

Trinidad Times (Port of Spain), 13 April 1892

Note: (by Bridget Brereton)

Sir John Gorrie, chief justice of Trinidad since 1886, and of Trinidad & Tobago since 1889, had become immensely popular with ordinary people in the colony for his rulings in favour of poor peasants, Tobago sharecroppers, cocoa contractors, tenants, labourers and indentured immigrants. The island's propertied elite saw him as a threat, and intrigued to cause his downfall. In 1892, they persuaded the Colonial Office to order a "Judicial Enquiry Commission" to investigate his administration of justice, and also the conduct of Justice Cook, his ally. This text records the arrival of the Commission, comprising two eminent British jurists, William Markby and Frederick Pollock. Their report in June resulted in the dismissal of Cook, who had a drinking problem, and the suspension of Gorrie. He died later in 1892 just after arriving in Britain, where he had gone to try to clear his name.

WHAT VENUS SAYS.

Venus bin here so mucche talk wen she bin go by Ammon Wak¹ bout dem baccra massa wha gwine cum fo trie Papa Gorrie and she fren Missa Cook dat she go warf side dis marning fo see dem. She bin see plenty nagas dere lik sheself an eben de parson man wha kep skool in Chacon treet, he bin dere too. Wen she go see dem baccra massa specially him wha ware pugree² rung he hat she sah dat man Papa Gorrie brudda him so mucche lik him only he no ware he belly band³. Dem too big baccra massa, an de man Venus here dem sah be Seketary he luk lik dah nice nyoung man wha bin lib wid he unkle one time.

¹ *Almond Walk*. Former name for Broadway, lower Frederick Street between Independence Square and South Quay in Port of Spain.

² *pugree*. An Indian fashion of a long piece of cloth, wound around a hat or helmet and hanging down the back of the neck, to protect from the sun. Gorrie often wore this in Trinidad, as well as a "belly-band".

³ *belly band*. A cummerbund, a wide sash worn by men around the waist, a common fashion adopted by British military officers in India as a waistcoat, and now used by Europeans as part of a traditional 'black tie' costume.

English Version

Venus heard so much talk went she went by Almond Walk about those white men who are coming to try Papa Gorrie and her friend Mister that she went to the wharf this morning to see them. She saw plenty naygars there like herself and even the parson man who runs a school in Chacon Street, he was there too. When she saw those white men, especially the one who wore a pugree round his hat, she say that man is Papa Gorrie's brother, he's so much like him only he doesn't wear a belly band. Those two big white men, and the man Venus heard them say is Secretary, he looks like a nice young man who lived with his uncle once.