her child, and one who would give her a pound note occasionally.

She never met one. She came across only the white men of the slums, hard-working Syrians and Jews, most of them, impoverished and tubercular, and a few clerks and shop-assistants stealing an occasional Sunday away from their wives. She did not like them, and they did not like her. To them Tabitha was only another black — too black, too skinny, too tart of tongue. They took their pulpy fingers and their patronizing eyes elsewhere.

When Tabitha was thirty she abandoned her dreams of a white lover, and took Jeremy's father to her flat bosom.

The old negress, staring at the house which to her enclosed all her worldly ambitions, nodded. Chinese-white clouds slid across the sky, driven by a fresh sea-breeze. A coconut palm thrashed its branches derisively, and at its foot a speckled hen clucked to and fro, her feathers ruffling against the wind.

Suddenly a shadow fell across the doorway, and a figure stepped into the shop. Tabitha had creaked to her feet and moved behind the counter before she recognized her visitor.

"Mawnin'," he said, and she saw with displeasure that it was her son.

He was very dirty, and he dragged a much-bandaged foot behind him. There was a running sore on the dark skin, and one trouser-leg had been rolled up to display it. His face was pock-marked, and when he smiled slack lips spread wide over a few yellow stumps. His busy fingers never stopped scratching. His whining tones were those of the professional beggar.

"Well, Jeremy, what you want ina me shop today?" Tabitha demanded, and added vindictively, "You good-for-nothing blackguard, you!"

"Doant abuse me widout cause, me dear mudder! Can't a man come and see him own dearly-beloved mumma?"

"You know I don't want fe see you."

"That may be. But *I* want fe see you. And who is going to stop me?"

"You only want fe see ef you can get any more money out of me. But I can tell you, you won't."

"Yu never know," Jeremy replied, smiling affably, and lifted a *buller* from the counter, then recoiled sharply as Tabitha darted at it. "Now, I just wonder . . ."

The rest of his sentence was lost in the crumbling *buller*. He eased himself on to a wooden bench in one corner. Presently he began to sing, and as he sang he sucked the sweets he was stealing one by one from a large glass jar, taking a noisy suck at the end of each line of song:

"Me nebber did-a go to no mango walk, to no mango walk,

Me nebber did-a go to no mango walk,

An' me nebber thief no Number 'Leven."

Tabitha returned to her chair at the door. Once more she looked at the house opposite. She thought of the linen sheets on the beds, of the bright mirrors, of the piano, of the embroidered, tasselled cloth draped over it, of the curtains at the windows. There was not a proper bath-room at *Fort Outlook*. Tabitha knew that, and she knew what one should look like. There should be tiles, white and green, and hot and cold water-taps shining brightly, and showers, and a china basin as well as the wonderful white bath for which the room existed. White men shaved with little safety razors, not cut-throats. They had shaving water brought to them in mugs. They wore pyjamas, and bedroom slippers. They cut mangoes with a knife. They drank whiskies with soda. Sometimes they dressed for dinner or the theatre, in black that made their shoulders wider and their legs longer and their faces redder. White men had white wives with soft skins, with painted lips, with smooth, ferny hair, with silken frocks. White babies —

She saw Jeremy as a little black tumbler. He came running to her. She heard herself forbid him to play with the other black children, who sat, ragged and plastered with mud, surrounded with flies, in the streets. She saw herself belabour him half a dozen times a day for disobeying her. She

saw his big boy's feet squeezed into shoes against his blubbering protests. He should have been a white man in all but colour. He had had every chance. And look at him!

"Every John Crow t'ink him pickney white!" she muttered bitterly, and Jeremy, understanding, laughed.

Hugh's only relaxations were an occasional cinema and those solitary walks about the capital. No building in the city was far away from the sea, and whenever he was free he had taken to going down to the beach by the shortest route he could find. This amazing Caribbean filled him with delight. That, at any rate, was something you could not get in a small town at home, and he was going to have his fill of it.

Yesterday afternoon he had been feeling depressed and resentful once again. After work he had made straight for the beach. Inside twenty minutes he was standing on the shore, a brisk breeze blowing his trousers against his legs and lifting the fretfulness from him. Now, he said to himself, he could think instead of feel. That was the trouble with this damned island. You forgot how to think, because your emotions always had you by the throat.

Three months were not a long time in which to judge a place, but already he was sure that he disliked the island. Everyone said that it was a paradise, and of course he could see what they meant. But not for him. It was beautiful, of course, incredibly beautiful, surely the loveliest place on earth, with the beauty of moonlight and palm-leaf and shadows dancing on the sands, and light and colour and warmth, but also beautiful with another, and for him a better, kind of beauty. He could see it, even through his loathing for the place.

There was not only the coloured calendar sorcery of that great silver or gold cheese of a moon riding over black seas, of crimson and gold sunsets and a curtain of falling blossoms under heavily-scented trees, not only bandannaed negresses and half-naked piccaninnies in the sunshine, but there was an insidious everyday beauty, which was more dangerous and enduring in the long run. It was the beauty of the odd little things which made men fall in love with a place, so that they could never live anywhere else. It was the beauty of the quieter colours, which slipped into your consciousness while you were gazing at the fanfare splendours of sunsets. The sudden, peaceful dawnings were lovelier to his mind than the flamboyant ones, with their high bugle-blasts of colour. He used to

get up early and go out into the garden to watch the pale morning glory, tight-shut and asleep in the hedge, which expanded delicately, like a woman stretching, opening and deepening in colour with the seepings of light, until the little rolled umbrella of chilly ice-blue had become a purple trumpet. As the sky lost its splendour and the sun came raging forth the flower closed gently again, furling itself, limp and crumpled, its veins swollen and dark, maltreated by the heat.

Oh, he'd grant the beauty all right, any kind of beauty, a thousand kinds of beauty! Only he had a feeling that he would only be able to appreciate it fully when he was quite away from it all, back in the colourless place from which he came. Then he could call up his pictures of the scarlets and golds, of the singing, dancing blacks, of the tumultuous crowds, of the mountains and moons and stars and seas and winds and gardens, and forget the sticky, prickly heat; and the thin, seeking mosquito on the back of his neck; and the gentle stream of sweat running down under his armpits; and the unspeakable distaste for action of any kind which assailed him. Perhaps then he would be able to forget the smell of the so picturesque black passengers in the overcrowded tramcars, and the way his uncle's clerks spoke, and thought and tittered. No doubt he would wish himself back again, too. And everything would seem very easy, as it always did after a lapse of time, and he would wonder why he had not done more, and made more of it all.



# BROTHER MAN

ROGER MAIS

THE tongues in the lane clack-clack almost continuously, going up and down the full scale of human emotions, human folly, ignorance, suffering, viciousness, magnanimity, weakness, greatness, littleness, insufficiency, frailty, strength.

They clack on street corners, where the ice-shop hangs out a triangular red flag, under the shadow of overhanging buildings that lean precariously, teetering across the dingy chasm of the narrow lane.

Around the yam-seller's barrow, and the tripe-seller's basket, and the coal-vendor's crazy push-cart drawn up against the seamy sidewalk, they clack, interspersing the hawking and the bargaining, and what-goes-on in the casual, earnest, noisy, meaningless business of buying and selling; and where the mango-seller sets down her country-load.

They clack where the neighbours meet in the Chinese grocery shop on the corner, leaning elbows against the counter with its saltfish odour and the spilled rice grains and brown sugar grains, and amid the dustings of cornmeal and flour under the smirking two-faced scale, waiting for change.

— Mis' Brody's clubfootbwoy get run over . . .

— You hear wha' Bra' Ambo say? Say we is gwine get nodder breeze-blow dis year yet . . .

— Cho Missis, no mind Bra' Ambo, after him no eena Big Massa council . . .

— Coal-price gone up since todder day . . .

— Ee-ee Ma, him do an' get run over . . .

— Oonu lissen hear wha' Bra' Ambo say . . .

Behind the pocked visage and the toothless grin, behind the wrinkled skin gathered and seamed around the lips and under the eyes, behind the facade of haltness and haleness and cursing and laughter, slander lurks in

ambush to take the weakest and the hindmost, and the tongues clack upon every chance.

- Cordy's man get tek-up fo' ganga . . .
- Bra' Man show de gospel way . . .
- Me-gal still wi' hold wid Bra' Ambo . . .
- Coal-price gone up since toddler day . . .
- Lawd Jesus, po' Mis' Brody . . .
- No mind, God is over all . . .
- Hush yaw ma', you' mout'-lip favour . . .
- No God do dem t'ing de at all . . .

There are sad-faced old ones, and sleek-faced young ones, and all ways in between; and there are those with an accounting of troubles the same and equal to and over and beyond the ones they tell; and there are those too who have missed the accounting, ducking and dodging and putting by for another day; but all, all are involved in the same chapter of consequences, all are caught up between the covers of the same book of living; they look with shuddering over their shoulder past the image of their own secret terror, feeling the shadow of it over them in another's fate.

- Po' Cordy one fe mind de pickney . . .
- Lissen good wha' Bra' Ambo say . . .
- Cho gwan wid you' Bra' Ambo . . .
- Bra' Man know de gospel way . . .
- Papacita beat up him gal las' night . . .
- Is a shame de way dem two de-live . . .
- Gal waan fo' him an she get married . . .
- Hm! Papacita know what 'married' give . . .

Over washtubs in noisome yards where the drip-drip of the eternally leaking standpipe makes waste in the sun-cracked, green-slimed concrete cistern, and under the ackee tree or the custard-apple tree or the Spanish-

guava tree or the Seville orange tree behind the lean-to pit-latrine in the yard, they clack-clack eternally telling their own hunger and haltness and lameness and nightness and negation, like flies buzzing an open unremitting sore, tasting again, renewing, and giving again, the wounds they have taken of the world.

- Flyin' Saucer tek-in Mercedes . . .
- Cho! A-swing her tail up an' down de street! . . .
- How she-one manage ketch so-much sailor? . . .
- Mus' be black-gal somet'ing sweet! . . .
- Hear dem say-say Papacita de mek eye after Bra' Man gal . . .
- Mek Bra' Man find out! . . .
- Hm! jus' wait bwoy! . . .
- Massa Jesus! gwine be hell! . . .

Night comes down and the tongues have not ceased to shuttle and to clatter, they still carry their burden of the tale of man's woes. It is their own story over that they tell in secret, overlaying it with the likeness of slander, licking their own ancient scrofulous sores. . . .

#### ONE

Girlie was idly turning the pages of a magazine when Papacita came in through the door. She did not look up. He closed the door quietly — too quietly — behind him, without taking his eyes off her, came cat-footing across the room.

He noticed that a corner of the page picturing Ingrid Bergman in Kodacolor trembled a little between her fingers. Something tickled him at the back of his throat. He wanted to cough.

He said: '*Hm!*' trying to clear it.

She turned the page, slowly, put her other hand up to her back-hair.

He went past her, across to the window overlooking the lane, threw it open with a bang, and said, angrily:

'It's like a furnace in here.'

She went on turning the pages of the magazine she held across her knee. She put a finger up to her lips, wet the tip of it with her tongue, raised her eyes slowly to look at him, as though aware of his presence for the first time, saw him without recognition, without change of expression, and brought her eyes back slowly to the page.

He leaned against the window and stood looking at her a moment, shrugged, turned away, went across to the bed, sat down, started pulling off his shoes.

'Lousy bum,' she said, casually, as though she was speaking to herself, just turning her thoughts out to air.

'What's it?' he said.

But when he looked up, quickly, challengingly, ready to get on with it, she wasn't looking at him at all. Her gaze had returned to the thumb-down page of the magazine she held open across her knees. She put her head a little to one side, and might just as well have been addressing herself to the half-length photograph of Humphrey Bogart.

He pulled off the other shoe, massaged his toes a little, let the shoe fall to the board floor with a clatter, heaved himself over, and rolled into bed.

'All right,' he said, 'might as well get started. I know you're jus' bustin' with things to say. Whyn't I come home las' night, hey? Don't you want to know?' A little breeze coming through the window fluttered the calendar on the wall.

'Lousy bum,' she said again, almost conversationally, without raising her voice at all.

'All right,' he said, 'but if you want to know it wasn't any woman I was with.'

'Was a woman you was with I wouldn't care, don't give you'self no fancy airs, could have men friends on the side a-plenty, if I wanted to give you the run-around, I'm tellin' you.'

Ignoring the second part of her statement he said:

'No, you wouldn't care, like hell not you wouldn't, only be scratchin' me eyes out to give you' han's somep'n to do, I guess. Awe' lemme alone.'

'Ain't troublin' you, got somep'n else on you' mind, mus' be. Wasn't a gal you was with, mus' be you was in church.'

'Don't gimme that stuff. I've had about enough of it, always naggin' at a man, don't get a chance to turn.'

'Go to sleep,' she said, 'ketch-up you' strength. You got a hard day before you. Hm! no wonder you too tired to work.'

'If you want to know, honey, was a job Ah was lookin' las' night. A job, see?'

'What kind of a job dat? Night watchman, mus' be. Gwine get meself a job like dat too, you wait an' see.'

'Don't gimme none of you' lip, gal. Gimme dat kinda lip Ah up an' slap you down.'

'Slap me down, you try dat again Ah chop you up fine. You know what's good fo' you, you don't even think it, much less talk it, see?'

'Awe, come on, honey. Was only jokin' you. Ah'm gettin' me a job, don't worry. Goin' go to wuk fo' you an' me.'

He patted the side of the bed, slowly, suggestively, with the hand that wasn't holding up his head, said softly, throwing the words at her as he might a cushion or one of those big soft indiarubber balls:

'Come over here. Come on no, honey, come over here.'

'Papacita, you're a big over-grown pickney, she said, pouting a little with vexation, looking at him sloe-eyed, letting the magazine slide off her lap to the floor, 'you think you can get around me that way, you foolin' you'self. Tell me 'bout the job you was all night las' night gettin' you'self, tell me 'bout it, eh, why you don't?'

His brows came together ever so slightly, as yet scarcely a frown, as if he was puzzling something out inside his head, trying to make the answer come right.

'The job,' he said, slowly, taking his time, 'Aw, honey, Ah'm keepin' that as a big surprise for you. Yeh, that's what, goin' be a big surprise. Goin' go to wuk fo' you an' me.'

'That shore will surprise me plenty,' she said, the corners of her mouth curling with contempt, 'goin' bust me shore. You get you'self a job, Papa-boy, Ah get meself wings an' fly.'

'All right,' he said, hurt, offended in his pride, 'You don' believe me, hey, you jus' wait an' see. Lissen, the money Ah'll be makin' will take you lap to hold it in.'

His mouth puckered like a sulky boy's. 'You think Ah'm kiddin', you think Ah'm jus' no-good, kiddin' you all the time. Jus' wait, baby, goin' show you somep'n mek you' eyes bung-up wid surprise.'

Her mouth made as though it wanted to laugh but she wouldn't let it. 'Goin' surprise me, don't it, honey? Look, you start me laffin' so soon in the day ...'

'Bitch! Laff no? Why don't you laff?'

He said it without heat, without antagonism, a little hurt only, his lips puckered like an obstinate boy.

He said: 'Have a mind get up an' walk right out on you, you'd deserve it. God damn it! Ah jus' have a mind.'

'You walk out on me, honey, where you eat? Walk out on me, eh, why you don' get goin', God hear me, I'd like to see you get up an' start walkin' right this minute. Have a mind is 'bout all you ever do. You think I'm scared of anything you say? Have a mind!'

The skin like parchment around his eyes tightened a little, and let go. And then he came all contrite, all treacle and melting butter again.

'Aw, come on over and sit here, will yah, honey? Jus' can't stand to see you takin' on that way.'

'Aaw, come on, honey, come an' sit on de bed,' Papacita urged in a tone that was like warm butterscotch.

Girlie stood by the window, looking out into the lane.

'You don't want any breakfast?' she said.

'You don't worry you'self I will get breakfast.'

'Don't worry meself is right, an' Ah ain't worryin'. All de same if you don't stop holdin' up de street corner chattin' to dat iittle gal Bra' Man tek in off de street, goin' be trouble one of these days, you mark my words.'

'Wha' dat you talkin' 'bout any at all, me holdin' up street corner wid Minette? You mus' be crazy.'

'Crazy no? Like Ah didn't see you in me own two eyes.'

'Cho, no mind, no bodder wid dat now, come siddung side me.'

She left the window and went across to the door. She said: 'Goin' down to de kitchen, goin' get meself a cup of coffee, you eat breakfast yet?'

'No.'

We wanted to tell her not to give herself the trouble, that he would go down to the kitchen and make breakfast, but she was gone before he could fetch the words out from inside him.

He sat on the side of the bed and lit a cigarette. He had just one left. That would do for after breakfast. After that — Well, perhaps Girlie would be able to find some change in her purse.

He had nearly finished the cigarette when she returned carrying a coffee pot and things for breakfast on a tray. She had to make a noise on the

door, using the toe of her shoe, for both her hands were full, she had come all the way up the stairs that way.

'Why you didn't call me to help you?'

She brushed past him, setting down the tray on a table.

'Sit down an' have some breakfast,' she said. 'Else you goin' be hungry later. Got to look a job, Ah'm goin' in town.'

He looked at her, started to open his mouth, but decided it wasn't time to speak. He sat down at the table and started to eat. He was hungrier than he thought. Jeez! He didn't know he was so hungry. The excitement, everything, had put the thought of food clean out of his mind.

Watching her secretly he saw a fly settle on her nose. She didn't even bother brush it away. She just wrinkled up her nose where its feet tickled her. It buzzed off, and settled again. It did that two or three times, but she didn't stop eating in that mechanical way, didn't take her hand up from the table to brush it off.

Her face seemed to have lost all expression, as though the will to live and laugh had died within her, and nothing mattered any more. He felt hurt, affronted, as though this was a personal accusation, as though it accused him of things he did not feel guilty of inside himself. It made him cross.

'What you mopin' about now? Somebody kill you' white fowl?'

'You should ask. Anybody kill me white fowl it would be you; you should ask, yes, an' Ah should leave you to answer you'self.'

He said, with a feeling of sudden contrition, 'No mind, everyt'ing goin' be all right. Jus' wait an' see.'

He scraped back his chair, stood up, went and stood behind her, laid a hand on the top of her head.

'Don't touch me.'

'Eh?'

'Ah say don't touch me. Lemme alone.'

He turned away, huffed. 'All right,' he said, 'if that's the way it is.'

He went over to the window, leaned an elbow on the sill, looked out over the lane.

'A man come home, an' no little happiness in the house. Nutt'n but naggin', naggin' all de time.'

'Why you didn't stay where you was, why you bodder come home?'

'It wasn't anyting like dat, Ah tell you. Wasn't a woman or anyting like dat at all.'

'You can tell dat to somebody else, maybe they will believe you. What you tek me fo', a first-of-April-born?'

'Was this job Ah was after, anyway.'

'I know; we goin 'be rich. Don't mek me laff.'

'All right, you can laff.'

'Ah'm laffin', don't you see?'

'Ah, you mek me sick. No little peace in de home, nuff to mek a man pick-up an' walk.'

He waited, as though to hear her retort to this, but she said nothing, so he went on on his own.

'Goin' get meself outa this, though, you wait an' see, can't stand it any more.'

He saw Jesmina going down the lane. She was coming from the shop with a bottle of healing oil in her hand. He made her a little sign with his hand.

She just raised her head and said: 'How Girlie? Give her howdy fo' me,' and went on quickly down the street.

Girlie looked up from picking at the threadbare tablecloth.

'Who dat?'

He wanted to say, why don't you come an' see for you'self, but he said instead: 'Jesmina. Say to give you howdy.'

And she said: 'Oh.'

She got up, cleared the used breakfast things off the table, started dusting and tidying the place. She hummed a little to herself.

He could see that her anger was cooling, little by little thawing out. She wanted to re-establish the old relationship between them. He was crafty, cautious, made no move to meet her part way; only stood there, looking out through the window, letting things flow through his mind.

'What you doing over by the window?' she said. 'You gone to sleep?'

He grunted two syllables that said nothing at all.

She started singing softly to herself.

She stooped down, picked up some crumbs from the floor, straightened, looked down at the boards under her feet, went behind the door for the broom.

He watched her sweeping, tidying, making the room like new, without letting her know that he was watching her; he watched her every movement, feeling deep down that hunger for her that kept him coming back after ever escapade — that deep down hunger that it seemed could never be altogether assuaged.

She was dusting the further end of the room, working gradually over to where he was.

All right, he would smoke that last cigarette now.

He watched her like a cat watching a mouse, without her seeing it. The old passion for her came up inside him, made the inside of his mouth seem dry. He pressed his tongue up against the roof of his mouth, brought down some saliva with it. He cleared his throat gently, tentatively, as though fearful to make the least sound.

## 5

Brother Man sat at his cobbler's bench before the open window looking out upon the lane. He worked quietly, efficiently, his head bowed over his last.

He was of medium height, medium build. The hair crisped and curled all about his head, around his mouth, over his chin. When he looked up from his work his eyes pin-pointed the light, and you could see almost all of the pupils. He had a far-away, searching look, as though the intensity of his being came to focus in his eyes. Many looked away and were embarrassed before the quiet intensity of that gaze.

He had now, as he always did, an open Bible on the stool beside him. He was putting heels to a pair of slippers, and Minette sat on a lower stool, at his feet, blacking a pair of shoes.

Every now and then she stole a glance at him, and went back to blacking the shoes again.

From the yard next door they could hear voices of people, talking, laughing, quarrelling. Beyond they could hear the yam-vendor hawking down the lane.

Brother Man belonged to that cult known as the Ras Tafari, and some people said he was mad. Others again thought he was a holy man and a healer, and many came to him, secretly, because they feared gossip, to heal their sick, and for advice and encouragement when things were going wrong.

Sometimes when they heard other people abusing and traducing Brother Man, they stood up in his defence, the people whom he had helped in times of trouble and sickness, but at other times they thought better of it, because they feared what their neighbours might have to say about them behind their backs, lacking the courage of their convictions. Sometimes they forgot, some of these people, that he had helped and comforted them, and healed their wounds. Sometimes they secretly despised him that he cared so little for himself, and so much for others, that he would give what little he had to succour another whose need he thought greater than his.

Minette held up to the light the shoe she was polishing to see how it shone. She sighed and set it down on the floor beside her on a piece of old newspaper, and took up the other one.

From the yard next door came the sound of someone singing, 'Jesu, lover of my soul. . . .'

She said suddenly, 'What is love?'

Brother Man said, 'Eh? What you say, child?'

'Say what is love? Bra' Man,' she repeated.

She let the shoe rest on her lap and looked up into his face.

He looked at her, earnestly, as though weighing his answer, and presently she let her eyes fall. She took up the shoe from her lap, and started polishing it again.

'Love is everything,' he said, simply. 'It is what created the world. It is what made you an' me, child, brought us into this world.'

And somehow the words didn't sound banal, coming from him. He spoke with such simple directness that it seemed to give a new import to everything he said. It was as though the common words of everyday usage meant something more, coming from his lips, than they did in the casual giving and taking of change in conversation, the way it was with other folks.

'Why you ask? You love somebody, child?'

'Yes an' no. I love plenty-plenty people, but none like you.'

He looked at her gravely and said: 'Peace an' love.'

'Why you always say that?' she asked, half-closing one eye, as though the better to study his face.

'It is the salutation. It is the way the brothers should greet each other.

It is like sayin' good morning, howdydo. But it is more than that too, it is the affirmation of our faith, the Jesus-talk, what you call the way.'

She didn't understand a word of all this. It showed in her face.

'Did Jesus talk it that way, that what you mean, Bra' Man?'

He nodded his head, gravely. 'He give us that word, sister: peace an' love.'

A bird flew smack into the window glass with a dull thud. It fell to the ground outside with a faint cry, stunned with the impact.

Brother Man got up, with a murmured exclamation, went out through the door, and presently came back with the bird in his hands. It fluttered a little, scared, though conscious, almost dead. A single drop of blood congealing at the side of its beak glowed like a jewel against the dark grey-green of its feathers.

It was going to die, Minette knew it, and she had an instant of impatience and vexation with Brother Man for trying to bring it back, to make it live. She didn't know why she felt this, only knew that it came up inside her, until she wanted to cry out at him, but it stopped in her throat.

She watched him as he stood there, holding the bird in his cupped hand, his head bowed over it.

'Don't trouble you'self over it, Bra' Man,' she said, 'it not goin' live.'

She came up and stood by his elbow, her body just touching his, and felt him move away instinctively, and as he did so she knew a sharp pang, savage and strong, and with a surge of exhilaration; but she could not have told what it was all about if somebody had asked her.

'Maybe,' he said, still holding the bird, and looking down at it.

It lay on its side now, and its eyes were shut in death.

'It's dead,' she said.

And she could scarcely hear his whisper, 'Yes.'

But he still held the little dead body cupped in his hand, as though he could not bear to part with it.

'What you goin' do with it?'

And she moved just that breathing space nearer, so that when she drew her breath in, long, the nipple of her breast rested against his arm an instant, and came away with respiration. He stood still, like someone lost in a trance, and as though he was not conscious of her presence.

He went and sat down on his stool, let his hand rest on the bench, relaxed his fingers. He sat there looking at the dead bird a longish time, as though in truth he did not know what to do with it. He set it down on the bench, and took up his last again.

She came up, stood behind him, said almost fiercely: 'Why you don't throw it out into the street, what you keepin' it for?'

He looked up at her, and she met his gaze without flinching.

'What's troublin you, me daughter?'

'Why you want to keep it before you? Why you don't throw it outside?'

'It is one of God's creatures, and it was alive a little while back, and now it is dead, an' it didn't do no harm. Let it rest there, eh?' he said.

And she felt rebuked.

She said: 'I am sorry.'

He put out his hand and touched her arm.

He said: 'Peace an' love.'

## 6

Her back was to him, and she flicked him lightly with the duster, as she reached up to get at a cobweb, as though she didn't know he was there. And all the time he leaned against the window, ignoring her.

Presently without a word, without any warning at all, he put his hand out and grabbed her about the waist, drew her to him. She ceased singing immediately, and started to fight. They made no sound, between them.

He pulled her close to him and wrestled her across to the bed, and she resisted him with all her strength, all of the way. He could feel her hot breath against his cheek, and it inflamed his passion, fanned it to a great heat. He bent down and tried to lift her clear off the floor, to throw her across the bed, and her clothes came up above her waist, and he could see how the muscles of her legs were straining, and there was a kind of dewy moisture on them, and it was the same as the moisture that beaded around her throat and went all the way down, and was lost between her breasts.

She thrust at his head with her hands, bringing both hands up under his chin, and pushing with all her might, pushing his head back. The muscles on either side of his throat stood out like manilla rope, and his gullet, blue-black at the tip of it, stuck out at her like the point of a

tongue, made a sudden voluptuous movement up-and-down as he swallowed hard.

He ceased trying to lift her by the legs now. She was strong as a man, and she fought him, thrusting at him with all her strength. It wasn't play, either; it was all in deadly earnest. And it happened like this every time he played fast and loose with her, chasing other women. Every time he had to force her, as he was forcing her now, as he had had to force her that first time, the very first time he had taken her, before they had come to live together as man and wife.

And every time they lived again the deep physical satisfaction that was like nothing else on earth, that acted upon them more than an aphrodisiac, that of his forcing her, and that of her suffering being forced by him. It acted upon them both like whips, goading them on to a kind of delirium of sexual indulgence, that to them, of all pleasures, had not its parallel in the world of experience.

But this love-play was never faked; always it was in deadly earnest. If he should ever be unable to overpower her, God knows what other expediency they would have come upon. But strong as she was, he was the stronger, had always proved himself the stronger, had enhanced his hold over her in that way.

He had to shift his hold now, lock both arms about her waist to hold her to him, or let her break loose from his grasp, and like as not run out through the door, down the stairs, leaving him to his chagrin and humiliation. Or she would come back and laugh at him to his face and snap her fingers under his nose, and call him names, until he could find other means to appease and win her.

He held her so close to him that the breath came gasping from her body, and it was as though her breath went away from her and she could not catch it back. So she let go with one hand, and the fingernails of that hand raked the flesh on the side of his face, bringing blood with them.

And still no word was spoken between them.

He had to loose one arm from around her waist to catch hold, with that hand, of hers. He thrust his hip into her side, until she was bent right across it, and he was able to throw her on the bed. But she bounced

up again, before he could throw himself on top of her and pin her there by sheer brute force.

He caught her by the wrist now, and pulled her back to him, so that for a moment she was sitting astride his knee, with him sitting on the side of the bed. He wrung her wrist, twisting it, to bring her over on her side, and she shut her teeth tight with the pain of it, and never let out a sound.

She lay on her side for an instant like that, panting, and he felt something coming up inside him, for he had conquered, almost had her at his will. But she twisted right over him, came up kneeling in the middle of the bed, and she had broken his hold on her. They closed again like two wrestlers. She was as agile and strong as a man. It took all he had to hold her.

When he had her down on the bed and was about to cover her, she brought her knee up and set it in the pit of his stomach, and he had to wriggle like a snake to break through that defence and get in close to her.

And at last she lay on the bed, panting, and it was like that that he had her this once again, for he had broken her resistance. He had overcome her again, as he had done before, many times, and he knew there would be no talk about what had happened before, after that.

And now for the first time since they clinched there was a sound between them. She laughed, and their mouths met in a savage kiss, and she took his bottom lip between her teeth and bit down on it until she tasted blood. And she laughed again when his face shuddered away from hers, and she said:

'Hurt me like that — hurt me — Love me and hurt me! Hurt me hard!'



EXTRACT FROM

## THE AUTUMN EQUINOX

JOHN HEARNE

NICHOLAS STACEY

NOWADAYS I sleep lightly. Perhaps my body, apprehensive of the long sleep balefully hovering just beyond the horizon of my days, snatches me from oblivion to regard every passing wind, restive leaf, footfall, raised voice or amorous dog. The body never learns: it fights blindly, ludicrously, hideously to the last unconvinced rattle, trying to rally an army long since scattered, dead or surrendered, certain to the end that it can pull off some cunning ambush and surprise death as it waits in massed battalions along the road.

I lie awake in this long night, listening to the light rain that has roused me as it advances fastidiously across the foothills and taps at the roof . . . my roof and Eleanor's. No, hers alone. As everything I have and do nowadays is for her alone. How ridiculous to try to live for another; and how impossible not to. The body again: with low, animal craft seizing this last chance for assertion, deceiving all the accumulations of experience; holding your intelligence to ransom with the thought of her alone in the world. As if we were not all solitaires.

Despite myself, reproaching myself for a flabby, senile coward, I roll out of bed, feel for my slippers, and go along the passage to her room. To half open the door and reassure myself that she is safe and warmly asleep. As I used to do when she was a child. Then back to my bed; to listen to the thin rain blowing out to sea, leaving as it does so a faint, self-centred murmur stretched tenuously between me and it, like the diminishing voices of strangers as they pass under your window and down the road.

What sound is more nostalgic than the elegant, prim fusillade of rain on your roof at night? You lie hypnotized by nostalgia; the mind lulled subtly along a thousand apparently unconnected corridors of memory — until they meet at some wrenching sadness.

"You can have her," that lost savage creature who was Eleanor's mother had told me nearly twenty years ago. "She's just what you need — at your age." She discarded this harsh and profound truth with the same indifference that she had discarded everything else: a second after

it was uttered she had probably forgotten it and returned to that desperate, solitary cave in which she passed her life. It was grotesque, but her mindless isolation had in it some elements of sanctity. No degradation, no ugliness, no emotion could rest on her. She had hidden too far from them.

"But what is the child's name?" I had asked. "What do you call her?"

"Call her what you like," she had answered. "The neighbours call her 'Baby'."

She sat there when I went into the narrow, airless bedroom and took the small, grimy, indifferently nourished bundle from the soiled sheets. There was a damp, cardboard carton beside the bed, of the sort used to ship tins of milk or fruit juice, and I supposed that was where she put the child whenever she brought a sailor up from the port.

"What about you?" I asked her. "Don't you need anything? Can I help in any way?"

One thin shoulder twitched rather than shrugged. Her blank face, eroded by indifference to something far less human than a mask, shone in the ghastly pool of the yellow flame belching up from the tin lamp.

"You can give me some money if you like. I think I have syphilis and it costs too much to get it cured." She said this as a person might say, "I think I must have caught a cold."

"Good God. The child . . . ?"

"She's all right, I think. I haven't had it long."

I gave her everything in my wallet. She took it and held the notes in her lap as if they were old newspaper to start a fire. Going out of the door with the baby held against me, wrapped in my jacket, I asked: "Do you know who the father was? It might be useful to have that information when I take out adoption papers." A ripple of what I thought was contempt passed across her face, but I may have been mistaken; it might have been simply the involuntary irritation of an animal's hide as it is stung by a persistent fly.

I went out, then, under the dusty, anaemic banana trees, leaves whispering like old, tubercular women in the steady sea breeze, to where I had left the taxi at the end of the lane. I told the man to drive me to the hospital. Eleanor — as I had already named her in my mind — was half

asleep all the time the doctor on duty was taking a blood sample.

"Of course I cannot say definitely," he told me. "Not until I do the full test in the morning, but I think the child is clean, *senor*."

I was staring out of his office window, down the jagged, black, moon-gilt water of the harbour. There were two ships in and the wharves were white in the steady, arctic glare of the lamps. A long, flat worm, jetting red sparks and winding swiftly through the bush from the interior, was the banana train coming up from the plantations. No Latin American town ever seems to sleep and, now, with banana ships in port, the little city was brisk and loud. Even at this distance the night was dotted with irregular punctuations of noise from the *cantinas* and brothels along the waterfront. The whole world seemed to me, at this moment, inconceivably ugly and meaningless. If the gentle-faced man who had taken Eleanor's blood had not given me some hope, if he had confirmed what had chilled my heart all the way to the hospital, I believe I would have hurled the child through the open window to its death down the dry river-course that ran below the hospital.

"You can have her," Eleanor's mother had said. "She's just what you need — at your age." How true. And yet how incomplete. I was aware as I gathered that damp urine-scented body to mine from the narrow bed that my life had taken on a significance of which she was the agent. Even our purest actions would be unimaginable unless we sensed our singularity in them and fulfilled some private unshareable need. But we become prisoners of even our purest, most selfless actions. Every action carries in it the germ of its own decay, its own lack of meaning. Sterility will out. Does that explain, perhaps, why the martyr saints have such a particular hold on our imagination?

I needed Eleanor, but she, as hungrily, needed me. At least I have the memory of her almost instantaneous illumination; in my care she shed, miraculously, horrible layer after layer of deadened soul. Of course, any other person would have done as well.

Now she no longer really needs me. If I were honest, I would ask myself if I really need her. But the body never learns. Or is it the heart? Something within us, at any rate, will not resign itself to solitude. I have got the habit of loving her, watching for her, choosing for her, shielding

her with the small experience I have acquired of this treacherous life that is predictable only in its capacity for betrayal. How can I abandon her now as she needs to be abandoned? How can I abandon the luxury that has filled the last twenty years of my life with meaning?

I tell myself that I only want to see her safely married. But I see beyond that, I know, to her child, who will truly be my grandchild. I do not care whether the child is a man or a woman. The excessive importance attached to the birth of a son has always seemed to me vulgar, primitive and alien.

With Eleanor married, perhaps my body and heart would resign themselves to uselessness, as they now so stubbornly refuse to do. But how can I entrust her ardent, untutored spirit to the raw, self-centred gropings of the young men she accumulates like small change on her way. Of all the men near her generation she might have chosen, Carl Brandt is the only one in whom I discern nobility of soul. And Brandt aside, there is only young Robey, who has gentleness of heart. Any of the others might destroy her. As her mother was destroyed.

Perhaps if I had really learnt from life, as I sometimes pretend to Eleanor, I would retire; allow her to play the scene by herself, with whatever bad actor she will choose. After all to impose even my approval or disapproval will, in a sense, limit a choice she would wish to make freely. How monstrously unfair, I tell myself sometimes, for me to participate, even remotely, in an event for which I cannot envisage much future responsibility. And yet I had already participated in her future, right up to her very death, the moment that I lifted her from those semen-stained sheets in that small, horrible kennel where she already spent nearly two years of her life.

She was, from the first, an invincibly cheerful child. Neglect and malnutrition seemed to have left no deep trace other than a squalid thinness, which filled out overnight. Indeed it was as if the very deprivation of nourishment she had suffered had left her with a spirit that kindled into love more easily than most. Sometimes as I watched the utter candour and simplicity of her affections I would be appalled. How, I would ask myself, will I deal with that when such combustible stuff is carried in a woman's body?

"You can't do it you know, Nick," Kathleen Slade, my closest though not my oldest friend, had said to me the morning after I brought her home from that beautiful half-savage country on the Main where everything, it seemed, that could happen to a man and yet leave him alive had happened to me. That country where truly, the Old World and the New had locked forever in an imperceptibly flowering explosion: two cannibals, the Spaniard and the Indian, devouring each other through the centuries, their brutal meal as yet only half-digested. The country where my young manhood and middle age had been successively gorged and tortured with experience, like a fly in hot jam, and to which I had returned only to bring Eleanor away.

"I can't do what?" I had asked Kathleen. We were sitting, I remember, under the great Bombay mango tree in her garden, watching Eleanor as she crawled on the lawn between the ample, frozen jets of colour that Kathleen Slade could coax from the earth so magically. Janice, Kathleen's daughter, was watching the baby with the half-suspicious, half-maternal concentration of a six-year-old.

"You can't bring that child up," Kathleen said. "Now can you? What will you do with her, alone in that enormous house of yours over in the Bay? Leave her here with me. You don't know what it is to bring up a girl child. It's nothing a man could learn. You'll make the most awful mistakes, Nick."

Her huge, dark eyes were turned on me with almost unbearable brilliance; they burned and glittered in her worn, ineffably gentle face. But for the magnificent integrity, which she brought to every relationship, I knew that she would have allowed the yearning of heart for another child to show in her voice.

"We'd be good to her, Nick. She is beautiful. If you are thinking that Hector wouldn't want her you're mistaken. It was he who suggested it last night, after I had put her to bed."

"No," I said. "She must stay with me. You mustn't ask for her again." I put my hand over the long, fragile fingers she had placed, unconsciously I am sure, on my sleeve. "She must stay with me."

There are moments with those whom one loves as I loved Kathleen and Hector Slade when it is better to be uncompromising; more honest to withhold any explanation. Doubtless they thought that with Eleanor

I was trying to replace something of my dead wife and daughter.

I could not tell them, then, why it was I had to have the child. Indeed, for me, it was only an instinct. I like to think that the intuition lay deeper and purer than the selfish need for a little meaning in my life which the child represented. I was only aware that if I gave Eleanor to the Slades now her heart would learn an unforgettable, unassimilable lesson in rejection. No love with which they could fill her life — and what people could do that better — would ever compensate. Every life has several moments of fateful arrest: points of departure where the heart stands tiptoe on a high platform gathering balance and momentum for its next breath-taking rush across the wire. At such moments there is always some one person whose weight is vital. Eleanor, I knew, as she alternately crawled and tottered between the cannas and the gloxina, was already on the wire. I was the weight. She could not put me aside, now, for another. Of course, another would have done as well — if he had got to her first.

As for me? Was I not on the high wire also? Did I not need the weight of that small, luminously debonair, infinitely courageous child? To need another is common: to be needed by another generates an incalculable resonance that can sweeten a whole life. I had learnt that early. For who, when I was a child, had needed me in that great brown and grey house up in the foothills, not a dozen miles from where I finally brought Eleanor to live?

I must have slept, for it is the sound of Eleanor taking the car from under the porch that has returned me to myself. My room is still very dark, but I am aware of the sun that is slowly pushing its pale tones of lemon and rose above the grey peaks inland. Down in the bay, the fishermen will be just emerging from the metallic gloom of the open sea, their boats black and sharp against the dense, glimmering, blue-grey of the dawn. I can hear Sonny's petulant rumble. He is a man born to sullen protest. Half mad, I think, but it is a daemon that will carry him far. He has courted failure in everything I have tried for him, so that he will have fuel for some tertile and gigantic resentment later on. Ineluctably, he learns just enough so that he will one day succeed in mesmerizing a whole people. Perhaps he is wiser than I imagine. Perhaps he has deliberately sidestepped all the comparatively humble spheres of mastery he could have enjoyed with my help, so that he can leave himself pure for

the vast power he will at some stage surely exercise. How many times since he was fourteen and left school have we not seen him returning up the drive, perversely triumphant with some defeat as if it had been a victory. The apprenticeship at the garage . . . the dray with which he was going to haul for half the merchants in town . . . the boat, at an age when many of the young men in the bay are glad to be taken on even two nights a week with the regular fishermen. He is fit for nothing other, really, than the deceit, treason and unctuous brigandage of party politics. In that twilight landscape of the half-men he will one day be outstanding; but he will have to suffer further failures of his inept and brutal nature in the world of real people before he learns his trade. I sometimes ask myself if I have not paid my debt to the memory of the old woman who was his grandmother and who, in her youth, as my nurse, gave me such an unqualified measure of energy and devotion. It would not do to call it love, for after all she was hired to do it, and it was a mere accident of circumstances that I was the child given into her care. Nevertheless it must be difficult to care for any child without loving it somewhat, and if what I got from Serena was not the real thing, it did for me.

When, in that huge, haphazard grey and brown house, with its random wings and deep, casually added verandas, set back in a thick stand of cinchona trees above the long, steep pastures did I learn the bewildering lesson that I was unnecessary?

Did I learn it the day that my mother told me that I was not her son, but merely my father's bastard?

"Where would you like to go, darling?" she asked my brother, Lionel. "Oxford? Or Cambridge?"

We had, Lionel and I, been riding since dawn and come back to late breakfast on the long, polished north veranda with our mother, as we always did after our morning rides during the holidays. To tell the truth, since I was only ten and Lionel eight, the question had about it a great deal of that unrealistic but compulsive planning for the future which makes up so much of the conversation between parents and children. Perhaps it is our instinctive method of teaching the very young a sense of time.

"I don't know," Lionel said. "I want to go to the best one. Which is the best?"

"They're both very good, darling," she said, and squeezed, gently, a handful of his thick fair hair. "Of course, your father has a friend at Cambridge. You remember Dr. Parr who stayed with us last summer? He's there. He is what they call a Warden."

"Do you have to do lessons at Cambridge?" Lionel asked.

"No. You read in your rooms and when your mother comes to see you then you send a servant out for tea and cakes."

"My word," Lionel said, "that doesn't sound much like school. I'd like that. When can I go?"

So gently inconsequential, so inviting are the approaches to our moments of disaster and appalling pain.

"Will I go to Cambridge, too, Mama?" I asked her. "If I did, then Lionel and I could share rooms. We'd only need one set of books, because when he was reading one, I could read another and we could swap."

Her widely spaced, bronze eyes flickered slightly as she turned from her habitual devouring of Lionel's countenance.

"I don't know where you'll go," she said. "It has nothing to do with me. That must be for your father to decide. You are not my child."

It was done with the detachment and expertness of a bull-fighter or an assassin. Not for many years did I come to see that it had been planned.

But, no! I must have sensed my redundancy long before this. As the bull smells his fate rising from the sands of the arena, or as the assassin's victim learns to flinch, long before the moment of death, at every street corner or proffered cup.

How else can I explain the desperate and concentrated hours I spent studying my mother's every gesture about the house; the rise and fall of her undulant drawl as she entertained the ladies of All Souls parish to tea; the precision and confidence with which she swung herself into the saddle from the locked hands of the groom: every action, in short, which might give me some clue to her essential pattern. To define her needs and anticipate them obsessed me for long before the morning that she dismissed me — and for long after.

Even now, as I remember Judith Stacey, I involuntarily think of that cruel and fantastic woman as my mother. Even now my emotions drown

in a deep incestuous heat as I recall her hip-thrusting slouch, so full of profound and graceful power, the great bronze eyes, the blunt-featured, wide-lipped face, the dark red braids of her hair turning to mahogany as she was flung back in her chair, out of the lamp's full light, by her soft, explosive laughter. Above all the lovely and sardonic growl of her voice sounding incessantly in every corner of the great, shadowy house as she performed painful miracles of dominion over her husband and her son. She must have been gifted with an astonishing astuteness. Only a woman of great cunning, or diabolical self-control, could have used the consequences of my father's infidelity to such advantage. The product of adultery — me — brought to live at the house before she had conceived her own son. The instrument of adultery — the disconsolate and bewildered widow of a Scottish private soldier — paid handsomely and shipped from the hot and alien country that had taken her husband and in which, afterwards, she had turned, like the mangled survivor of some accident, to the first gesture that promised her relief from pain.

And yet my father was not a dissolute man. In the irresponsible context of our seignorial community he was remarkably chaste. There were no illegitimate Staceys running about the hills as there were Brandt bastards threaded like beads along every road in Cayuna. I see his lapse with that poor stupefied woman who was my mother not as lechery but as a single, uncharacteristic extravagance. A moment's indulgence of sentimental 'pity. Poor devil, he probably took it for compassion.

He paid for it, though. He paid for it in all the years that Judith Stacey kept me before his eyes like an IOU.

"Edward," she would say, "he grows more like you every day. He is a real Stacey." Or when that became impossible to maintain, for as I grew older my features quite lost any trace of the square, lion's muzzle look of the Staceys, she would invent similarities between me and the family portraits in the drawing-room. Through me, my father fed her regular instalments of himself. In the end, I suppose, he must have grown accustomed to it; would have felt himself incomplete without that daily burnt

offering. The heat of her raging possessiveness became necessary to the invalid's soul she had refashioned in him; his unacknowledged resentment manifested itself only with me. And then not grossly, but in an exquisitely painful constraint and furtive unease. Between the ages of ten and twenty I cannot remember his ever being alone with me except by accident; and from such chance encounters we both made our escape to other company, like men clawing their way from a trap of quicksand. Was it the wretched ambivalence of his feelings towards me, I wonder, that caused him to die intestate? Torn between two horses of guilt!

She used me, also, as the shadow which emphasized the substance of our beloved Lionel. As my coming, I am sure, had stimulated her barrenness into life, so my presence served to sharpen her need to possess utterly those she loved.

It would be superficial, indeed, to see her only as obsessed with power. Who in that house would have ever denied her sovereignty? But tormented by some terrible desert patch of solitude within, she consumed blindly all who had love to give her. Wasting all the love of which they were capable on it, as I once saw a soldier, gone mad with the sun, empty his bottle into the sand.

The opaque glitter of her eyes, the serene stone of her face, the passionless, growling voice as she expounded to us a dry analysis of why Lionel did not love her. And Lionel — his fourteen-year-old heart revolted and terrified by that judicial, apparently objective accusation would croak a shaken protest.

How often, in those years when we were boys, have I seen her lead his eager, unsuspecting nature along intimate and stimulating paths of conversation — straight to that fatal indictment, concealed, like a mine, with meticulous cunning at the most unlikely place in their talk. Helplessly, as we were all helpless before Judith Stacey, I watched that beloved brother impale himself on the guilt she had so carefully pointed for him. Watched as the intrinsic and overflowing power of love that had been his most marvellous endowment became dismal and confined.

"You know," he said to me not long ago, "when Judith died, I was able to hate her for the first time. I hated her uselessly for years after that. I couldn't bear even to go to her grave. Then I began to dream of her and had a period of terrible loneliness. Not missing her, you understand. Not in the ordinary sense, at least. But a haunting, physical emptiness. Then I set myself to try and understand her."

"Did you?" I asked.

"No. But simply trying to give a name to what had moved her, seemed to make her more manageable somehow. Laid her ghost. The only thing that I could hate her for now is her destruction of what you and I had together as children. That's the only thing I really regret in my life, you know: that I didn't know you when we were men. I am almost grateful for this," he gestured briefly to his withered, quite useless legs. "At least it brought you back to me."

We were sitting on the coarse grass, on the steep rocks high above the thick, swirling water of Columbus Head, with the coconut fronds above us rasping like foils. Two or three afternoons a week, now, I bring my brother here as I have done for three years, ever since infantile paralysis freakishly attacked him when he was over sixty. I take an idiotic pride in the fact that, at my age, I can still lift his heavy, half-crippled body from the car and carry it twenty yards over the rough, stony ground to the cliff's edge.

"It was her doing, of course," he said now, "that our father died intestate. His conscience would not have allowed him to make a will without leaving you a share of the property, and he could not face showing her a will like that. As I could not face her when I should have signed over to you what was rightly yours. It was her silence that I feared. Those long, terrible silences after she had trapped me. What was *she* afraid of, Nick? It couldn't have been the money. There was plenty of that. I wish I could understand her. Even now, when it's too late."

"She was afraid of sharing you with me, of course," I told him, "but that's only part of the answer. I don't understand her any more than you do. Yes, perhaps a little. I could watch her from the outside, so to speak.

But I don't know much more about her now than I did when I was twenty. It's rather humiliating, don't you think? One of the compensations of old age is that we are supposed to know even if we can't act."

Lying awake that night, watching the moonlight diffuse through the jalousies and inch across the floor, I thought of Judith Stacey. Was she, perhaps, only the most intimate example I had known of a fact we all sense and refuse to acknowledge? That love is a prison as vast as death? A keep where each captive has his own special torment to maim and stunt his truest self. Though we call these tortures ecstasies of fulfilment. Remembering that cruel and fantastic woman whom I loved so completely and in such anguish, it was impossible not to ask myself this question. It was impossible and it was useless. With love, as with death, it is the answers to what we most need to know that are forever unfathomable.

The sun has shown me my room once more. Outside I can hear the servants: a *clink of china* on the breakfast table, the harsh protest of iron on iron, the comfortable *unhurried murmur* of their voices. I am infinitely grateful for these *snug familiar sounds*. They give me the same reassurance they gave me as a child. If I rise now I shall have time to look at my bees before Eleanor comes back from the bay with the fish. The golden, silky sweet heaviness of honey, those glittering, succulent creatures that Eleanor will bring back from the sea, the elusive fragrance of coffee: how much pleasure I get now from good food. I relish the simple, untranslatable secrets it conveys to me from the earth. Basic, uncomplicated foods are the fairy-tales of the old. And really, except for our accidental burdens of unusable knowledge, we are little different from the very young.



# HOW WAR CAME IN 1914

W. ADOLPHE ROBERTS

(Extract from "These Many Years", an autobiography still in progress)

THE foliage of the chestnuts and plane trees was unusually dense that summer, and the sky had never been clearer in the soft climate of the Ile de France. All the stately parks took on added charm from the dappled shade that enticed the world to linger, but no park more than the Luxembourg Gardens near which I lived, with its statues of poets and nymphs and queens.

On the other side of town the Champs Elysees seemed the perfect urban avenue, bearing an endless tide of horse-drawn carriages and a few motor cars, the promenade on either side overarched by greenery and bordered by the terraces of cafes. I was a familiar in an apartment on the left bank of the Seine from the windows of which the view was magical; the winding stream in the middle, the dome of the Invalides on one hand and the Arc de Triomphe on the other. But every boulevard had sorcery, in the bland sunlight or the blue dusk of Paris. I loved the plumes and gay scarves worn by the models on Montparnasse, the opalescent tints of absinthe in tall glasses, the bright nosegays of the flower-vendors. These and much else. . . .

I am glad that I saw that Bastille Day (July 14) in 1914. It was completely nineteenth-century in character, because only national catastrophes alter the ways of Paris. Since 1914, Bastille Day has not been as it was then. The generality of the workmen wore corduroy trousers, peaked caps and sabots. Many of their women also had on wooden shoes, with black cotton stockings and voluminous skirts. The national fete has always been of and for the people in the first place. I had a feeling that the well-to-do joined in it and were welcomed, just that.

All classes danced in the streets to the music from little bandstands set up by the municipality, sang patriotic songs, provided ready-made audiences for impromptu harangues, and knew how to be friendly with every stranger without degenerating into rowdiness or drunkenness. Informal parades marched and countermarched, and there was of course a huge formal military review. Fireworks began at dusk, to last all night in the Place de la Bastille itself and other centres. The gendarmes were treated as carnival

heroes. Their dignity broke down at times, and they danced with the rest. The city was vibrant with the tempo of a festival that actually prolonged itself for two more days.

The jubilee ended, and general European affairs came back into perspective. War closed down remorselessly, but only the heads of nations and cabinets expected it — and not all of them. . . .

Saturday, August 1, Germany declared war on Russia. The news was followed almost immediately by the announcement of mobilization in France, to begin the next morning.

I left the office at dusk, and as I turned from the boulevard de la Madeleine into the Rue Royale I saw a man affixing a white poster to a wall. I stepped up behind him and read. "*Mobilization Générale*," succeeded by the curt, clear terms of an order that called to the colours every man up to the age of forty-eight. A generation afterward that very poster was still to be seen in its original position, framed in bronze and under glass. It happened to have been chosen for preservation as a war relic from among the tens of thousands like it that went up that August afternoon on city walls, in municipal and other government buildings and on every post-office box throughout France. Its prompt availability showed that it had been printed hours, if not days, earlier as a precaution.

The words I heard oftenest from those watching the posting were colloquial and pithy, "*Ca y est!*" which can be rendered in English as, "This is it!" They rang true. Mobilization meant war. France would never have faced so costly a disruption of her life unless she had known that war had become unavoidable.

I found the cafes of Montparnasse overflowing. A constant interchange of patrons went on between the Rotonde and the Dome, which ordinarily did not occur. Groups met in the middle of the street and stood there arguing. The talk was not loud. I sought out my friends and took back my opinions of the evening before, but now no one wanted to believe me. Foreigners insisted that the citizens round about were calm enough. I answered that rather they were stunned, that for them this was a tranquil quarter to which the full significance of events had not yet penetrated; a tour of the Grands Boulevards would show a different attitude. It was

agreed that a small party of us would go after supper to the other side of town. . .

We left at about nine o'clock. As we emerged from the Madeleine station of the Nord-Sud subway we were beset by newsboys with extras. The papers had been putting out special editions all day, but for the first time the headlines turned on the question of whether England would support France against the Teutonic combination. The Entente had been discussed in editorials, to be sure. But what was an *entente*? Nothing was down in black and white. I was not astonished to see those headlines. They counted for little in the streets as yet.

We turned on to the boulevards and encountered pandemonium. Men had swarmed down from all the outlying quarters, from Montmartre and Montsouris, from Passy and the Porte de Vincennes, from the fashionable environs of the Bois de Boulogne no less than from the slums of Belleville. They had formed processions and carried the flags of England and Russia along with the Tricolour. Not the faintest echo of the *Internationale* was to be heard. The *Marseillaise* came full-throated as the demonstrators passed between tight-packed masses. Persons of both sexes ran out of their shops to join them. I saw some waiters at the Cafe de la Paix leave their customers and place themselves at the end of one of the most ardent columns. The running fire of cheers included, "*Vive l'Angleterre!*" Parisians believed in their allies, though here and there on the pavement I heard the anxious mutter: "What will England do?"

At dawn on Sunday, August 2, a compact little flock of aircraft rose from the aviation grounds near the Porte de Versailles and flew over Paris, headed east. Today they would seem fragile toys, biplanes as well as monoplanes, of which some could carry only one man. But their wings, glistening in the sunlight, were fabulous to those who rushed to the windows to see them pass. They flew low and very swiftly.

As the morning wore on, the soldiers of the line regiments poured out of the capital, company after company, many on foot, rifles over their shoulders and campaign kits on their backs, their faces, also, set toward the east. The red trousers surging in unison were like an endless rippling pennant. By nightfall the conscripts on the first day's call were going — men who had recently had military training and were therefore in con-

dition to bear the early shocks of battle. Few fathers of families left that Sunday, but many sons and many lovers.

They crowded the subway trains, the omnibuses, the trolley cars, the cabs, all the means of transportation leading to the Est, Nord and Austerlitz railroad stations, from which troop trains were being dispatched to the frontier every few minutes. They were dressed in their shabbiest suits, to be thrown away when they received their uniforms. Each man carried nothing but the small parcel of personal effects specified by the military regulations. Admirable order prevailed. Contrary to the predictions of enemy newspapers, the machinery of mobilization functioned like a stop-watch.

On the following day the early afternoon extras reported violations of both French and Belgian soil. "*Les Allemands ont Franchis la Frontiere*" — I see the black type yet — "The Germans Have Overleapt the Frontier." A few minutes after 5 P.M. the imperial ambassador, von Schoen, demanded his passports and gave in exchange a formal declaration of war. It was an after-climax. Paris was already keyed to the high note of war, had known that the peace could not be saved. And then, the business of mobilization had been going on all day, dominated by the departure of artillery and the Red Cross.

The guns went eastward like a running tide. Always when the guns were passing the atmosphere was bombastic and gay. I wondered, without finding an answer, why the artillerymen should take this war lightly, while the foot soldiers seemed austere and sad. There were roses in the mouths of the cannon, and behind the ears of the jaunty gunners. "*A Berlin!*" was chalked on the side of caisson after caisson. As the long procession of 75s thundered down the boulevard du Montparnasse and disappeared from view, I heard an American voice exclaim from the terrace of the Cafe du Dome:

"There's a thrill in this. But wait till they hear from the dead. There'll be a heavy vote from the dead."

I glanced around to identify the speaker. He was the humourist Gelett Burgess, from my old San Francisco days.

Ambulances streamed by in columns, with lay nurses seated on the cross benches, and cases of lint, medicines and disinfectants piled high.

Sisters of Mercy were leaving, too, but for some reason invariably by train.

I saw a group of young priests and monks, in cassocks and shovel hats, pass into the Montparnasse station. They were not going as chaplains, but to shoulder the rifle, to assume the blue coat and kepi of the common soldier. France did not exempt the clergy. Yet some over-age priests now mobilized themselves. A great stir was caused by a cleric of impressive stature who strode at the bridle of a colonel in command of reservists. This volunteer could not have been less than sixty-five. His hair was snow-white, and his eyes were at the bottom of hollows in his bony head. Aquiline, relentless, he looked like a cardinal of the Church Militant in a mystic age.

August 4 was the supreme day of doubt. The question, "What will happen if England does not march?" had become pre-eminent. Promises, honour — just so; these were only words, useless to France unless transmuted instantly into deeds. God alone knew what was happening on the frontier. German warships had shelled Algerian ports. The rumour of an ultimatum from London on Belgian neutrality made England seem less calculating. But suppose this were nothing but a bluff! Englishmen were buttonholed on the streets and held personally responsible for the decision of the sole ally whose fleet could command the seas.

The city continued to answer the call to arms. The older reservists were going now. They came up from the workmen's quarters in droves — carpenters, bricklayers, masons and day labourers, carrying their small equipment in tool bags, in pillow slips. Groups of the very poorest tramped past me interminably in the Place de la Bastille, dressed in baggy corduroy trousers and blue shirts, and wearing the wooden shoes of the peasant. Except for their stern faces, they looked as they had looked on Bastille Day. Middle-aged men came, too, from easy bourgeois homes, from shops, from studios, from laboratories, from the stage. No one was exempted.

And so the night of August 4 fell. Powerful searchlights swept the sky, because of a canard that Zeppelins were approaching. A lone sentinel air plane circled above Napoleon's Tomb. For the first and last time during the crisis Paris went to bed sombrely. In the morning, the streets were a turmoil of roaring citizens. England had declared war on Germany. The

party was as good as won. It would be over by Christmas. Comments such as these were tossed frenziedly from mouth to mouth. Women wept. The flag of England was cheered wherever seen. Little by little the capital calmed down and became, by proclamation, an entrenched camp behind the firing lines.

That was Paris as I saw it on the eve of combat. For me, as for millions of others, no later experience in life could ever be so dramatic as the launching of the first of the century's great wars. Subsequent conflicts had been drearily expected. In 1914 the lightning broke from the blue, or we had the illusion that it did. What we did not know was that a libertarian period was dead beyond recall. It took the events of the next few weeks in 1914 to make the truth clear to different men in different ways. The green time was gone.



# Spanish Town

CLINTON V. BLACK

THE OLD CAPITAL

Nowhere in Jamaica does the spirit of the past linger more strongly than in Spanish Town, and nowhere else are the physical survivals of that past as richly congregated. Here in the island's ancient capital (and the capital still of the parish of St. Catherine) is to be found the finest collection of historic buildings, the most significant monuments, the country's Archives and its chiefest church. Here, too, one senses an atmosphere and a character which are the peculiar heritage of the place.

Built on the west bank of the river *Cobre*, the town lies thirteen miles from Kingston on the main road along which all journeys westward must proceed. The road now takes its name from Spanish Town, but old residents still call it the 'Kingston Road' as their ancestors did, for Spanish Town had long been established before the first proper path was opened across the plain and through the swamps to the new and struggling settlement of *Kingston*, destined in time to supplant the older place.

## 1. *Its History*

### THE SPANISH PERIOD

The history of Spanish Town, a long and fascinating one, goes back almost to the earliest days of settlement. The colonists from Spain built their first rude shelters at the north coast port now known as St. Ann's Bay — the first Jamaican port into which Christopher Columbus sailed his caravels in 1494. They called the town *Sevilla la Nueva*, a town doomed to early failure because, says the King of Spain, 'no citizen prospered nor kept his health for a day . . . by reason of the site.' In the twenty years of Sevilla's existence the settlers had not reared ten children. The place was untenable.

Meanwhile the island's Treasurer, Pedro de Mazuelo (amongst others) had made his way south across the island where on the banks of a great river, on a wide fertile plain cleared and cultivated long ages before his coming by the aboriginal Arawak Indians, he found the perfect site for the new capital. He himself was highly pleased with the place and set about building a sugar mill there, becoming, as a result, one of the first

citizens (known to us by name) of the town that was soon to rise on the spot. His next task was to convince his sovereign of the merits of the place and to sue successfully for the abandoning of the old town and the building of the new.

Other settlers had followed his move south and soon he could write to the King — 'the land is plentiful in bread and beef, and is healthy and . . . all who reside there have a healthy and easy life because it is a land of very good water, without mountains or ranges of hills, and has very good ports suitable for navigation to the provinces of Santa Marta, Cartagena, the mainland and Peru and Honduras.' For which reasons, and others which he adduced, Mazuelo begged the King to order that a licence be issued for the new town to be built close to his sugar mill. He further suggested that the first settlers should be thirty or forty married Portuguese farmers and labouring people, 'so that cultivation and stock rearing may be more quickly done for the use and advantage of the persons who might go to settle and live in the said town.'

The *Villa de la Vega* they called their new settlement, 'The town of the Plain'. It is claimed that Diego Columbus, son of the Discoverer, was concerned with its establishment, but he had been dead some years before the royal decree was issued. However, his son Luis, the third Admiral of the Columbus family, who was created Duke of Veragua, bore also the title of Marquis de la Vega after the island's new capital. In Spanish documents relating to Jamaica the name *St. Jago (Santiago) de la Vega* is never used for the town. The adoption of this latter form by the English was probably owing to the fact that the Spaniards called the island itself Santiago in honour of their country's patron saint. The name Spanish Town is of still later date.

From its foundation Spanish Town became the focus of life on the island and its history during the Spanish regime, and indeed for some time after the conquest by the English in 1655, was for all practical purposes the history of Jamaica. Although other settlements sprang up, none took root as Spanish Town did. As late as 1611 the Abbot of Jamaica, in a letter to the King, could write of it as the only settled town in the whole island.

The Spaniards had hoped that Jamaica would have yielded much gold, but in this they were early disappointed. Because of its strategic position,

however, it proved valuable as a supply base and during the period of the Conquistadores arms and food, men and even horses were shipped from the island to help in the conquest of the Main. After that Jamaica's importance waned. Little was done to develop its natural resources, and the inhabitants, never large in numbers, were for the most part poor. And yet there are, especially in Spanish Town, persistent legends of buried Spanish Jars full of gold and rich jewels. When the inhabitants were forced to withdraw from the island with the coming of the English, they were confident that in time they would recover the island, so, we are told, they buried most of their money and drew up an official list of the secret caches, each distinguished by a special mark, to establish the various claims later on. Edward Long in his *History of Jamaica* (1774), says that 'large quantities of [copper coins] have been dug up in Spanish Town, the hills adjacent to it, and other parts; but no gold nor silver coin was ever found, that I have heard of. Was he being naive? The legends persist. . . .

Long knew Spanish Town in the eighteenth century, but it is to the early chroniclers and adventurers that we must turn for contemporary accounts of the place in Spanish times. The Carmelite missionary Antonio Vazquez de Espinosa, writing about 1628, says: 'It has a marvellously attractive site, contains 500 Spanish residents, and is very well built and laid out. There is a collegiate church with an Abbot and some clerics who reside there and serve it; there are two convents, a Dominican and a Franciscan, the two shrines which serve as parish churches, Our Lady of Belen and San Jeronimo, in which Mass is said for the poor people in the environs.'

From Espinosa also comes an interesting account of the attack on the town by Christopher Newport in January 1603. The residents, led by their governor, Fernando Melgarejo, fought so vigorously that the English were forced back to their ships. The townsfolk felt that their success was owing to the intercession of St. James, 'accordingly,' writes Espinosa, 'from that time on the town sends its prayers to him and has him as their patron; on his day they hold a fiesta there and a general celebration, in commemoration of this victory.'

But such attacks did not always end victoriously for the Spaniards. In January 1597, Sir Anthony Shirley, the celebrated Elizabethan adventurer, guided hither by an Indian, marched on Spanish Town, which he plun-

dered and burnt, being, while he stayed, 'absolute master of the whole' Unlike Newport, he met almost no opposition—'the people all on horseback made shew of great matters, but did nothing.' The expedition remained for a month, provisioning their ships with beef and cassava. 'We have not found in the Indies a more pleasant and holsome place,' declared a member of the party.

The privateer Captain William Jackson also plundered the town in 1643. Forewarned of his approach, the people managed to spirit away their valuable possessions and he and his men had to be content with 'Hoggs, Hennis, and other good provisions'. It is 'a faire Town', he wrote later in his *Briefe Journall*, 'consisting of four or five hundred houses, built for ye most part with canes, overcast with mortar and lime, and covered with Tyle. It is beautified with five or six stately churches and chappels, and one Monastery of Franciscan Fryers.'

Such attacks were not confined to Jamaica, but formed part of a general effort by various European nations to loosen Spain's strangle-hold on the area. Where Jamaica was concerned, raids like Captain Jackson's were opening the eyes of more and more people to the value and attractions of the island: in fact, he had to turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of his men who 'desired to sett up their stacon here'. As it was, many deserted the fleet. It was one of the conditions of the capitulation in 1655 that these deserters should be handed over by the Spaniards.

These attacks also had a demoralizing effect on the Spaniards who, according to a report made in 1644, became 'so nervous and terrified that if two ships are seen off the port, without waiting to know where they are from, they remove the women and their effects to the mountains. The time they waste in doing this gives the enemy the opportunity to return and occupy the town without resistance'.

On 10th May, 1655, an English expeditionary force under Admiral William Penn and General Robert Venables dropped anchor in Kingston Harbour (as it was later to be called). The people of Spanish Town prepared, as before, for another marauding raid. But this time they were

wrong: the expedition's object was the taking of the island, and its appearance that May day spelt the beginning of the end of Spanish rule.

#### THE BRITISH\* PERIOD

Although the island was captured without the loss of a man and with scarce a shot being fired, the final conquest was to take five years and cost much blood. In most of the events of this period Spanish Town played a central role.

Finding on their arrival that the inhabitants had turned their cattle loose and escaped across the island to Cuba with their valuables, the invading troops burnt and pillaged most of the town in angry disappointment, even melting the church bells down for shot. When, later, with more settled conditions, the island began to be colonized, they repaired most of the buildings worth the effort, but it is doubtful if any Spanish work exists to-day, except in the form of foundations.

Spanish Town took a long time to recover from this devastation, time which gave Port Royal a chance to exceed it for a while in size and importance. Nourished by the wealth brought in by the buccaneers who made it their headquarters, Port Royal rose during the latter part of the seventeenth century to be the richest and wickedest city in the world. Sir Hans Sloane writing of Spanish Town in 1688, described it as next in bigness to Port Royal. At the same time he noted that it was in Spanish Town that the governor usually resided, the Courts and Assembly sat and the island's Archives were kept — all of which, he predicted, 'must make this place in some time very considerable'. And he was right. On 7th June, 1692, most of Port Royal was swallowed up by an earthquake and Spanish Town reigned once more supreme, a reign which was to last for nearly two hundred years.

Even though Port Royal was the buccaneer port, the effects which the activities of this wild *Brethren* had on the life of the times was strongly felt in Spanish Town. Here, in the Record Office, may still be seen the

\* In 1706 an Act of Union was passed declaring that England and Scotland (which had been united under one sovereign since 1603) should have a united Parliament as from 1st May, 1707. From that time it is proper to speak of British rather than English activities in the West Indies.

will of Sir Henry Morgan, the greatest buccaneer of them all, who rose to be four times lieutenant-governor of the island. In the Cathedral churchyard sleeps his great friend and abettor Sir Thomas Modyford (governor from 1664-71), described on his tombstone as 'The soule and life of all Jamaica, who first made it what it now is'. And here it was, towards the end of Morgan's fantastic career, that many a night, when the candles were lit and maps and charts unrolled, he and his crony from London days, the Duke of Albemarle now governor of the island (they were to die within two months of each other), 'goblets of rum or wine in their fists . . . leaned, wiggid head to wiggid head, over their maps, and damned the Assembly while in spirit they dredged the gold from under the seas, as the candlelight winked on the jewels on their velvet coats and on the tapestries and curtains and the gold and silver plate, loot from Panama'.

Sloane (mentioned above) came to the island as Albemarle's private physician. He also attended the ailing Morgan. He wrote two famous works on the island, and, while here, made an important botanical collection, which on his death was presented to the nation and formed the nucleus of the British Museum's Natural History section. His house, 'an old Spanish fronted building', stood on the site of what is now 14 Nugent Street.

It was here in Spanish Town that the island's new era under English rule began. At first a sad, unsettled era. The unaccustomed climate and tropical diseases took early toll of the newcomers. To this was added the miseries of famine, brought largely upon themselves by the soldiers who, not wishing to settle in the island, refused to plant any crops in the belief that if there was no food they would be recalled. But as Cromwell was determined on the settlement of the island, here they remained, and here many died, crying with their last breath, 'Bread, for the Lord's sake!'

The depredations of the Maroons aggravated the difficulties. These Maroons (their name probably derives from the Spanish word *cimarron*, meaning 'wild') were the freed or escaped slaves of the Spaniards who had taken to the thick woods and mountains on the coming of the English. There they were organized and armed by their fleeing ex-masters and encouraged to harry the invaders with guerilla warfare until an army could be assembled in Cuba for the recapture of the island. Some of their encampments were near the English quarters which they often raided,

firing a house in Spanish Town itself. Soldiers venturing outside the town were frequently cut off by prowling bands of Maroons, and efforts — when they were made — to cultivate usually ended in the slaughter of the planters and destruction of their crops.

The English eventually won over one band under the chief Juan Lubolo (his name, corrupted to *Juan de Bolas*, lives on in many place-names in the neighbourhood of Spanish Town), and this proved a significant factor in the final defeat of the Spaniards.

Of the military Commissioners sent out to the island, four lost their lives while doing their utmost to help the unfortunate infant colony during this desperate and unsettled period. The last of these, General William Brayne who described his stay in Jamaica as 'one continual sickness', died in September 1657, and the command of the colony fell to Edward D'Oyley, a colonel in the army of invasion who had acted twice before in this position. He governed by court martial which met regularly in Spanish Town until June 1661, when, with the death of Cromwell and the restoration of Charles II to the throne, he received his commission as first civil governor of the island.

It was fortunate that the command fell when it did to as capable a military officer as D'Oyley, for he had barely taken over when the long-expected Spanish invasion began to materialize. The resourceful D'Oyley managed to storm successfully a stockade the Spaniards had built near Dunn's River on the north coast, and so foil that attempt. The decisive battle was fought at Rio Nuevo in June 1658 and within two years all Spanish influence in Jamaica had ended, England's claim to the island being further confirmed by the Treaty of Madrid of 1670.

The defeat of the Spaniards removed the danger of foreign invasion, but in August 1670 came the threat of internal rebellion — and an important event in the story of Spanish Town. It took the form of a mutiny of the troops, led by Colonels Raymond and Tyson, the latter having at the time the command of one of the regiments quartered at Guanaboa Vale, nine miles from Spanish Town.

The reasons for the mutiny are not clear. Dislike of D'Oyley and his iron methods played a part, as did rivalry between those who favoured the Monarchy and those who preferred the Commonwealth. But the root-cause was probably impatience at the continuation of military rule and

a longing to settle down as colonists, especially as provisions were now plentiful, trade increasing and the general health of the community improving.

D'Oyley as usual acted promptly to meet this new danger. He tried fair words first, but these failing, he brought reinforcements into the town. With much tact he at length persuaded the troops to hand over their leaders and disperse in exchange for a complete pardon. A court martial was quickly convened who adjudged the colonels worthy of death, and, without delay, they were executed in sight of both parties under the big tamarind tree which, according to tradition, stood until 1951 in *Mulberry Garden*, *Monk Street*, now the site of the *Poor House*. 'Raymond expressed no concern, but died with a haughty kind of Resolution,' says one account; 'Tyson behaved in a manner more becoming, and seemed penitent for the part he had acted.'

After the execution the troops were ordered to their several quarters, but they had by now grown so insolent that D'Oyley was forced to allow them to plunder the town houses of the two rebellious colonels and any others that took their fancy before he could persuade them to return to their precincts. Twelve days later news of the Restoration in England arrived and within a year D'Oyley was appointed governor — the first of more than sixty administrators who were to guide the destinies of the island from their headquarters in *Spanish Town*.

From this point until at least 1872 when the removal of the capital to *Kingston* was completed, it is difficult to treat of the story of *Spanish Town* in isolation, for that story is in large measure the story of *Jamaica*. It was here, in *Council* and *Assembly*, that laws were made, amended, repealed, bitter battles fought over rights and privileges, and constitutions framed, defended and abrogated. Near the *Assembly* sat the *Supreme Court* — the two bodies thus circumstanced, affording (says Long) 'a striking picture of the legislative and executive departments . . . each harmonizing the other ever acting and re-acting; various, yet concurrent'.

It was the streets of *Spanish Town* whose very names recall the city's history, which knew the quick soft step of *Spanish* *senorita*, the reflective tread of *sandalled friar*, the shackled shuffle of *barefoot slave* and the heavy tramp of *blunt-toe-booted Puritan*; streets which echoed to the marching feet of *militiamen* off on an expedition to track the elusive

Maroon, to crush some slave revolt, or to man the ramparts at Carlisle Bay in a desperate and brilliantly successful action against the might of the French Admiral Jean du Casse and his invasion force in 1694.

It was in the Square whose buildings themselves reflect the city's story, that Lewis Hutchinson the perverted, red-haired planter of St. Ann, who welcomed visitors to his tiny *castle* only to torture them to death, was, it is said, hanged one gusty day in March 1773. 'His reckless gaze upon the instrument which was to convey him before the tribunal of his Maker, finds no parallel in the history of crime or punishment,' writes the prosy Rev. Mr Bridges in his history (1827), 'nor can the annals of human depravity equal the fact that, at the foot of the scaffold, he left an hundred pounds in gold to erect a monument, and to inscribe the marble with a record of his death.'



# THE SELF-GOVERNMENT MOVEMENT

From *The Daily Gleaner*, May 10, 1955

H. P. JACOBS

DURING the period of 1938-1953, Jamaica underwent four important changes. The most obvious of these is that while in 1938 the participation of Jamaicans in the Government of their country had reached the lowest point since the restoration of an elective element in the legislature, in 1953 the country became virtually self-governing in internal affairs.

Secondly, while in 1938 the wage-earners and small farmers exercised no significant influence on affairs, the workers have since developed institutions which are exclusively their own (unions) and the small farmers have a powerful voice in the great commodity associations, the creation of which would have been impossible without them.

Thirdly, the economy has assumed a more varied and modern aspect. Fourthly, the feeling has developed that Jamaicans constitute a "nation."

Thus the country changed its constitutional system and its relationship to Britain; new forces came into existence to affect public affairs; the economy changed; and there was a significant change of outlook. Obviously these four stands of history are interwoven. Let us try to see how.

The defect of all systems of personal government is that so much depends on the persons involved. In the twenty years before 1938 there was no Governor except Sir Edward Stubbs who counted very much personally with the people of Jamaica.

Moreover, the more complicated system of administration which developed in the post-earthquake generation called for rigid control of the administrative machine. If this rigid control was not applied, the system ran down and public scandals occurred. If the rigid control was applied by people who neither understood the moral purpose of the machine nor considered their civil service subordinates as human beings, there would be a feeling that the country was subjected to tyranny.

In order to ensure that such a system works, both the Governor and the Colonial Secretary have to be well above the average in ability. This was seldom the case; and Stubbs, for example, had to be constantly smoothing things over and putting the best front on awkward happenings.

Stubbs was genuinely liked. He was therefore able to follow a policy which, while it mainly benefited the men of property, did bestow real benefits on every class. Moreover, he made people anxious to help themselves; he created a warm belief in the country, which was diffused downwards in society and created new ambitions.

After Stubbs, the feeling was one of flatness and disillusionment. The old banana co-operative cracked and had to be reconstituted as an ordinary company. There were natural calamities, which destroyed crops. Ten thousand repatriates, mainly from Cuba, created new problems and talked of the way things were done in republics.

The Governor who reaped the whirlwind, Sir Edward Denham, was aware of the dangers of the situation: but his remedy contributed to the collapse of the regime. A loan of £2m. was raised; but to cover the cost the basis of customs duty collection was changed, so that indirect taxation was increased.

Moreover, the allocation of the funds caused little satisfaction. A large body of thought was opposed to all increased taxation; but the more enlightened regretted that indirect taxation should be increased, while the more progressive elements in the propertied class felt that the expenditure was for the most part unproductive — that the money would serve as a palliative not as a means of developing the country's resources.

There was thus a general atmosphere of rather querulous criticism, which was communicated downwards amongst the masses, who believed that every increase in the cost of items in common consumption was due to the Governor. Denham thus became a symbol of tyranny to the masses at the same time that he ceased, owing to audible criticism from other classes, to be regarded as a magical figure.

Not all the critics were merely querulous. Some took the view that there must be a better organised public life: hence, in 1937, the formation of the National Reform Association (with which such people as N. N. Nethersole and Ken Hill were connected) and the successful campaign of the Federation of Citizens Associations to secure control of the KSAC. Others stressed the economic side, and this led to the Economic Conference summoned early in 1938 by Mayor Oswald Anderson — an effort in which people who usually had little contact with each other were found working together.

There was a good deal of overlapping in the two movements: few of the politically-minded were opposed to the conception of the first claims of economic progress.

The link between the idea of political progress and that of economic progress was the recognition of the fact that Jamaica's resources were too feebly exploited. Those who held that "Jamaica's problems are primarily economic" tended to think that the development of resources called for a vigorous co-operation of all able Jamaicans of goodwill with government in securing markets for exports and in encouraging the acquisition of land by a thrifty peasantry.

Those who held the theory of political action believed that the co-operation of all able Jamaicans with an administration controlled by the Colonial Office was unnatural. Faced with the argument that the Colonial Office represented Britain, and "we are British, aren't we?" they were forced to develop the "national" theory — that is, the view that the Jamaican people having had a continuous historical existence for over two centuries, was a *nation*.

The theoretical formulation of this view was influenced by the Jamaica Progressive League of New York, and in particular by such members of it as Adolphe Roberts, the founder; W. A. Domingo, and Ethelred Brown.

The first local exponents, such as Frank Hill and O. T. Fairclough, attempted to work out principles of action which would lead up to Dominion status. They studied Jamaican history after 1865, examined the evolution of self-governing dominions, modern Socialism, and the menace of Fascism. They were aware of the significance of the proletariat, and thought in terms of a more liberal franchise.

In the late 'thirties there was considerable restlessness in the labour force of sugar estates. Banana workers struck in St. James in 1937. The Jamaica Workers and Tradesmen Union — the seedground of all later unionism — had appeared in 1936, and with it were connected several men of types till then unfamiliar in the unionism of Jamaica: W. A. Bustamante, P. A. Aiken, A. G. St. C. Coombs (the founder). But the union met with little success in 1937. Bustamante's early efforts at

organising sugar workers were rebuffed. Nonetheless Bustamante kept himself in the public eye by denouncing the conditions under which the workers lived.

The appearance of the West Indies Sugar Company in 1937 actually increased the tension, for it meant relative prosperity in Westmoreland, where the new Frome Central was being built, and so attracted a large number of unemployed persons. Hence the first explosion was at Frome, where riots took place early in May, 1938, and several people were killed by the police.

The Frome riots were a leaderless disturbance, the protest of the masses against unemployment, and therefore directed, with inverted logic, against the chief source of new employment.

In precisely the same way a tense situation developed in the capital, not out of unemployment alone, but out of the efforts to relieve it. Workers on a housing scheme were driven away by crowds who said there must be work for all, and it was increasingly felt that the city unemployed were a power. The spelling of work amongst PWD daily-paid employees did an injustice to the old hands without satisfying those who got two days work a week instead of unemployment.

A waterfront strike in Kingston brought matters to a head. The city went to bed one night in an uneasy, feverish quiet; it awoke to the activity of milling crowds in a sort of spontaneous general strike. Bustamante was that day, for the first time, a dominant figure; and amid the confusion the police took it into their heads to arrest him. He and St. William Grant were hustled off to gaol.

The arrest was the simple device of stopping an agitation by arresting an agitator; logically, therefore, bail was refused. The appointment of a Board of Conciliation, however, brought out sharply the realities of the situation.

Island Treasurer Hodges, the Chairman, felt that the general rate of wages was too low. Two Privy Councillors were members of the Board, and both were convinced that changes in the social order were desirable.

The Board, therefore, inevitably assumed the function of converting both private employers and Government to the idea of higher wages. But while the waterfront employers were quickly induced to offer wage increases, it was another matter to get the workers to accept them.

Mr. N. W. Manley, Mr. Bustamante's cousin, who was in close contact with both the Board and the strikers, carried to the men the offer of the employers; but they unanimously declared that they would not return to work until Bustamante and Grant were released. It now became the business of both Manley and the Board to convince the Governor that the police must no longer object to bail.

Denham was already stricken with a mortal illness, but he let no sign of this appear. A little before the riots, he had been half-persuaded that something was radically wrong, and this vague feeling of vast events, or pride, or humanity, had led him to resist the hysteria which called for sharp repressive measures. He was unwilling to appear to capitulate, but he was prepared to listen. In a nocturnal conference he was non-committal, but ready to see a new point of view.

In the next few days took place the release of Bustamante and Grant, on bail, the end of the waterfront strike, the death of the Governor, and the installation of Mr. (now Sir) Charles Woolley as Acting Governor. What had happened was the first successful organisation of a trade union, and with it the emergence of the militant proletariat as a force. The tremendous spread of unionism amongst the sugar workers began.

At no stage was this working-class movement political. Bustamante was less political than Garvey. His object was the creation of a tight organisation under his sole control, with no opportunity for subordinates to create independent or rival authorities. He did not think of entering Legislative Council, or of extending the franchise. The trend of his evidence before the Royal Commission at the close of the year showed no special interest in self-government.

In September, 1938, N. W. Manley and others formed a political party. After much hesitation, the founders rejected the term "Labour Party" and

chose that of "People's National Party". This name was intended to show that the Party was not to be the party of any particular class, nor to represent any particular economic theory: it was to be a means of making the country's politics into a serviceable instrument of social and economic progress, with all citizens identified with its political life and seeking national goals.

This was the effective beginning of the national movement for self-government. The movement rested upon a small group of people, mainly middle-class and largely professional, who considered that the condition of the masses must be improved and that this could not be done without the active and intelligent participation of the masses.

This was the first time that a political party had been formed, and it was not accompanied by the formation of any rival party, because there were not two opposing principles or personalities. The PNP, by their stress on political and economic theory, created the conditions for a second party, but only gradually.

The typical reaction of the educated classes in Jamaica to political crisis was not permanent organisation, but temporary combination — that is, not a party, but a *fronde*, to attack the Governor of the day. Members of the *fronde* might have no close connection at all with each other, and one group might attack an unpopular Governor merely because a rival group had already done so and must not be allowed to get all the credit.

A *fronde* might penetrate the civil service, and could influence every section of society. Groups and individuals would gradually withdraw their opposition to the administration if they received some recognition, or gained their immediate objects, or became afraid. A *fronde* might accept some common principle, but *frondeurs* never proposed to accept responsibility, as the PNP did.

The politicians would have been inclined to welcome the party, for they rested on appeals to organisations, and a powerful island-wide organisation could help them. But the Party required that its candidates should be freely chosen by the Party — should be its own candidates — and that every candidate should pledge himself to support the programme of the

Party. This seemed intolerable to the politicians and the few who attached themselves to the Party drifted away.

Naturally, the PNP hoped for support from Bustamante's new unionism. They argued that they could be the political wing of a reform movement with the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union as its industrial wing. But the various reasons — including charges of Marxist conspiracy levelled at the PNP — led Bustamante to feel that the PNP meant to use him and then take over his power.

Thus the PNP drifted into hostility to the only great mass movement, while their theory of adult suffrage was anathema to the propertied, salaried and professional classes.

In February of 1939 the position altered for a while, Bustamante made a bid for union supremacy in Montego Bay, and in pursuance of this called a disastrous general strike, which was utterly broken by Governor Sir Arthur Richards. It seemed certain that the BITU would be destroyed, as employers began to refuse to recognise it. The PNP leaders now persuaded the Governor to use his influence to prevent the destruction of unionism.

As a preliminary to this, Bustamante joined a Trade Union Council in which all unions would work together to evolve recognised union procedure. Several small unions with the PNP sympathies joined the TUC. All these had democratic constitutions: it was expected that Bustamante would modify that of the BITU. He never did, and in a few weeks he was once more at odds with the PNP.

The party in that year rejected the idea of representative government and called for responsible government. They had now practically no support. Such was the position when the war broke out in September, 1939; Bustamante and the PNP were completely isolated from each other and from the traditional controlling and guiding forces of the country — politicians, planters, traders. The PNP had some strength amongst teachers, and had not yet broken with the Federation of Citizens' Associations, as it did soon after.

The war led the PNP to suspend their agitation for self-government. When it became clear, however, that there was to be no highly organised local war effort, the Party moved gradually into opposition. In 1940 it declared itself Socialist.

This weakened the PNP still further, but prevented it from going up a political blind alley. Many PNP supporters wished to model their Party on the Indian Congress Party — to make national independence the Party goal, to which other considerations should be sacrificed. Under Jamaican conditions this would have meant trying to create a permanent *fronde*, which is a contradiction in terms.

By forcing the Party to defend specific policies and programmes, by creating organised opposition, and by building up support from the British Labour Party, the declaration of Socialism was beneficial to the PNP in the period of 1942-8, after which Socialism became a millstone around its neck.

On some points, the Party was in agreement with the Governor. It was necessary for far more revenue to be raised, and the only method available was to increase direct taxation. Woolley had increased income tax rates in 1938; from the end of 1939 they began to rise steeply. Excess Profits Tax further reduced business incomes.

The process brought the Governor into conflict with business interests, and the PNP, while supporting taxation measures, succeeded in effecting a partial alliance with the business community over civil liberties.

The Colonial Office in 1941 offered the so-called Moyne Constitution, which was a form of single-chamber representative government with adult suffrage. This was accepted by the PNP with qualifications which would in fact have turned it into responsible government. The elected members rejected it entirely.

The PNP were in considerable difficulties on the constitutional question, as the elected members of Legislative Council were virtually a hostile party, and the Hon. J. A. G. Smith, the *doyen* of the House, wished to hark back to something like the old pre-1866 constitution.

In 1941, Bustamante was interned and the PNP established themselves as caretakers in charge of his union, which began successful bargaining for the sugar workers. All attempts to induce Bustamante to modify the autocratic character of the BITU failed, and on his release from internment in 1942 he launched an attack on the PNP, which did not feel it wise to maintain an open struggle. The TUC unions remained with the PNP.

Meanwhile the Japanese war had started, the hardships of life greatly increased, and the fall of Singapore weakened British prestige. At this point the PNP unexpectedly withdrew from their position of "self-government now" and declared themselves ready to accept a form of two-chamber responsible government with adult suffrage.

This had immediate results. Smith abandoned his objections to adult suffrage and his idea that a modified form of representative government was the goal. The British Government was faced with a united call for constitutional advance in the direction of responsible government. For the first time, two elected members were made Privy Councillors (1942). The PNP succeeded in winning a by-election, putting into Council Dr. Ivan Lloyd, who had joined the Party in 1941.

The failure to ensure food supplies in the capital and the internment a number of PNP leaders strengthened the *fronde* which thus inevitably appeared. Self-government was in fact won by the *fronde* of 1942, which included the most diverse elements. The dissolution of the *fronde* was comparatively slow, but this was due less to the new national spirit than to the shuffling of the Colonial Office, which kept all groups loosely united.

Nonetheless, there began to be a crystallisation of opinion. The PNP was a Socialist party, and the more progressive non-Socialists decided that self-government was certain and that a conservative party must be organised. This led to the foundation of the Jamaica Democratic Party. But Bustamante, pondering on his prospects if ever the PNP gained power, formed his own Jamaica Labour Party, and since Bustamante was anti-Socialist, much of the support given to the JDP was now shifted to the JLP.

The new constitution provided for a House of Representatives elected by adult suffrage, for a Legislative Council with three *ex-officio* and twelve nominated members, and for an Executive Council, with most of the power of the Privy Council, in which there were to be three *ex-officio* and two nominated members, but five persons elected by the House of Representatives, while the Governor was chairman.

The first general elections were in December, 1944, and the JLP won an overwhelming majority of seats. The idea of the self-governing nation, presented by the PNP, had far less attractive force than the idea of "Labour", of the bond uniting all, wage-earners and small farmers alike, who worked with their hands.

If we look carefully at the period 1942-5, we shall find that all the people who advocated self-government lost out. Not only were the PNP defeated by Bustamante, who was a little afraid of the national movement, but the advanced section of the propertied class, such as D. J. Judah and R. L. M. Kirkwood, were pushed into the background by conservatives like O. K. Henriques and Sir Robert Barker.

Similarly, the elected members who voted for adult suffrage were mostly swept away in the elections by candidates with no recorded opinions at all. This was due to the fact that self-government was won by a *fronde*, not by a mass movement guided by nationalist leaders; though the PNP, by abandoning their uncompromising stand in 1942, had created the *fronde* and given it the unique character of a demand to be allowed to accept responsibility.

The *fronde* of 1942 was the *fronde* to end *frondes*.



## ANANSI THE SPIDER MAN 215

PHILIP SHERLOCK

ANANSI AND FISH COUNTRY

THERE was famine in the land. For months there had been no rain. Day after day the sun rose and set in a cloudless sky. The grass changed from green to yellow to parched brown. The parched leaves of the trees cried out for water. The plants in the fields withered away. There was famine in the land.

Anansi was hungry. He felt as if he had been hungry for weeks, for months, forever. Now he must go off to some other place to find food.

"If I only had a bag and a long coat," he said to himself, "I would go to Fish Country and pretend to be a doctor. That's it," he thought to himself: "the only thing that a doctor wants is a black bag and a long coat and a long face."

No sooner said than done! By next morning Mr. Anansi had his tall hat and black bag and long coat. Then he set off.

When Anansi got to Fish Country he took an office and outside of it he put up a signboard: "M. Anansi, Surgeon."

The first patient was a very large, fat fish. She had many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Now her eyes were troubling her. Could Mr. Anansi help her?

Anansi looked at her eyes from every angle. He spent a long time looking, and as he looked he talked to himself. Sometimes he shook his head or stopped and coughed as he had seen doctors do. He seemed to be thinking hard. At last he said, "Yes. Your eyes are very weak, but I think that I can help you. Will you do what I tell you?"

"Yes, doctor, I will," said the fat old fish, who was now very frightened.

"Very well," said Anansi. "Go to bed as soon as you get home. See that your maid makes up a big fire in your room and puts a frying pan beside it, along with some coconut oil and a sharp knife. Call me when you are ready."

The fat fish hurried home as fast as she could and told the maid to make a fire. Soon everything was ready, and she sent to call Anansi.

As soon as Anansi came to the house he said to the relatives:

“All of you must leave the room. I will lock the door. Do not try to look inside, but listen carefully. When you hear the frying pan say ‘fee-fee’ you must all stamp on the floor and sing this song:

‘Bim, Bam, my grannie’s eyes are well, oh,  
Bim, Bam, my grannie’s eyes are well, oh,  
Bim, Bam, my grannie’s eyes are well, oh.’

“Make a lot of noise.”

Quickly the fishes learned the tune and the words. When Anansi was satisfied that they could sing the song without his help he went into the room. First he locked the door, and then he put the frying pan on the fire and put the oil in the pan. As the oil got hotter the frying pan sizzled and called out ‘fee-fee.’ Quickly Anansi put the fat fish in the frying pan while outside all the other silly fish sang as loudly as they could’ “Bim bam . . .”

And while they sang Anansi ate the fish. When he was no longer hungry, he began to think about getting away. But what was he to do? Quietly he put all the bones and scales in the bed and wiped his mouth with the sheet so that no crumbs showed; and then he covered the bones with the sheet. He took up his bag, put on his longest face, opened the door, and faced the crowd of fishes.

“All is well,” he said. “The operation was very successful. Leave the fish alone for two hours. You have been making a lot of noise, but now you must be still. Now you must pay me my fee.”

The fish paid Anansi the money he requested, and away he went. He meant to leave Fish Country as quickly as possible.

There was a river to be crossed, however, and when Anansi came to the river he was horrified to find that it was full of alligators. How was he to get across?

Just at that moment Anansi saw brother Dog on the other side of the river.

“Ah, Brother Dog,” he cried, “are you glad to see me?”

“No,” barked Dog.

"Ah, but you would be glad if you knew how much money I have here," said Anansi, shaking the bag of money.

"Bring it," barked Dog.

"But I must cross the river!" said Anansi.

"Cross now," barked Dog.

"The alligators will eat me," cried Anansi. "Look how hungry they are."

"Leave that to me," barked Dog. He began to run along the bank, away from Anansi, barking as he went. The greedy alligators followed him, thinking that he was going to jump into the water. And while they chased Dog, Anansi dashed across the ford and was soon safe on the other side. He knew that Dog was stronger than he was, and so he left the bag of money by the fording. Dog was very pleased with himself.

When the fish came to the bank of the river, which was the boundary of their kingdom, they saw Anansi. But what could they do? He was running through the forest singing,

"Bim-bam . . ."



## ANANCY AND SORREL

LOUISE BENNETT

ONCE upon a Christmas Eve morning it was Grand Market morning and Bredda Anancy stood by his gateway watching all the people going down to market. The baskets on their heads and the hampers on the donkeys were laden with fruits and flowers and ground provisions. Anancy called out, "Happy Grand Market, everybody."

"Thank you, Bredda Anancy," replied the people.

Anancy said to himself, "Wat a crosses pon me, it look like say everybody pick off everything offa every tree an carry gawn a Grand Market." Anancy groaned as a cart-load of oranges and grapefruits went by. "Massi me massa, dem don't leave a ting ena de field dem fe me to scuffle."

Anancy waited until everybody had passed on their way to the market and then he went from field to field in search of scufflings.

"Wat a hard set of people sah," Anancy grieved, "dem clean out everything outa de fiel' dem, not a chenk a scuffling fe me."

Suddenly Anancy exclaimed, "Wat a sinting so red." And he broke a long stalk of a long red plant and held it to his nose.

"It don't got no sweet smell," said Anancy, "but it pretty fe look pon. I wonder wat it good for?"

Anancy picked a few more stalks of the red plant and stuck them in his trousers waist, mumbling to himself.

"Well den, since you is the only ting I can scuffle, I scuffling you, 'Red Sinting', I don't know wat I going to do wid you yet. I don't know if you can eat, but I might even haffe eat you." Anancy laugh, "Kya, kya, kya, kya."

He danced and sang all the way to the Grand Market. When he got there Anancy looked around at all the beautiful stalls, full of fruit kind, and food kind and cooked food and food cooking. Anancy said to himself, "I will have to work up me brains and find a way to raise something." He stopped in front of a stall with plenty otaheiti apples, pointed to the red plant in his trousers' waist and said to the stall keeper, "Hi, missis, swap me some a fi you red tings fi somea fe me red tings."

The woman asked him, "Wat fi you red tings name?"

Anancy said, "Swap me first."

The woman said, "Tell me first."

The woman replied, "Tell me first an I will swap you."

Anancy said, "Swap me first."

The woman said, "Tell me first."

The woman in the pumpkin stall next to the woman's otaheiti stall shouted, "Missis, if yu want di red ting, why don't you just grab it away from di little man ."

Anancy laughed, "Kya, kya, kya, kya," and shouted back, "Grab it if you bad."

#### INTO THE POT

The man grabbed after Anancy, Anancy said, "Slip," and ran. The man chased Anancy through the Market. Several people joined in the chase shouting "Tief, tief, catch de tief." Anancy kept slipping them, darting in and out of the stalls until he reached the hominy stall.

*The hominy-lady had a big jester-pot full of boiling water on the fire.*

She was just about to drop the hominy corn into the pot when Anancy flung the bundle of red plant into the boiling water.

The hominy-lady screamed "wat dat you throw into me pot?" The crowd rush up to the pot and one man exclaimed, "It red like blood! It favour wine." Anancy looked into the pot and laughed, "Kya, kya, kya, kya, it don't only look like wine," he shouted, "is wine."

"Wine! wine!" the crowd exclaimed, "make me taste it."

#### SO - real

Anancy mumbled to himself, "Poor me boy, a hope is not poison." The man who had started the chase rushed forward, grabbed a spoon and tasted the liquid. He made up his face and said, "It don't got no taste."

Anancy said, "It don't finish brew yet.

It want some sugar

A little ginger

A piece of cinnamon

And then you stir so

And then you stir so."

And Anancy took a little of all the spices from the hominy-lady's stall and threw them into the pot. Anancy tasted the brew, "Kya, kya, kya, kya," Anancy laughed. "It taste nice, like real-real wine." The hominy-lady said "It smell nice!" Anancy looked fondly into the pot and whispered in wonderment, "How you so real, so real, so real!"

Somebody in the crowd shouted, "It name So-real ! Sell me tru-pence wut a So-real !" The crowd took up in chorus, "Tru-pence Sorreal, tru-pence Sorreal." Anancy brewed and sold so-real all day, it was the most popular drink at the Grand Market. By the end of the day in true Jamaican fashion So-real had become Sorrel. And from that day to today Sorrel is a famous Christmas drink. Is Anancy make it.

Jack mandore me no chose none.



EXTRACT FROM

## MEIN KAMPF

A. E. T. HENRY

WICKED LANDLADY

WHEN I was nineteen I was offered a clerkship with a firm of solicitors not fifty miles from Kingston. Upon reaching the town I was told that board and lodging arrangements had already been made with "a prominent lady." I have since had a chronic suspicion of all persons calling themselves "ladies." And I will tell you why: I was paid fifty shillings per week out of which the "lady" took thirty-five. And for the thirty-five shillings I was supplied with a furnished room which I then described as the *Mecca* of all mosquitoes. There was no net. As for my meals I shall not complain lest I be said to be gargantuan. I shall content myself with putting the menu before a reasonable and humane reading public and shall stand or fall by its judgment.

For breakfast: half of a grapefruit; one cup of coffee (the cup was a cross between a demi-tasse and a thimble); three small slices of bread, taken from a cylindrical loaf, about two inches in diameter. It was obvious that there was some sort of estrangement between the bread and what might be called butter. In fact, the relationship was so distant and imperceptible that one day I cautiously and without bitterness remarked that there seemed to be a shortage of butter in those parts.

Said the "lady" acidly and in the most malicious tones: "The difficulty is not a shortage of butter, but a dearth of butter." And, as if in retaliation, butter became increasingly unseen and finally perished from the bread.

Hunger demoralised me during the morning at work; but I said to myself that the "lady" was perhaps a person who had a conviction against passably good breakfasts; preferring a good luncheon instead. So I watched the clock like a civil servant, and at twelve I was gone for lunch like a civil servant. And this was what I got: one demi-tasse cupful of rice, presented with all the embroidery and flourish and jingling of cutlery of middle-class respectability. For neatness, information and delicacy of presentation my aesthetic impulse had nothing but the highest praise. But for sheer inefficiency, no tongue can tell. This shapely little cupful

of rice was accompanied with a finger of banana. As for the banana, it seems that at the shooting of the stem of which my finger was a junior member, the root was attacked by either Leafspot or Panama disease or both. Consequently my finger of banana was suffering from an acute attack of arrested development. It was the sort of banana — nay the type of phenomenon — which would have made a botanist exclaim: "This would have been a banana but for the vagaries of nature." Those were the days when I boasted a good appetite and I longed for the solidifying properties of our sturdy ground provisions *a la Jamaïque*. But of this there were but two representatives whose attitude in my plate was so inarticulate that like Rachel of old I wept in my heart and would not be comforted. The two ground provision representatives were one match-box-size slice of yam of the Saint Vincent variety — commonly referred to as "come-to-help-us"; and the neck and throat-section of a giraffe-looking cocoa of the "left-man" variety.

As for the meat, it was undeniable that a cow had been slaughtered in those parts recently. And I am prepared to grant that the "lady" accepted — at least in principle — my entitlement to a touch of animal protein, for there was a pretentious slab of beef on a platter before me. But I was, it seemed, regarded as the least of the apostles, and was permitted neither to cut nor to carve. So, of meat, my portion took the form more of smelling than of eating.

Albeit, the lady's chinaware, crockery and cutlery were as imperialistic a display as I ever saw. The setting was majestic and awe-inspiring. There were fish forks, but no fish; dessert spoons, but no dessert; a vase with flowers — artificial flowers. There was elaborate and eloquent grace-saying. I, of course, refused to join in any form of thanksgiving on the simple and honest ground that the food my landlady was thanking the Lord for having received was, in reality *my* food, for which I was giving nine hours per day to a firm of solicitors; and I could not conscientiously join in any vote of thanks for her having been permitted to rob and defraud me. No! thrice no! a hundred times no! The woman was obtaining money by false pretences — a samfie — and was asking the Lord to ratify her methods — to bless her ill-gotten gains.

There was a little food shop in town, which I soon discovered. The meals were robust and buoyant, hale and hearty — Jamaican in every sense. Crisp and inviting sprats lay side by side with imposing and elephantine jacks; huge bowls of rice and peas with flaw-flaw and bragadap to boot.

I made friends with the bragadap man; brought enlightenment to his shop and established myself as a sort of pocket edition of Dr. Johnson in his best coffee house days. But the coarseness of the food affected my stomach and my epicurean sense has revolted against all food shops since.

I tendered my resignation to the firm, hinting darkly that my going would be a great loss; but hoping that it would be able to get somebody else whose talents (though poorer than mine) would assist it in living down the tragedy; and finally, by perseverance, industry and the inevitability of the march of time, the firm would once again regain its prestige and come back into its own. I further stated in my letter of resignation that I would do nothing to hurt the firm and urged it to, as it were, stand at ease. And I have never done anything to ruin that firm of solicitors; though I could — merely by shouting "Police!" I was only a youth; but I had a sense of honour.

I left the town and the firm. I was in Kingston again after two months. But before I left the town, I had made a great impression. I was a young man of genius, I felt, and I did nothing to conceal my feelings upon the point. I had flung myself about; I had hushed the town's windbags and bags-o'-knowledge; I was confident of myself. When I was laying down the law upon a point I would brook no interruption. I was a young half-starved prodigy of an intellectual — of very great promise — who spoke with village doctors and lawyers and put them to flight. And of my future, more anon.

I was again in Kingston in search of a living and of companionship — of books, which I loved; of spiritual alliances.

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*Mein Kampf* — extract

A STRANGE EMPLOYER

WHEN I was 22 I was employed by a merchant of the city and parish of Kingston. My employer could not read and the only writing he could do took the form of a queer series of slanting strokes which purported to be his signature. Sometimes he would make twelve strokes; sometimes sixteen. And I have seen him make as many as twenty until the bank sent back his cheque with the comment, "Irregular Signature." In order to expedite the business of the office I decided to put a stop to the "Irregular Signature" affair. So I stood over him whenever he was signing a cheque and when I thought twelve strokes were already made I would contemptuously say "that's enough, sir."

His customers in the country parts were not always punctual in settling their accounts and he used to dictate the most obscene letters to them in a loud voice, calling upon them to do their duty. During his dictation his temper generally rose to a pitch where he genuinely believed that I was the customer who would not pay and from a mouth chronically foamy, he spat on my clothes; beat my shoulders; thumped the table; swore and threatened loud enough to be heard several chains away. Indeed, people who passed the place and heard him dictating used to go about the city telling their friends that they had heard my boss giving me hell and had seen him actually beating me.

Here is a specimen of his letters:

"John Brown — You cock-eye brute — Far Enough P/O — Dear Sir — Yu skylarking wid my money — yu son of a b—; but ef yu tink dat yu gwine tief me yu mek big mistake. A see yu and yu wife in a new moto cyar two weeks ago. How yu buy big moto cyar and won pay yu debt? Don't yu see yu is a wutliss man?

"But a givin yu dis warning; if yu doan pay my money by Satiday of dis week a shall sue de account in de Supreme Curt companion (accompanied) with a Bankruptcy Notice and run you out a business — yu dyam wutliss dog."

And he had a rubber stamp in the office with the words "FINAL NOTICE" which was ferociously applied with red ink to the violent letter.

Here is another specimen:

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Smith — Mount Sinai, Horeb P/O — Dear Sar and Madam — Seem to me yu tek yu account mek joke. Dat's fe yu

business. Is no dyam joke wid me; and dis skylarkin is only gwine to humbug yu good self. Cause a nat losing my money — a telling yu dat straight. And yu can put it in yu pipe and smoke. A hear say yu childs goin to Wolmer's. How yu can sen yu childs to Wolmer's and hole up my money?

"What about my childs? If a doan get me money by return post a telling me solicitors to sue de hell out a yu — yu dyam tief." And, of course: "FINAL NOTICE."

And here is a final one:—

"Nathaniel Powers — Rackabessa — Dear Sir: A write yu till a tiad. Yu seem to be a son-of-a-b—man; but a gwine get even wid yu. Doan tink yu gwine to nyam out my money. A brute man like you should go a workhouse. Tree months ago yu say yu waitin on de ginger crop. Ginger crop come an gone an no money. Den yu tell nedda lie bout coffee crop. Coffee crop finish; no money. Den yu say yu son in Merica sendin yu sometins. Yu son mussa dead. Wat new lie yu gwine tell now? A giving yu a chance to pay me my money by Chuesday. An if yu doan pay me a show yu what is it." And "FINAL NOTICE."

Of course I never took down his obscenities which were unprintable. I would listen to his fulminations and then write a letter *in English* to the customer. And as he couldn't read the letter in any case, he invariably signed it. Occasionally he would ask while signing it: "Yu write dis man a strang letter?" And I would say "yes."



## IN REVERSE

Wat a joyful news, Miss Mattie,  
I feel like me heart gwine burs'  
Jamaica people colonizin  
England in reverse.

By de hundred, by de t'ousan  
From country and from town;  
By de ship-load by the plane-load  
Jamaica is England boun'.

Dem a pour outa Jamaica,  
Everybody future plan  
Is fe get a big-time job  
An' settle in de mother lan'.

Wat a island! Wat a people!  
Man an' woman, old an' young  
Jusa pack a bag an' baggage  
An' turn history upside dung!

Some people don't like travel,  
But fe show dem loyalty  
Dem all a open up cheap fare  
To England agency.

An' week by week dem shippin' off  
Dem countryman like fire,  
Fe immigrate an' populate  
De seat a de Empire.

Oona see how life is funny  
Oona see de tunabout,  
Jamaican live fe box bread  
Outa English people mou'.  
For wen dem catch a England  
An' start play dem different role,  
Some will settle down to work  
An' Some will settle fe de dole.

Jane say de dole is not too bad  
Because dey payin' she  
Two pounds a week fe sèek a job  
Dat suit her dignity.  
Me say Jane never fin' work  
At the date how she dah look,  
For all day she stay pon Aunt Fan couch  
An' read love-story book.

Wat a devilment a England!  
Dem face war an brave de worse,  
But I'm wonderin' how dem gwine stan'  
Colonizin in reverse.

*Louise Bennett*

